2021 DISTINGUISHED SENIOR AWARD

CELEBRATION

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

APRIL 7, 2021
AWARD RECIPIENTS

TARA E. ALLEN  JACOB M. LESCH
CHRISTOPHER D. BAIRD  MELINA MALLORY
BRIAN D. BUSH  EZEKIEL M. MILLER
RACHAEL A. CLINE  TODD R. PETERSON
ANNIKA N. DIAZ  OLIVIA K. PFLAUMER
PHILIP M. EBERLY  MILAN S. J. POZDERAC
JACQUELINE M. FOX  ALLISON M. RAPP
MELANIE A. FUHRMANN  CLARE M. SOLLARS
COURTNEY N. HEISER  VASHTI B. TATMAN
JASON HOLLICK  LAURA I. TAVERA MONTAÑEZ
NATALIA JASPEADO BECERRA  JAYSON E. VELAZQUEZ
BRIETTA E. LATHAM  CAMERON S. WHITE
RACHEL H. LEITSON
VIRTUAL PREMIERE

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 7, 2021 AT 7 P.M.

GO.OSU.EDU/CFAES2021DSA
The Distinguished Senior Award honors academic, disciplinary, and professional excellence in the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences (CFAES). It is the most prestigious undergraduate award in CFAES, recognizing our top graduating seniors each year from each of the academic units on the Columbus campus. The selected students' accomplishments and activities have benefited their communities, their academic unit, the college, the university, and/or their future profession.

The award honors students who exemplify the CFAES mission in areas such as academics and scholarship, research and innovation, service and involvement, and influence and leadership. Recipients are our future innovators and thinkers who have made an impact in and outside the classroom — those who inspire us with their passion, pursue opportunities, rise above challenges, and epitomize our core values: excellence, diversity and inclusion, and integrity.

Students must be a CFAES undergraduate major who will graduate in the Spring, Summer, or Autumn semester during the calendar year, with a strong academic record. Nominations are to include the student’s examples of service, employment, involvement, research, and academics. Other considerations: notable achievements, unique challenges, overcoming adversity, growth as a person and as a professional, and/or meaningful impact(s) on the unit, university, or community. Instances of how the nominee’s involvement has influenced their plans after graduation is also a consideration for this award.
Attending the Nobel Prize week in Stockholm, Sweden, an opportunity made available to her as a sophomore through a program sponsored by Stockholm University, is the venture Tara Allen shared as her most valuable learning experience. As part of the event, she was able to sit in on the Nobel Week Dialogue, a conference where Nobel Laureates, world-leading experts and scientists, policymakers, and key leaders, all came together to discuss current issues and breakthroughs. In addition to gleaning knowledge from presentations during the week, she also had the chance to immerse herself in Swedish culture through visiting different sites around Stockholm, trying new foods, and meeting new people. The other students in the program were from around the globe, including Japan, Malaysia, Greece, and Brazil.

Tara recognized Dr. Elizabeth Toman as her faculty mentor. Tara shared, “I met Dr. Toman when I was selecting my Honors research project and advisor. What first struck me about Dr. Toman was her kindness and enthusiasm for her work and for helping students with theirs. I knew immediately after our first meeting that I would like to work with her, and I was right. When I had to alter my research goals because of unforeseen pandemic-related issues, she was there for me, providing guidance and helping me navigate the new course I’d chosen. Knowing that she genuinely cared, not only about my work with her, but [also] about my overall wellbeing and my long-term goals, meant a lot to me. The support and guidance I found in Dr. Toman is something that I will cherish for many years to come.”

Her undergraduate research project initially centered on invasive honeysuckle in riparian areas and its effects on aquatic macroinvertebrates, but due to the pandemic, she was not able to go back into the field and collect data, so she had to change directions. Though reorganizing and altering the focal point of her project was difficult, it was also an enriching and empowering experience because it taught her to adapt to situations outside of her control.

Following graduation, Tara plans to take a gap year, in hopes of traveling abroad and teaching English in another country. If she is unable to do that, then she will most likely continue her current internship at the Warren County Regional Planning Commission while studying for the GRE. After her gap year, she plans to attend graduate school to obtain a Master’s and PhD in a field related to her undergraduate degree. Tara ultimately aspires to work in land management and habitat preservation, either doing academic research or working directly at a government agency, such as NOAA or the BLM.

Service, involvement, and accolades: Towers Agricultural Honorary, treasurer | Advocates for Women of the World (AWOW) | OSU Kendo Club (Martial Art that teaches Japanese swordsmanship) | Undergraduate Research Small Grant from the School of Environment and Natural Resources | Undergraduate SEEDS Grant from CFAES to fund her undergraduate research project
Chris Baird was proud to share how valuable his two internship opportunities have been. He worked as a Field Research Intern with Buckeye Ag Testing, a local contract research organization in Troy, Ohio, which helped him to develop analytical skills and vastly improve his understanding of agricultural chemical programs. He ventured a little farther from home to Ames, Iowa, to work as a Precision Agronomy Intern with Ag Leader Technology. This position allowed Chris to see more of the business side of agriculture, and also how alike and different things can be in another part of the country. Both internships gave him a chance to put what he had learned in the classroom to use while expanding his knowledge.

Chris traveled abroad his freshman year to Queensland, Australia, to study human impacts on the natural environment. Although in unfamiliar territory, being there exposed him to new information and ideas and allowed him to see the world in a different light. In addition to gaining a wealth of knowledge on this trip, he was also able to participate in great service activities, meet amazing people, and have some unbelievable adventures.

The experience that has given Chris the greatest sense of accomplishment was being chosen to represent the university as a Sesquicentennial Scholar. During the 2019-2020 school year, this program was a part of the 150th anniversary celebration of the university’s founding. From across the student body, 150 students were selected to receive a scholarship and participate in a development program, as well as serve at university celebration and advancement events.

After graduation, Chris will be returning to Clark County to help manage his family’s grain farm and will be working for an aerial imagery and analysis company called Aerial Plot as a drone pilot.

Chris recognized Dr. Andrew “Dewey” Mann as his faculty mentor. Chris shared, “I met Dr. Dewey Mann very early in my academic career, as he is the advisor for the Agricultural Systems Management Club. Finally, Dewey served as my supervisor after he took on a new role at Waterman and encouraged me to seek out employment there when I was looking for jobs on campus. It has been a privilege to work for Dewey, as he is the kind of person to get the best out of the people he works with without [making] demands. Not only has Dewey been an excellent advisor and mentor, he has made it very clear to all that know him that he really cares about the people around him, whether it be students or employees, and that he will do all within his ability to help others succeed.”

Service, involvement, and accolades: Agricultural Systems Management Club, social media manager, vice president | Crops and Soils Club | Romophos Sophomore Class Honorary, service committee co-chair | Bucket and Dipper Junior Class Honorary, service committee co-chair | Sesquicentennial Scholars Program | Buck-I-Serv: North Carolina Coastal Federation (NC) | Rizoma Field School (Colonia, Uruguay) | Columbus Refugee and Immigration Service | Mid-Ohio Foodbank | Ohio AgrAbility
Excelling in the Honors Program, Brian Bush has worked in the Stream and River Ecology Lab with Dr. Mazeika Sullivan since his freshman year, both as a research technician and as an Honors student conducting his own independent research.

Doing field research during his initial year gave Brian first-hand exposure to the real-world applications of his chosen field of study. Instead of reading about stream ecology or water quality sampling in a book, he was able to see it all in person and build a strong foundation, which made all of his higher-level classes during his junior and senior years that much more engaging. While Brian’s tech work has focused on many different aspects of stream ecology research, it has included studying the effects of artificial light at night on stream ecosystems, the results of dam removal on trophic dynamics, and the outcomes of various rare stream fish reintroduction projects. Currently, his Honors project is analyzing the impact of the reintroduction of the Bluebreast Darter to the Licking River on the resident native fish assemblage. This research opportunity has been the centerpiece of Brian’s college career.

Virtually presenting his research at the Society for Freshwater Sciences conference this past summer was the first time Brian truly felt like a scientist. Prior to this it had been easy for Brian to feel like an imposter who didn’t actually know that much about his field. But when he was presenting his research poster, he had so many different distinguished faculty members across the country compliment his work and speak to him like a fellow scientist, instead of just a student. This really helped him become more confident in himself and not just view his successes in college as happenstance, but rather as things that he had worked hard for, and that he deserved to be there!

Brian has recognized Dr. Mazeika Sullivan as his Ohio State mentor. Brian says, “Mazeika has been my research advisor for over two years now and has given me lots of perspective on what I want to do with my career moving forward. He’s also provided me with so many different connections to people and opportunities that it’s hard to think about where my prospects would be without his help.”

