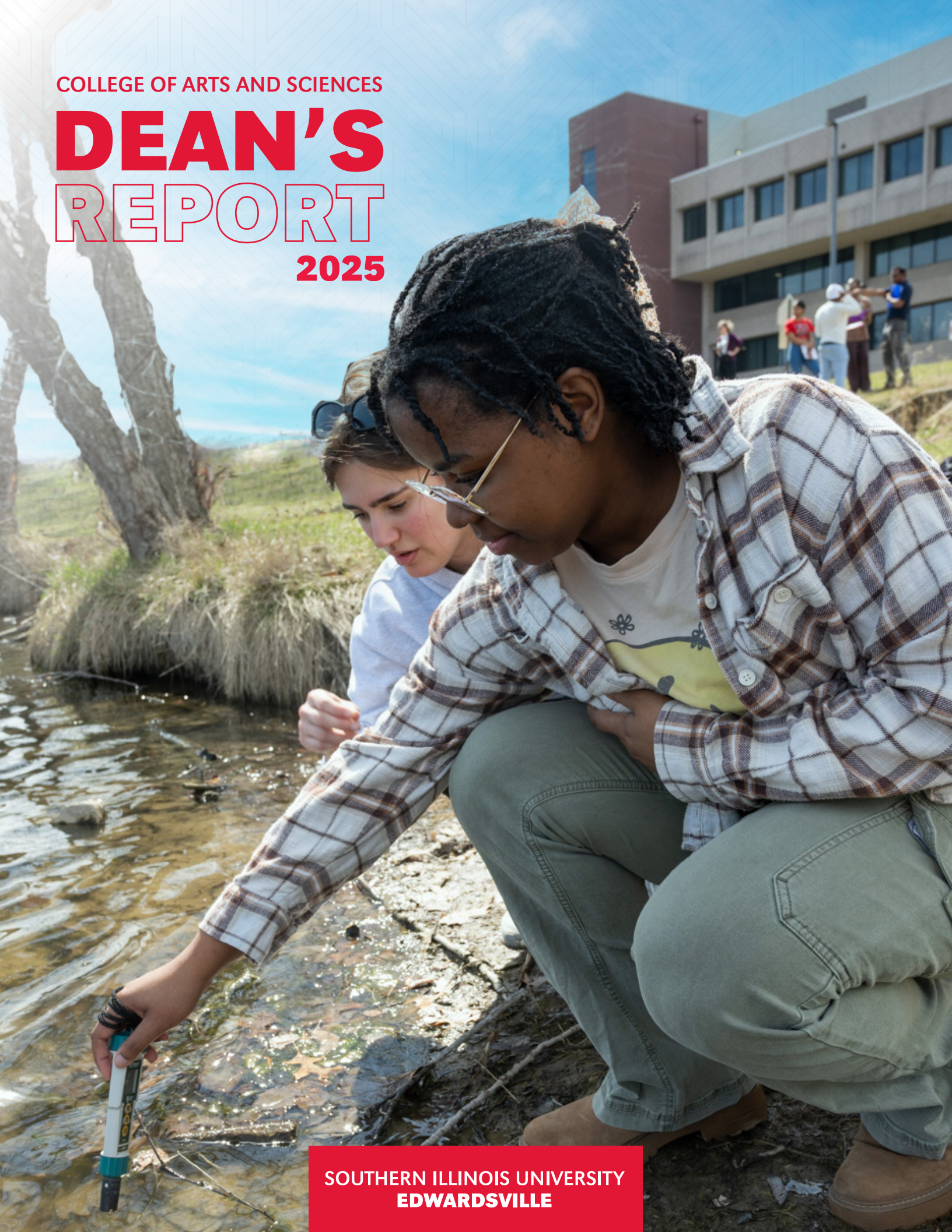


COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

DEAN'S REPORT

2025



SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
EDWARDSVILLE

Q&A

WITH DEAN KEVIN LEONARD, PHD



Q WHAT WERE THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2024-2025 ACADEMIC YEAR?

A This academic year was an exciting one for the College. In the fall, students were admitted directly to majors as they entered SIUE. This new process is helping new students connect with other students and faculty in their majors. The number of majors in most departments has dramatically increased, and the initiative promises to improve the retention of first-year students. In the spring, CAS recognized 265 students in two different Celebration of Student Excellence ceremonies. These new ceremonies replaced our Honors Day celebration, which had outgrown the Meridian Ballroom, and increased the opportunities for award and scholarship sponsors to interact with student honorees.

