



## Amber Mraz

**High school:** Naperville North High School

**Hometown:** Lisle, Ill.

**Majors:** Music education (vocal)

**Activities:** Augustana Choir, Augustana Chamber Singers, National Association for Music Educators, American Choral Directors Association, Sigma Pi Delta sorority

**Internships:** Choir director at Trinity Lutheran Church in Moline, Ill.

**Post-grad plans:** Accept a choral directing position at the high school- or middle school-level in Illinois or Iowa

“Amber has taken an active role in the choral area at Augustana—showing significant promise as a young leader and conductor through student work with the Augustana Choir and Oratorio Society. She has taken advantage of travel opportunities to China, Sweden and Spain, partially funded through Augie Choice. She also worked as choir director at a local congregation where she gained significant real-life experience. Amber has demonstrated great potential, and I look forward to seeing her grow as a music educator as she moves into her professional life”

— Dr. Jon Hurty, professor of music and director of choral activities

## MORE THAN I IMAGINED 2020

SENIORS REFLECT ON ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LOOK AHEAD

### Why Augustana?

Unlike many people, I did not fall in love with Augustana as soon as I walked on the beautiful campus. I knew I wanted to go to a smaller school to receive a more individualized education, but Augustana was one of a handful I was looking at. I became sure of my choice to attend Augustana when I met the music education faculty. The music education program and professors at Augustana made it clear that this was a place I would gain plenty of experience in my field with the support back on campus.

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

Academically, I have fulfilled almost all of my goals I made for myself at the beginning of my education at Augustana. However, I had absolutely no idea how many inspiring people I would meet and become close to over these past four years. Being an introvert, I was nervous I wouldn't be able to create those relationships for myself, but our campus culture encouraged so many strong friendships that I will keep for the rest of my life and mentors I know I can lean on for future help.

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

There are countless people who have helped me along the way, and definitely too many to fit in this singular response. My parents, family, close friends and fellow music education majors have socially and emotionally supported me through these past four years to keep me sane and provide the best “college experience” possible.

From an academic perspective, I have profound gratitude for my professors and colleagues who have emerged as my biggest mentors. Dr. Michael Zemek, Dr. Jon Hurty, Dr. Sangeetha Rayapati and my cooperating teacher, Michael Reese, have shaped me into the educator, musician and leader I am today. There have been many moments of doubt and discouragement along the way that these few people have guided me through and helped me make into a positive experience.

In addition, I firmly believe every teacher I have had at Augustana has engaged me in becoming a better human being or world citizen, and for that I am grateful.

### Peak experience?

My peak experience was performing with the Augustana Choir in Stockholm, Sweden, on our international tour. It is ironic that I am being asked to describe this as my peak experience because the reason why it is my peak experience is because it was so indescribable. There is no other feeling of community like the kind you have when you perform complex music for an audience that doesn't even speak your language but is still able to connect with you through the music.

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### What surprised you?

Honestly, I am surprised by how proud I am to go to Augustana. When I was in high school, I never thought I would be the person to promote my school and encourage everyone to go there, but here I am as that person...oops!

### How did you use Augie Choice?

I used my Augie Choice when I went on international tour with the Augustana Choir in 2018. We toured and performed in Spain, France, Italy and Sweden.

### What will you miss the most?

Especially with this abrupt ending to my senior year, I will miss all of the people I have cherished while at Augustana. This includes my professors, mentors, friends and peers. Overall, however, I will miss Augustana Choir the most. That has been my home away from home since the very first week of my freshman year. I will miss the high-level performing opportunities, beautiful music and the relationships I have built.

### Advice for the Class of 2024?

It is okay and completely normal to be uncomfortable your first couple months to a year of being at Augustana. I felt like transferring most of my freshman year but eventually realized it was the transition to college and a new life that was difficult for me. Augustana soon proved to be my second home!