Brian’s most enjoyable experiences since arriving at Ohio State have come through his participation in activities with the Mountaineers, an outdoor adventure club that he has been involved with since his sophomore year. Mountaineers has given him memories and friendships to last (or cherish for) a lifetime, while hiking, climbing, and exploring the outdoors together. It has also strengthened Brian’s resolve in working in his field because enjoying natural places has made him want to work even harder to protect them!

After graduation, Brian plans on attending grad school, either this upcoming fall or the next, to continue conducting freshwater ecology research.

Service, involvement, and accolades: Sierra Club Student Coalition, vice president | Mountaineers Club | Peer Mentor | SENR Ambassador
Rachael Cline believes her most rewarding experience during her time at Ohio State was her internship with Columbus Crew SC at MAPFRE Stadium. Her position there allowed her to develop skills as a young groundsperson, to perform routine maintenance tasks, and to problem-solve. It also presented her with the opportunity to take on major responsibilities, including preparing training fields and communicating with the coaches of the professional soccer team. This was her first experience affiliated with a team of that caliber and affirmed her passion to pursue a career in professional sports turf management.

As an undergraduate, Rachael’s greatest sense of accomplishment came from setting up and following through with her internship at Everton FC, a professional soccer club in Liverpool, England. While overseas, she helped facilitate the management of Premier League first team training pitches, which included three full-size natural grass fiber sand fields reinforced with a Desso fiber hybrid system, as well as an additional designated goalkeeper area. Rachael had the opportunity to follow the agronomic consultant team as they performed their annual pitch performance tests. She was also involved in the daily and weekly management planning for the professional training surfaces. She completed her 6-month internship throughout the global COVID lockdown. Being in a foreign country while in the midst of such challenging and isolating circumstances helped her to understand how important relationships and a sense of community are. Rachael was able to take advantage of the situation, sitting in on multiple turf industry meetings/conferences and reaching out to numerous professionals, to make connections and garner advice during the tough times. She learned so much about herself, as well as gained extra knowledge within the industry, because of her experiences.

Rachael would like to recognize Mr. Matt Williams as her OSU staff mentor. Rachael shares, “Matt Williams was the manager at the OTF Research and Education Facility when I joined as a student employee. Matt inspired me with his passion for the turfgrass industry and extended his personal connections in order to help me to become successful. Matt is the reason I changed to a Sustainable Plant Systems major with a specialization in Turfgrass Science. In working alongside Matt at the turf plots, I recognized his passion for the industry, and I connected with it. It is because of Matt’s networking and personal connections that I gained my internship at Columbus Crew, which led to both my internship with Everton FC and my job at Austin FC. Matt was the catalyst that ignited my start within the professional sports turf management career. I owe the passion I hold within this career field to Mr. Matt Williams himself.”

Rachael has accepted a position with Austin FC as the assistant groundskeeper at St. David’s Performance Center. Her long-term goal is to become a professional sports turf manager, specifically in professional soccer.

Service, involvement, and accolades: Ohio State Rowing Team | Turf Club, vice president | Student Council Representative, community service committee
Before starting her freshman year, Annika Diaz participated in a 3-week bridge program through the Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation in STEM (LSAMP), which equipped a cohort of 20 underrepresented minority students in STEM with numerous resources for success in college. She distinctly remembers being the last person in the room during her chemistry exam and feeling like she was going to fail her whole chemistry course if she stayed on that track. Despite these feelings, Annika was excited for college and utilized every resource suggested to her, including free tutoring, while actively attending office hours and engaging in peer mentor relationships. Upon completion of her first semester, she finished with a newfound love for chemistry and a potential career in STEM education outreach. She credits LSAMP for providing the confidence to pursue the opportunities she has had at Ohio State.

Annika’s San Diego Zoo Institute for Conservation Research (ICR) internship was a key opportunity for her to learn more about her chosen field. As a Patricia Beckman Summer Student Fellow on the Disease Investigations Team, Annika worked on an epidemiological study assessing potential etiologies in an outbreak of snake spinal osteopathy in the zoo collection. Working at the San Diego Zoo taught her the true value of building a strong network. Many employers and even graduate school admissions committees have since been very interested in her experience. Through her time at ICR, she gained numerous skills in both molecular virology and epidemiological research, which have already proven useful in several lab settings and will continue to be vital throughout her career.

Annika recognized Ms. Mariette Benage as her mentor. Annika says, “Mariette has been a mentor for me prior to even joining the Buckeye family. She was a driving factor in my decision to attend OSU, as she showed me that I could truly benefit from all the Department of Animal Sciences had to offer. Once arriving on campus, it wasn’t long before she became my academic advisor and someone whom I could trust to always have my best interests in mind. Mariette went above and beyond to put me in contact with Dr. Anastasia Vlasova, setting the foundation for my interest in pursuing virology research. Further, Mariette has welcomed me with open arms every step of the way, encouraging me to pursue my big goals and always being there to serve as an incredibly strong recommender. Mariette never gave up on me and always pushed me to pursue my full potential.”

After graduation, Annika will be moving to Ithaca, NY, to start graduate school in the Biomedical and Biological Sciences Ph.D. program at Cornell University. She will have a concentration in Immunology and Infectious Disease, with a focus on studying viral zoonoses.

Service, involvement, and accolades: Animal Science Community Alliance, member-teaching assistant, president | SPHINX Senior Class Honorary, chaplain | Scientific Thinkers Student Organization, treasurer | Bucket and Dipper Junior Class Honorary, inductions chair | ROMOPHOS Sophomore Class Honorary, selections chair | CFAES Peer Mentor | Biological Sciences Scholars Program
Philip Eberly spent six weeks in Brazil through his participation in the Alpha Zeta Partners honorary. He deemed this as the most valuable learning experience of his college career, as it gave him the opportunity to immerse himself in the culture of Brazil and adapt to an entirely new environment. In Philip’s own words, “studying abroad developed my global perspective of the food and agricultural industry and gave me lifelong memories.”

While at Ohio State, Philip has found building community as a Food Science and Technology Peer Mentor and serving as the president of the Food Science Club to be his most rewarding experiences. He enjoys playing the role of mentor to first-year Food Science students, and has loved watching their excitement when making apple pies for the first time in the pilot plant. His favorite Food Science Club event was a service project where he helped prepare hot meals for the homeless population in Columbus with Crosswalk Outreach to the Homeless, which was recognized with the 2020 college-wide Student Organization Excellence Award.

One of Philip’s greatest accomplishments was developing a food product from concept to prototype. The challenges that product development brings make him excited to pursue a career as a food scientist because there is always something new to learn. As an undergraduate, he created three products with three different teams: “Cranberry Blasts” for Ocean Spray’s Student Product Development Competition; “Breakfast Beef Jerky” for his product development capstone class; and “Tropicookie” for IFTSA’s Smart Snacks for Kids Competition.

As his mentor Phillip chose to recognize Dr. Mary Kay Pohlschneider, saying, “Dr. Pohlschneider is an example of what every student hopes for in a professor: caring, passionate, and relatable. She goes above and beyond to help students understand food science as a professor, advisor, and coach. I am grateful for Dr. Pohlschneider’s guidance over the years and hope to one day emulate her wisdom.”

Philip has been dedicated to gaining valuable work experience by participating in Food Science internships with Hilmar Cheese Company, Inc. (Hilmar, CA), MANE, Inc. (Lebanon, OH), and The J.M. Smucker Company (Orrville, OH). These allowed Philip the opportunity to work in Sensory Analysis Exposure by running and engaging in descriptive and sensory panels. When Philip was required to work remotely in his most recent internship, he initiated individual meetings with 38 employees to learn more about the company, seek support on projects, and receive life and career advice.

After graduation, Philip plans to attend graduate school to pursue his master’s degree in Food Science, with the end goal of entering the industry in research and development, product development, or sensory science. This summer, Philip has accepted an internship with ADM, as a Nutrition Product Development Intern in Erlanger, KY.

Service, involvement, and accolades: Alpha Zeta Partners | Phi Tau Sigma (Food Science and Technology Honor Society) | Food Science Club, president | FarmHouse ATZ Fraternity, vice president of administration | Ohio FFA Food Science and Technology, contest student coordinator | CFAES Ambassador | Experience Ohio State for a Day Host | Citation Needed | H2O Church | 2017-2018 Ohio FFA State Officer
One of Jacqueline Fox’s greatest undergraduate accomplishments was her internship at Graeter’s Ice Cream. She shared that this opportunity was so special because, at the time, she had recently completed her first year of college, she was in the beginning stages of learning about her field of study, and Graeter’s was such a large Mid-western, well-known company. At the ice cream plant she was able to see how often they created different pastries and iced cakes, and how they kept the wet areas wet, and the dry areas dry, while in production. She also saw how workers hand-scooped and filled each pint and gallon before it reached the customer. Jacqueline came away with indispensable knowledge from her internship which she was able to implement in the rest of her career as an undergraduate student.