Q WHAT IS THE COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES DOING TO PREPARE STUDENTS FOR THE CAREERS OF THE FUTURE?

A Faculty across the College are working to revise courses and curriculum so that students learn to responsibly use generative artificial intelligence (AI). In Applied Communication Studies courses, for example, students use AI in the editing process, and they complete assignments that explore the advantages and disadvantages of using AI in public relations. Students in the Department of Geography and Geographic Information Sciences gain experience with machine learning in remote sensing and digital image processing.

Q WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO IN 2025-2026?

A The coming year promises to be another great year for CAS! New faculty will join the Departments of Anthropology, English Language and Literature, History, and Theater and Dance. These new faculty will support expansion of the Community-Oriented Digital Engagement Scholars (CODES) program and bring new vitality to our interdisciplinary minor in Black Studies. Redesigned courses will help students master College Algebra and prepare them for more advanced mathematics courses and courses in their majors.

About the College of Arts and Sciences

The College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) is committed to a mission of intellectual transformation for our students in which they explore a rich tapestry of ideas, experiences, and people.

CAS fulfills this mission with our exceptional teacher-scholars who provide innovative experiential learning opportunities; our excellent degree programs; and the outstanding liberal arts and sciences foundation we provide for undergraduate students across the University.

CAS promotes scholarly and creative activity, community engagement and public service, and cultural and arts programming, all of the finest quality.



Uncovering History

AT LOVEJOY LIBRARY

The Louisa H. Bowen University Archives and Special Collections at SIUE's Lovejoy Library preserves the past and gives students studying history invaluable hands-on experience protecting and sharing meaningful materials with broader audiences.

Last fall, Jason Stacy, PhD, distinguished research professor in the Department of History, and Marcella Lees, digital archivist and visiting assistant professor, led applied historical methods students through the delicate processing of the Henry D. "Hap" Meyer Collection.

Hap Meyer (1889-1974), a St. Louis resident and business professional who fell in love with soccer as a young man, amassed thousands of items related to the evolution and history of soccer in the United States. Students worked carefully to assess, organize, and preserve the expansive assortment of memorabilia and materials, gaining direct experience in completing archival work.

Jeff Manuel, PhD, professor in the Department of History, and his students continued digitizing the Hap Meyer collection this spring. The materials will be published online through ArchivesSpace, making them more accessible to researchers and the public.

The University Archives recently began exploring the John Chamless Popular Literature Collection, a 47-box archive containing over 1,500 vintage comic books donated in 1973 by the son of Paul Chamless, a former Lovejoy Library staff member.

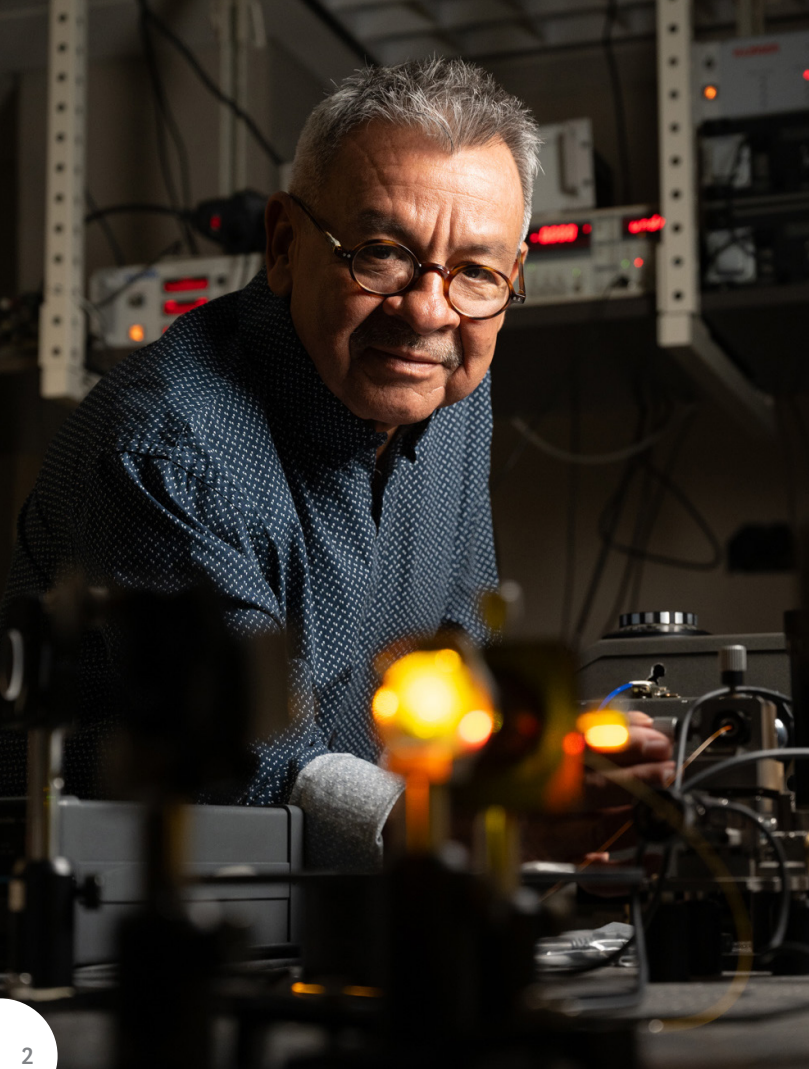
"The collection consists of early Detective Comics books, including issues featuring the caped crusader Batman from the 1940s-1960s," said Lees.

