



Natalie Hardy

High school: Elk Grove High School

Hometown: Des Plaines, Ill.

Majors: Neuroscience, philosophy

Minor: Biology

Activities: Be The Match On Campus, TriBeta honor society, club volleyball, Phi Beta Kappa

Internship: Texas Medical Center internship at MD Anderson Cancer Center, Houston

Post-grad plans: Pursue a Ph.D. in healthcare ethics at Saint Louis University

“It’s always an honor to encounter that rare student who embraces philosophy and life with a vigor that is all encompassing. Natalie does just this. Her “fire” for learning new skills, sharing provocative ideas, and deep ethical reflection serve as an example for us all. Our world is a better, brighter place for having her in it.”
— Dr. Heidi Storl, professor, philosophy

MORE THAN I IMAGINED 2020

SENIORS REFLECT ON ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LOOK AHEAD

Why Augustana?

When I was looking for schools, I loved Augustana’s small class size and student-to-teacher ratio. I’m someone who enjoys getting to know professors and other students, so I was looking for a college that made me feel like I wasn’t just a number.

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

Definitely not! When I arrived, I thought I wanted to become a physician assistant. I shadowed and took the required courses, but after taking Neuroexistentialism, I began to re-think my decision. One philosophy class after another led me to realize that this is where my passion is, in the humanities. Now I’ll be graduating with a double major in philosophy and neuroscience, and I want to become a medical ethicist or college professor—a path I never would have guessed!

Who helped you get to where you are now?

I owe my story of self-discovery to all of my professors, most notably Dr. Heidi Storl. She encouraged me to take her neuroexistentialism seminar, which is when I seriously began to consider changing career paths. I will always be grateful for her support and guidance throughout my time here. Along with the entire philosophy department faculty, she pushed me to be a better student and thinker.

Dr. Ian Harrington, my neuroscience advisor and professor, has also been monumental. I truly appreciate all of our office conversations, especially the one we had when I was on the brink of changing paths. He is the sort of advisor that every student hopes to have—one that listens, cares and helps students in any way he can.

And of course, my friends and family. :)

Peak experience?

My peak experience was my Texas Medical Center internship the summer of my junior year. I worked in the Section of Integrated Ethics at MD Anderson Cancer Center, where I went on interdisciplinary rounds, observed ethics case consultations, and did an independent research project with my mentor. It was a life-changing experience that I will never forget—not only did it confirm my passion for ethics, but it really shaped the person I am today.

What surprised you?

Honestly, I didn’t think I would enjoy the prerequisite courses as much as I did. I took an awesome variety of “required” courses as part of the liberal arts curriculum, and I still think about what I learned to this day. I am so grateful for being pushed to learn things outside of my major, as it has made me a more well-rounded person and student.

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How did you use Augie Choice?

I used my Augie Choice for my Texas Medical Center internship. It was really helpful in paying for housing and other expenses!

What will you miss the most?

I am definitely going to miss the people the most. Not only have I made lifelong friends here, but my professors are people I hope to stay in contact with for years to come. They have become role models and mentors for me; people who have inspired me to want to become a professor myself, and I will miss stopping by their offices to say hello or have discussions.

Advice for the Class of 2024?

Keep an open mind and listen to your heart. This is coming from someone who had a very narrow mind as a freshman and thought she knew exactly what she wanted to do. But chances are, if you truly listen to yourself, you'll discover passions you never thought you had. That's the beauty of Augustana.