



Mikaela Ferrara

High school: Genoa-Kingston High School

Hometown: Genoa, Ill.

Majors: History (history communication), anthropology

Activities: Cheerleading, Phi Rho sorority, Admissions ambassador, Phi Alpha Theta honor society (history)

Internship: Curatorial intern for the Putnam Museum and Science Center, Davenport, Iowa

Post-grad plans: Earn my M.A. in museum studies with a concentration in collections management or exhibitions/visitor experience at George Washington University in Washington, D.C.

“While not everyone understands the connection between history and social justice, Mikaela does, and is prepared to take that message to the public. As a future public historian who not only has a deep understanding of the ways the past has shaped the present, she is also equipped to understand the ethics of historical representation, and to see public history as a tool that empowers communities to speak for themselves.”

— Dr. Jane Simonsen, professor, history; women, gender and sexuality studies

MORE THAN I IMAGINED 2020

SENIORS REFLECT ON ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LOOK AHEAD

Why Augustana?

I chose Augustana because of its close, caring community. Since I came from a small rural town, I was searching for an educational environment similar to what I experienced in high school. Each time I visited Augustana—three times to be exact—the faculty and students were always extremely welcoming and genuinely cared about my success. Without Augustana’s supportive students and faculty, I would not have broken out of my shell to take advantage of all the great opportunities at Augustana.

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

Overall, I do think I’m where I thought I’d be. I came to Augustana pursuing a career in museums, and I’ve kept that promise. During my time here, I’ve had an internship at a museum as well as worked for an archive on campus as I had hoped to do. After graduation, I’ll be attending graduate school for my M.A. in museum studies just as I expected. Despite all that, I’m much more involved on campus than I ever expected to be coming in as a freshman.

Who helped you get to where you are now?

Who didn’t help me get to where I am now? I owe so many thanks to my faculty advisors, professors, coaches, friends, sorority sisters, family, internship supervisors, work supervisors and so many others. The list honestly goes on and on.

However, I feel that there are some pretty important people who we tend to forget when composing these long lists of thanks. Without the generous support of Augustana alumni, Augustana’s Office of Financial Aid and Augustana’s Office of Advancement, I would not be at Augustana to begin with. Without their help, I would not have this extensive list of people to thank for teaching me, motivating me, inspiring me and believing in me.

Because of all these people, I truly got the full college experience that every college student should have both inside and outside the classroom. I’ll always be indebted to these people, and I’ll always remember Augustana no matter where life takes me.

Peak experience?

I’m fortunate enough to have had two peak experiences at Augustana. The first being my Spring in Rome program in the summer of 2019. This was my first time leaving the country, and I couldn’t have had a better experience exploring all Italy has to offer with a few sorority sisters and our faculty advisor. My second peak experience was working on a suffrage exhibit for the Putnam Museum. This experience was so great because my hard work got to be seen by the public.

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What surprised you?

I was most surprised by everything the Quad Cities had to offer—experience and growth-wise. Prior to coming here, I had never heard of the QC. But, I found plenty of opportunities in the community to really build my résumé and have fun while doing it! For me, I feel that the size of the QCA worked great because it is a place you can easily learn how to become independent.

How did you use Augie Choice?

I used my Augie Choice for the Spring in Rome program. During the program, we explored ancient Roman ruins, the Vatican and the more modern aspect of Italian culture. I also opted to stay on for an extra week and a half to explore Florence, Lucca, Greve in Chianti, and Pisa.

What will you miss the most?

Everything. The people, the beautiful campus, the experiences, the security, the community, everything! When they say “College is going to be the best years of your life,” they weren’t lying. I have made priceless memories to last a lifetime here. But, if I had to pick one thing I’ll miss the most, it’s my best friends/roommates who’ve always pushed me out of my social comfort zone, making me a happier person overall. I’m sad knowing we’re going such separate ways, but they’ll always be there.

Advice for the Class of 2024?

If you can dream it, you can achieve it at Augustana. No matter how absurd your dream may seem, Augustana’s students and faculty will be your biggest cheerleaders. Anything you want to do, you can do it! The tools are all at your disposal, but it’s up to you to use them to create something amazing!