

Hansen inspires graduating class, refers to them as products of America's belief in education

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EDWARDSVILLE – *Interim Chancellor Stephen Hansen* inspired graduates both on Friday and Saturday at the **Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville** 2016 Spring Commencement exercises where 1,850 students received their diplomas.

Hansen was on hand for ceremonies for Graduate School, School of Business and School of Nursing graduates on Friday night and continued on Saturday with ceremonies for the Graduate School, School of Education, Health and Human Behavior in the morning with the College of Arts and Sciences and finished with the School of Engineering in the evening.

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville celebrated its 2016 Spring Commencement exercises Friday and Saturday as 1,850 students received their diplomas in the Vadalabene Center on campus.

“You are the product of America’s belief in the value of education and America’s investment in the future,” Hansen said. “You are the answer to critics of higher education who question the value of a college degree. You are an investment in the future of America.”

Hansen pointed out that 90 percent of SIUE graduates have a job within a year of earning their diplomas.

“I hope that the ‘E’ experience has allowed the love for the learning, the respect for others, sustainability, integrity, and the application of knowledge to bloom in your hearts, so that your own personal light will shine out into the world and change it for the better, even if it’s just one person at a time,” said Hansen. “In the end, I am ready to turn the sun in a new direction.”

Thelma Mothershed Wair was awarded an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters during today’s afternoon ceremonies. The SIUE alumna has spent her life championing diversity efforts. In 1957, Mothershed Wair attended Central High School in Little Rock, Ark., as one of the Little Rock Nine.

After making her historic footprint, Mothershed Wair earned a bachelor’s in home economics from SIU Carbondale in 1964. She achieved a master’s in guidance and counseling from SIUE in 1970 and completed an administrative certificate in education from the University in 1972.

Long-time friend and fellow SIUE alumna **Vivian Nichols** spoke on Mothershed Wair’s behalf. “A good education can be the key to success or at least a stepping stone,” Nichols said. “Pursue your dreams, no matter how lofty, with honesty, integrity and hard work. Success is attainable.”

Ollie Langhorst, who earned a bachelor’s in mechanical engineering, was the final student speaker. A non-traditional student and Marine Corps. veteran, Langhorst pointed to the skills his fellow graduates accumulated during their time at SIUE.

“We are equipped to solve complex problems, work effectively in teams with people from different walks of life and get the facts in a scholarly manner, he said. “On top of all this, each of you has gained the knowledge that despite falling down, success hinges on having the courage to pick yourself up, over and over again.”

Mariah Huelsmann, who earned a bachelor’s in anthropology, was the student speaker for the Saturday afternoon session and noted, “College is a season of life, a time to grow and change. The college experience is an ephemeral one, but like springtime on campus, it allows you to bloom into yourself.

The morning student speaker was **Tarsha Moore**, who received a master's in education /college student personnel administration. She reminded her fellow graduates that, "You determine your own success and being humble leaves room for more blessings to come your way.

"You are fearless, and no matter what life throws your way, you can handle it because you have come way too far to fail now.

"Finally, remember that as long as you set out to make a positive impact on the lives of the individuals that you encounter, you will always be successful because to make a positive impact is to leave a legacy, and to leave a legacy is to never die."

Nathan Wiederholt, who earned a bachelor's in nursing, was the student speaker for Friday's session. "Throughout our time at SIUE, we have all grown personally and professionally," he said. "Our constant dedication and commitment to our education has been the steady guide to our progress. As we advanced through the years, we slowly but surely grew into who we are today - graduates who embody SIUE's core values of citizenship, wisdom, integrity, inclusion and excellence."

Camille Emig-Hill was honored with the University's Distinguished Service Award Friday night. She achieved a bachelor's in mass communications and journalism in 1972 and a master's in business administration in 1977. She began her career in business communications with Ralston Purina. Later, she worked for 30 years at Anheuser-Busch, where she retired as director of human resources shared services.

Emig-Hill focused on gratitude and service. "My feeling of gratitude for SIUE is because of the opportunities afforded to me that changed my life," she said. "My experiences at SIUE were the best of my life and resulted in relationships that were life-changing.

"That attitude of gratitude led to my desire to serve and help others build their success. When you serve, it becomes part of something that's on-going – remember the power of service."