As time passed, the collector's market for vintage comic book issues from this era has skyrocketed, and single issues within the collection are anticipated to be worth hundreds. Manuel's public history students are developing exhibits showcasing the evolution of comic books and their cultural impact that will be available in Lovejoy Library and online.

Our goal was to teach theories behind the hands-on skills utilized by historians in their fields and execute them by processing an archival collection that has sat on Lovejoy Library's shelves for the last 50 years.

— JASON STACY, PHD

Distinguished Research Professor, Department of History



Hoppe Research Professor Award

HERNANDO GARCIA, PHD
Associate Professor, Department of Physics

This award recognizes and supports SIUE faculty members whose research or creative activities have the promise of making significant contributions to their field of study. An experimental physicist, Garcia will focus his research on understanding the Faraday effect when a single photon, or the smallest possible particle of electromagnetic energy and the smallest possible particle of light, is used, and how the polarization of light is affected when a single photon is put into an entangled polarization state. Financial support provided by the award will fund additional equipment, such as single photon counter modules and optical components.

Vaughnie Lindsay New Investigator Award

SUSAN KOOIMAN, PHD
Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology

This award recognizes faculty members whose research has the promise of making significant contributions to their fields of study, their respective school/department, and to SIUE in general. The award celebrates Kooiman's significant advancements in her field of archaeology, including her impactful research of the long-term dietary and technological adaptations in the Great Lakes and Midwest regions. Kooiman's research examines the region's changing subsistence patterns through analysis of culinary, technological, and environmental interactions. Financial support provided by the award will fund additional excavations at interior archaeological sites in Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

FACULTY *Awards*

CHARTING PATHS FOR INCLUSION

Maisy Garrison, '25, dedicated her academic journey to the relentless pursuit of knowledge while ensuring students like herself feel at home at SIUE.

Garrison, who majored in geography and minored in geographic information systems (GIS), believes her participation in the John Martinson Honors Program helped her become a better thinker and someone who can answer big questions.

"A lot of the honors classes deal with morality, interdisciplinary world problems, and current issues," said Garrison. "As a geographer, it is important that I don't shy away from these issues and can understand a multitude of perspectives from around the world."

Garrison, who identifies as LGBTQ, led an honors project called #SIUEHonorsYou to help LGBTQIA+ honors students find community within the program. She invited its members to complete a survey and share variations of their identities, including descriptors such as bookworm, musician, heavy lifter, gamer, artist, and more. She submitted the idea to the National Collegiate Honors Council and presented her project at the NCHC annual conference last fall.

Outside of enhancing the Honors Program's inclusive environment, Garrison participated in three separate Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities projects. During the spring semester of her senior year, Garrison kickstarted her GIS career and started an internship at GeoMARC. The SIUE research center provides access to innovative geospatial analytics/solutions to address complex, spatially related problems.

"Working at GeoMARC has helped me understand and apply concepts I might have struggled with in the classroom," said Garrison. "While I felt prepared to start my internship, there are a lot of concepts in GIS you can only learn by doing."

With the help of her GeoMARC mentors, Randy Pearson, PhD, GIS professor and GeoMARC director, Sarah Chamberlin, and Charlie Brown, Garrison sharpened her ArcGIS Pro skills above and beyond what she thought would be possible. "I owe any success I have to them!"



