

PRESS RELEASE

LIAM NIGRO NAMED 2023 DISTINGUISHED SENIOR AT THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLUMBUS, Ohio—D. Liam Nigro of Cleveland, Ohio, has been named a 2023 Distinguished Senior at The Ohio State University College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences (CFAES).

“The Distinguished Senior Award is the most prestigious undergraduate award in CFAES and honors top graduating seniors on the Ohio State Columbus campus,” said Ann Christy, CFAES professor and associate dean for academic programs. “The 25 award recipients exemplify the CFAES mission in areas such as academics and scholarship, research and innovation, service and involvement, and influence and leadership.”

Nigro is an environment, economy, development, and sustainability major, a joint option between the School of Environment and Natural Resources (SENR) and the Department of Agricultural, Environmental, and Development Economics (AEDE). The multidisciplinary major focuses on economics, business, social change, and managing components of sustainability to ensure a better environment for both present and future generations.

Nigro was nominated by college faculty and staff who felt that he personified the award’s attributes of academic, disciplinary, and professional excellence.

He transferred to Ohio State from John Carroll University in Cleveland, which provided him with his greatest sense of accomplishment. “Taking this leap of faith to switch schools taught me how to become self-reliant,” he said. “Changing academic, social, and living facets of a university, especially considering John Carroll had a small student population, challenged the identity of who I thought I was in my personal and professional life.”

Nigro has completed four internships. Two were in Telluride Academy in Telluride, Colorado as a field instructor and business development intern. He was also a sustainability and business intern at Rust Belt Riders in Cleveland, served as a peer mentor in SENR, and completed a sustainability internship at John Carroll University.

His most rewarding professional and personal experience was a decision to add a creative writing minor to his degree. “Not only did this satisfy a deep personal need for creativity, but it provided a unique specialization in environmental economics and sustainable development to my major” he said. “By combining these interests, I formed a hypothesis and earned two grants to construct a humanities-based sustainability project that documented Columbus’s green spaces through the medium of poetry.”

Esther DeBusk, student engagement manager and peer mentor advisor in SENR, worked closely with Nigro for over three years. “Liam served as peer mentor president, led a group of 25 peer mentors, designed their retreat, and headed up the process of recruiting new members,” she said. “He is passionate about inclusion,

mental health, and sustainability. He is always asking questions about how our work could be more inclusive for underrepresented, neurodivergent, and disabled students. He also planned and executed the SENR Community Event series, which engaged hundreds of SENR undergraduates and graduates.”

Nigro also brought the practice of Climate Cafés to SENR. A climate café is a space where people can process and address anxiety and difficult questions about the personal impacts of climate change. “He led the charge to incorporate a climate café into a beginning survey class,” DeBusk said. “Students were so grateful for the opportunity to process the heavy things they are learning in class and in the news. He is now working on expanding opportunities for climate cafés as a campus-wide mental health initiative.”

Extracurricular activities included being a student disc jockey with the internet radio station, Arouse OSU; a volunteer with Students Advocating For Food Equity (SAFE); and a volunteer with Franklinton Farms in Columbus.

After graduation, Nigro will spend the summer hiking the Santiago De Camino in Europe, a pilgrimage of medieval origin running from France to Spain. In the fall, he plans to seek out professional work opportunities.

A reception for the Distinguished Senior Award recipients and their families was held on Wednesday, March 22, hosted by Ann Christy and Cathann A. Kress, vice president for agricultural administration and CFAES dean. Meet the 25 outstanding students and learn more about each via a YouTube video release at go.osu.edu/CFAES2023DSA.

In autumn 2022, there were 2,248 undergraduate students in CFAES pursuing bachelor of science degrees in 22 majors. Learn more about CFAES academic programs at go.osu.edu/B4V2.



D. Liam Nigro

CLEVELAND, OH

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2023 DISTINGUISHED SENIOR AWARD



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