

# **SIUE's Sasso helping to expand College Student Personnel Administration Program**

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EDWARDSVILLE - Dr. Pietro Sasso's arrival as the program director of the college student personnel administration program (CSPA) at Southern Illinois University

Edwardsville, comes extensive knowledge, substantial research and previous successes in the field. He is expected to use those assets to grow and enhance the graduate program.

Sasso joined SIUE's Department of Educational Leadership in the School of Education, Health and Human Behavior in August, coming from Monmouth University in New Jersey, where he was the architect of the student affairs master's program. He increased the student enrollment from two to 40 and helped the program achieve accreditation.

"College student personnel administration is still a new program at many universities and colleges around the country," Sasso said. "The program is about preparing entry-level professionals for careers in higher education administration, where they learn about how to work with diverse student populations and the context of how colleges function.

"Higher education has grown so complex, that you need a graduate level program to prepare the next generation of leaders," he added. "You need well-trained administration to help students navigate their college experience, and highly trained administrators will also increase student retention and learning."

SIUE's CSPA program began in fall 2014 with about 20 students. The program has grown to 60 students and several affiliated faculty members and instructors, including Vice-Chancellor for Student Affairs Dr. Jeffrey Waple, PhD.

"Although we do have some faculty in our department with expertise in higher education, we did not have anyone whose primary area was student affairs until Dr. Sasso's arrival," said Laurel Puchner, PhD and chair of the Department of Educational Leadership. "He knows people in the field, and is outstanding at networking. He has the ability to build bridges both within this institution and across higher education institutions that are necessary for a successful program."

"There is a need for this program within the region," Sasso said. "Within the St. Louis area, there are only a handful of these (CSPA) programs, and none at a public institution that focuses on student development and social justice, to my knowledge. As a profession, student affairs practice is approximately 100 years old, but the credential of having a required master's degree is less than 30 years old.

"Our first goal in the program is to get students to understand themselves and their own personal narrative," he continued. "My long term vision for the program is to have external partnerships with other St. Louis regional institutions. We are already

partnering by having internships and practicums at Lindenwood University, Lewis and Clark Community College, Harris-Stowe State University, Washington University and Ranken Technical College.”

“He has achieved much of what I was hoping he would accomplish,” Puchner said. “He also has students involved in national student affairs organizations and done a great job of collaborating with SIUE student affairs offices.”

“It’s a great program, which will have good outcomes for students and colleges,” said Sasso. “I see raising the profile of this CSPA program both regionally and nationally. The program will continue to become a signature program at the University and distinguished from others.”

The [SIUE School of Education](#), Health and Human Behavior prepares students in a wide range of fields including community and public health, exercise science, nutrition, instructional technology, psychology, speech-language pathology and audiology, educational administration, and teaching. Faculty members engage in leading-edge research, which enhances teaching and enriches the educational experience. The School supports the community through on-campus clinics, outreach to children and families, and a focused commitment to enhancing individual lives across the region.

**Photo:** Pietro Sasso’s, PhD, director of College Student Personnel Administration program in SIUE’s Department of Educational Leadership.