

**PRESS RELEASE****THANIA ORTIZ SANTIAGO NAMED  
2022 DISTINGUISHED SENIOR AT  
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY**

COLUMBUS, Ohio—Thania Ortiz Santiago of Toa Alta, Puerto Rico, has been named a 2022 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 and director of academic programs.

Ortiz Santiago, a food science and technology major, was nominated by college faculty and staff who felt that she personified the award’s attributes of academic, disciplinary, and professional excellence.

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

After completing two years as a biology undergraduate at the University of Puerto Rico-Cayey, Ortiz Santiago transferred to Ohio State in 2019. After experiencing Hurricane Maria on the island in 2017, she realized the importance food science has in food preservation.

As she attended classes in Columbus and worked as a student worker and lab assistant, she learned what food science and technology had to offer. She worked to surpass her language barriers and learned how to effectively communicate with others.

Looking back on her time at Ohio State, Ortiz Santiago identified a first semester class as her most enjoyable student experience. “The Introduction to Food Science class truly sparked my love for food science,” she said. “My group and I developed different types of peanut butters. With this experience, I started to learn how much both science and the technology is needed to make a food product.”

Her greatest sense of accomplishment has come from her engagement in undergraduate research, specifically in the department’s FoodS.U.R.E. program in which students seek out a faculty mentor for the duration of a research project.

She worked closely with professor Monica Giusti, who is an expert on natural colorants in food. “She was very supportive and helpful in getting my research proposal and work started. I’m learning a lot about pigments and how the food industry is moving forward with potentially changing food colorants towards more naturally

sourced ones,” she said.

A research and development internship with Jeni’s Splendid Ice Creams resulted in Ortiz Santiago landing on the perfect formula for a new ice cream flavor. It will be brought to market in early 2022 while she continues her internship assisting in new flavor creation and solving issues that may arise during the development process.

Ortiz Santiago, who is minoring in human nutrition, was also active in the Food Science Club and the Student Dietetic Association. She is still considering her options for graduate school after graduation, including possibilities at Ohio State, as well as back home in Puerto Rico. Her ultimate goal is to work in the food industry as both a food scientist and a registered dietitian.

Due to persisting impacts of the pandemic, celebration of this year’s CFAES Distinguished Seniors took place during a by invitation reception at the Nationwide and Ohio Farm Bureau 4-H Center on The Ohio State University’s Columbus campus on Wednesday, March 23, 2022. At the recognition celebration hosted by CFAES dean and vice president for agricultural administration Cathann A. Kress and associate dean and director of academic programs Steven Neal, recipients were presented with special award packages. A YouTube video recognizing the award recipients on the Ohio State—College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences YouTube channel was also released on that same day. View the recognition video at [go.osu.edu/CFAES2022DSA](https://go.osu.edu/CFAES2022DSA).

While this year’s recognition took on a varied format from previous years for the 2022 recipients, Neal said, “We were pleased to be able to acknowledge their commitment to their education and dedication to their time as a student in CFAES by recognizing them with the YouTube video, and via social media and professional networking platforms.”

In autumn 2021, there were 2,859 undergraduate students in CFAES pursuing 22 majors and 34 minors. Learn more about CFAES academic programs at [go.osu.edu/B4V2](https://go.osu.edu/B4V2).



## **THANIA N. ORTIZ SANTIAGO**

**TOA ALTA, PR**

FOOD SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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

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COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,  
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