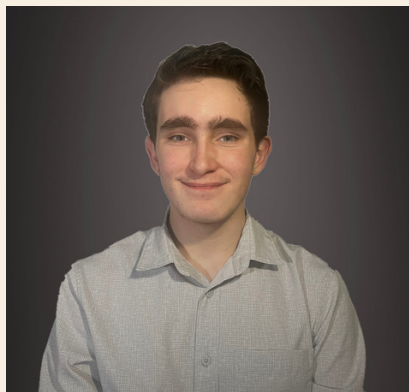


KCIFT STUDENT MEMBER HIGHLIGHT

GRIFFIN CUMMINGS



UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT, FOOD SCIENCE
KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY-MANHATTAN
IFT MEMBER SINCE 2023

Born and raised in Wyandotte County, Kansas, Griffin attend Sumner Academy of Arts & Science where he conducted undergraduate research in food chemistry and graduated with an International Baccalaureate diploma.

While at K-State, Griffin has completed internships at Three Dog Bakery and the USDA Central Milk Market, been a lab technician at the Kansas Value Added Foods Lab, & was elected president of the KSU Food Science Club. Currently, he is preparing to study abroad in Thailand next year.

HOW DID YOU FIRST GET INVOLVED IN IFT?

In April of 2022, the KSU Food Science Club hosted the Institute of Food Technologists Student Association (IFTSA) at a meeting to discuss IFT Student Membership. As an undergraduate researcher, the competition teams, volunteering opportunities, like the Science Meets Food Blog, and the IFT interest groups really appealed to me.



WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST INTRODUCTION TO THE SCIENCE OF FOOD?

This was either during my senior year of high school, or my second year of the International Baccalaureate program. One of the program's assessments is the Extend Essay, which is a self-directed, 4000-word research paper. I immediately knew that I wanted to research my newfound passion for food chemistry. I chose Food Additives as my topic of interest and wrote an essay on the research question "to what extent will the addition of a synergist (citric acid) affect the antioxidant concentration (ascorbic acid) of commercial fruit juice and thus extend its shelf life?". This was my first real, self-driven introduction to the science of food, and it made me critically think about my career long term.

FAVORITE IFT MEMORY

The two Festive Foodies events that I've participated in with KSU's Food Science Club. IFTSA hosts the event, where they randomly pair up chapters to send each other boxes of items representing their club. It's a unique opportunity to connect with other IFTSA chapters in the country and world.



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DO YOU HAVE ANY FAVORITE MEMORIES CENTERED AROUND FOOD?

When I was a kid, my father and I watched a lot of cooking shows together, but Good Eats was always my favorite. Specifically, I loved seeing food science explained to me in a way that I could understand at that age. When I graduated high school, my dad got me a signed copy of Good Eats 4: The Final Years, where Alton Brown personally wished me luck on my food science journey before I ventured onto K-State.

WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE ON A DEGREE IN FOOD SCIENCE AND/OR A FOOD SCIENCE-RELATED FIELD?

I have had a deep love for cooking and learning my entire life, and food science combines those two passions perfectly. Learning the science behind food and getting into deeper multidisciplinary topics makes me excited. My favorite food science course so far was actually my Honors English Class titled "How to Cook a Raccoon." We learned about the evolution of cookbooks and the transformation of their role throughout history. We were able to collaborate with special collections in the library and connect with community members to explore food beyond the sustenance perspective.



ARE THERE OTHER AREAS OF IFT THAT YOU ARE INVOLVED IN?

As the current president of KSU's Food Science Club, I've been able to attend the IFTSA Leadership Workshops. The leadership board does a great job, and we've really benefitted from the resources and support they have provided. The KSU Food Science Club also hosted the KCIFT Section's Membership Chair at a meeting last semester. We had a great discussion about their role and what we as students can do more to connect together with the Section.

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WHAT SURPRISED YOU MOST ABOUT FOOD SCIENCE?

The wide variety of career positions and multidisciplinary connections really stuck out to me. Personally, I am viewing these opportunities as I also approach a minor in either chemistry or political science.

WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE PLANS POST-GRADUATION?

While that is still a few years away for me, I feel like getting my masters, and eventually PhD, is of interest eventually. However, directly out of college, I think working in industry might be best to prevent any potential burn out. We will see what the future holds!



ADVICE FOR STUDENTS

There is no correct way to be a food scientist, so be the unicorn that you were always meant to be.

Don't be afraid to tell people "no" and to give yourself a break! I see way too many food science members overwhelm themselves. The college experience is too short & expensive for you to be unhappy!

LASTLY...WHAT'S YOUR GO-TO SNACK?

Pretzel M&Ms!

