



Matt Harrington

Majors: Geology, environmental studies

Minor: Mathematics

Activities: Udden Geology Club, Sigma Gamma Epsilon earth sciences honor society

Post-grad plans: Attend East Tennessee State University to pursue my master's in geosciences

“Matt’s senior research, which cleverly teases out the migration patterns and diet of woolly mammoths that existed in the Midwest over 20,000 years ago, is the culmination of focused ambition, keen interest and scientific persistence; when Matt dug into his project and discovered new results, Matt dug deeper. He assembled an impressive combination of isotopic analyses and then brought his project to life by mapping the ancient landscape of the mammoths. Ultimately, Matt’s project was recognized at a national Geological Society of America conference as Best Undergraduate Poster Presentation. We can’t wait to see where his determination, intellect and helpful personality take him!”

— Jenny Arkle, instructor, geology, geography, environmental studies

MORE THAN I IMAGINED 2019

SENIORS REFLECT ON ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LOOK AHEAD

Why Augustana?

Augustana provides so many opportunities to travel both domestically and internationally. I was drawn in by these amazing chances to visit and experience unique places. The geology department was full of fantastic faculty and a massive museum collection. The overall campus atmosphere was beautiful and enticing to me.

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

I could have never envisioned how far I’ve come since I showed up for my first day of classes. I came into Augustana with a strong interest in paleontology, geology and ecology and have grown those interests in ways I never imagined possible. I’ve been able to work in the Fryxell Geology Museum for four years and even had the opportunity to design one of the exhibits.

Who helped you get to where you are now?

All of my professors have helped me so much over the last four years, and there isn’t enough space to truly thank them all. However, a few faculty members definitely rise above the rest.

Dr. Michael Reisner opened my eyes not only to the complexities of natural ecosystems, but to the endless ways in which they interact with society and its people.

The entire geology department has been there to help me at every step during my time here. Susan Wolf has been there for a very wide variety of moments, from proofreading thesis drafts to teaching groups of 100 first graders. Dr. Michael Wolf has been essential to my success in geology, research and museum construction. Dr. Jeff Strasser supported my SI and has helped me considerably grow into the student I am today. Professor Jenny Arkle spent countless hours assisting me with my SI and teaching me as much about GIS as she could. Dr. Kelsey Arkle helped deepen my interest in paleoecology and allowed me to become a better TA.

Peak experience?

One of my peak experiences was traveling to Hawaii with the geology department. We spent two weeks on the big island of Hawaii, visiting beaches, volcanoes and cultural historic sites. Our department is very close, which made the experience even more fun. I learned a lot about life on Hawaii, got to visit green-sand and black-sand beaches and experience flowing lava up-close, and made memories that will last a lifetime.

What surprised you?

I learned that I was able to do so much more than I thought I could. My research for my Senior Inquiry pushed me harder than anything ever has, and I achieved a very successful project. I learned to never underestimate your own abilities. When you set your mind to a task, opportunities and potential are endless.

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How did you use Augie Choice?

I used my Augie Choice to fund my Senior Inquiry research. I researched the dietary and migratory patterns of woolly mammoths in the Upper Midwest. The project got me into graduate school and has set me up for the future.

What will you miss the most?

I will miss all my friends I've made throughout my time here at Augustana. I'll also miss the professors and faculty that I've grown with, academically and personally. Office visits and field trips with them have given me some of the best advice, experiences and memories.

Advice for the Class of 2023?

Don't stress too much about the future. The future is unknown, and you will have gained so much knowledge, experience and insight by the time graduation arrives. My path was unclear when I first arrived at Augustana, and I could have never predicted where I am now. Stay focused on the present, and the future will unfold itself.