Jacqui related her most valuable learning experience as the time she worked as a quality technician at United Dairy Farmers, where she was able to directly apply the skills she was learning as a Food Science and Technology student to a real-world setting. Jacqueline ran microbial tests, such as plating for E. coli and swabbing for listeria, among others. She was tasked with making sure products were within specifications on solids, total solids, butterfat, and other indicators. She had the opportunity to weigh in and collaborate on creating a new, dairy-free line of ice cream, as well as new flavors for ice cream and sorbet.

A most rewarding experience described by Jacqueline was working with autistic children through an organization called “Buckeyes Give A Break.” During their events, members are entrusted with caring for children with autism and their siblings while parents run errands or just take a break from being a full-time parent. Jacqueline loved seeing how happy and excited the kids were, especially during activities like roller skating and playing at indoor trampoline parks! Witnessing the appreciation of parents and the joy brought to the children has been tremendously rewarding to her.

After graduation, Jacqueline is enrolling in dental school. She has been accepted to a number of programs and is considering her options. She is excited to pursue her career as a dentist, with the hopes to become an orthodontist in the future.

“Ms. Julie Townsend was one of the first people to interview me for a scholarship. Once she found out what my future career goals were, she gladly told a wonderful story about a past graduate who has an amazing dental practice and family now, and graduated with a degree in food science and technology. . . . Ms. Townsend overall helped solidify that I chose the right major for my future career, and was always so encouraging about it as well.” This is what Jacqui had to share about her selected mentor.

Service, involvement, and accolades: Phi Sigma Theta National Honor Society | National Society of Collegiate Scholars | Dunn Sports and Wellness Scholars Program | Zeta Tau Alpha Fraternity | Wrestling Manager | Buckeyes Give A Break | Food Science Club | Chemistry 1200 Mentor | Pre-Dental Club | BuckeyeThon Member | Food Science and Technology, recruitment and scholarship chair
Melanie Fuhrmann’s most valuable learning experience was her time spent working with LiFEsports at Ohio State. Within this organization, she was able to volunteer at sports clinics throughout the year, mentor a member of the Youth Leadership Academy (YLA), and work as a “Chalktalk” leader during the summer camp. Working with at-risk youth has been very rewarding and eye-opening for Melanie.

The ventures Melanie found most fulfilling were her opportunities to travel and participate in two Buck-I-SERV programs. The first trip was to New Orleans, LA, where she worked with Habitat for Humanity and the Louisiana SPCA. Learning about how people are still struggling with housing years after major catastrophes have occurred was extremely enlightening to her. During her second trip, she worked solely with Habitat for Humanity in Pensacola, FL. Being able to provide labor to expedite the process of rebuilding homes was very uplifting, and it was amazing to her to be a part of such an important endeavor.

In the course of Melanie’s Early Field Experience at the Scioto County Extension Office, she assisted Extension Educators by teaching various clinics, planning and completing 4-H project judging, and helping to run livestock shows, weigh-ins, and sales during the Scioto County Fair. In one instance, she led a STEM Clinic for youth, during which she created lava lamps, lightsabers, and more, as a unique way of teaching the content. Overall, her involvement was a terrific way for Melanie to practice the community leadership skills she hopes to use in the future as a 4-H Youth Development Extension Educator.

Melanie’s most impactful work experience has been assuming responsibilities at her family’s farm. Her family owns an apple orchard and attends three farmers markets from June until September every year, and she helped manage and operate each of the farmers markets weekly, promoting buying local and talking to customers.

Identifying Dr. Jerry Davis as her mentor, Melanie said, “Jerry was my professor for a social work class and he is also the Director of LiFEsports. He introduced me to the organization through that class and helped me to be on the path I am today. LiFEsports has truly changed my life, provided me with key teaching experiences, and reassured me that I am on the correct path in my life and career. Jerry helped me along the way and has always been someone I knew I could rely on and go to if I need[ed] help.”

After graduation, Melanie plans on getting her master’s degree in the ACEL Department at The Ohio State University to accomplish her goal of becoming a future 4-H Youth Development Extension Educator.

Service, involvement, and accolades: ACEL Distinguished Senior | Agricultural Education - Society Community Outreach, McCaslin chair | Scioto County 4-H Program | OSU Bowling Club | Our Lady of Victory Catholic Church Choir | Motor Development Assistant: G Tyree Head Start Center | OWL Program - Ohio State Welcome Leaders | Buckeye Library Leaders | Columbus Community Kitchen | LiFEsports Initiative, Youth Leadership Academy Mentor | Metro School Agricultural Club | 4-H Camp Counselor at Canter’s Cave 4-H Camp
Tying together her passion for helping others and her love for Ohio State, Courtney Heiser’s time as a CFAES ambassador, at both the Wooster and Columbus campuses, has been her most rewarding and enjoyable experience as a Buckeye. A first-generation college student, Courtney didn’t know much about college life or the extensive opportunities available to her, so being able to share parts of her journey to help inspire future Buckeyes has been extremely gratifying.

Courtney cites her education abroad trip to Brazil with Alpha Zeta Partners (AZP) as her most valuable learning experience. Her program spent six weeks traveling throughout Brazil and gaining insight into the country’s agriculture, natural resource management, environmental standards, and culture. In addition, she also learned about personal leadership, adaptability, and resilience. One of the most important lessons she took away from this journey is that we can truly accomplish anything when we suspend judgment and have a sense of curiosity.

Courtney said of her mentor, “From the start of my college journey, David Dietrich has pushed me to step out of my comfort zone and grow as a leader. As a freshman at Ohio State ATI, he encouraged me to apply for Track 1 of the Ag Future of America (AFA) Leaders Conference. I made many connections and learned more about professional development through my AFA experiences, and I cannot thank Dave enough for believing in me and pushing me to apply. Dave is the director of admissions and recruitment at Ohio State ATI; during my time as an ambassador at the Wooster campus, he was a great role model and supporter, always supporting my fellow ambassadors and me. Dave also helped make my transition to the Columbus campus smooth by connecting me with his colleagues at the campus.”

How is this going to work? That was the big question Courtney received in her role as the manager for the Tiffin Seneca Farmers Market. She accepted this position two weeks before the initial pandemic lockdown in March 2020. Courtney wasn’t well-versed in crisis communication, but she used her talents to provide support to their vendors. During her first week, she worked tirelessly to create a new website and collaborated with state and local officials to develop a plan-of-action for the 2020 market season. Thanks to her coursework, she was able to apply her knowledge to help local farmers and small businesses stay successful throughout the pandemic.

After graduation, Courtney will work for Heritage Cooperative as a marketing specialist, partnering with the marketing team and their divisional leaders to develop social media plans and generate digital marketing content. After a few years of field experience, Courtney plans to return to school to complete a graduate program, with hopes of becoming a professor to prepare the future leaders of agriculture.

Service, involvement, and accolades: Ohio State Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow, president | Alpha Zeta Partners, chancellor | Ohio Soybean Association | Ohio Corn & Wheat | Ag Relations Council | Ohio State Welcome Leader | Clintonville Resource Center | American Soybean Association Advocacy Communications Team | AgriNaturalist Magazine, associate editor
Jason Hollick's most valuable learning experience during his undergraduate program has been his time working in the Kubota Controlled Environment Plant Physiology and Technology Lab. As part of his undergraduate research, he was able to design and run his very own experiment looking at the effects of grafting two basil cultivars on plant growth. This was an incredible experience that taught Jason a great deal about experimental design and deepened his resolve to pursue a career in agricultural research.

Jason's experiences working at Waterman Agricultural and Natural Resources Laboratory have been the most enjoyable and rewarding of his undergraduate career. During his time at Waterman, he has been able to work alongside incredible coworkers and researchers on an extremely wide range of projects, whether focused on genetics, dietetics, agronomy, ecology, or entomology. In the role of “student assistant,” Jason was involved in a large array of tasks and projects, such as tillage/field preparation (including laying plastic), marking out plots, spreading fertilizer, planting sweet corn and pumpkins, starting and transplanting vegetable crops, trellising tomatoes, and mowing. He also helped researchers harvest and analyze their plots, performed orchard maintenance, constructed endangered fish rearing ponds, assisted with fish surveys, completed equipment maintenance, gave tours of the facility, and carried out many other duties. As someone who didn’t grow up on a farm, Jason is incredibly proud of all of the knowledge and skills he acquired in his years of working hands-on at Waterman. He can now confidently run tillage equipment and planters, lay out research plots, maintain orchards, and implement a myriad of other useful skills in both his life and in his future career as an agricultural scientist.

