



Amanda Tannhauser

High school: Streamwood High School

Hometown: Streamwood, Ill.

Major: Elementary education (Reading Teacher Endorsement)

Activities: Camp Kesem, Chi Alpha Pi sorority

Internships: Number Sense Research Project, Spring Forward Learning Center

Post-grad plans: Teach first grade at the Elgin Math and Science Academy in Elgin, Ill.

“Amanda is prepared to embrace the many rewards and challenges of teaching. She has stepped beyond the boundaries of the traditional Augustana experience by being an outstanding director for Camp Kesem, teaching students at the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind, presenting research at the Council for Exceptional Children and more. She understands that making a difference is not about what we teach; it is about how we teach. I look forward to the difference Amanda will make in the lives of every student who walks through her classroom door.”

— Dr. Deb Bracke, associate professor, education

MORE THAN I IMAGINED 2020

SENIORS REFLECT ON ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LOOK AHEAD

Why Augustana?

When I stepped on the campus, I knew this was my home. I felt comfortable and loved seeing all the friendly faces on campus. I remember thinking, “These are my people.” The academically driven, always busy, super involved leaders were who I wanted to be. When I got to meet the education professors and hear about all the amazing opportunities that existed for education majors, I was even more hooked. I knew this was the school where I would feel at home!

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

Yes and no. I knew I wanted to be an elementary teacher working with the primary grades, but I did not think that I would have a leadership position running one of our largest student organizations. I did not think I had the leadership abilities I had seen in all the other Augustana students when I visited. If someone would have told 18-year-old me that I would be running Camp Kesem, I would have never believed them. It was easily one of the best decisions that I ever made!

Who helped you get to where you are now?

My education professors have gotten me to where I am by far. Dr. Bracke helped me find my true passion for special education and working with children with differences in the general education classroom, as well as opportunities for me in the special education field. She also pushed me to present at the Council for Exceptional Children conference, where I was terrified to present on our research.

Randy [Hengst] also has pushed me to become the teacher that I am today. Without his constant tough love when I needed it, I would not have learned the skills that I need to be a successful teacher.

Besides from my professors, I have also gotten a lot of help from my friends who have pushed me to try new things and given me support when I was struggling the most. Without the support from all of my friends, I never would have joined a sorority, applied for leadership positions or done many of the amazing things that I have done over the past four years!

Peak experience?

Each summer going to Camp Kesem. Camp Kesem has made the biggest impact on my life, and it will be the experiences that I cherish the most! Throwing paint during messy games, playing gaga ball, listening to my 6-year-old campers share about their parent who passed away, and the late-night adventures and talks with all of the other counselors are the best memories that I have ever had. These experiences pushed me out of my comfort zone and helped me find a second family!

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What surprised you?

I am surprised about how much I have changed and grown over the past four years. When I moved into my freshman dorm, I was a terrified 18-year-old who did not even know how to start meeting new people and joining organizations. Now, I am a senior looking for teaching jobs, and I am going to be an elementary school teacher.

How did you use Augie Choice?

I went to the Florida School for Deaf and Blind in St. Augustine, Fla., with Dr. Bracke for a week. While we were there, we did research on early literacy strategies for students with visual impairments. We then presented our findings at the Council for Exceptional Children conference in Portland, Ore.

What will you miss the most?

I will miss walking around campus and seeing people I know all the time. There is nowhere at Augie where you go and do not find someone you know. Whether it was when I was sitting in the Brew, Evald or my residence hall, there was always someone walking by and willing to sit and talk to me. I will miss the random 2 a.m. deep talks about life in my apartment and the funny stories that people shared in the Brew. In other words, I will miss the Augustana community!

Advice for the Class of 2024?

Take advantage of every opportunity (but don't overwhelm yourself). You never know where you might find your new passion, best friend or biggest inspiration. I have done so many things at Augustana that I can't even fit them all on my résumé. That is an amazing problem to have!