



Brittany Hatlestad

High school: Sherrard High School

Hometown: New Windsor, Ill.

Majors: Biology, neuroscience (pre-occupational therapy)

Activities: Board of Trustees Fellow, President's Advisory Council, Phi Rho sorority, Phi Beta Kappa

Internships: Texas Medical Center Summer Research Internship Program at Baylor College of Medicine

Post-grad plans: Pursue my master's in occupational therapy at University of Illinois-Chicago

"I met Brittany when she was a student in Child Development, and it's been a pleasure to get to know her more over the past two years. Brittany is an exemplary student and truly embodies the liberal arts—she is a critical thinker, a passionate advocate for her community and one of the kindest people I know. Her graduation from Augie is bittersweet, but I know our world shines brighter with her in it!"

— Dr. Megan Lorenz, assistant professor, psychology

MORE THAN I IMAGINED 2020

SENIORS REFLECT ON ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LOOK AHEAD

Why Augustana?

Augustana reflects the core values that I try to uphold in my own life—compassion, kindness, inclusivity and dedication. By sharing the same foundational morals, I knew I would be part of a community that supported who I truly was while pushing me to achieve any goal I set my sight on. I recognized that Augustana is not a place that allows complacency; my peers and professors would set high standards and then help me to accomplish more than I ever thought possible.

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

The answer to this question is both yes and no—yes in the fact that I knew Augustana would provide the resources and support to go beyond whatever goals I set for myself. However, I did not expect the journey to be filled with sweet successes and humble failures that would utilize my strengths and refine my weaknesses. I can confidently say that Augustana continually challenged me to become a better version of myself.

Who helped you get to where you are now?

My parents, who are the greatest people I know, have spent the last four years supporting every decision I made and loving me unconditionally. My siblings, A.J., Kate and Jack, are my biggest source of happiness, and I have spent my time at Augustana trying to make them proud.

My professors, specifically Drs. Tallitsch, Muir, Lorenz, Harrington, Stork and Stough taught, inspired and encouraged me in more ways than they could ever imagine.

My best friends truly turned Augie into a home and made my college experience something indescribable. The Phi Rho sorority granted me role models that are brimming with grace, poise and maturity. Empowered women empower women, and I had the most beautiful example of that during my time in Phi Rho.

Even those who offered a smile in the Quad or raised a great point during a class discussion encouraged me, in a seemingly small way, to be kinder and consider situations in a new light. Each person and moment led me to where I am now.

Peak experience?

I recognize that the beauty of my Augustana experience is a collection of the small moments that only seem significant after they've passed. However, if I had to pick one, it would be my summer spent at the Jan and Dan Duncan Neurological Research Institute in Houston, Texas. Dr. Samaco and his team opened up a world of innovation, research and intellect that I've never been exposed to. Their guidance, encouragement and kindness will continue to influence me for the rest of my life.

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What surprised you?

What surprised me most was how quickly I reached a point where I referred to Augie as "home" and my actual house as "home home." Everyone dreams of having a college experience where they are comfortable enough to be vulnerable, confident enough to be challenged, and supported enough to feel like they belong. Augie was that—and more—for me over the past four years.

How did you use Augie Choice?

I used my Augie Choice as a stipend during my time at the Neurological Research Institute, where I worked to create and validate a mouse model to better understand the neurobehavioral and molecular consequences of a new and rare genetic disorder, NGLY1-Congenital Disorder of Deglycosylation.

What will you miss the most?

Due to the unforeseen circumstances created by COVID-19, "what I will miss the most" quickly turned into "what I am missing the most." I can say that the sense of community and connection created by day-to-day interactions can never be replicated. Quick drop-ins to see a favorite professor, sitting around the table for far too long with my best friends, and countless smiles and hellos while walking through the Quad are core aspects of my Augustana experience that I will always hold close.

Advice for the Class of 2024?

Never sell yourself short. If you have a goal, go after it. You are about to enter a space and be part of a community that supports any endeavor and encourages all ideas. You will never know all that you can accomplish unless you try, so never be afraid to take that first step.