



Emily Minarik

High school: Knoxville High School

Hometown: Knoxville, Ill.

Majors: French, theatre arts

Activities: Sigma Pi Delta sorority, Jenny Lind Ensemble, Augustana's theatre program

Post-grad plans: I don't know yet because of the coronavirus; I have applied to TAPIF (Teaching Assistant Program in France).

“I loved seeing Emily's excitement for French take hold and grow during her first year; when I saw that spark in her eyes, I couldn't not recommend that she keep going with it, even though it wasn't part of her original plan! Emily has truly made the most of her Augustana experience, keeping herself open to new opportunities and allowing each one to inform her understanding of herself and the world around her. I hope she'll be able to teach abroad; the best teachers have—as Emily has—experienced the transformative power of education for themselves.”

— Anne Earel, research and instruction librarian & assistant professor, Thomas Tredway Library

MORE THAN I IMAGINED 2020

SENIORS REFLECT ON ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LOOK AHEAD

Why Augustana?

I chose Augustana because during my first campus visit, unlike the other schools I toured, I felt at home.

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

I thought I was going to major in psychology, but life has a funny way of not going the way you planned. I came to Augie with no second language work under my belt, and I figured I would take French to fulfill my second language requirement. After just one year of studying French at the 100 level, I branched out and did something that surprised everyone, including myself, and declared a major in French. Looking back, it was the best decision I ever made.

Who helped you get to where you are now?

Without my first-year advisor Anne Earel pushing me to continue learning French during my last advising meeting freshman year and my French major advisor Gillian Lederman encouraging me along the way, I never would have imagined that I'd be speaking French proficiently by the time I graduated. These are the two to whom I owe my decision to major in French.

Professor Lederman made French fun for me at the very beginning, and the thrill I got from successfully communicating in French was none like any other I'd experienced.

Continuing along, Dr. Kiki Kosnick provided a very encouraging support system and helped me out with my TAPIF (Teaching Assistant Program in France) application, and Dr. Emily Cranford taught me about Old French and Francophone cultures in medieval times. It became more than just the language. Instead it became a tool I could use to study cultures I never would have known existed without my four years at Augustana.

Peak experience?

My peak experience at Augustana actually didn't happen at Augustana, but happened because of it. I studied abroad in Dijon, France, during the summer of 2018, and it was easily the best experience of my life. I would do it again in a heartbeat. Without Dijon, I don't think I would be where I am today. This study abroad is the reason I applied to move to France to teach English in the 2020-2021 school year.

What surprised you?

I was most surprised at how quickly I was able to learn another language! From what I understood, learning a second language was supposed to be difficult, but I picked up on French so quickly, it was completely shocking. I became so passionate about it, I never wanted to stop practicing my French.

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How did you use Augie Choice?

I used my Augie Choice to partially pay for my trip to France, and thank goodness I did.

What will you miss the most?

I will miss my French classes the most. Even when things were difficult as far as classwork goes, I always looked forward to seeing my classmates who were just as passionate about learning another language as I was, and getting to practice with them. Learning new things about the French language and Francophone cultures was the best part of my Augustana experience.

Advice for the Class of 2024?

If you want to do something but you think you can't, do it anyway. If you're passionate enough, you can do anything.