Jason wished to acknowledge two mentors that have deeply impacted him and his time at Ohio State. Jason stated, “Glenn Mills has been an incredible mentor during all four years of my undergraduate career; working under his guidance at Waterman Agricultural and Natural Resource Laboratory, I have been able to gain practical skills and knowledge that I would not have been exposed to through my classes. Glenn has always pushed me to try new things and take on additional responsibilities, whether at Waterman or elsewhere on campus. I consider Glenn to be a good friend and someone I can always go to for honest opinions and advice. Without his guidance, I wouldn’t know a fraction of what I know today about agriculture. I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Chieri Kubota as an equally important mentor. Though I have not known her for as long as Glenn, she profoundly changed my planned career path and introduced me to the world of scientific research. Being able to conduct my very own research project in her lab has taught me a great deal, and convinced me to apply for graduate school.”

After graduation, Jason plans to pursue a PhD program here at The Ohio State University, working in the Kubota Controlled Environment Plant Physiology and Technology Lab.

Service, involvement, and accolades: Environment and Natural Resources Scholars, Leadership Council, Mentor Council | Poultry Science Club | Horticultural Honorary Pi Alpha Xi, vice president
Being a member of the Ohio State Women's (Varsity) Swim & Dive team has brought Natalia Jaspeado Becerra an extreme amount of joy and accomplishment. Natalia has grown as an athlete and a person from swimming and loves to train with people from all different backgrounds. At their conference championships, Natalia and her team placed in the top three during her first two years, and they were Big Ten champions last year, which was such an amazing feeling of accomplishment for all of them. Natalia is tremendously thankful for her teammates, coaches, and professors who have helped her and taught her so much throughout this process!

Serving as a CFAES Peer Mentor has been Natalia’s most rewarding experience during her time at Ohio State. Natalia has always considered herself a team player and has always enjoyed helping others, being there for others, and guiding others, especially when she has often found herself in the position of looking for guidance. She knew that she wanted to offer support to other students in the same way her Peer Mentor had assisted and supported her. After being the mentee and going through the process from the other side, Natalia felt ready and excited to pay it forward when she became a Peer Mentor.

Identifying Dr. Rafael Jimenez-Flores as her mentor, Natalia communicated, “Dr. Jimenez has always been supportive, welcoming, and encouraging in terms of me getting my research work started, which has been such a valuable learning experience. [A]nd I was so thankful to have someone to push me and encourage me to do it, especially as a student-athlete, because it could have been easy to postpone it, due to my busy schedule. However, that was not the case, and I always felt very excited, ready, and supported in the process.”

Natalia has not only taken classes and been a student-athlete, but she has also worked a number of jobs. After completing her freshman year, she worked as a lifeguard and a swim instructor at a summer camp. The next summer she worked with Ohio State Dining Services and with the Athletic Department. From these experiences, she learned how to ask for help, communicate, and solve problems on her own.

Working in her research lab has been an incredible learning experience for Natalia. She is surrounded by immensely capable and exceptionally skilled people. As an international student, it is always significant and memorable to meet people from your own country, and when she connected with some in her department, and specifically in dairy lab, it made this whole experience extremely special.

Natalia is still considering options for after graduation, including possibilities here in Ohio, as well as back home in Mexico City. She is currently enjoying her last months of undergraduate courses and her final collegiate swimming season. Natalia wishes to pursue graduate school, with the long-term goal of working in the food industry.

Service, involvement, and accolades: Towers Agricultural Honorary | Ohio State Varsity Scholar Athlete | Ohio State Women’s (Varsity) Swim & Dive team | Second and Seven Foundation | CFAES Peer Mentor
When asked to reflect on the successes of her undergraduate career, it’s hard for Brietta Latham to find one instance that demonstrates her greatest sense of accomplishment. The application of the knowledge Brietta has amassed throughout her time at Ohio State is the experience she values the most. Whether Brietta is considering the logistics of an experiment in class, drawing on her previous course material and experiences while teaching, or simply having a discussion with her peers, reflecting on how far she has progressed in her holistic understanding of science and its applications provides a sense of accomplishment for Brietta that surpasses any single success. Other accomplishments for Brietta were placing in the top five at the AVMA Animal Welfare Judging Competition for two consecutive years and, most importantly, getting accepted into multiple graduate schools.

Brietta participated in two internships, one with AstraZeneca in Frederick, Maryland, as a Manufacturing Sciences & Technology Intern, and a second with the University of California — Davis, shadowing graduate students, which she funded using her Ohio State STEP program transformational experience funds. Within her time at AstraZeneca she was introduced to the process of biopharmaceutical manufacturing, and through various tours and intern-specific programming she became very comfortable with the steps in that process.

Brietta has been involved in many research experiences, including a parasite resistance study which helped harvest lambs and collect abomasum and fecal samples to be observed for signs of infection caused by Haemonchus contortus (barber pole worms). She counted worms in samples from the liquid collected after rinsing the abomasum samples. Brietta also researched the impacts of personality on animal welfare where she observed and recorded penguin behaviors. She guided the Animal Welfare and Behavior Club through the design of various welfare research projects, including enrichment, novel object, and training studies. Lastly, Brietta designed and implemented behavior observations for a study looking at how goat behavior changes in a pasture environment versus a wooded environment.

Brietta recognized Dr. Benjamin Wenner as her faculty mentor. In her words, “I have worked closely with Dr. Wenner in many different roles. As a student, teaching assistant, member of the Animal Welfare Judging and Dairy Challenge Teams, club president, and fellow sheep breeder, there is hardly a way to begin to express how influential Dr. Wenner has been on my college career. I am incredibly grateful to have gotten to spend so much time learning from him and praise him for his commitment to his students.”

After graduation, Brietta will be pursuing a graduate degree in either Animal Biology with an emphasis on Biotechnology at the University of California — Davis, or Molecular Biosciences at Washington State University. In the future, she intends to enter the field of animal biotechnology with a focus on genetic engineering in livestock.

Rachel Leitson’s most valuable learning experience was her participation in an Associated Schools of Construction commercial construction competition. This was her first time putting together a complete bid for a project, and she learned from the upperclassmen that were on her team as well as from the other teams they were competing against. Rachel attributes the many terrific opportunities and relationships she has found within her major to this competition.

After transferring into the Construction Systems Management program, Rachel started being acknowledged. In her nomination it was shared, “With her foundation in engineering courses, Rachel quickly adapted to the concepts taught in core CSM courses, and proved herself an outstanding learner and teacher among her peers. Her abilities did not go unnoticed, and she was quickly recruited to be a teaching assistant for the electrical and lighting systems course.”

Rachel identified Mr. Jeff Suchy as her mentor. Rachel said, “Professor Suchy has been a strong supporter and advocate for me throughout my undergraduate career. He has constantly been a sounding board for issues and problems I face, giving me invaluable advice that I will use for the rest of my life and career. He has given me countless opportunities where I am pushed to further my knowledge, experience, and skills. He has helped me with industry contacts and relationships that have benefited me throughout my work here at OSU. He has been an absolute joy to work for and has helped me to thrive and succeed within the construction industry, and I would not be receiving the award without his support and advice.”

The greatest sense of accomplishment Rachel has experienced was from completing her Humanitarian Engineering Scholar distinction, which occurred over a two-year process. It was the first community that she felt a strong mutual bond for service within the Ohio State community. She created meaningful relationships through those two years that she knows she will carry for the rest of her life. Overall, she believes that it made her more conscious of the global impact of all her decisions in her industry.

Rachel has had extensive internship experience; she worked as a project engineer with Borror Construction in 2019, Kiewit Construction in 2020, and she has accepted her final internship with Turner Construction for summer 2021. Through her internships, Rachel was able to attend a groundbreaking ceremony for a public sponsored project that the mayor of Columbus and a senator for Ohio both attended. She was able to take a virtual tour of incredible large-scale projects during her internship for Kiewit. She also gained tools and training that are invaluable for future jobs during all of her internships.

After graduation, Rachel plans to attend a year-long graduate program to earn her master’s in management. Until she can begin that pursuit, she will continue working full-time in the construction industry.
Being a part of the FABE Department field operations team has been Jacob Lesch's most valuable learning experience. There he was able to learn the necessary states of research, from experimental design to publication, and everything in between. Jacob has been able to interact with several influential individuals in the agricultural industry, and this has taught him how to conduct himself professionally. Jacob thanks this role for teaching him many things he will use as his career develops.

Jacob considers his most rewarding experience to be his involvement with the Agricultural Systems Management Club. He gained many opportunities and friends through different events with this organization. From professional conferences to social nights, to networking with industry representatives, Jacob has been able to make an impact on the university and the community around it. This club not only bolstered his resume but also made it possible for him to help several members get excited about agriculture, as well as find a reason to do their best in everything they do.

