

SIUE fall commencement confers more than 1,100 degrees

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EDWARDSVILLE - Southern Illinois University Edwardsville Interim Chancellor Stephen Hansen oversaw the 2015 Fall Commencement exercises today. Two ceremonies for the 1,121 eligible graduates began in the morning and concluded this afternoon in the Vadalabene Center on campus.

Hansen focused on the value of an education by quoting Benjamin Franklin, “An investment in knowledge pays the best interest.” He also told the graduates that their “investment in an education from SIUE provides you with good dividends in your future. SIUE has prepared you well for navigating this rapidly changing world.”

Wendy Fuchs, PhD and associate professor of special education and communication disorders in the School of Education, Health and Human Behavior, is SIUE’s 2015 Teaching Excellence Award winner. She provided the commencement address during the morning ceremony for the Graduate School, and the Schools of Business, Nursing and Education, Health and Human Behavior.

“Choose gratitude – there’s a saying that gratitude is the best attitude,” Fuchs stated. “Gratitude is defined as the readiness to show appreciation for and return kindness to yourself and others. You have to much to be grateful for as you’ve just joined the six percent of the world population that hold college degrees.”

Brandi Jackson was the student speaker in the morning and earned a bachelor’s in accountancy from the School of Business. She touched on the important of perseverance in her remarks.

“Struggles come in many forms, but the receipt of our degree demonstrates our resiliency,” Jackson said. “We have all persevered and proven we can achieve anything we put our minds to! Remember that as you go out and conquer your dreams.

“Good things come to people who wait, but better things come to those who go out and get them.”

Also during the morning ceremony, Dr. Lakesha Butler, clinical associate professor of pharmacy practice in the School of Pharmacy, received the SIUE Champion for Diversity Award. The award is presented to a faculty or staff member who has demonstrated an exemplary level of dedication to SIUE’s mission of fostering equal opportunity, as well as exhibiting outstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Stephen Hupp, PhD and associate professor of psychology in the School of Education, Health and Human Behavior provided the commencement address for the afternoon

session to the Graduate School, College of Arts and Sciences, and School of Engineering. The SIUE Alumni Association selected Hupp as its 2015 Great Teacher Award winner.

Hupp drew upon this weekend's release of the latest Star Wars movie to entertain with a variety of quotes from the film series. "I'm counting on you to make this world a better place," he said. "My son and daughter, who give immensely deeper meaning to my world, are counting on you. My mom and dad, who are my first and greatest teachers, are counting on you. My significant other, who enriches my exploration of joy in this world, is counting on you. My colleagues, who tirelessly serve the students of this world, are counting on you. Our families and our friends, and indeed all of the people of this world, are counting on you."

"You are the next generation to make discoveries, save lives, create masterpieces, and to 'restore peace and justice to the galaxy.' My optimism for our future and beyond awakens as I look out at you. You give me new hope."

Louis Bourgeois was the student speaker for the afternoon ceremony. He earned a bachelor's in mechanical engineering from the School of Engineering. He chose to look toward the challenges ahead.

"It is time for us to take what we have learned throughout our college career and put it to use," Bourgeois said. "I don't just mean finding a job and using our skills to earn a paycheck and just get by. It is bigger than that. Let's put our skills and knowledge toward a higher purpose."

"Whatever it was that motivated you to work so hard these past few years and accomplish so much, let that guide and influence the many decisions you'll make throughout your future. Find your purpose and use it as a springboard to launch you through any difficult times that lie ahead of you just like you did to get here today."