



## Hannah Vercellotti

**High school:** Joliet Central High School

**Hometown:** Joliet, Ill.

**Major:** Psychology (pre-occupational therapy)

**Minor:** Public health

**Activities:** Zeta Phi Kappa sorority, Psi Chi/ Psychology Club, Reading/Writing Center tutor, Phi Beta Kappa

**Post-grad plans:** Attend the University of Illinois at Chicago to pursue a master's in occupational therapy

“Hannah is a special kind of student. She learns with a purpose. Her curiosity is front and center. She reflects on how what she has learned can impact her future and those around her. Applying these lessons will make her an exceptional occupational therapist. One impactful lesson came from her trip to Guatemala—I’ll never forget her telling me she learned to move away from an ethnocentric lens when thinking about what others need. I hope she always remembers that. I am confident she will.”

— Dr. Lisa Szafran, assistant professor, psychology and neuroscience

### MORE THAN I IMAGINED 2020

SENIORS REFLECT ON ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LOOK AHEAD

#### Why Augustana?

When chatting with others about why I chose Augie, I always joke that it was the trees and slough that drove me here. I love spending time outdoors; it has always provided me a sense of comfort. So, the campus beauty was a big factor in why I chose this school. More than this, however, was the feeling that I would be comfortable in my classes. With Augustana’s small class sizes, I knew that it would be easier for me to speak up in class and develop close relationships with my professors.

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

Yes and no. While I have remained steadfast in my desire to become an occupational therapist, my personality and convictions have changed substantially since my freshman year. I never would have guessed that my shy, introverted self would join a sorority and later become its service chair. Nor would I have guessed that taking a course on the psychology of prejudice would spark a passion for advocating for individuals in need. Augustana has prepared me for my future in more ways than I imagined!

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

There are so many people who have helped get me to where I am today.

First, I have had an amazing academic advisor. Dr. Szafran, thank you for not only preparing me for graduate school, but also helping me step outside of my comfort zone. I will definitely miss our impromptu chats between classes!

I also want to thank Dr. Nordling. You are one of the most supportive and fun professors that I have had at Augie. I am so honored that you invited me to assist with your research; I had such a great time working on and presenting it!

Next, I am grateful to have worked at the Reading/Writing Center. To the faculty tutors and my fellow peer tutors, thank you for your support, great conversations and dedication to helping Augie students succeed!

Finally, I never would have gotten to this point without the support of my family. Mom, I cannot thank you enough for helping me work through challenges and celebrate successes. You’re the best!

#### Peak experience?

My peak experience was celebrating graduate school acceptances with my professors, friends and family. Not only has it been rewarding to see my hard work pay off, but it has been just as fun to see where my friends are headed after graduation!

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## What surprised you?

I am surprised by the opportunities presented to me at Augustana. In four short years, I studied abroad, presented at academic conferences, completed a clinical experience, and held leadership positions in my sorority. Looking back, I am amazed in the ways I have grown because of these experiences, and I will be forever grateful to have experienced each one.

## How did you use Augie Choice?

I used Augie Choice to study abroad in Guatemala over spring break my junior year.

## What will you miss the most?

More than anything else, I will miss the people here. I feel so fortunate to have made such wonderful friends and established such supportive relationships with my professors. Everyone is so friendly, and I will miss this place dearly.

## Advice for the Class of 2024?

Take advantage of the opportunities here. Engage in research with a favorite professor. Study abroad. Go chat with your advisor just because. Be involved in something that isn't class. You're going to be surrounded by amazing people and opportunities, and I hope you will make the most out of them!