



## Sierra Rood

**Majors:** Biology, public health

**Activities:** Varsity volleyball, TriBeta National Biology Honor Society, Sigma Pi Delta sorority, Relay for Life, ACHOO/JETS

**Internships:** Texas Medical Center Summer Research Internship Program in Houston, Texas, where I worked in the laboratory of Dr. Shulin Li in the department of pediatrics, doing circulating tumor cell research in relation to pediatric brain tumor patients; public health internship with Project Nest in Rock Island, assisting at-risk mothers throughout their pregnancy

**Post-grad plans:** I will attend Rush University College of Nursing in Chicago for the Masters of Nursing Program, with intentions of becoming a nurse practitioner.

“Sierra is an amazing individual who has experienced it all from studying abroad, to participating in the volleyball team’s trip to Australia, to spending the summer as an intern at MD Anderson Cancer Center in Texas. She is an amazing individual with a heart of gold! She is willing to go above and beyond with everything that is asked of her and is highly respected by her teammates and coaches. Sierra will go on to do great things in her career in the medical field and is one of the most dedicated, hardworking and responsible people that I have known.”

— Kelly Bethke, head coach, women’s volleyball

## MORE THAN I IMAGINED 2019

SENIORS REFLECT ON ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LOOK AHEAD

### Why Augustana?

I intended to play collegiate volleyball, so I was originally interested in Augustana through volleyball. Then after attending a visit day, I instantly fell in love with the campus. Coming from a fairly small high school, it was comforting knowing that Augustana had small class sizes and a great professor-student ratio. I also knew Augustana had an excellent biology department and the courses would prepare me for my future career/graduate school. After my first visit, it seemed silly to not attend a school that pushed you outside your comfort zone to develop into the best version of yourself, travel the world and give you once-in-a-lifetime opportunities while having the chance to play college athletics.

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

No! My original plans were to become a physician but after taking certain classes and utilizing CORE on campus, I came to realize that this was no longer my dream. I never expected to graduate with two majors and find my passion within public health. I also never expected to travel to Nicaragua through ACHOO/JETS, travel to Australia to play collegiate volleyball with my teammates or assist with prestigious research at the Texas Medical Center in Houston, which would lead me to being published.

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

Honestly, there have been so many people who helped me through this journey and given me endless support and guidance. First, my family has given me endless amounts of support, and I’ll never be able to thank them enough. The professors who always challenged me, including Bob Tallitsch, José Boquin, Lena Hann and many other mentors I was fortunate enough to have. My volleyball coach, Kelly Bethke, who cheered for me on and off the court. Lastly, my lifelong friends who pushed me to take chances and to never give up on any aspect of my dreams.

### Peak experience?

I could go on and on about the amazing opportunities I’ve been privileged to experience. However, my peak experience was the Medical Service Learning and Public Health Outreach trip to Nicaragua. Having the opportunity to assist populations that have limited access to healthcare sparked my interest in assisting patients in rural settings. It was so eye-opening, and it inspired me to pursue nursing. This trip validated my passion for a future career in the medical field, and two years later, I have the opportunity to attend Rush University College of Nursing.

### What surprised you?

I learned how to be more confident in myself and take risks which I truly never expected. I never had the opportunity to participate in many activities or travel through my high school, so finding this new part of me was extremely exciting. Without attending Augustana, I would not have discovered this about myself. I am so grateful to have learned so much about myself.

### How did you use Augie Choice?

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I used my Augie Choice to travel to Nicaragua through ACHOO/JETS. We traveled to various regions of Nicaragua, assisting physicians in clinics, and visited orphanages. I am so thankful that Augustana offers Augie Choice for every single student to pursue their dreams, which they might not be able to do otherwise.

### What will you miss the most?

It is hard to pinpoint exactly what I will miss the most because Augustana has been a huge part of my life. It has been my home away from home for the last four years. However, the close bonds with the professors and the authenticity of people at Augie have truly impacted me more than expected. I also will miss the genuine friends I have made throughout the four years. The environment on campus is truly unique, and I will definitely miss it.

### Advice for the Class of 2023?

Do not be afraid to take every opportunity you can. Augustana offers so many different paths for any student. Travel the world, complete internships in areas you're interested in, challenge yourself and participate in activities that make you happy. It is absolutely okay to not know what you want after Augustana, but as long as you're true to yourself and don't forget who you are in the process, you will have the best time at Augustana College.