



Lydia Lara

Majors: Political science, Spanish

Minor: Latin American studies

Activities: Dat Poetry Lounge, Latinx Unidos, Black Student Union, Sisterhood of Unique Ladies (SOUL), Augustana Concert Band

Internships: I interned while I was in Ecuador for a organization called EducationUSA, funded by the U.S. Department of State! I was a facilitator for the conversation club for domestic high school students who wanted to study in the United States. I helped them in their journey to finding a college and studying abroad.

Post-grad plans: I just accepted a position in Americorp! The organization is an Americorp program called "College Possible," and it is a non-for-profit that enables low-income, first-generation and/or students of color from Chicago to find a path to go to college. It is an honor to be chosen to do this work, and I want to pass my knowledge onto younger people because we are the future! I have prospects to one day run for office at a local or state level, but first I want to do work with my Chicago community and communities like mine so I will one day be more prepared to serve the people!

"I've watched Lydia grow over the past two years. Her experiences make her an extraordinarily empathetic woman; her character leads her to step forward, ask the hard questions, and advocate for herself and others. As a result, Lydia has been thoughtful but fearless in the ways she has engaged students, faculty and administrators at Augie. This shows Lydia's potential to act as a change-agent wherever she finds herself in the future. I see her as a servant-leader, caring for the least of these."

— Dr. Lauren Hammond, assistant professor, history

MORE THAN I IMAGINED 2019

SENIORS REFLECT ON ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LOOK AHEAD

Why Augustana?

I chose Augustana because I understood the opportunities that being an Augustana student would give me, especially because of all the amazing programs and events available. Augustana was my first choice, and even though it was a hardship to get all the way through, I am coming out saying I did my very best, and I have had opportunities that will impact me for my entire lifetime.

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

I knew I wanted to make an impact and be an outgoing student in college, but I have become so much more than I could have hoped for. Sure, I am not perfect, and neither is the institution, but all of the things I have done at Augustana taught me how to be the woman I am today. I surprise myself to this day with what I have done, and I am so proud of each accomplishment!

Who helped you get to where you are now?

I am so grateful to have come out of Augie, and I could not have done so without the assistance that I got in the Office of Student Inclusion and Diversity, along with the culture groups that I took part in. The students in the clubs and the office, as well as the directors and staff in the office, gave me unwavering moral support and a chance to be a better person and student. As well as those groups, my professors, and specifically all my professors of color, made an imprint on my academic work and the way I envision myself as a women of color in the future!

Peak experience?

My peak experience was quite literally a peak experience. When I went to Ecuador to study abroad before the summer of my junior year, I went to Machu Picchu and climbed Machu Picchu Mountain, which is 10,007 feet above sea level. The hike to the top took me about four hours, but I was the proudest I have ever felt about accomplishing something, and it was one of the most beautiful views I have ever seen in my life!

What surprised you?

At Augustana, I learned that I only become the person that I work to become. That means that each thing that happens in our life, all of the events, jobs and people we encounter build us to be the person that we transform into. So it is most important that we commit ourselves to what will help us grow for the future we envision. This was the only way that I became the woman I am today and accomplished some of my biggest dreams.

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How did you use Augie Choice?

I put my Augie Choice toward the total cost of my trip (Summer Spanish in the Andes) to Ecuador and Peru, along with two institutional scholarships from Augustana and a national scholarship that I received called the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship. With all of these scholarships I was able to pay the total amount of the trip. Without the financial help, I would have not been able to travel abroad.

What will you miss the most?

I think what I will miss most will be the environment of change that I get with my closest peers on campus. Some students understand that we can't settle with the status quo, and when we are vocal about it, we truly make an impact. I am going to miss my friends and peers because they are the main reason I am a better woman and a leader to push for the improvement of the situation of people of color in higher academia and in society.

Advice for the Class of 2023?

You can give your life purpose, and you get to choose what that purpose is. Give yourself a chance to figure out what your passions are as an individual. With that, you will understand your future goals and eventually where your career goals lie. Augustana will provide you with a plethora of options, and you have the next four years and the help at Augustana to become that person. Use that to make change in the world!