

PRESS RELEASE

GABRIELLA GEPHART NAMED 2023 DISTINGUISHED SENIOR AT THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLUMBUS, Ohio— Gabriella J. Gephart of Powell, 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.”

Gephart, a food science and technology major in the Department of Food Science and Technology (FST), was nominated by college faculty and staff who felt that she personified the award’s attributes of academic, disciplinary, and professional excellence.

Being selected as a peer mentor to other FST students gave Gephart her greatest sense of accomplishment at Ohio State. “I was one of the youngest to become a mentor, and I was joining a group of students that I looked up to,” she said. “I have been a mentor for three years, and seeing all that the program has accomplished makes me feel very proud.”

In addition to being a peer mentor, she is a member of the Food Science Club, the FoodSURE program, and recently joined the college bowl team who will compete against other universities in March. She conducted undergraduate research through FoodSURE and gained knowledge of basic techniques, data analysis tools, lab etiquette, and experimental design.

Gephart identified her most rewarding student experience as working as a teaching assistant for a general chemistry lab during her junior year. She taught one lab per week with 25 students, held office hours, graded lab reports, and attended meetings. “Since general chemistry I and II are typically seen as intimidating courses, I wanted to create a positive and welcoming environment,” she said. “By doing this, my students were able to grasp the concepts and were comfortable asking me questions. I received multiple student emails thanking me for being helpful and kind. I found a love for teaching through this job.”

Other valuable experiences for Gephart were internships with J.M. Smucker in Orville, and another with Rime Time Pops in Columbus. “At Smucker’s, I was able to see how a large food company works and all that goes into creating products people know and love. Seeing this firsthand helped me put into perspective things I had learned in class,” she said. “At Rime Time, I was able to see the hard work that goes into running a small business. I was also able to have a hands-on experience with product development. Not many students can conceptualize an idea, develop it, and get to see people eat their product.”

She identified professor of food science, Ahmed Yousef, as the mentor who made the most impact during her undergraduate degree. “He offered me a position in his antimicrobial discovery lab, and that is where I found a real passion for research. He is so incredibly knowledgeable and is always willing to help me understand a topic or plan an experiment,” she said. “I’ve learned so many new techniques and gained a much deeper understanding of food microbiology from this experience. I have learned more from him than I have from any other professor. Without him, I would not be the student and researcher that I am today.”

Gephart has appeared on the Dean’s List every semester and will graduate summa cum laude in May. After graduation, plans to begin a PhD in food science and technology at Ohio State.

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.



Gabriella J. Gephart

POWELL, OH

FOOD SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

DEPARTMENT OF FOOD SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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

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