

## PRESS RELEASE

# JAYSON VELAZQUEZ NAMED 2021 DISTINGUISHED SENIOR AT THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLUMBUS, Ohio—Jayson E. Velazquez of Paterson, New Jersey, has been named a 2021 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.

Velazquez, an environment, economy, development, and sustainability (EEDS) major, was nominated by college faculty and staff who felt that he personified the award’s attributes of academic, disciplinary, and professional excellence.

“One of the hallmarks of our college is an emphasis on student success, and it is heartwarming to see it exemplified through the accomplishments of our students,” Neal said. “Recipients are our future innovators and leaders who have already made an impact within the academic environment at this university and beyond.”

Velazquez interned for Smart Columbus in Columbus, Ohio, where he worked on projects looking at how transportation can bridge resource gaps for those living in low-income neighborhoods and residents with mobility limitations. He also interned for City Green in his hometown of Paterson, New Jersey, where he analyzed the structural causes of food insecurity.

Among his many achievements are serving with the Buckeye Leadership Fellows; serving as an ambassador for the School of Environment and Natural Resources (SENR); mentoring Morrill Scholars; leadership in the Latinx Student Association; receiving the Scarlet Gray and Green Student Sustainability Leadership Award; and serving as the 114th president of the SPHINX senior class honorary. In 2019 he led the charge on the first-ever Students of Color Dinner for SENR, and he currently serves on the CFAES Student Council as a diversity, equity, and inclusion advocate.

The honors student completed multiple alternative break trips, as well as volunteered in the Columbus community. Some trips were with Buck-I-Serv: Once Upon a Time in Appalachia, where Velazquez completed community service work within the Eastern band of The Cherokee Nation in Tennessee and North Carolina. He also took two Morrill Scholars Program Alternative Spring Breaks: one to Weldon, North Carolina, for rural education equity work among elementary and middle school students, and a second to Washington D.C., to engage in food security efforts among marginalized Black and brown communities throughout the city.



**THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY**

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,  
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

**2021 DISTINGUISHED SENIOR AWARD**

**Academic Programs**

100 Agricultural Administration  
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Velazquez conducted research and completed projects related to green infrastructure as part of the Doris Duke Conservation Scholars Program at the University of Michigan. He also served as sustainability programming lead for Ohio State’s Office of Energy Management and Sustainability.

His nominator wrote, “Jayson epitomizes our core values of excellence, diversity and inclusion, and integrity. In our first conversation, he expressed his passion for resiliency-building in under-resourced communities, rooted in his experiences growing up in a low-income, Latinx community in New Jersey. Since that conversation, I’ve witnessed Jayson take remarkable action as an advocate for the many communities he finds himself in.”

Velazquez has been accepted to multiple graduate schools and is deciding between various fully funded opportunities where he will study environmental and social justice concerns in Latin America, and more specifically in Puerto Rico, where he intends to build his career.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this year’s recognition of the CFAES Distinguished Seniors occurred via a YouTube Premiere video on Wednesday, April 7, 2021. Beginning at 7 p.m., CFAES dean and vice president for agricultural administration, Cathann A. Kress, recognized award recipients on the Ohio State—College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences YouTube channel. View the celebration video at [go.osu.edu/CFAES2021DSA](https://go.osu.edu/CFAES2021DSA).

“Although we could not gather in person, this honor and these 25 students remain an important focus of our college,” Neal said. “Their commitment to their education and dedication to their time as a student in CFAES was recognized with the YouTube Premiere video, and via social media and professional networking platforms. A special award package will also be mailed to each top senior.”

In autumn 2020, there were 2,457 undergraduate students in CFAES pursuing 22 majors and 32 minors. Learn more about CFAES academic programs at [go.osu.edu/B4V2](https://go.osu.edu/B4V2).



## JAYSON E. VELAZQUEZ

PATERSON, NJ

ENVIRONMENT, ECONOMY, DEVELOPMENT, AND  
SUSTAINABILITY - HONORS

SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Photo available by sending a request to [flood.13@osu.edu](mailto:flood.13@osu.edu)

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