

## PRESS RELEASE

# ALEXANDRA KUSHNIR NAMED 2024 DISTINGUISHED SENIOR AT THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Alexandra Kushnir of Ravenna, Italy, 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.”

Kushnir is an environmental science major specializing in water science 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.

A standout for the Italian national rowing team, Kushnir came to Ohio State on an athletics scholarship. The first-generation college student began her undergraduate career as a landscape architecture major and then changed to environmental science after her first semester. “I took an environmental science introductory class that made me realize that was my calling,” she said.

A student-athlete and member of the Ohio State women’s rowing team, she discovered that her passion outside of rowing was studying water science. “I grew up around water, along the coasts of Italy, and then became a rower in high school, so water has a very big sentimental value for me,” she said. “Being able to conduct research to improve the quality of this precious resource was particularly appealing in terms of long-term career aspirations.”

Kushnir completed an internship as an undergraduate researcher and lab assistant at The Ohio State University Stone Laboratory, Put-in-Bay, Ohio. “Besides running my own experiments, I had the chance to be involved in other research projects and fieldwork that was happening at the Water Quality Lab at Stone Lab. I assisted with multiple water sampling trips on the research vessels and processed the samples with the other lab members.”

She also met and worked with Suzanne Gray, associate professor of aquatic physiological ecology, who has had a tremendous impact on her academic story and future goals. As one of Kushnir’s mentors, Gray said, “You don’t get students every day who are so passionate about the work that they’ll give up their free time to dissect fish brains, but she was doing that. She shows so much drive and passion for preserving environments; she’s not just checking a box.”

Katz’s extracurricular activities included Students Advocating for Food Equity; Leadership of Environmental Athletes for Sustainability; and serving as an undergraduate committee representative for the Lake Erie Research Network.

2024 DISTINGUISHED SENIOR AWARD

Academic Programs

100 Agricultural Administration  
2120 Fyffe Road | Columbus, OH 43210

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THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,  
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

After graduation, Kushnir plans to go to graduate school for a master's degree and an eventual doctorate. "Ideally, I want to stay in the field of water quality, with a greater focus on the biological factors affecting marine and freshwater ecosystems," she said. "I also hope to gain even more experience in research dealing with cyanobacterial blooms and phycology, the study of algae."

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](https://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](https://go.osu.edu/B4V2).



## Alexandra Kushnir

RAVENNA, EMILIA-ROMAGNA, ITALY

Environmental Science - Water Science

School of Environment and Natural Resources

Photo available by sending a request to [flood.13@osu.edu](mailto:flood.13@osu.edu)

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