

Before she was drawn to Augustana, Megan Brandsrud was determined to find a college she could call her own — far away from her family and from South Dakota. This is her story.

Megan's Story

For me, there's a two-part definition to the term "legacy student." First, it officially describes an Augustana College student who is the offspring of an Augie alumnus. Second, it's a title I spent much of my youth trying to avoid.

Growing up, I was always hearing about Augustana and the "glory days" of college from my parents.

When my family would come to Sioux Falls, my parents would have to drive around Augie's campus, point out the window at different buildings and tell stories of yesteryear that my brother and I pretended to listen to.

I could have been inspired by those stories, could have wanted to carry on this family tradition.

Instead, I was just stubborn. I was determined to find my own college, move out of South Dakota, and "do my own thing."

When the time came for me to start researching and visiting colleges, I was drawn to the private, liberal arts schools, and my parents suggested that I at least tour Augie. I reluctantly, but ultimately, agreed.

I first toured Augustana the summer before my senior year of high school. My tour guide told me stories of experiences she'd had at Augie, and moments she'd shared with friends. I immediately felt a sense of community, and one I felt I could be a part of. Needless to say, the experience was good enough to completely change the outlook I'd held for the past 10 years. Before I knew it, Augie quickly became a front-runner in my college decision.

The next thing I knew, I was moving into my dorm room on the third floor of Solberg Hall on one of the hottest days of the summer.

Adjusting to this new stage in life had its difficulties at first, but by the time Fall Break rolled around and I realized I'd rather stay at school than go home for the first time since moving out, I knew I'd found my niche.

Upon coming to school, I had declared pre-law as my major, but Augustana's liberal arts education led me to my true interest areas and my majors in Communication Studies and Journalism. Because of this, the past years have not only been filled with classroom learning, but also journalism department pancake breakfasts and communication department end-of-the-year picnics.

I dove into campus life and became involved in organizations such as Viking Days Central Committee, Union Board of Governors, Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA), Collegiate Chorale, New Student Orientation and *The Mirror*.

I even had the opportunity to help high school students searching for their college home, like I once was, find their place at Au-



Megan Brandsrud, center, celebrates Viking Days with fellow students Rachel Gerber, left, and Carli Ellwein, right.

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— Megan Brandsrud, senior
Communication Studies and Journalism major

gie by serving as a student ambassador in the Office of Admission.

I took advantage of the opportunity to study abroad and spent January of my junior year walking the streets of London, soaking in culture and history.

And perhaps most unique of all is that I've been able to have several internships in my fields of communications and journalism.

Through PRSSA and connections in Sioux Falls, I've had the privilege to work with for-profit and non-profit organizations, a private firm, and a local news station. I was even able to take a lead role in managing an online magazine that is based in Sioux Falls.

The community of Sioux Falls respects and appreciates Augustana's presence, and the city's diverse industries provide great, and many, opportunities for students to get "real world" experience in their field.

My internships have enhanced my education at Augustana by allowing me to apply my knowledge and skills outside of the classroom. These experiences have all been more beneficial than I could have anticipated, and

the connections I have made along the way are invaluable.

When I started my college search, I wanted a place where I could grow as a person and do "my own thing."

Well, I found it — and so much more. The Augustana community has challenged me, supported me, and encouraged me. It's a place where I could not only do "my own thing," but where I would also have a team of faculty, professors and classmates cheering me on.

This campus has become my home, and this community has become my family. And though I once cringed at the thought of following in my parents' footsteps, I now feel blessed to have been a part of the legacy that is Augustana.

There is an abundance of emotion surrounding my quickly-approaching graduation date, except for one — I am not nervous to graduate. Augustana has prepared me for the "real world" and has given me the experience and the confidence I need to succeed not only in my career, but in life.