Jacob felt his greatest sense of success when he attended the North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture (NACTA) Judging Conference. There he had the opportunity to compete in the Precision Agriculture competition and placed 1st individually in the nation! This achievement boosted his confidence, helped him build communication skills, and sharpened his resume.

He takes great pride in his internship with Corteva Agriscience, where he worked as a sales intern for their Pioneer® brand. During his time there, he was able to build his professional contact list, and gain hands-on experience in sales, agronomy, and management. Jacob also learned how to create meaningful relationships, and how to convince a new customer to meet with him and listen to what he had to say. In the process, he saw how various sales representatives conducted business. As an outsider (not from Ohio), he was able to experience a different type of agriculture and see how passionate farmers can be about their industry.

Jacob is also extremely proud to have worked part-time on Lesch Farms, his own family's farm. It allowed him the opportunity to be more than an operator and to learn the ins and outs of a modern, profitable farming operation. This experience helped him gain a handle on precision ag technology, agronomy, and business management.

Jacob recognized Dr. Dewey Mann as his CFAES mentor. Jacob said, “Dr. Mann encouraged me to take that next leap and push myself outside of what I was comfortable with. I was able to represent the college and the university to the community with the encouragement of Dr. Mann. I also had Dr. Mann as an instructor, [and] I was able to learn a lot from his classes. If I needed help, he was more than happy to help. He provided sound career advice and life advice in general, which I will draw on for the rest of my career.”

Service, involvement, and accolades: ASM Club at Ohio State, young member chair, chair, president
Melina Mallory's was on the Division I varsity fencing team her freshman year. She had just moved 2,000 miles from anyone that she knew, taken on the hardest physical and mental challenge she ever had, and had to face college-level courses. Melina is extremely proud to have passed general chemistry. She had never been in a massive lecture hall or spent so much time training, all while starting over in a new city with no old friends to lean on. After passing general chemistry under such pressure and change, Melina knew she could handle any obstacle thrown at her. She considers getting through this time as her greatest accomplishment.

Melina wanted to recognize Ms. Brenda VanCleave as her mentor. In her own words, Melina says, “Brenda has really taken me under her wing. I was working in her office as a sustainability intern, and she had heard I had an interest in water sustainability. Even though I am not a civil engineering student, she gave me a position. She has shared her knowledge and showed me a side of water management I likely would not have been able to experience with my major. She not only created a safe learning atmosphere for me to understand a topic I am relatively underqualified to be working in, but really nurtured me personally. She has generously shared her path and experiences working in her field and repeatedly chose projects for me that would enrich my education. She has frequently offered career advice, supported me in my graduate school endeavor, and it has been very meaningful to have a strong female mentor in a male-dominated field.”

During her time working with the OSU Zero Waste Campaign as a tailgate supervisor, Melina was able to oversee zero waste practices in tailgate lots and at the stadium on game days, as well as offer stadium tours from a zero-waste perspective. This taught Melina the social side of sustainability and how to find the best way to interest people in recycling habits they typically do not care about. It was difficult losing a full day of studying (at minimum) to work 10-hour shifts on game days, but interacting with fans and seeing the immediate impact of zero waste practices was always worth it. Melina also served the OSU Office of Energy and Sustainability Services as a sustainability intern and logistics coordinator. This allowed her to see how zero waste practices can have drastically different implementation techniques and challenges on campus versus in a stadium. Ultimately, her work experiences have helped to shape Melina’s grasp of her field.

After graduation, Melina will be attending the University of Pennsylvania to pursue a master’s degree in Environmental Sciences, with a concentration in Water Resource Management.

Service, involvement, and accolades: Delta Zeta Sorority, historian and environmental committee | TerrAqua Club, treasurer | Environment and Natural Resources Scholar | Ohio State Varsity Fencing
Before coming to Ohio State, Ezekiel Miller attended community college for his associate’s degree while also working as a civilian contractor for the Navy. This opportunity allowed him to travel extensively while going to college, and to develop online learning skills that would become useful in the future. At the same time, it cultivated and improved his academic discipline. Additionally, while transitioning to the Columbus campus he spent a few months working for the Ohio State Women’s Rowing Team, which gave him the chance to be fully immersed in rowing and participate in the system that facilitates the university’s athletic success. His most valuable experience has simply been learning how to learn again. After taking six years off from school, he had to reintegrate into the environment of collegiate academics. This was by no means easy or painless, but it has set him on a path of lifelong learning that he hopes will allow him to succeed wherever he goes, moving forward in life. It is not one experience, but a multitude of experiences, under the tutelage of many professors, that have guided him to this place.

In his nomination form Dr. Parkman and Ms. Kurzhals shared, “During his time at The Ohio State University, Ezekiel has exemplified the Buckeye values of academic achievement, earning the Dean’s List honors for the year of 2020. Ezekiel’s dedication to academics has also merited acknowledgment within his department of study, AEDE. ...Ezekiel was also awarded the Robert S. Tennant scholarship in recognition for his academic performance within his department of study.”

He worked hand in hand with Dr. Jeff King for his Leadership Studies minor capstone project to develop a professional mentorship program for undergraduate CFAES veterans. During that process, Ezekiel found a purpose in both mentorship and service back to his veteran community. Finding this strong sense of purpose has been an amazingly rewarding boon that he will take into his post-graduate life.

Being invited to participate in the hiring committee for a new professor was a great honor for Ezekiel. This process left him with a notion of having “arrived” in his collegiate career. This opportunity, paired with other accomplishments he was blessed with this past year, left him feeling empowered to determine his own personal and professional success.

After graduation, Ezekiel plans to pursue post-graduate studies in economics or finance, in hopes of breaking into the finance or banking industry.

Ezekiel recognized Mr. Christopher Henney as his undergraduate mentor. Ezekiel related, “I was connected to Chris through a mentorship program run by a partnership between the Columbus Rotary and the OSU Rotaract Club. This program was geared towards pairing veteran students with mentors. However, over the past year and a half, Chris has mentored and guided me through the end stages of my collegiate career, and helped me develop into the person I am today.”

Service, involvement, and accolades: CFAES Student Council | CFAES DEI Action Committee | Ohio State Men’s Rowing Club | Towers Honorary | Little League Coaching
Todd Peterson’s internship at Corteva Agriscience in Janesville, WI, has brought him the greatest feeling of success in his undergraduate career. During this internship, he worked at a research station, conducting experiments that tested new seed treatments, herbicides, and transgenic crops in the final stages of development. This experience taught him a number of skills in both crop science and research, which have proven to be invaluable, but more importantly, it taught him how to live and work in a place far from home. The knowledge and experience he gained from his five and a half months in Wisconsin provided him with a sense of self-accomplishment because he proved to himself that he was capable of not only surviving, but also thriving in the midst of challenges, like those of field research, and moving 800 miles away from home.

During Todd’s first semester, he joined the Crops and Soils Club and has stayed involved ever since. The club provided Todd with an opportunity to network with industry professionals and peers at the local, state, and national level, while a number of the people he met in the group have become some of his closest friends. He even considers trips to the American Society of Agronomy Annual Meetings with fellow members to be some of his fondest memories from his time at Ohio State. These excursions allowed him to test his knowledge of agronomy through the crops judging contest, and see the agriculture of the host state through tours. The organization has also granted him many opportunities to expand not just his education, but also his leadership skills, including the chance to serve as club president for a year. Overall, the Crops and Soils Club will hold a special place in Todd’s heart, thanks to the friendships and experiences he gained through it.

Todd recognized Dr. Laura Lindsey as his Ohio State mentor. He shared, “Laura has served as [a] mentor for me for a number of years, and has helped me to navigate the undergraduate-to-graduate transition, as well as provid[ed] academic and career guidance. She is also the major professor for my graduate program.”

Todd was thrilled to become a member of the Alpha Zeta Partners honorary. As part of their program, he spent six weeks in Brazil learning about Brazilian agriculture, politics, and culture. This trip taught him more about himself and Brazil than he ever could have imagined. Spending an extended period of time in the country, he was truly immersed in its national culture. Thanks to the lessons by the professors, and the tours, he now feels he has a much deeper understanding of how agriculture in Brazil has developed, where it is now, and how it will progress in the future.

After graduation, Todd plans to either work in the industry as an agronomy researcher or return home to his family’s farm.

Service, involvement, and accolades: Crops and Soils Club, president | Agribusiness Club, historian | Buckeye Brewing Club, co-founder | Ohio Farm Bureau | Ohio Corn and Wheat | Ohio Soybean Association
The COVID-19 pandemic forced everyone to innovate in order to continue making an impact in and outside of the classroom. During the summer of 2020, Olivia Pflaumer felt fortunate to still be able to participate in an internship experience at the Stratford Ecological Center, an ecological farm and state nature preserve in Delaware, Ohio. It was her second summer working at Stratford, where she focused on developing a Beginner Farmer program. Though the center remained closed to the public during that time, Olivia worked on programming that would provide in-person opportunities for gaining hands-on skills and experiences in various agricultural pursuits and made adaptations to create virtual opportunities. The flexibility and new technological skills that were pertinent to the task also served to help Olivia in the virtual classroom when she returned to school.

