

Press Release

March 11, 2019

Fredericks Named 2019 Distinguished Senior at The Ohio State University

COLUMBUS, Ohio—Maria Fredericks of Valley Stream, New York, has been named a 2019 Distinguished Senior at The Ohio State University's College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences (CFAES).

"The Distinguished Senior Award is the most prestigious undergraduate award in CFAES, recognizing the top graduating seniors from each of the academic units on the Columbus campus," said Steven Neal, CFAES associate dean and director of academic programs.

Fredericks, an environmental policy and decision making major from Nassau County, will be honored at an on-campus awards dinner on March 27 where all 25 distinguished CFAES seniors will be recognized.

The CFAES Distinguished Senior Award honors academic, disciplinary and professional excellence.

"One of the hallmarks of our College is an emphasis on student success, and it is heartwarming to see it exemplified through the accomplishments of our students," Neal said. "Recipients are our future innovators and leaders who have already made an impact within the academic environment at this university and beyond."

Cathy Rakowski, associate professor of rural sociology and a Fredericks nominator, wrote: "Maria is probably the most impressive, brightest-shining undergraduate student I have had the opportunity to interact with in my 15 years of teaching. Her honor's thesis is based on original research where she examined the spatial distribution of environmental risks from oil-by-rail transportation networks. The quality of her thesis is at the level of many master's theses."

Fredericks is passionate about addressing and rectifying environmental issues and especially environmentally-based injustices, as evidenced not only by her thesis research but also her activism and leadership on environmental issues. She founded and leads a student group called Renew OSU aimed at urging OSU to disinvest from fossil fuels, as well as holding officer positions in other environmental organizations.

She organizes and hosts frequent meetings to provide information to students and community members on important environmental issues such as contamination, spills, etc. surrounding rail transport and on serious energy issues at the national, state, and local levels. Fredericks has organized meetings to inform undergraduate students of contemporary issues such as Native Americans fighting against the Dakota Pipeline passing through their land and oil spills damaging the environment.

She has been employed during her entire undergraduate studies while deliberately carrying a heavy course load. She has attained competency in Spanish (she was born in Ecuador) and has enhanced interdisciplinary training that strengthens her knowledge and expertise in areas important to understanding and researching key environmental issues.

Distinguished Senior Award



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

CFAES

She spent Autumn 2018 in Ecuador on an Education Abroad program that involved both taking courses and living in a local community in the Amazon. There, she conducted research regarding environmental issues and conflicts in the area, examined specific cases of capitalist development (gold mining, oil) in the fragile ecosystems, and assessed the expectations and fears held by the indigenous people.

Last year she took an independent trip over spring break to Cuba in order to learn firsthand about Cuban culture. She has also participated in a Buck-I-Serv trip to Guatemala.

In addition, Maria has served as a resident advisor on campus, is part of the Morrill Scholars Program, is an SENR Ambassador, worked with the Ohio State Student Farm, and completed an internship with the New York City Council.

Shortly after graduating, Fredericks will spend a week in Louisiana with the Livable Futures Field School to learn from and work with artists and indigenous activists whose work is at the intersection of environmental racism, wetland restoration, and pipeline resistance.

Fredericks then plans to return to her home country of Ecuador to build upon her knowledge of small-scale farming and to enact decentralized community development. After spending time in South America, she plans to work on a PhD in critical geography.

Writer:

Sherrie R. Whaley
whaley.3@osu.edu
614-292-2137

Source:

R. Warren Flood
flood.13@osu.edu
614-247-6624

###

Electronic files of head shot for this individual award recipients may be secured by making an email request to Warren Flood at flood.13@osu.edu.