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PRESS RELEASE

MARY KATE RINDERLE NAMED 2023 DISTINGUISHED SENIOR AT THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLUMBUS, Ohio—Mary Kate E. Rinderle of Columbus, 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.”

Rinderle is an environmental science major in the School of Environment and Natural Resources (SENR) and was nominated by college faculty and staff who felt that she personified the award’s attributes of academic, disciplinary, and professional excellence.

With a specialization in water science, an internship with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources’ H2Ohio Program provided her most valuable learning experience outside of the classroom. The honors student assisted with the management of 113 wetland creation and restoration projects statewide, conducting site visits and working with the H2Ohio project leads on timeline and budget needs.

Rinderle toured the wetlands with each having different designs, functions, and goals. She also tagged along with a wetland monitoring body, the Lake Erie Aquatic Research Network team, and witnessed the science that drives the creation of wetlands. “The internship also taught me about the bureaucratic processes involved in managing natural resources and how research in a government agency differs from research in academia,” she said. “Research offers a hands-on pursuit of knowledge that reminds me of what I love most about the natural sciences. I am now confident that my future lies in research.”

The honors student conducted a research project at Ohio State’s Stone Laboratory on Lake Erie with a focus on the study of inland aquatic ecosystems. “I worked with Dr. Justin Chaffin to study the effects of experimental scale on the response of various phytoplankton to limiting nutrients. With his guidance, I designed and conducted my own experiments, learned many laboratory techniques, and improved my technical writing abilities,” she said.

She also worked in assistant professor Rachel Gabor’s SENR lab where she headed an independent project examining different kinds of plastics in various incubation conditions to better understand the impact of plastic litter in natural systems.

Rinderle called Gabor “the most influential professor I’ve had. Her classes were the reason I decided to study

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water science in the first place," she said. "Her passion for the field and her ability to connect the subject matter to current day issues made me fall head-over-heels in love with water sciences. After joining her in her lab, she's also come to be a source of inspiration for me as a successful female scientist."

Rinderle's academic advisor, Cheryl Walter, said, "MK is among the top 1% of students I have worked with during my career. She has demonstrated outstanding performance as an SENR Ambassador, a teaching assistant, a researcher, and a student leader. She was drawn to SENR by her intersecting interests of water science and social justice; a desire to work in a career that would enable her to communicate science research to the public; and a passion for understanding harmful algal blooms. She has inspired current and prospective SENR students and left a lasting impression on faculty and staff."

After graduation, the Franklin County resident will attend graduate school to study water quality "attempting to understand the biological, chemical, and ecological factors influencing phytoplankton growth and distribution in environments impacted by human activity." After graduate school, she hopes to work for an agency like the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and conduct research on phytoplankton and harmful algal blooms.

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.

Mary Kate E. Rinderle

COLUMBUS, OH

ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE - WATER SCIENCE

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Photo available by sending a request to flood.13@osu.edu

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