

2010

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Augustana Digital Commons Citation

Fish, Pat (2010) "Pat Fish," *Intersections*: Vol. 2010: No. 31, Article 12.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/intersections/vol2010/iss31/12>

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Pat Fish

In high school, everyone always asked what I was going to do with my life. Growing up I loved being around people and helping others, yet I did not know what profession or job that would translate into. My parents, teachers, and peers always told me I

would be a great doctor or psychologist. Thus, when I arrived at Augustana I was debating whether to be a pre-med or psychology major. During my freshman year I got more and more involved with an organization on campus called the Center for Vocational Reflection (CVR). The staff and student workers began asking me different questions and got me thinking of life more broadly. The CVR helped me realize there is more to life than a career or profession. Thanks to the CVR, I began exploring not what I wanted to do, but instead I began searching who I was.

The CVR emphasizes a person's vocation, which was a term that Martin Luther used and stressed during his lifetime. This was a word that I had not been familiar with. Thanks to CVR staff I realized college is more than just finding a career to fit into. Today, colleges and universities stress preparing students for the real world and giving them the skills to succeed in their future jobs. But life is more than a 9-5 job. A job is an essential part of an individual's life; however, a vocation applies to more aspects of life than a job. I realized a vocation is being a good son, brother, student, religious person, and friend. Although I have solidified what I'd like to do when I leave Augustana, the CVR helped guide me to find just exactly who I was and match that with something the community needed. Vocation is about taking your passions, skills and talents and applying them to the needs in the community. Thanks to the CVR I have come to this understanding and am confident in taking the next step in my life journey.

The CVR has provided me with ample opportunities through volunteer opportunities, one-on-one talks, and internship experiences. My freshman year at Augustana I joined a program called Rockastana and helping run an after-school program at Rock Island high school. Additionally, I also volunteered a few times at Broadway school tutoring and doing activities with some of the youth in the Quad City community. The CVR provides all Augie students the chance to get out of the Augie bubble and go out into the community to make a difference. The CVR provides several service opportunities that otherwise would not be available to students.

In addition to all the different volunteer opportunities I have had the chance to experience, I also had the chance to sit down a few times to just talk about my future and goals. It was a great feeling to be able to map out my likes, dislikes, passions, and talents. I realized that although I loved helping others, I did not have the patience to work with small children. This realization was crucial because I was able to narrow down what I wanted to do with my life. All these conversations allowed me to reflect on who I was and to really listen to what God's calling for me entailed.

Lastly, thanks to the CVR I was able to have three incredible and life-changing summer internships. Without the CVR, I would not have been able to afford such an experience. My freshman summer I traveled to Biloxi, MS, and worked in a free medical clinic. This was the summer I realized that medicine was not my calling, because I found myself constantly frustrated with the lack of communication between the patient and doctor. Doctors often have no time to chat with patients and are just trying to diagnosis the major problems. Yet, people often come in to the hospital with more than just a disease or illness and need someone to listen to their problems. Doctors just do not have the luxury to listen to patient's stories because they are overloaded with other patients who need to be seen. This was a great insight and thanks to the grant money provided by the CVR, I was able to figure out that becoming a doctor did not fit who I was as a person.

My sophomore year, I received an internship through the CVR to work at Trinity West Hospital in the pastoral care department. I shadowed the hospital chaplains, ran a bible study, and visited with patients on a daily basis. I learned through that experience that I hated hospitals, yet I loved incorporating faith into my healing. I loved the conversations I had with individuals and it really made me into a stronger, mature young adult.

This past summer I worked as an intern for United Way of the QCA. Again this was due to the help and funding of the CVR. While at United Way, I helped coordinate several events and programs and even started a partner student group on campus that is called Student United Way (SUW). SUW works alongside United Way and the CVR to provide students more service opportunities and try to create unity amongst all the groups on campus.

All these wonderful experiences that CVR has sponsored have made me into who I am today. Additionally, my internship experience and conversations have made me realize who I have been called to be in this world. Thanks to the CVR, I am ready for my next step after Augustana and to bring my knowledge and skills into the real world.