

## CAFES outstanding seniors honored at UW-River Falls

May 11, 2021 - The College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences (CAFES) at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls presented two outstanding senior awards at their 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Senior Supper on April 21.

The annual event, sponsored by the CAFES Alumni Association, celebrates the accomplishments of the graduating seniors and welcomes them into the alumni family. The event was held in-person in the large machine shed at UWRF's Mann Valley Farm to allow for physically distant seating and a safer, nearly outdoor environment.

**Abigail Solum**, a food science and technology major from **Rice Lake**, received the Rochelle Junkman Seymour Award for 2020-21. The award recognizes the graduating senior with the highest GPA in the college.

Solum was described by faculty as an excellent student who really wanted to learn all she could. Her academic adviser said she was great to have in class, definitely a high achiever, but always willing to help other students and she gained their respect for that. Another faculty member said Solum would absorb information in class and when she spoke, it was worth listening to her. She added that Solum was very good at connecting her experience and knowledge to new and different situations.

**Brooke Brantner**, an animal science major from **Menomonie**, was presented the Dr. Earl Hildebrand Memorial Award which honors a graduating senior who best exemplifies a combination of scholastic achievement, extracurricular involvement and leaderships roles in CAFES. Students are nominated by faculty and the recipient is selected by the CAFES Scholarship Committee.

Six faculty from two departments nominated Brantner. They described her as an AgVocate with a real passion for agriculture that extended beyond her engagement in various clubs on campus to efforts across the state. Brantner took the passion she developed early on through 4-H, FFA and her own family beef operation, and, over the past five years, led 30 beef fitting clinics for youth, judged numerous FFA contests and served as the beef superintendent for the Dunn

County Fair. In addition, she was involved with a number of community philanthropic events including the Special Olympics and the Polar Plunge.

Brantner is an accomplished competitor having received the Top Individual Award at the International Dairy Judging Contest in Scotland in 2016. She freely shared what she learned through that experience by joining the Dairy Judging Team at UWRF and taking on the role as coach for the Dunn County dairy judging youth teams.

The faculty concluded their nomination letter by writing, "Brooke is sincere, compassionate, driven, smart and enthusiastic. She clearly wants to make the world a better place and for those reasons we believe she is an excellent candidate for the 2020-21 CAFES Outstanding Senior."

This annual event featured the traditional series of speakers. Representing the alumni was Sam Tauchen, '15, who shared his insights of life after graduation. Agricultural Engineering Professor Joel Peterson represented the faculty and offered advice to the graduates. Coincidentally, the speaker representing the graduating seniors was Brantner.

The students graduating with Laude honors, those who maintained a minimum 3.7 GPA for their entire college career, were also recognized and presented with the red and white cords they are entitled to wear at the commencement ceremony. CAFES Dean Dale Gallenberg also took a few moments to thank the many students who took on leadership roles in the college this past year, particularly those who served as an officer for one of the 20 student organizations in the college.

"I know many of you had great plans for your clubs and were certainly looking forward to some of the traditional activities," Gallenberg said. "Instead, I know many of you struggled this past year to engage students and to come up with activities that could be done safely, but you were up to the challenge."

Gallenberg went on to note that club meetings took place at corn mazes and in faculty backyards, and he described some new activities that were created. The Crops and Soils Club brought meals to farmers bringing in their harvest at a local cooperative last fall, and the Collegiate Farm Bureau created a scavenger hunt for Ag Day 2021.

The evening concluded with attendees picking up their catered boxed dinners and gathering with their friends in small groups at various locations on the farm where tables and chairs had been arranged.

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Photos of Solum and Brantner attached.