

PRESS RELEASE

MCKENZIE NAMED 2020 DISTINGUISHED SENIOR AT THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLUMBUS, Ohio—Hannah Sue McKenzie of Westerville, 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.

McKenzie, an entomology major from Franklin County, was nominated by college faculty and staff who felt that she 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.”

Nominator Joe Raczkowski, Hannah’s academic advisor and an assistant professor in CFAES’ Department of Entomology, wrote, “I have witnessed this first-generation college student develop into one of the finest undergraduates I have encountered in my nearly 20 years at Ohio State.”

McKenzie served two terms as president of Chrysalis, the undergraduate entomology club, where she transformed the struggling group into a club that met monthly and facilitated many activities. She attributes her two terms as president as her greatest collegiate accomplishment.

“I am very impressed with Hannah’s leadership skills, and the Department of Entomology owes a great deal of thanks to Hannah for all her efforts. She is by far the strongest president I have worked with, and she will be terribly missed upon graduation,” Raczkowski said.

She also served on CFAES Student Council for two years, volunteered at Inniswood Metro Gardens every summer since 2017, volunteered each year at the annual Museum of Biological Diversity Open House, and volunteered to teach 4-H members about entomology.

McKenzie made the Dean’s List every semester while attending Ohio State and received many academic honors including The Ohio State University Provost Scholarship, the Paul A. Kari Scholarship, and the Joseph and Nina Mattus Memorial Scholarship.

She completed an internship at the Museum of Biological Diversity, housed on campus, specifically working with the Triplehorn Insect Collection. While serving in the role of curatorial assistant, she was able to sort through insect specimens from Russia. “I got to see insects that I would have never seen otherwise and learn about the great biodiversity that exists on our planet,” she said.

2020 DISTINGUISHED SENIOR AWARD

Because of her internship, McKenzie got involved with an undergraduate research project about sex ratio variation in a parasitoid wasp. “Prior to working on this project, I had no experience working in a molecular lab or performing DNA analysis,” she said. “Not only did I learn new scientific skills, but I also got to complete a literature review, write a research proposal, and present my findings at the Denman and CFAES Undergraduate Research Forums. This experience will help me greatly when I attend graduate school.”

McKenzie also participated in a New Zealand study abroad program and calls it the “most rewarding experience from my undergraduate career. This experience pushed me out of my comfort zone and allowed me to expand my worldview, which I will value for the rest of my life.”

After graduation, McKenzie plans to attend graduate school at Ohio State. She will work with Reed Johnson, professor of entomology, to research honey bees in Wooster, Ohio. “After I obtain my master’s degree, I would like to also obtain a PhD in entomology,” she said. “Afterward, I hope to teach entomology classes at a university, while possibly performing further entomological research.”

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/>.



HANNAH S. MCKENZIE

WESTERVILLE, OH

ENTOMOLOGY

DEPARTMENT OF ENTOMOLOGY

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

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