

PRESS RELEASE

RAYGAN KIRK NAMED 2024 DISTINGUISHED SENIOR AT THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Raygan L. Kirk of Ste. Anne, Manitoba, Canada, has been named a 2024 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 23 award recipients exemplify the CFAES mission in areas such as academics and scholarship, research and innovation, service and involvement, and influence and leadership.”

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

Kirk began her undergraduate career at Pennsylvania’s Robert Morris University. The ice hockey student-athlete entered the transfer portal and came to Ohio State in 2021. As a goaltender, she was part of the team that won both the 2022 Women’s Ice Hockey National Championship and the 2024 National Championship.

“This undoubtedly ranks among my most significant accomplishments and my favorite college memories,” she said.

Off the ice, she identified SENR associate professor Matt Davies as a mentor and favorite professor. “He connected me with graduate students and other professors to gain research/lab experience and was my biggest supporter in the classroom and as a student-athlete,” she said.

The admiration is mutual, with Davies noting that Kirk not only gained excellent grades, but also took advantage of SENR professional development training opportunities. “She achieved certification as an Ohio Department of Agriculture licensed commercial pesticide applicator and gained ‘red card’ certification as a qualified wildland fire fighter,” Davies said. “Achieving both accreditations requires considerable effort. The way she balanced her studies and sport resulted in several scholar-athlete awards, along with several prestigious national awards for her hockey prowess.”

She interned with MAD Scientist Associates in Westerville, Ohio. “I gained a lot of hands-on experience such as helping with wetland delineations, ecological surveys, and invasive species management,” Kirk said. “I learned about the importance of wetlands as an ecosystem, the importance of community involvement, and all the work that goes into ecological consulting.”

She traveled to multiple locations in Ohio, and one of her favorite experiences was conducting a mussel survey and relocation in Sandusky, Ohio. Another unique experience was a herpetology survey at the Army National Guard in McConnelsville, Ohio.

Katz's extracurricular activities included Athletes Voices Amplified; the Society for Ecological Restoration; the Second and Seven Foundation, a reading program where student-athletes visit middle schools to read to second and seventh graders; and Buckeye Buddies, where each ice hockey team member has a third grade "buddy" (pen pal).

After graduation, Katz hopes to get drafted and play professional ice hockey in the newly inaugurated Professional Women's Hockey League. She also has interest in further academic study and may return to graduate school in the future or pursue an environmental science career.

A reception for the Distinguished Senior Award recipients and their families was held on Thursday, April 4, hosted by Ann Christy and Cathann A. Kress, Ohio State vice president for agricultural administration and CFAES dean. Meet the 23 outstanding students and learn more about each via a YouTube video release at go.osu.edu/CFAES2024DSA.

"Honoring the award recipients for their excellence will be a highlight for us this spring. These students have excelled and most certainly will continue to thrive in their future careers," said Christy.

In autumn 2023, there were 2,224 undergraduate students in CFAES pursuing Bachelor of Science degrees in 21 majors. Learn more about CFAES academic programs at go.osu.edu/B4V2.



Raygan Kirk

STE. ANNE, MANITOBA, CANADA

Environmental Science - Ecosystem Restoration

School of Environment and Natural Resources

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

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