

PRESS RELEASE

KNOWLES NAMED 2020 DISTINGUISHED SENIOR AT THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLUMBUS, Ohio—Isaac Knowles of Marysville, Ohio, has been named a 2020 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, 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.

Knowles, a plant health management major from Union County, was nominated by college faculty and staff who felt that he personified the award’s attributes of 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.”

Knowles spent his first year at The Ohio State University at Marion, then he transitioned to the Columbus campus. He quickly found work in the nematology lab, where he has been a student assistant since 2017.

“Isaac conducted laboratory and applied field work as part of an important statewide survey focused on management of the most economically important pathogen of U.S. soybeans, the soybean cyst nematode,” said Monica Lewandowski, an assistant professor of plant pathology who nominated Knowles for the award.

“He helped sample and maintain field research plots and catalogued and processed over a thousand soil samples. This project is generating important information and is part of a combined effort with other U.S. soybean production regions.”

Knowles developed strong interests in plant health and forestry after completing an internship in the Wayne National Forest, where he conducted plant surveys. “The work required knowledge of plant taxonomy, soil science, and ecology, as well as a passion for the outdoors,” Lewandowski said. “This research is important to understanding changes in forest ecosystems and the impact on plants, trees, and wildlife habitat.”

2020 DISTINGUISHED SENIOR AWARD



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

Academic Programs

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He expanded his interests in ecology as an officer and member of Ohio State's chapter of the Fish and Wildlife Society, an organization that works to increase wildlife awareness. Knowles is also an active member of the Society for Ecological Restoration and is involved in restoring an area along the Olentangy River.

"The work involves laboriously removing invasive plants (mostly Bradford pear trees and seedlings), and preparing the area to replant native vegetation. These efforts will help improve the environmental quality of this ecosystem on campus," said Thomas Mitchell, Knowles' advisor, professor, and chair of the Department of Plant Pathology. "Issac has pursued diverse experiences to become a well-rounded student. He is perfect for this award."

In addition to being on the Ohio State Dean's List, Knowles served as the plant health and management representative to the CFAES Student Council. For the past three years, he has also served as advisor to the Franklin County Barn Busters 4-H Club.

At this time, Knowles is unsure of his plans when he graduates in fall 2020.

An awards dinner to recognize all 25 CFAES Distinguished Seniors has been canceled due to COVID-19.

"The safety of our community is our top priority," Neal said. "We are deeply sorry the planned celebration will not occur. The commitment and dedication of these students to their undergraduate education will still be recognized with a special award package that will be mailed later this semester."

In autumn 2019, there were 2,486 undergraduate students in CFAES pursuing 22 majors and 31 minors. Learn more about CFAES academic programs online by visiting <https://students.cfaes.ohio-state.edu/>.



ISAAC H. KNOWLES

MARYSVILLE, OH

PLANT HEALTH MANAGEMENT

DEPARTMENT OF PLANT PATHOLOGY

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

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