

SIU SDM Emeritus Professor Roller honored with Outstanding Educator Award

by Megan Wieser
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EDWARDSVILLE - Southern Illinois University School of Dental Medicine Section of Periodontics Emeritus Professor Neal Roller, DDS, MS, has been honored with the American Academy of Periodontology (AAP) Outstanding Teaching and Mentoring Award.

According to the AAP, the award is presented at each dental academic institution to a periodontal educator, who has demonstrated a commitment to excellence in providing education in the full scope of periodontics and relays that enthusiasm to students.

SIU SDM administrators, faculty, periodontics residents and staff gathered for a reception and breakfast on Thursday, May 4, to present the award to Roller. The Section of Periodontics organized the event.

“Dr. Roller has been an incredibly active faculty member in periodontics at the SIU SDM for more than 40 years,” said Nathalia Garcia, DDS, MS, assistant professor and section head of periodontology at the SIU SDM. “He has demonstrated a tremendous commitment to the school, always looking for excellence in providing education in the full scope of periodontics.

“Dr. Roller is constantly attempting strategies to improve and innovate his teaching practice in accordance with new challenges in dental education. He conveys enthusiasm to students and is a highly respected faculty member who has been an inspiration for generations of dentists.”

Acknowledgements of this nature are significant, according to Garcia, who supports the recognition of faculty members whose accomplishments have made an extraordinary impact.

“Dental educators should feel that they are appreciated for their contributions and dedication to the dental school and the profession,” she said. “It is motivating for them and for their colleagues to highlight the role of teaching as a fundamental aspect in the development of new dentists.”

The SIU School of Dental Medicine students manage approximately 35,000 patient visits each year at its patient clinics in Alton and East St. Louis. In addition, students offer oral health treatment, screenings and education to more than 10,000 people annually through a wide variety of off-campus community outreach events. These opportunities provide students the training they need to graduate and become highly skilled dentists. The School of Dental Medicine is a vital oral health care provider for residents of southern and central Illinois, and the St. Louis metropolitan region.