



## Rob Williams

**Majors:** History, secondary education

**Activities:** Varsity cross country, varsity track & field, Concert Band, Phi Alpha Theta honor society (history)

**Internships:** Learning Community in Jamaica, student-teaching

**Post-grad plans:** Find a social studies teaching job in Illinois or Wisconsin

“A highlight of my year was watching Rob deliver a paper at the American Historical Association annual meeting, presenting results from our research project last summer—the only undergraduate on the program! In the data analysis we did together, Rob followed his own line. He observed patterns I did not notice; when he disagreed with my reading of student work, he said so, and often he changed my mind. Rob will deserve full credit as a co-author when we publish our work.”

— Dr. Lendol Calder, professor, history

## MORE THAN I IMAGINED 2019

SENIORS REFLECT ON ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LOOK AHEAD

### Why Augustana?

I chose to attend Augustana because of how welcoming it felt. Everyone I met loved Augie and wanted to be here, and it just felt like another home. I also couldn't pass up a chance to run under Paul Olsen or an education program that graduates its students in four years.

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

Yes and no. I had a pretty good idea that I wanted to be an education major, but I never thought that I'd be a part of so many different groups and have so many opportunities to explore my interests. Augie provided me with chances to explore parts of myself that I didn't even know were there.

### Who helped you get to where you are now?

I owe a lot to my advisors, Drs. Scarlett and Simonsen. They found ways to make sure that I balanced my required coursework with classes that I was passionate about, and consistently advocated on my behalf when I needed them. Dr. Calder generously allowed me to join his research project and let me present the work in settings that are usually closed to undergraduates.

I also owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to Dr. Olsen. His unceasing optimism inspires me every day, and he helped me find the drive to accomplish things that I thought were impossible. I would not be who I am or where I am today without him.

I also owe a lot of gratitude to my family. My mom, grandmother, aunt and sister are endless sources of love and support, and I couldn't have gotten to where I am today without them.

Last and certainly not least, my teammates always keep things entertaining, and they made college so much fun. Brandon Wilkerson especially helped me; we trained, lived, studied and worked together for four years, and I can proudly count him as one of my best friends.

### Peak experience?

One of my peak experiences was breaking 25:00 at regionals for cross country my junior year. That race was always a wistful goal that I never really thought I could fulfill, but everything fell into place, and I did something that I thought I could never do. But what made it truly special was how supportive my teammates were. They came to the meet on a cold day when they could've done something else and mobbed me at the finish line. Their support was another key ingredient in getting me to my goal, and that sense of community really made my race special.

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### What surprised you?

I learned that I feel most fulfilled and happy when I'm helping other people. Whether it's teaching at the Alpha Boys School in Kingston, student teaching in Davenport or leading a running workout, I feel the happiest when I'm doing things that help other people. I learned that my calling is to help other people reach their dreams and goals in the same way that my Augie family helped me reach mine.

### How did you use Augie Choice?

I used my Augie Choice to help pay for the Jamaica study abroad program.

### What will you miss the most?

I will miss the community that Augie provides. People at Augustana really lean on each other, and we use that support to do great things. If I can find another place that's half as great at being supportive as Augie is, I'll be very lucky.

### Advice for the Class of 2023?

Don't hesitate to try new things. There are so many opportunities out there to make these next four years some of the best of your life, so don't limit yourself to what you know. Break out of your box and let those new experiences take hold.