



Brian Martinez

High school: West Liberty High School

Hometown: West Liberty, Iowa

Major: History

Activities: Alpha Sigma Xi fraternity, History Club

Post-grad plans: After taking a gap year, I want to go to graduate school to pursue a master's in history so that I can be a history professor.

“Skaters (skateboarders) don’t often major in history. So when Brian showed up as a transfer student, I thought the dude seemed a little sketchy. But Brian had no intention of bailing on this ride. Quickly he charmed us with his rad T-shirts and infectious love for history. Then he wowed us with his mastery of historical methods and gnarly (high-quality) work. When skaters “land bolts,” it means they nail their trick perfectly, landing with both feet on the bolts of their board. After lots of sweat and determination, Brian is landing bolts and dialed in for success at whatever comes next”
— Dr. Lendol Calder, professor and chair, history

MORE THAN I IMAGINED 2020

SENIORS REFLECT ON ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LOOK AHEAD

Why Augustana?

After dropping out of community college for a few years, I met a few Augustana students who did not judge me and showed a love for their classes and school. That inspired me to finish my Associate of Arts (AA) at Muscatine Community College. As a nontraditional student when I obtained my AA, I was unsure at first if I would pursue a bachelor’s degree. I decided I wanted to have small classes like my community college. Augie was the perfect fit, since it had small classes and a welcoming community.

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

When I first came to Augustana, I enjoyed history. Knowing the dates of major events and how they affected people is what history was to me. Soon after attending my first history class, I fell in love with the subject. Viewing documents from the past and contextualizing them made me have a deeper understanding of the field of history. In the beginning, I didn’t know anybody at Augie. Leaving Augie, I have deep friendships with my fellow history majors and my fraternity brothers.

Who helped you get to where you are now?

At Muscatine Community College, both Lisa Powell and James Compton helped me realize that I made the right choice in going back to school. Without our intellectual conversations and their belief in me, I wouldn’t have continued my education and gone to Augustana.

Dr. Hammond was my first history professor at Augustana, and she taught me that studying history was more than memorizing facts, it is to have a deeper understanding of the past through the contextualization of documents. Dr. Leech, Dr. Ellis and Dr. Simonsen all played a major role in my growth in the field of history, from understanding that historians debate over everything to learning about archives.

Last but not least, Dr. Calder. What is there to say other than, “I’m so excited! I’m so excited! I’m so excited!” Dr. Calder and the rest of the history department encouraged me to be the best historian I can be.

My fraternity brothers helped me find my place socially at Augustana, and I appreciate them greatly.

Peak experience?

My peak experience was hands-down my Senior Inquiry. I was able to research the history of the Plymouth County Iowa Farmers Holiday Association. I drove five hours to Le Mars, Iowa, with one of my fraternity brothers to dive into archives and was even able to stand in front of the courthouse where the events I researched happened. Sharing my passion of history with fellow historians by presenting my information to my peers and faculty is a moment I will never forget.

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What surprised you?

I was surprised at how welcoming Augustana students and faculty were to me as a nontraditional student. Since I was a little older than most students, I was concerned it would affect my social life. That couldn't be further from the truth. At Augustana, I made lifelong friends with so many people that it is hard to keep track of everyone.

How did you use Augie Choice?

Since I was a transfer student and dealt with the change to semesters, I was caught up in scheduling my classes and was unable to use my Augie Choice. I encourage all those attending Augustana to take time and decide the best way to use your Augie Choice.

What will you miss the most?

I will miss the community of the history department. Over the course of two years, I came to know all of the professors and my fellow students, and they made me feel welcome even though I was a nontraditional student. I have had deep intellectual discussions about the discipline of history and course matter with all of my professors. They helped me fall deeper in love with the discipline of history. I'm going to miss casual conversations with professors and late-night study sessions with friends.

Advice for the Class of 2024?

STEP 1: Attend class—You need to be present to succeed.

STEP 2: Sit in the front of the classroom. This ensures you are present and paying attention.

STEP 3: Make a connection with your professors after the first class. This helps open up a relationship that will help when you run into problems.