



Nadia DeCastris

High school: Freeport High School

Hometown: Freeport, Ill.

Majors: Public health, psychology

Minor: Communication studies

Activities: Phi Rho sorority, Vikettes, Dance Company, Her Campus, Mortar Board honor society

Internships: Public Leadership Education Network (summer and fall 2022 communications intern and spring 2023 interim programs associate); Angie Normoyle for Congress (special projects intern)

Post-grad plans: Law school

“Nadia’s ability to lead by example — in academics, internships, extracurriculars and community service — put her liberal arts education into action. I have been honored to work with Nadia in the public health program and watch her curiosity about the intersection of health and policy grow over the past few years. She has taken advantage of all that Augustana has to offer; we are incredibly proud of her hard work and look forward to cheering her on as she embarks on new adventures!”

— Dr. Lena Hann, associate professor,
public health

Why Augustana?

In high school, I knew that I wanted to attend a small institution, and while I visited many schools, Augustana stood out the best. Even as a prospective student, I could tell that the community, leadership, involvement and genuine joy for this campus were truly unmatched in comparison to other universities.

While going through my decision process, I knew that Augustana was the strongest choice as I could tell it was going to be a transformative experience, in all aspects of life.

Are you where you thought you’d be when you first came to campus?

As a freshman, I suffered from a serious case of imposter syndrome. After breaking out of my shell and getting involved on campus, I truly grasped that transformative feeling I had noticed during my prospective student days.

say I hold leadership positions in every group that I am a part of, I have leaned on a comprehensive alumni network for post-graduate plans, and I now feel the most confident in my skin than I ever felt before.

Who helped you get to where you are now?

My support system throughout college has been my peers, my professors and most importantly, my family.

Whether they are in my classes or in my residence halls or even my closest and dearest friends, my peers have shown me true kindness and acceptance. They have allowed me to be my most true and authentic self.

As for my professors and advisors, they have allowed me to mature and learn both academically and professionally, without judgment. I have become a stronger student of life thanks to their unwavering support and guidance. For it is these leaders that showed me how mistakes are not failures, they are growth.

Last, but certainly not least, my family has not just assisted me, but has been my biggest cheerleader. Even as life throws me obstacles, discomfort and uncertainty, my family has shown me unconditional love and support and has allowed me to explore my purpose.

I am so incredibly thankful for everyone I have shared my time with while at Augustana.

Peak experience?

My peak experience has been the opportunity to make friends of a lifetime. While I have had extensive opportunities in leadership, academics and professional experiences, nothing compares to the bonds I have made with my dearest friends.

These once strangers are now my sisters, bridesmaids and the strongest companionships I have ever made. I cannot imagine life without these women, and only at Augustana would this have been possible. It is the community that makes Augie, Augie.

MORE THAN I IMAGINED 2023

SENIORS REFLECT ON ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LOOK AHEAD

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What surprised you?

The number of opportunities available for academic and professional exploration! I never knew that such a small school could offer the experiences it does and excel in these areas as well! Through Augustana, I have been able to intern in America's Capitol, work on a political campaign and utilize extensive professional development resources.

How did you use Augie Choice?

I am using my Augie Choice for a June-Term Study Abroad Course — PUBH-247: Whole Person Health — a Scandinavian public health trip!

What will you miss the most?

By far the community and camaraderie on campus. No matter where I am on campus, I always see a familiar face. This type of positivity and joy is not a universally shared experience, and I will greatly miss the overwhelming love people have for our campus community. As for a silly thing, I will absolutely miss Gus's Snack Shop grilled cheese, the best ever.

Advice for the Class of 2027?

GO TO CORE. It is always daunting to admit you are feeling lost with your academic and/or professional goals, but that office and career coaches are there for you! They understand and validate you always, so just try. It is totally okay to be nervous but I promise, you will feel content after.