

Press Release

March 7, 2019

Pechtl Named 2019 Distinguished Senior at The Ohio State University

COLUMBUS, Ohio—Heather Pechtl of Mundelein, Illinois 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 professor and associate dean for academic programs.

Pechtl, an animal sciences major from Lake County, Illinois, 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. Recipients are our future innovators and leaders who have already made an impact within the academic environment at this university and beyond," Neal said.

"From her very first semester, Heather has truly seen the world as her classroom," wrote her nominator, Mariette Benage, student success coordinator in the Department of Animal Sciences "Knowing we live and work in a global industry, she grasped two different opportunities to study abroad in Nicaragua and Spain. During her travels, she had the opportunity to explore the animal and agricultural industries and their impact on the culture, society and economics of those countries."

Petchl also gained an appreciation for how history, government, geography, and infrastructure can impact cultural development and the use of land and animals within our societies. After touring a family farm in Nicaragua and connecting with the family, she pursued an opportunity to complete an independent research project with her own experimental design studying the impacts of human-animal interactions and societal factors on the welfare of animals on their farm. She even learned to speak Spanish fluently enough to converse with the family over Skype.

After finishing the project her second year, Petchel began two new research experiences in the department, which she is continuing to complete for research distinction.

"I am truly amazed and inspired by the courage, initiative and drive Heather has in pursuing what she is most passionate about studying: animal welfare. In fact, Heather helped get the Animal Welfare and Behavior Judging Team off the ground in her tenure here, which has placed in the top three at several regional competitions," noted Benage.

Petchl is a leader and as a member of the Animal Welfare Club, the Animal Science Community Alliance (ASCA), provides tours to prospective animal sciences students,

Distinguished Senior Award



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CFAES

and communicates with admitted students through emails, postcards, online chats, and phone calls. She co-chaired a committee to plan and implement the largest CFAES student event, the Back 2 School Bash, managing a \$25,000 event budget and creating the nearly 100-page audit for reimbursement.

In addition, Petchl is a Morrill Scholar mentoring at-risk youth, has participated in BuckeyeThon, served as a trip-lead for Buck-I-Serv, and served as a teaching assistant and course mentor. She was also involved in a new program ASCA created with a Columbus college preparatory high school, Cristo Rey, to offer a science club with engaging hands-on activities.

“She is extremely selfless and truly embraces diversity and appreciates people for who they are regardless of background or status; she is compassionate to all, which is one of the many reasons why Heather was one of 24 students inducted into our prestigious SPHINX Senior Class Honorary this past spring,” wrote Benage.

After interning with Humane Farm Animal Care, Pecthl was offered a full-time position. After graduation, she plans to work with the organization for two years while obtaining a master’s in animal welfare, ethics and law from the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. Afterwards, she intends to pursue a PhD in animal welfare and behavior.

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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.