

Kelly Paulk named 2018 UGA-Tifton Student MVP

By Julie Jernigan

University of Georgia, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences

University of Georgia Tifton campus senior Kelly Paulk has been named 2018 UGA-Tifton Student MVP. The agriscience and environmental systems (AES) major and Inaha, Georgia, native will be recognized at the campus's spring graduation celebration on Sunday, April 29.

Paulk was selected for the award because of her high level of professionalism and her participation in service activities, which are required for a qualified Student MVP award candidate, according to George Vellidis, director of academic programs at UGA-Tifton.

Paulk maintains a 3.8 GPA and was recently selected as the outstanding AES senior for the 2017-2018 school year. She has conducted three undergraduate research projects and made scientific presentations on campus, at the Georgia Farm Bureau Commodity Conference and at Sunbelt Agricultural Expo Field Day.

Paulk has worked on commercial farms and as a student worker at UGA-Tifton. She is a member of several student clubs and professional organizations, including Collegiate FFA, Agriculture Business Club and the UGA College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences' prestigious ambassador program.

"Not only has she committed herself to the UGA Tifton campus, she has also committed herself to community service, which is part of her daily life," Vellidis said. "Paulk was an excellent candidate."

To apply for this award, applicants must complete a statement of purpose detailing their accomplishments and dreams and must submit professional letters of reference. A group of faculty members, who represent all of the academic departments at UGA-Tifton, review the applications.

Initially Paulk wasn't going to apply for the UGA-Tifton Student MVP award because she thought there were so many other eligible seniors, but she decided she would regret it if she didn't apply.

"I was definitely surprised when I won, but I'm proud to represent UGA-Tifton in this way," Paulk said.

The Georgia Cotton Commission sponsors the UGA-Tifton Student MVP award and will provide Paulk with a \$750 scholarship. Her name will be added to a plaque, located in the National Environmentally Sound Production Agriculture Laboratory (NESPAL) building on campus, that includes the names of past UGA-Tifton Student MVP award winners.

Paulk will also be recognized at the 2018 Presidential Honors Week Luncheon in Athens, Georgia, for her accomplishments at UGA.

After graduation, Paulk plans to attend graduate school to fulfil her dream of becoming a UGA Cooperative Extension county agent.

“I’m debating on whether or not to wait to attend, but if I want to become a county agent, I have to attend graduate school at some point,” Paulk said. “Ever since I saw the UGA-Tifton television commercial telling me about how to become an AES major and after attending Extension training meetings with my dad, I knew it was something I wanted to pursue.”

Paulk’s father, John Paulk, is a senior agricultural specialist and farm manager for the Tifton Vegetable Park and Hort Hill Farm at UGA-Tifton.

Kelly Paulk attributes her success to UGA-Tifton’s hands-on learning opportunities and invaluable classroom experiences.

“Getting to work in the field and learning from the top professors while also being a part of rewarding clubs has really shaped me into the person I am today,” Paulk said.

Julie Jernigan is an intern at UGA-Tifton.