“

There is a great community at SIUE who wants to welcome you.

— MAISY GARRISON
BS GEOGRAPHY '25

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BREAKING BARRIERS TO

EDUCATION

COMMUNITY-ORIENTED DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT SCHOLARS (CODES)

On a warm spring afternoon, a cohort of students and their faculty mentors, armed with soil coring and water quality testing tools, gathered along the banks of a pond on the Edwardsville campus to examine what lies beneath the surface of the campus's landscape.

These students are part of an innovative alternative general education curriculum at SIUE called the Community-Oriented Digital Engagement Scholars (CODES) program. Instead of taking stand-alone general education courses across multiple, often disconnected subjects, CODE Scholars follow a curriculum emphasizing multidisciplinary research and problem-solving methods to help them understand real-world problems like environmental sustainability, youth violence, and social justice.

CODES is designed for students who are first-generation college students, historically underrepresented in their major, and/or Pell-eligible based on the FASFA or Illinois RISE application. Students are selected to join CODES based on their commitment to making a difference in their communities and receive an award for full tuition for up to 18 credit hours per semester for four years.

“

Our students thrive when they can use their learning experience to have a direct, meaningful impact on the world.

— JESSICA DESPAIN, PHD
Professor of English Language and Literature
CODES Curriculum Director

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“When developing CODES, I thought about how to support students who might not have had access to high-impact practices like the Honors Program or Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities because they did not have the test scores or the time,” said Jessica DeSpain, PhD, professor of English Language and Literature and CODES curriculum director. “As a first-generation college student myself, I knew what these struggles were like, and I wanted to give students a sense of belonging and purpose.”

The Mellon Foundation* recently awarded SIUE a \$1 million grant to expand each CODES cohort from 25 to 100 students beginning in fall 2025. The program will also serve as a model for training SIUE faculty fellows and fund a three-day training for visiting fellows from institutions across the country.

“I am glad that CODES is being recognized not for just the excellence in innovative undergraduate education but also for its digital humanities curriculum and scholarship,” said DeSpain. “There would be no Mellon Grant if our scholars weren’t game for a challenge, willing to try hard things, and ready to bring all their energy and dedication to the program.”

**The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation is the nation’s largest supporter of the arts and humanities. Since 1969, the Foundation has been guided by its core belief that the humanities and arts are essential to human understanding. The Foundation believes that the arts and humanities are where we express our complex humanity, and that everyone deserves the beauty, transcendence, and freedom that can be found there. Through our grants, we seek to build just communities enriched by meaning and empowered by critical thinking, where ideas and imagination can thrive. Learn more at mellon.org.*

BOUNDLESS SCHOLAR EXPERIENCE

The Boundless Scholar Experience (BSE), an academic program for first-year students that fosters active intellectual engagement and supports degree completion, consists of three main components—academic advising, tutoring support, and African American literature courses. Students join learning communities, helping them build a sense of community as they transition into life at SIUE.

“The first year of college is a critical period for our students’ personal and academic journeys,” said Howard Rambsy, PhD, distinguished research professor in the Department of English Language and Literature and BSE coordinator. “It is meaningful to me to be involved at this pivotal time to help our students navigate university life as they begin shaping their paths in the world.”

BSE builds upon SIUE’s existing anti-racism, equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts to improve retention and graduation rates of marginalized students.

“We read and discuss works by Frederick Douglass, Toni Morrison, Amiri Baraka, and Margaret Walker,” Rambsy said. “As students engage with these texts, they experience moments of recognition and connection, deepening their understanding as they progress on their educational and cultural journeys.”

SIUE’s program was among the first recipients of the National Association of Higher Education Systems’ \$275,000 Catalyst Fund. The grant expanded BSE from 40-50 students to a much larger population of underrepresented first-year students, increasing equitable access to higher education.

LOUIS STOKES ALLIANCE FOR MINORITY PARTICIPATION

The Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP), funded by the National Science Foundation, supports historically underrepresented students in STEM fields at institutions nationwide.

SIUE’s LSAMP program, part of the Illinois alliance based at Chicago State University, provides one-on-one tutoring, research and supply stipends, and opportunities to present at national conferences.