Olivia selected Dr. Caryn Filson as her mentor, saying, “Dr. Filson has provided her mentorship to me as an advisor to [the] Agricultural Education Society, [a] teacher in the classroom, my academic advisor, and someone to turn to with questions. Dr. Filson has made an influential impact on my college career at Ohio State by providing the opportunity for me to figure out what it means to be an agricultural educator, and providing guidance in times of need.”

After joining the Agricultural Education Society (AES) during her first year, an opportunity to participate in a Buck-I-SERV was presented. Olivia was reluctant at first, as she was not sure what to expect, but she now looks back on it as one of her favorite experiences during college. Buck-I-SERV provides alternative break opportunities for students to engage in meaningful and sustainable community service. Through AES, she was able to visit Dallas, Texas, and work with Our Community Pantry, which served a wide area in Dallas. Rekindling her passion for community service from high school, she also participated in the Pinellas County Sea Grant Buck-I-SERV the following year, assisting in a variety of environmentally-focused community service projects.

All of these opportunities prepared her for a future as an agriscience educator, where she hopes to instill community service opportunities within a future FFA program.

Through her STEP Project, Olivia was able to participate in a week-long sustainable agriculture workshop at Wyatt Run Farm, a program specifically for STEP students interested in the topic. Olivia looks back on this experience as one of her most enjoyable memories for many reasons, including the bonds formed between students and teachers, the encouragement and opportunity to think about the world around them in new ways, and for its lessons in just how valuable Southern Ohio can be. As a result of these encounters, Olivia often reflects on the kindness and resourcefulness of the people she met.

After graduation, Olivia hopes to work as an agricultural educator in a high school. After several years, she plans to attain a master’s degree.

Service, involvement, and accolades: Agricultural Education Society, president, reporter | Ohio State Rock Climbing | USAC National Qualifier, outdoor chair | CFAES Ambassador, co-chair | Buck-I-SERV participant | Semester of Service with NNEMAP Food Pantry
Milan Pozderac’s most enjoyable experiences were in the summers of 2018 and 2019 when he served as a Farm Credit Mid-America College Scholar. Through this opportunity, Milan took part in two week-long leadership experiences, one in Louisville, KY, and another in Gettysburg, PA. He met other agricultural college students from Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, and Tennessee, and together they went through leadership and personal development workshops. The content of the workshops was extremely applicable to his life and he has continued to use what he learned to this day.

As the New Member Educator for FarmHouse ATZ, Milan recreated the education process for his fraternity, implementing some of the strategies he learned in his classes as an education major. His goal in this role was to make a program that was reflective of their organization’s values and provide sustainability for those who will inherit his position in the future. By the time he finished, he had completely reorganized the New Member Manual, incorporated community service and personal development into the education process, and created seven complete lesson plans that covered all necessary content. Milan was proud to leave behind materials that were an improvement for their new members.

Milan recognized Dr. Tracy Kitchel as his mentor. Milan shared, “Dr. Kitchel served as my research advisor, but his role in my years at Ohio State exceeds far beyond that. In the fall of 2018, I asked to meet with Dr. Kitchel as part of an assignment for my Introduction to ACEL class. This meeting, which I anticipated being short and uneventful, turned into one of the most significant moments in my undergraduate career. During this meeting Dr. Kitchel mentioned a faculty member needed help importing data for their research and asked if I would be interested. At the time, I was struggling to find a part-time job to accompany my classes, so my response was a resounding, ‘Yes.’ This opportunity later led to my role as a student worker in ACEL and connections with the incredible faculty and staff of the department. Later, Dr. Kitchel approached me again with the opportunity to be a part of a research project with him. I leapt [at] the opportunity, though I doubt I ever would have considered research without his encouragement. I knew next to nothing about research, but he helped me through every step in the process until we finished the project this year. Throughout all this, he has pushed me as a student and researcher and has always been available to give advice and resources as I consider my future after graduation. I owe an incredible amount of my success to his guidance and support, which is why I am proud to identify him as my mentor.”

After graduation, Milan plans to begin his career as an agricultural educator in Ohio.

Service, involvement, and accolades: FarmHouse ATZ Fraternity, new member educator, spiritual chair | Ohio Farm Bureau Member | Soil Judging Team | CFAES Ambassador | Alpha Zeta Partners | Bridge Community Center, volunteer | Farm Credit Mid-America College Scholar
Allison Rapp took advantage of the opportunity to travel to Scotland to study small ruminants, and other food animal species, with her fellow classmates. There, they were able to tour the country, immersing themselves in the unique culture, while meeting researchers, farmers, and veterinarians, all of whom played roles in Scotland’s animal industries. This was a once-in-a-lifetime trip, and she will value this experience for years to come.

Allison is extremely proud of her time on the Ohio State Poultry Judging Team. This was an ambition that she brought with her to Ohio State, and it was rewarding to complete that goal after working on it for nearly six years. As a member of the team, she competed against students from across the country in contests at both the University of Arkansas and Louisiana State University. She was also given the chance to “pay it forward” by putting on local poultry judging invitationals through Ohio’s FFA chapters. She loved the opportunity to bring her experience full circle and help encourage this interest among FFA students, particularly future OSU students.

During her internship with Cooper Farms in Fort Recovery, OH, as a veterinary services intern, Allison had a terrific experience. She performed surveillance testing, sample collection, and analysis of reovirus events in turkey finisher flocks. She assisted veterinarians in evaluating health concerns in hens, turkeys, and swine through farm visits, necropsies, and lab work. During this internship, Allison learned how to effectively communicate with producers and her fellow employees about the tasks at hand. Through encountering a lot of different procedures, tests, and situations, she discovered how to navigate each of them well. With an in-depth understanding of Ohio’s animal agriculture industry, she respects the hard work and dedication that it takes to maintain health and quality.

Allison expressed her desire to recognize Dr. Michael Cressman as her faculty mentor. She shared, “Dr. Cressman has been an influential part of my time here at OSU. I came to school with interest and involvement in the poultry industry. Through Poultry Science Club, Poultry Judging Team, numerous classes, and in our relationship [with him] as my advisor, he has supported my interests and provided me with opportunities to submerge myself into the industry. The confidence, experience, and skills that I have gained have allowed me to branch out to other species and new interests, but it would not have been possible without his guidance and support along the way.”

After graduation, Allison plans on attending the College of Veterinary Medicine here at The Ohio State University, to pursue her DVM degree, followed by a career in food animal medicine.

Service, involvement, and accolades: Sigma Alpha Professional Agricultural Sorority, president, vice president | Poultry Science Club | CFAES Student Council representative, president, outreach and education chair | Poultry Judging Team | Veterinary Early Commitment Program | Saddle & Sirloin Club | Ohio Farm Bureau
In February of 2020, Clare Sollars attended the Midwest Regional Rally through the student organization American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers (ASABE). This rally brought students from different institutions together who had majors similar to Ohio State’s Food, Agricultural and Biological Engineering (FABE) major. Clare’s specialization of Food Engineering is a smaller program, and she had not yet had the opportunity to interact with many food engineering students as an undergraduate. However, this rally connected her to numerous students interested in impacting the world’s food supply with engineering methods. She also visited several food companies and was able to tour the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s campus. It was fascinating to her to see how another university developed their program. Clare networked with many young professionals on this trip and, overall, considered it a great experience that allowed her to learn about different opportunities in the food industry.

Clare participated in the Aspiration for Women’s Advancement and Retention in Engineering and Sciences (AWARES) mentoring program, where she was paired with a female professional working in a STEM field. They met over the course of two semesters to discuss career planning and advancement, interview strategies, conflict resolution, building a network, and being a minority in a male-dominated field. It was enjoyable for Clare to build a strong relationship with a mentor in the industry who had gone through many relatable experiences. She also met with other mentees to discuss what advice and perspective they were given by other professionals. It was rewarding and inspiring for Clare to see how so many young women, like herself, had become leaders within their field.

The summer after her sophomore year, Clare was excited to begin the challenge of a six-month co-op at Abbott Nutrition, working in packaging research and development. She was immersed in a new environment and assisting in an area that she did not have a great deal of experience in at the time. Since then, Clare has had the opportunity to work in four other departments at Abbott Nutrition and has learned from every experience, finding it rewarding to work with other people who are just as passionate about the food industry. Her projects ranged from implementing new lab methods, developing a new product formulation, redesigning a global quality assurance process, issuing recommendations for commercialization, and having the opportunity to travel across the United States to conduct engineering studies. She has also gained a global perspective from working with cross-functional teams in Ireland, Singapore, and the Netherlands. She has found a sense of success in leading projects and implementing new methods. Her input and knowledge were necessary in every position she held and confirmed that she was valued as a contributing member of each team.

