



Ivan Starenko

High school: Rock Island High School

Hometown: Rock Island, Ill.

Majors: Engineering physics, German

Minors: Mathematics, jazz

Activities: Jazz ensemble and combo bands, Kali Yuga, APES (Augustana Physics and Engineering Society)

Internships: Mechanical engineering internship in Germany

Post-grad plans: Graduate school for a master's in mechanical engineering

“Ivan was a bit of a non-traditional student as he transferred to Augie. This can be a difficult transition for some, but clearly wasn't for Ivan. He has absolutely made the most of his time here, both inside and outside the classroom. He studied abroad in Germany and Switzerland and followed that with an engineering internship in Germany. Ivan is a very diligent and incredibly thoughtful student, and has a very relaxed personality that allows him to transcend drama and provide leadership. He will be missed!”

— Dr. Joshua Dyer, associate professor, engineering physics

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SENIORS REFLECT ON ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LOOK AHEAD

Why Augustana?

I grew up around Augustana—my mom works here and my older sister went here, but I wanted to be somewhere new so it didn't even register as a school I should consider. I went way out of my way to go somewhere else very similar to Augie but, after two years, I realized I wanted to become an engineer. My school at the time didn't have any program for engineering so I transferred here. As it turns out, my past connection with Augustana is part of what has made being a student here so fulfilling.

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

Being a transfer student, I already had two years of college when I got here, and I felt a sense of urgency to hit the ground running with my newly chosen path and make up for lost time. I definitely found my footing and direction at Augustana, and I feel confident moving forward from here—which is exactly where I hoped I would be when I arrived.

Who helped you get to where you are now?

The faculty in all of my programs and my student peers are all so inspiring and helpful, and I've been so fortunate here with all of them. I should specifically mention and thank Dr. Dyer, Dr. Vogel and Dr. Frank in the engineering and physics departments; Dr. Rodman in the math department; Dr. Seidlitz in the German department; Professor Parrott, Professor Rice and previously Professor Ott in the jazz department. I feel truly fortunate to have studied under each of them.

My fellow engineering physics majors, with whom I've shared countless late study sessions, have helped and motivated me continually and are a great community and support group.

I also didn't have any experience playing music in groups before Augustana, and all of my peers in the jazz bands were very welcoming. It's been such a great opportunity to play with them. I've made some great friends here at Augie who helped me, and I'm also very thankful to my parents for their support and patience as well as my host parents in Germany.

Peak experience?

For me, the culmination of learning in all of my pursuits over the years has been the most rewarding part of my Augie experience so it's difficult to single out just one. I was the group leader in a term project for an engineering design course in which we reverse-engineered and improved a Slap Chop. It was the first project I had done in college that resembled what I wanted to do professionally, and I don't think I had ever worked harder on any single project. It was very validating.

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What surprised you?

The student body at Augustana continually surprises and reinvigorates me. I'm always so inspired at everyone's involvement, particularly with regards to activism. Even if there's a scandal on campus that might seem to disgrace Augustana's student body, I always find the general student response is something to aspire to.

How did you use Augie Choice?

I used Augie Choice to help fund my participation in the Alps study abroad program for music and physics. As an engineering physics and German studies double major with a jazz minor, this was a perfect study abroad opportunity for me, and I stayed in Germany after the trip to do an internship.

What will you miss the most?

I feel very ready to move on to grad school for engineering, but I'm worried about losing the opportunity to regularly speak German, play in ensembles and take lessons from such great musicians outside of Augustana. Particularly with regard to jazz, I feel I still have so much to learn from the program at Augie, and I will miss it very much.

Advice for the Class of 2024?

There's nothing wrong with being an unorthodox student! Everyone's figuring themselves out in college so live your life with no holds barred and know there's nothing wrong with your pace or your experience being different.