



Your CALS Connection For Life

# 2019 Outstanding Sophomore Award Recipients



### Emily Franke • Dairy science

Emily Franke is from Oakfield, Wisconsin. She is currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in dairy science and a certificate in agricultural business management. Her passion for agriculture started on her family's 500-acre cash crop operation and grew from her participation in 4-H, FFA, and showing animals at the county fair. It wasn't until she worked on a dairy farm that she decided she wanted to attend the University of Wisconsin-Madison and major in dairy science.

Franke is a member of the Association of Women in Agriculture (AWA), Badger Dairy Club (BDC) and Collegiate Farm Bureau (CFB). Through these organizations, Franke has been able to help plan and participate in many campus-wide activities to engage with other students about agriculture, such as Ag Day on Campus and Harvest Handouts.

Franke was also the 51<sup>st</sup> Fond du Lac County Fairest of the Fair this past summer and served as an ambassador for the fair and the agriculture industry. After she graduates, Franke hopes to work in agricultural finance or marketing and advocate for the industry she loves.



### Summer Henschel • Dairy science

Summer Henschel comes to UW-Madison from Chilton, Wisconsin and is a dairy science major. Henschel has been highly involved in several organizations on campus. She is a member of AWA, BDC, CFB, collegiate FFA and the Pre-Veterinary Association.

Henschel worked on a dairy farm before coming to UW-Madison and has been passionate about the dairy industry ever since. Most of her free time is devoted to dairy-related activities. She works in a dairy science lab on

campus studying dairy cattle lactation physiology, participates in the Badger Dairy Challenge to evaluate a 500-cow dairy, volunteers at Ag in the Classroom, Badger Dairy Camp, and the Wisconsin 4-H Dairy Bowl, and she shows cattle at all levels of competition.

This past fall, Henschel was named a Food Animal Veterinary Medical Scholar through the UW School of Veterinary Medicine. This honor is given to students who show a deep interest in food animal medicine and demonstrate the ability to succeed in veterinary school, which she will start in fall 2020.

### *Welcome to the 2019 Outstanding Sophomore Award recipient features!*

Each year, WALSAA names 10 second-year CALS students at the University of Wisconsin-Madison as outstanding sophomores. The award focuses on the qualities that truly exemplify an outstanding student, including leadership, service, experience, and academic success. Continue reading to learn more about this year's award winners and why they are truly outstanding.

*Since 1972, WALSAA has been THE alumni association of the UW-Madison College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALS) and Farm and Industry Short Course (FISC).*

*WALSAA is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization that supports the connection of students, faculty and alumni to the UW-Madison College of Agricultural & Life Sciences.*

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### Dima Kenj Halabi • Nutritional sciences

Dima Kenj Halabi is from Middleton, Wisconsin. Before coming to UW-Madison, Halabi was highly involved in efforts at her high school to start a Muslim student association. When she came to UW-Madison, she remained involved and joined the Arab Student Association to help plan meetings to promote the culture and social awareness of the Arab nations. She also volunteers her time as a coach for the Muslim Interscholastic Tournament, preparing students on art, music, debate, and writing competitions for regional and national tournaments.

Halabi is currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in nutritional sciences. In addition, Halabi attended the Madison Area Technical College in the summer of 2018 to receive phlebotomy training. This training taught her how to take blood samples, collect and record medical history, blood pressure, height, and weight. Halabi has a desire to one day work in the healthcare field, and all of her training and experiences will help her in this pursuit.



### Jessica Mehre • Dairy science and agronomy

Jessica Mehre grew up on a dairy farm in Glenbeulah, Wisconsin and is pursuing bachelor's degrees in dairy science and agronomy, as well as a certificate in business management for agriculture and the life sciences. While she is busy with a full course load, Mehre has remained busy outside of the classroom with her involvement in several extracurricular activities. She is active in several organizations on campus, including BDC, Badger Crops Club, Badger Dairy Challenge, and Saddle and Sirloin. She also volunteers her time to food pantries and livestock judging competitions.

Mehre has also held several different lab and research positions on-campus to gain real-world experience. She currently works for the Arlington Sheep Research Unit in Arlington, Wisconsin, and she has worked in a sweet corn breeding program organizing and processing samples, a livestock lab, and the Wisconsin Veterinary Diagnostics Lab. Recently, she was a field research and agricultural technology intern collecting and maintaining data from a plant breeding nursery.



### Dawson Nickels • Dairy science

Dawson Nickels grew up in Watertown, Wisconsin and is currently studying dairy science and pursuing a certificate in agricultural business management. Nickels has been extremely involved in the dairy industry throughout most of his life. Nickels worked part-time on a dairy farm as a milker before he found a niche fitting and showing cattle. He soon started his own business as a freelance dairy cattle fitter for all levels of competition. He also shows cattle competitively on his county's 4-H Dairy Judging Team and the UW-Madison Intercollegiate Dairy Judging Team, and he has earned several honors, including the 2017 Merle E. Howard Award at World Dairy Expo, which honors the outstanding junior exhibitor at the show.