Clare graduates in December of 2021. She hopes to begin work in the food industry but is still evaluating her options. This summer she is interning with Abbott Nutrition.

Service, involvement, and accolades: FABE Mentor Program | American Society of Agriculture and Biological Engineers, social director and secretary
Vashti Tatman’s greatest sense of accomplishment as an undergraduate has come from being employed in her actual field of study since her sophomore year. Vashti worked in the Ohio State Insectary, taking care of ant colonies and working with Stink Bug parasitoid research. These assignments provided her with experience and an extensive education that will help prepare her for a future career as an entomologist. Her nominator, Dr. Joe Raczkowski, highlighted that Vashti pursued opportunities in two research laboratories during her time at OSU, and her expertise proved valuable in both cases. In Dr. Celeste Welty’s lab, she was responsible for cultivating colonies of Brown Marmorated Stink Bugs, which were critical for the various research projects in which she participated. In the lab of Dr. Rachelle Adams, she maintained 175 colonies of various fungus-growing ant species for research projects, vouched specimens, and wrote protocols for new lab members.

Working on campus in the Ohio State Insectary with George Keeney has been an extremely valuable learning experience. It expanded her knowledge a great deal and helped to cultivate her passion and love for insects during her time in the lab. Among the numerous techniques she honed there, learning how to “rear” insects when housing the species was an incredibly valuable skill to attain in Entomology. She also learned how places like the Insectary can reuse things in order to work more sustainably.

Vashti would like to recognize Mr. George Keeney as her Ohio State mentor. In Vashti’s words, “George Keeney is my mentor because he has taught me so much and allowed me to really follow my passion of rearing insects. I would have had this dream of starting my own insectary, but not have the knowledge or experience to actually achieve this dream, if it weren’t for him. He allowed me to complete my internship at the Insectary, and really took me under his wing, and taught me so much. I would say he has taught me everything he knows, but I don’t think that would ever be possible. He knows so much, and really has allowed my dream to become a reality one day[,] [And] I can only hope that my future insectary makes him proud, and [that] he knows that none of it would be possible if it wasn’t for him.”

After graduation, Vashti plans to attend graduate school to obtain her master’s degree and then go on to earn her PhD. Her future career goals are to start an insectary at the Columbus Zoo, to travel the globe collecting different specimens, and to teach others about the vast world of insects. Vashti also wants to aid in the conservation efforts of different species. Therefore, part of her future insectary’s mission will be to rear species and release them into the wild, in hopes of establishing new colonies and boosting their population.

Service, involvement, and accolades: Chrysalis Entomology Club | CFAES Student Council | Abundant Life Tabernacle, volunteer | Children’s Choir, volunteer
Laura Tavera Montañez was extremely proud when she received her internship offer letter from Purina. She was in Wisconsin, participating in the Midwest Dairy Challenge, when she received a call from the company, followed by an email with a copy of her offer letter. After struggling to find an internship within the dairy industry, but gaining valuable experiences along the way, she managed to land her dream internship. Getting that offer letter left her feeling incredibly accomplished.

Laura’s most rewarding experience was being a part of the winning team from this past year’s 2020 Ohio Dairy Challenge. The Dairy Challenge team was composed of four students who did not grow up on dairy farms. To Laura, this just proved that you do not have to come from a specific background to excel in the area of your interest. After four years of trying to continuously learn about the dairy industry, a multitude of her experiences came together for a perfect ensemble. It was immensely satisfying for her team to work through this competition together and come out victorious. When they released the results, Laura felt pure bliss, as she had achieved a goal she was extremely passionate about.

Laura recognized Dr. Jeffrey Firkins as her mentor. In her own words, “Dr. Firkins has really pushed me to be the best version of myself. He’s someone that I really look up to, and he has always been very clear on what his expectations are from me and sets high standards. I firmly believe that you’re never going to grow unless you push yourself and step out of your comfort zone. Dr. Firkins most definitely does that. He wants to see his students succeed. [He] and I get along extremely well, and he’s someone that I’ll always respect. He’s someone that I turn to whenever I need advice, and he recently helped me in figuring out what my post-graduation plans were going to be. We met weekly last semester to discuss research papers and post-graduation plans, and what we thought was my best fit moving forward. Luckily, I was able to sort that out with him! I’m extremely grateful for everything he has done. Working in his lab has been the best experience of my entire undergraduate career. The people that I’ve met, the connections that I’ve made, and the experiences I’ve had because of it are ones that I’ll hold close to my heart, long after I have graduated. Dr. Firkins has easily been the most influential person in my entire undergraduate career.”

After graduation, Laura hopes to begin her career in the dairy industry as a dairy nutritionist. She is currently in the process of applying for full-time employment positions.

Service, involvement, and accolades: Puerto Rican Student Association, president, secretary | Animal Science Community Alliance, vice president | Undergraduate Teaching Assistant | Buckeye Dairy Club | CFAES Learning Community | Neighborhood Services, Inc. Food Pantry Holiday Program, translator | Disaster and Humanitarian Crisis Relief, piloted three university-wide fundraisers aimed toward Hurricane María and earthquake relief efforts for Puerto Rico
Jayson Velazquez’s greatest senses of success and self-accomplishment have come throughout his senior year. As he reflects on being honored on this year’s Homecoming Court, serving as the 114th president in the SPHINX Senior Class Honorary, and being recognized as a CFAES Distinguished Senior, he feels seen and appreciated. It hasn’t always been easy. He started off with a low GPA after his first semester of college and has worked extremely hard to earn everything he has access to today. He never let up and knows he couldn’t have done it without the support of his mentors, faculty, and staff in the School of Environment and Natural Resources, as well as his program directors in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

Jayson would like to acknowledge the financial, academic, and professional support he has received from the Morrill Scholars Program through the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI). Some of his most rewarding experiences came from knowing that he could turn to ODI and find the help and resources he needed to succeed. The “Panamá: Through the Lens of AgriCulture, Sustainability and Diversity” education abroad program was Jayson’s most formative experience. He remembers his excitement as he applied for his first passport, and the feeling when traveling outside of the United States for the first time. He credits this trip with providing him the insight he needed to commit and dedicate his future studies to environmental and social justice concerns in Latin America, and more specifically in Puerto Rico.

During his time in CFAES, Jayson worked as an Inclusion and Outreach Coordinator in the School of Environment and Natural Resources, serving to further recruitment and retention of underrepresented minority students in his academic unit. He is also proud to have worked as a Sustainability Programming Lead in the Department of Energy Management and Sustainability through the Office of Student Life. This summer he will be interning with the Keney Park Sustainability Project in Connecticut.

Jayson has been accepted into multiple graduate schools and is deciding between various fully-funded opportunities to engage in community and climate resilience planning and research in Puerto Rico.

Jayson would like to recognize Dr. Joseph Campbell as his Ohio State faculty mentor. Jayson shared, “Dr. Campbell has been an amazing professor, and I’ve taken [several] of his courses that guided my interest in community resilience and development. He also believed in me and my academic plan when I asked him to be my Honors Advisor, even before I was academically eligible to apply for the program. He’s been guiding my undergraduate research thesis and continues to be someone I can talk to about post-graduate opportunities, while also allowing me to contribute to his current courses and serve as a mentor for his current students.”

Service, involvement, and accolades: Buck-I-Serv - Once Upon a Time in Appalachia | Morrill Scholars | SPHINX Senior Class Honorary | Boys and Girls Club of Columbus, volunteer
Cameron White's time as a member of the leadership team for the Animal Science Community Alliance (ASCA) has been equal parts reward and enjoyment. She met some outstanding people through this club and got to know them individually through their retreats, early morning meetings, and event planning. They always had at least one project underway, but it never felt like work, as everyone fed off of each other’s positive attitudes. As a member of ASCA, Cameron worked to reach prospective high school students, organize some of the biggest college and department-wide events, lead class recitations, and teach a science club at a local high school. All of these experiences were unbelievably rewarding, especially when she was able to see their efforts pay off.

The two summers Cameron spent in the Animal Sciences Undergraduate Research program were her most valuable learning experiences. She had never done research prior to being in the program, and from it she gained more hands-on experience and knowledge than she could have ever imagined. Not only was this an essential learning opportunity because of all the new topics and lab protocols she became aware of, but it also had huge impacts on her decisions concerning her future after graduation. When Cameron first started, she questioned if her initial goal of becoming a veterinarian was what she really wanted to do. After being a part of this program, and realizing how much she enjoyed research, she was able to definitively switch career paths, and is now working toward a future in academia.

