

Chancellor Pembroke, SIUE Deans explore HICEP opportunities in Costa Rica

January 25 2017 2:57 PM



EDWARDSVILLE - Southern Illinois University Edwardsville Chancellor Dr. Randy Pembroke demonstrated his passion for developing “professionals, scholars and leaders who shape a changing world,” as the institution’s mission states, during his January travels to Costa Rica.

Pembroke spent approximately one week in San Jose and outlying communities volunteering his time for the betterment of local citizens. It was his 12th consecutive year participating in service work in Costa Rica, with students and faculty from Baker University and Washburn University.

“I’m not sure I conceive it as leading by example, rather, that I’m doing what I am called to do and hoping that others will want to join in a meaningful, transformative experience,” Pembroke said. “Basically, we go to help others. We provide health screenings, build structures, and give away clothing and food.”

“On a personal level, I’m always reminded not to take what we have for granted, and how one individual can make a difference in the world. Professionally, I come away with improved language skills, a better knowledge of other cultures and an appreciation for the academic disciplines that participate, including nursing, construction, engineering and dentistry.”



In collaboration with SIUE leaders from multiple disciplines, Pembroke is eager to increase SIUE's involvement in this type of High Impact Community Engagement Practice (HICEP) to further engage students in applying their academic knowledge and skills in a way that makes a positive impact within communities.

From Jan. 7-11, the Southern Illinois University School of Dental Medicine's (SIU SDM) Dean Bruce Rotter, DMD, and Kenneth Rawson, DMD, interim associate dean for academic affairs, also traveled to Central America to explore partnership opportunities between the School and those serving the people of Costa Rica.

"Our goal is to provide an opportunity for our students to be immersed in treating and interacting with patients of another culture," said Rotter. "It is important for student

dentists to become culturally aware and sensitive to the needs of others. Establishment of a partnership of this type would provide a full immersion experience for those students, while providing tangible benefits to a needy and deserving population.”

“Our desire is to set up and maintain a clinic where students, faculty and alumni can provide both emergency and ongoing care to a patient population who would otherwise have minimal to no access to such care,” added Rawson. “We hope to have logistics in place for a January 2018 program start.”

In addition to the SIU SDM establishing a presence in Costa Rica, Pembroke is actively working with SIUE’s Office of International Affairs and leaders of the Schools of Nursing and Engineering to expand international experiential learning opportunities for students in other disciplines.

“Our goals in the School of Nursing are to enrich students’ learning and expand our reach in new, incredible ways,” said Laura Bernaix, PhD, dean of the SIUE School of Nursing. “We don’t want to limit our impact on health to only this region, so to eventually participate in an experience such as this would be a great opportunity for our students. Dr. Pembroke’s commitment to the people of Costa Rica is admirable, and we are anxious to become a part of this work.”

“The School of Engineering educational experience is amplified by the multitude of experiential learning opportunities available to our students,” added Chris Gordon, PhD, associate dean of the SIUE School of Engineering. “We are eager to increase our global impact as a School through international partnerships and experiential learning opportunities. We are excited to participate in this endeavor for the benefit of our students.”

According to Mary Weishaar, PhD, executive director of the Office of International Affairs, the SIUE School of Pharmacy is already in the process of pursuing a partnership with the University of Costa Rica.

“Along with programs facilitated through Chancellor Pembroke, a formal partnership would allow SIUE to broaden experiences to include collaboration with faculty and students from Costa Rica,” Weishaar said. “Currently, we have continuing programs through the School of Pharmacy in the form of faculty-led programs, specifically studying in the area of medicinal plants and animals. We also send students to Costa Rica at Veritas University to further their study of the Spanish language.”

In 2016, more than 200 SIUE students participated in study abroad in 20 countries. With the strong support of Pembroke, these life-altering experiential learning experiences will be further enhanced.

“Without exception, students who study and travel abroad return with a global perspective,” Weishaar explained. “When our students engage globally, they are likely to view and impact the lives of others in a positive manner. We are always working to increase opportunities for our students in study abroad.”

Pembroke plans to coordinate a trip to Costa Rica with University leaders for further exploration of partnership opportunities during March 2018.