Myron Jones, PhD, associate professor of chemistry and SIUE LSAMP coordinator, and 12 students attended the 2025 Illinois LSAMP Symposium in late February. Four students presented research in the poster competition, and junior chemistry student Yassine Ndiaye claimed first place in the chemistry poster competition. In addition to the oral and poster presentations and keynote speakers, students had opportunities to meet peers and faculty from other institutions. Over 320 students, faculty, and staff members from a dozen institutions across the state were in attendance.

“It is extremely rewarding to see students interact with each other at a welcoming conference that both represents them and allows them to express themselves,” said Jones. “It is clearly empowering for everyone in attendance.”



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AN EVENING OF *Harmony*

The SIUE University Choirs partnered with the SIUE Meridian Society, an auxiliary organization of the SIUE Foundation that promotes women's leadership and community-based projects, to celebrate the power of music and the spirit of giving. Held in October, the inaugural "There Will Be Light" choral concert uplifted and inspired its audience through connection and used light as a symbol of optimism, hope, and new beginnings.

"There Will Be Light" was a fitting theme as it was one of SIUE University Choirs' first outings under the leadership of Nikos Myrogiannis-Koukos, DMA, assistant professor in the Department of Music and director of choral activities.

"In our instance, light represents optimism, new beginnings, celebrating the end of our struggles, and the fulfillment of our potential," said Myrogiannis-Koukos. "As I was programming music for our groups, I indulged in the idea of telling that same story through different lenses: genres, historical eras, and styles."

Myrogiannis-Koukos led the Choral Union and Concert Chorale through their performances while Alicia Canterbury Vorel, DMA, assistant professor of music education, conducted the Treble Choir and combined SIUE choirs.

Attendees of the concert enjoyed readings of poetry and musical movements that nurtured the theme of light.

Canterbury Vorel incorporated a reading and a 1971 piece from Michael Bussewitz-Quarm with lyrics by Chantal Sellers to explore the historical significance of the revolutionary Radium Girls. The piece, named after the early 20th century female factory workers who suffered health problems from using radioactive paint, perfectly fit the evening as it echoed the empowerment of women that the Meridian Society delivers through their philanthropy.

Even though light is something we all experience visually every day, we need to stand still and feel its impact, what it means to each one of us, literally and metaphorically.

— **NIKOS MYROGIANNIS-KOUKOS, DMA**
Assistant Professor, Director of Choral Activities

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PROTECTING SOUTHERN ILLINOIS COMMUNITIES AGAINST DOMESTIC EXTREMISM

According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and other national agencies, domestic violent extremism is one of the nation's most serious security threats.

Political Science professors Suranjan Weeraratne, PhD, and Laurie Rice, PhD, have created a sustainable and robust prevention framework to help communities throughout southern Illinois remain safe from these threats. Reducing Extremism and Violence through Education, Research, and Societal Engagement (REVERSE) was funded by a DHS grant under the Targeted Violence and Terrorism Grant program.

"The U.S. is facing a growing threat of lone wolf actors motivated by a variety of ideologies and grievances," said Rice. "Given the current highly polarized political environment and the prevalence of online extremism, this threat is likely to grow unless communities act to build preventative factors and work to reduce risk factors."

Beginning in 2023, the REVERSE team conducted nine surveys across southern Illinois and the U.S., gathering responses from over 10,000 people to assess extremist attitudes, drivers of violence, and risk factors for terrorism. Their findings revealed key concerns:

- Nearly 25% of southern Illinois adults reported experiencing bullying, both in-person and online, in the past three years.
- Individuals facing recent struggles with life goals, employment, family, and romantic relationships were two to three times more likely to support violence.

Using this data, the team engaged law enforcement, community organizations, faith leaders, academics, policymakers, and residents to raise awareness of radicalization risks. REVERSE also trained community members to facilitate future discussions on political violence and developed media literacy and critical thinking programs for SIUE political science students.

“ The success of REVERSE depends on dedicated partners from all sectors of society working together. It takes all of us to help keep our communities safe from the threat of targeted violence. ”

— **LAURIE RICE, PHD**
Professor, Department of Political Science

Although the grant period has ended, the researchers continue to offer prevention-related training and collaborate with state officials to inform future initiatives.

LEARN MORE
siue.edu/reverse

This project was supported by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security as part of an award totaling \$332,491, of which \$332,491 are federal funds with 0% financed with nongovernmental sources. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security or the U.S. Government.