After graduation, Cameron will begin her journey to becoming a professor of animal sciences by attending graduate school next year at the University of Illinois. There, she will be pursuing her master’s in animal sciences, studying swine nutrition.

Cameron would like to recognize Ms. Mariette Benage as her mentor. In Cameron’s own words, “Mariette has been a prominent part of my Ohio State career, even before [it] began. I initially met her when I first toured and was [a] part of a scholarship competition, and [then] continued to get to know her as my instructor for the Animal Sciences 1100 and 2700 courses. Mariette is also the leader of ASCA, so upon becoming a member of that club, I only grew closer to her through our weekly meetings, retreats, and planning committees. The reassurance of knowing you have someone who will always be in your corner cannot be understated, and it helped me immensely in adjusting to a life away from my home for the first time. Although I will be leaving Ohio State in a few short months, it’s incredible to know that I have made a connection with someone whom I feel like I can reach out to at any time in my future, and she will be there for me just as she has in the past.”

Service, involvement, and accolades: CFAES Peer Mentor | Animal Science Community Alliance | CFAES Student Council, public relations chair | Animal Sciences Academic Affairs Committee, student representative
Thank you to the 2021 CFAES Faculty and Staff members, who were identified by an award recipient as someone who has truly made a difference to the recipient during their college career.

MENTORS

MARIETTE BENAGE
JOSEPH CAMPBELL
MICHAEL CRESSMAN
JEROME “JERRY” DAVIS
DAVID DIETRICH
CARYN FILSON
JEFFREY FIRKINS
CHRISTOPHER HENNEY
RAFAEL JIMENEZ-FLORES
GEORGE KEENEY
TRACY KITCHEL
CHIERI KUBOTA

LAURA LINDSEY
ANDREW “DEWEY” MANN
GLENN MILLS
MARY KAY POHLSCHNEIDER
JEFF SUCHY
MAZEIKA SULLIVAN
ELIZABETH TOMAN
JULIE TOWNSEND
BRENDA VANCLEAVE
BENJAMIN WENNER
MATT WILLIAMS
The 2021 CFAES-DSA class of award recipients, collectively has much of which to be proud. Listed here are the many diverse and outstanding forms of recognition this group of students have achieved. The collective honors these students have accomplished exemplifies the truly amazing dedication all have demonstrated academically and scholastically.

**ACADEMIC AWARDS**

- Dean’s list
- American Society of Animal Science Undergraduate Scholar
- Present Scarlet Gray and Green Student Sustainability Leadership Award
- Morrill Scholars Program
- Newcomb Scholar Award
- Ohio Dairy Challenge Silver Medal Award
- American Dairy Science Association Bronze Medal Award
- Ohio State Varsity Scholar Athlete
- CSCAA Honorable Mention Scholar
- All-American Academic
- All-Big Ten Honoree
- ACEL Distinguished Senior
- American Society of Animal Science Undergraduate Scholar Recognition
- Sesquicentennial Scholar

**ACHIEVEMENTS**

- Undergraduate SEEDS Grant from the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences at The Ohio State University
- Undergraduate Research Small Grant from the School of Environment and Natural Resources at The Ohio State University
- American FFA Degree
- Diversity, Intercultural and Community Engagement (DICE) Certification
- Beef Quality Assurance Program, Cow/Calf Certification - A.I. Certified COBA/Select Sires
- Graduating with Research Distinction
- Scarlet, Gray, and Green Sustainability Leadership Award
- American Star in Agriscience Research
- Ag Future of America Leadership Conference Participant
- FarmFluencer National Finalist
- Ag Voices of the Future Participant

**HONORARY SOCIETIES**

- Towers Honorary Society
- American Society of Animal Science Undergraduate Scholar
- SPHINX Senior Class Honorary
- Alpha Zeta Partners
- Environment and Natural Resource Scholar
- Phi Alpha Xi
- Phi Sigma Theta national honor society
- Phi Tau Sigma (Food Science and Technology Honor Society)
- Bucket and Dipper
- ROMOPHOS Sophomore Class Honorary
- Student member of American Fisheries Society and Society for Freshwater Science
PUBLICATIONS

*Rotavirus C: prevalence in suckling piglets and development of virus-like particles to assess the influence of maternal immunity on the disease development* - published in *Veterinary Research*

*Comparative Sequence Analysis of Historic and Current Porcine Rotavirus C strains and their Pathogenesis in 3-day-old and 3-week-old piglets* - published in *Frontiers in Microbiology*

SCHOLARSHIPS

Robert S. Tennant Scholarship | Provost Scholarship | National Buckeye Scholarship | Moser Scholars Annual Fund | Kuohn Scholarship | Ralph Grimshaw Award | Sultzbach Memorial Scholarship | McMunn Scholarship | Seth Adams Scholarship | Waldock Brothers Award | Maryland State Fair Scholarship | Maryland Sheep Breeder’s Scholarship | Maryland State Grange Scholarship | Targeting Excellence Scholarship | Dr. Roger C. and Margery W. Henderson Memorial Fund Scholarship | Dr. O. Lynn Deniston Scholarship Endowment Fund Scholarship | National Buckeye Scholar | Moser Family Study Abroad Scholarship | Bert W. Martin Fund | CXS National Scholarship | Local Elks Scholarship | Mount 4-H Achievement Rice Trust Scholarship | Merva Scholarship | American Soybean Association Scholarship | Engineering Dean’s Scholarship | Chema Memorial Scholarship | Henderson Fund in Agriculture | Brakel Dairy Scholarship | Ludwick Scholarship | Scarlet and Gray Grant | Bailey Scholarship | Agriscience Education Scholarship | George Ruff Scholarship | Ohio Agriculture Council Scholarship | Sunrise Cooperative Scholarship | Ohio 4-H Scholarship | Columbus Foundation Scholarship | Kottman Scholarship | Sickles Scholarship | Singer Texans and Dixon Maine Endowment Fund Recipient | Ralph Bender Scholarship | Ross County Alumni Scholarship | National FFA Foundation Scholarship | Adams Scholarship | Jack and Judy Fisher Endowment Fund | Agricultural Education Scholarship | Baughman Scholarship | Ohio Agricultural Council College Scholarship | Franklin County Farm Bureau Scholarship | Thomas B. Kyle Scholarship | Edgar J. Grand Scholarship | Dr. Dale A. Ray Memorial Scholarship | Gene Wittmeyer Vegetable Scholarship | William J. Skou Memorial Scholarship | Burgwald Memorial Fund | Paul H. Smucker Fund | Abell Endowment Wayne Smith Scholarship | The Ross/Abbott Laboratories Undergraduate Minority Endowment Scholarship Program, Western Reserve Herb Society Scholarship | Ohio Farm Bureau - Women’s Leadership in Agriculture | Southern Ohio Agricultural Community Development Foundation Scholarship | Portsmouth Area Ladies Scholarship | Farm Credit Mid-America Customer Agriculture Scholarship | FLUOR-BWXT Portsmouth STEM Scholarship | Hauk Memorial Scholarship | OHBPA Scholarship | 4-H Roby Clothing Award Scholarship | 4-H A.B. Graham Scholarship | Ruth and S.N. McIntosh Memorial Scholarship | Ralph and Louise Arrick Scholarship | OSU Alumni Club Scholarship - Scioto County | Scioto County Endowment Scholarship | Farm Credit Mid-America Scholar | Agriculture Future of America Delegate and Scholarship, FarmHouse International Fraternity Scholarship, Interfraternity Council Scholarship | Institute of Food Technologists Scholarship | Ohio Corn & Wheat Scholarship | David H. and Virginia Russ Brown Scholarship | Wayne and Kathie Longbrake Scholarship | Louis H. and Lillian B. Burgwald Memorial Fund | Darian Daily OSTMA Grant | Matt Williams educational OSTMA Scholarship | OTF Scholarship STMA SAFE Scholarship | STMA Darian Daily Internship scholarship | Morrill Scholarship Program Prominence Scholarship | Lewis R. Jones Diversity Scholarship | Deniston Ol Scholarship | Animal Sciences Blake Scholarship | Bert W. Martin Fund Scholarship | Sesquicentennial Scholarship | Case Endowed Scholarship | Flax Agr Scholarship | Paul Rofkar Scholarship | Ohio No-Till Council Scholarship | Maximus Scholarship | Undergraduate Research Scholarship | Barneby Family Scholarship
CARMEN OHIO

Words by Fred. A. Cornell, '06.

Oh! come let's sing Ohio's praise And songs to Alma Mater raise;

While our hearts re-bound- ing thrill With joy which death alone can still.

Summer's heat or Winter's cold, The seasons pass, the years will roll...

Time and change will surely show How firm thy friendship—Ohio.

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HOW FIRM THY FRIENDSHIP