

"Immigrants in Our Midst" Symposium slated for Nov. 4 at SIUE

by Doug McIlhagga
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The one-day event “Immigrants in Our Midst: Unleashing the Economic Power of Our New Americans” is dedicated to the profound impact that immigrants have on the U.S. work force. It is scheduled from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Friday, Nov. 4 at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville’s Morris University Center.

The symposium features a slate of presenters along with keynote speaker [Michele Waslin](#), senior research and policy analyst at the [American Immigration Council](#). The program highlights the value of diversity, and how it enriches businesses and communities. Panel discussions will address the unique needs of immigrants, and how communities can work together to ensure immigrants reach their full potential and get in better position to contribute to the economy.

Vicki Niederhofer, labor market economist with the Illinois Department of Employment Security, said the annual educational conference will offer an array of practical expertise about the economic impact of immigrants.

“We’ll present information regarding demographics, legal issues and more,” Niederhofer said. “This year, we’ll feature success stories from our Latino community members. We invite the public to learn and enjoy hearing success stories and positive impacts with a depth of content that is rarely available. Our panels promise to be interesting, informative and inspirational.”

Thomas Lavallee, PhD, associate professor of Chinese and chair of SIUE’s Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, has actively forged connections with presenters and attendees in preparation for the Nov. 4 event. “With communications from Chancellor Randy Pembroke about High Impact Community Engagement Practices (HICEPS), this conference is timely and suggests many possibilities for positive interactions between our students and the community,” Lavallee said.

Silvia Torres Bowman, director of the Illinois International Trade Center, said the public is invited to attend and gain a valuable perspective on how immigrants enhance the Illinois economy and the diversity of communities throughout the Metro East.

“Current affairs are changing the immigration landscape in our country,” Torres Bowman said. “The immigrant community has become front and center of much debate in the 2016 political cycle. Through Immigrants in our Midst, we hope to engage and educate the regional community regarding this extremely important subject.

“We also look forward to facilitating new connections and raising the profile of immigrants by celebrating local success stories.”

The symposium is partly the result of SIUE alum Raffi Mikaelian’s efforts in connecting his alma mater with The Latino Roundtable of Southwestern Illinois. The group is comprised of representatives from community organizations, businesses, colleges, universities and various agencies with a unified purpose of serving the Latino community in the Metro East.

“My participation with the Latino Roundtable and the Immigrants in our Midst program has allowed me to connect people with many helpful area resources,” said Mikaelian, who earned both a bachelor’s in Spanish, and a master’s in public administration and policy analysis in 2010 and 2015, respectively.

The Illinois International Trade Center within the SIUE School of Business and the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature in SIUE’s College of Arts and Sciences sponsor the event.

Attending the symposium costs \$10 in advance and \$15 at the door. A networking lunch and parking is included. For more information and to register, visit: siue.edu/educationaloutreach/registration1.shtml

The [International Trade Center at SIUE](#) serves businesses in Southern Illinois by providing individualized, export consultation to Illinois businesses; identification of foreign buyers, agents and/or distributors through trade leads; international market analysis and more.

The ITC strives to support the goals and objectives of both the [SIUE School of Business](#) and the University at large. It is a service to the community supported by the U.S. Small Business Administration, Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity and Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. To learn how these no-cost services can help your business, contact the ITC at (618) 650-3851, International-Trade-Center@siue.edu or www.siue.edu/business/itc.