EXPLORING CLIMATE CHANGE'S IMPACT ON AMPHIBIANS

For Thomas Anderson, PhD, assistant professor of biological sciences, the ecologically diverse landscape on the Edwardsville campus—including woodlands, specialized gardens, restored prairies, and wetlands—serves as the perfect field site for his research on climate change's effect on phenological shifts, or the timing of biological events, in amphibians like salamanders and frogs.

"Normally, salamanders emerge from underground, hop or crawl to the nearest wetlands, and reproduce in the late winter to early spring," said Anderson. "Since climate change seems to shift the timing of when organisms do things in their lives, I wondered if factors like increased temperatures and rainfall could impact salamanders' emergence and the timing of their reproduction cycles."

Though salamanders and other amphibians can be easily bred in captivity, Anderson and his students developed a unique experimental design, including 100 outdoor water tanks that provide salamanders with an ideal habitat while giving the team the ability to alter certain variables in their experiment.

"We can easily manipulate when their eggs can hatch by putting them in differing water temperatures," said Anderson. "By doing this, we can simulate hatching scenarios and determine what would occur if the ponds warmed up too quickly or too late."

In an article published in Nature's open-access journal Scientific Reports, Anderson and one of his former Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity students, Trevor Rallo, BS biological sciences '23, highlighted their investigation into how hatching delays in small-mouthed salamanders can influence survival, growth, and metamorphosis.

Anderson and Rallo found that shorter hatching delays (approximately 14 days) improved the salamander's survival rate, while longer delays (greater than 28 days) led to higher mortality. Late hatchers grew

larger, but their survival rates were lower likely due to predation and increased competition. Salamanders with a shorter hatching delay had more time to grow outside of the egg, giving them a size advantage over later hatchlings and the ability to outcompete the smaller salamanders for food, sometimes even preying on late-season hatchlings. The late hatchers that survived often grew larger due to reduced competition, and many were able to catch up on their development.

These findings highlight how climate change can disrupt amphibian populations by altering when they reproduce and interact.

Rallo passed away in July 2024 after a seven-year battle with cancer. Despite having no initial experience working with amphibians, Rallo enthusiastically assisted Anderson with his experiments and became a key contributor to his research on climate's effect on amphibians.

"It was extremely fun to work with and interact with Trevor. He brought so much enthusiasm and curiosity not only for science but for life in general," said Anderson. "I miss the excitement he brought to everything we did together."

EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS

Life & Legacy



OF PROFESSOR EMERITUS STEVE BROWN

Steve Brown, professor emeritus in the Department of Art and Design, passed away in August 2023. Brown spent nearly two decades bringing the photography program into the digital age and overseeing the design of the updated photography and digital media space. He retired from his tenured role at SIUE in 2019 and moved to San Francisco to be close to his family.

The department hosted a memorial retrospective and alumni exhibition to honor Brown's legacy. Brown's friends, family, colleagues, and students attended the exhibition's opening reception last October in the Art & Design West Gallery. The month-long exhibition showcased his original works and pieces by several of his former Master of Fine Arts and Bachelor of Fine Arts students.

Steve had a huge impact on my path as an artist
The world is a little less interesting without him in it.

— AMANDA PFISTER, MFA STUDIO ART
Photography '10

“/”

"Our students knew that Steve cared about them," said Larry LaFond, PhD, professor of English Language and Literature and Art and Design's interim chair. "He was adept at asking his students probing questions to help them think deeply, and he encouraged them to make work that aligned with their convictions."

John DenHouter, professor of painting, regarded Brown as a wonderful colleague known for his thoughtfulness, insight, and care for his fellow faculty members and students. "One of the highlights of my teaching career was leading a student trip to Ireland together in 2006," said DenHouter. "We had stopped for lunch at a café overlooking Galway Bay, and I remember him saying in jest, 'John, let's chuck it all, stay here, and become pirates!' I'll always remember Steve fondly."

An established and gifted photographer, Brown's work explored the intersection of culture and nature. He focused his lens on the self-exploration of illness, including his own struggle with and remission from esophageal cancer, rich landscapes of the Midwest, and portraiture of North Dakota's fracking industry.



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CAS BY THE NUMBERS



647 Bachelor's Degrees
Awarded 2024

187 Master's Degrees
Awarded 2024



2,978 Undergraduate
Students

392 Graduate
Students



309 Scholarships
& Awards

265 Student Honorees
at Spring Celebration of
Excellence Ceremonies



144 Students in
Internships or Practica

39,115 Hours Served by
These Students

SIUE is proud to support responsible use of forest resources.

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