

PRESS RELEASE

ZEHRINGER NAMED 2020 DISTINGUISHED SENIOR AT THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLUMBUS, Ohio— Amber Zehringer of Greenville, 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.

Zehringer, a food business management major from Darke 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.”

To Zehringer, perseverance is more than just a word; it’s a way of life. After having her first child at age 17, she moved from one dead-end job to another, finally making her way to Ohio State.

“Amber had many goals, which fluctuated from going to school and becoming a pastry chef to committing to full-time parenting. We are so pleased that she found her way to us in the Department of Food Science and Technology,” said Mary Kay Pohlschneider, a senior lecturer and the person who nominated Zehringer for the award.

Zehringer, a nontraditional student, was older than the average incoming freshman when she started at Ohio State. She had already completed an associate degree from Ivy Tech College in Kokomo, Indiana, while working full time and attending school part time. It took her five years.

With no real plans to continue her education, on a lark, she decided to see if she could get admitted to Ohio State. To her surprise, she was accepted, and she decided to major in human resources. Soon after her arrival on campus and after taking a few food science and technology classes, she refocused her educational goals to include her love of food and food safety.

“It’s Amber’s various experiences that have made her so focused and determined to succeed in her educational and future career goals,” said Pohlschneider. “We have no doubt that she will make a positive impact in her community and on the food industry.”

Zehringer appeared on the Dean’s List and received several honors and scholarships. She was inducted into the National Society of Leadership and the Phi Sigma Theta Honors Society. She received a Staples Scholarship

2020 DISTINGUISHED SENIOR AWARD

for Critical Difference for Women; the Critical Difference for Women Re-Entry Scholarship; the President's Affordability Grant; a Scarlet and Gray Grant; an Altrusa Critical Difference for Women Scholarship from Dublin Women's Club; and the Soroptimist International Jennings Memorial Fund.

According to Zehringer, her most valuable learning experience has been that, "with patience and practice, I can accomplish anything I set my mind to. Returning to school and especially to a large university like OSU, I was intimidated because of my age and lack of any personal connection to anyone in the university setting. I was not only able to set up a support system within the community, but I have met many traditional and nontraditional students that have had the same fears as I had."

Upon graduation, Zehringer will work toward being credentialed by the National Environmental Health Association. Her goal is to work in public health as an environmental health specialist or as a sanitarian, working to ensure the health and safety of the public in the food service industry.

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/>.



AMBER R. ZEHRINGER

GREENVILLE, OH

FOOD SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

DEPARTMENT OF FOOD SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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

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