Nickels is an active member of several organizations at UW-Madison, including BDC, where he is currently an activities officer helping plan monthly activities, and the Alpha Gamma Rho (AGR) fraternity. Nickels also volunteers his time to teach dairy handling and judging classes for the Dodge County 4-H Club, and he leads meetings as president of the Dodge County Junior Holstein Association.

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**Ethan Rocha • Chemical engineering**

Ethan Rocha is from Franklin, Wisconsin and is currently a chemical engineering major. At UW-Madison, Rocha has been involved with the Triangle fraternity and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Immersion program. Within the Triangle fraternity, Rocha has most recently served as secretary to keep organized meeting minutes and as the health and wellness chair providing members with resources for dealing with all health-related issues.

Rocha has served as a STEM Immersion coordinator and leader within the last year. STEM Immersion is an immersive orientation program through UW-Madison for underrepresented and first-generation incoming students interested in those related disciplines. He first served as a leader and mentor for students within the program and has since taken on a position as a coordinator to help plan next year's four-day orientation program. Rocha also works in a research lab focusing on the sustainable synthesis of chemicals using different catalysts.



**Mena Schmitt • Dairy science**

Mena Schmitt comes to UW-Madison from Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, and she is currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in dairy science and a certificate in agricultural business management. Her passion for the dairy industry started on her family's registered Milking Shorthorn dairy farm, where she assists with daily chores, breeding decisions and show string management. Schmitt also cares for a neighboring show herd's calves and heifers, and she assists with milkings.

At UW-Madison, Schmitt has continued to be involved in dairy- and agriculture-related organizations. She is a member of CFB, on the Midwest Spring Show committee for BDC, and the Breakfast on the Farm food chair for AWA. Schmitt is also serving as secretary for the American Milking Shorthorn Junior Society. She spent last summer in Australia as an intern for the American Milking Shorthorn Society learning about the Illawarra cow family and selecting potential genetics to bring back to the United States. Recently, she was named a Renk Agribusiness Institute Scholar for displaying excellence in academics, campus and agriculture involvement.



**Emily Schwanke • Animal science**

Emily Schwanke is from Waupun, Wisconsin and is pursuing a bachelor's degree in animal science. When you look at the organizations and experiences Schwanke has associated with so far, you can tell she has a passion for animals. She grew up working on her grandfather's small dairy farm and her uncle's sheep farm, the latter of which she owns a small flock of sheep she cares for and shows at the Dodge County Fair and the Wisconsin State Fair. Schwanke has also been an active member in her county's 4-H club and FFA organization.

Schwanke has also kept herself busy at UW-Madison with extracurriculars and other jobs. She is a member of AWA, UW Saddle and Sirloin, the UW Animal Welfare Judging Team, and the UW Pre-Veterinary Association. Schwanke works for the Arlington Research Center caring for the on-site sheep unit and in a sheep fertility lab on campus. She has also job shadowed with a large animal veterinarian.

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### Yiding Wang • Genetics

Yiding Wang comes to UW-Madison from Luoyang, China. She is currently studying genetics and pursuing a certificate in Italian. For several years, Wang has served as a teaching assistant for an English learning and overseas education agency in Luoyang. In this role, Wang helps prepare non-native English speaking students to take international standardized tests for English language proficiency.

At UW-Madison, Wang has served as team leader in the BRIDGE program of International Student Services. The BRIDGE program was created to help connect international students with U.S. students to help make friends and alleviate some concerns when traveling abroad. Wang helped organize events to facilitate friendships and connections between people of different cultures and backgrounds. She has also been working as an undergraduate research assistant in a research lab studying epigenetics.



### Elise Warda • Microbiology

Elise Warda is from Middleton, Wisconsin and is pursuing a bachelor's degree in microbiology with a biocore certificate. Warda has used a lot of her time on campus to become involved in health-related extracurriculars. Coming to UW-Madison, Warda immediately joined the Wisconsin Pre-Medical Society, an organization that assists students pursuing medical school. She attends meetings and volunteers regularly at Saturday Science and campus blood drives. Warda is also a member of the CALS Health and Research Society (CHARS), which helps undergraduates network with students with similar interests as well as healthcare professionals and university researchers. Warda is the secretary for the organization and helps coordinate funding for meetings, dues, and events.

Warda is also a certified nursing assistant, volunteer at a local hospital, personal trainer at UW-Madison RecSports, and an undergraduate research assistant in a lab on campus. While she keeps herself busy, Ward doesn't let it affect her academics as she has made the dean's list every semester so far.



### **Congratulations to all of our 2019 Outstanding Sophomore Award recipients!**

We are proud of all of our 2019 Outstanding Sophomore Award recipients and look forward to what they will accomplish in the years to come. We would also like to thank all of the applicants for this year's award and wish them good luck as they finish school.

*The ability for WALSAA to provide this type of support is at the core of its mission and solidifies its connection to CALS. Starting with donations and continuing with annual silent auctions, WALSAA has been able to generate continued scholarship support over many years to deserving students of CALS. If you are interested in supporting students and advisors, visit [www.WALSAA.org](http://www.WALSAA.org).*