

Valor program selects four SIUE nursing students

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EDWARDSVILLE - The Southern Illinois University Edwardsville School of Nursing has had four students selected by the Veterans Affairs Learning Opportunity Residency (VALOR) program at the Marion VA Hospital.

The students are in SIUE's regional nursing program in Carbondale:

- Melanie Lowe, of Herrin, will be in the medical/surgical unit
- Denetta Magruder, of West Frankfort, will be in the Community Living Center

- Kelsey O'Brien, of Arlington Heights, will be in the medicine clinics (hematology, cardiac catheterization lab and oncology)
- Kaitlyn Spirk, of McHenry, will be in the emergency department

The students will rotate through each unit, working as techs with registered nurse preceptors and receiving the same starting hourly salary as an RN. They have completed orientation and are starting to work this week. Eventually, they will complete 400 hours.

“This program is extremely competitive and highly revered,” said **Laura Bernaix, dean of the SIUE School of Nursing**. “We are always in competition with other schools in the area, and typically end up with two students being selected. For our students to be selected for all four available positions certainly highlights the exceptional talents of not only the students, but also our instructors who have prepared them.”

For consideration, students must submit a recommendation letter from their nursing program, an application and an essay on why they want to participate in the VALOR program. They must have a minimum grade point average 3.0.

“Although this is the third year that I have recommended students, we have had student appointments ever since the program started, and it is quite an accomplishment to be chosen,” said Carole Sullivan, DNP, RN, and director of the SIUE regional program in Carbondale. “It is a great program for the students and helps to strengthen our relationship with that agency.”

About VALOR

The [Veterans Affairs Learning Opportunity Residency](#) (VALOR) program provides students with the opportunity to develop competencies in clinical nursing, pharmacy and medical technology during residency at an approved VA health care facility. The program is designed to improve participants' clinical skills, clinical judgment and critical thinking while caring for our nation's veterans. Learning opportunities include classroom experiences, competency-based clinical practice with a qualified preceptor, and participation in focused clinical conferences.

Students may be appointed on a full- or part-time basis during the summer months and may continue during their senior academic year on a part-time basis. Students participate in the program for one full year, while completing a minimum of 400 consecutive work hours during the summer months. Students may complete an additional 400 work hours during their senior academic year.