

# **SIUE Healthcare Diversity Summer Camp empowers high school students to pursue careers in the health sciences**

June 26 2017 11:36 AM



EDWARDSVILLE - Southern Illinois University Edwardsville's 8<sup>th</sup> annual [Healthcare Diversity Summer Camp](#), held June 19-23, opened high school students' eyes to the many career paths within pharmacy, nursing and dental medicine.

The camp is a collaborative effort, organized by the Schools of Pharmacy (SOP) and Nursing (SON) and the SIU School of Dental Medicine (SDM). It focuses on exposure, experience and enrichment as students gain an understanding of the ample opportunities that exist within each field, through interactive lessons and activities.

“SIUE’s Healthcare Diversity Summer Camp is a pipeline program from our Schools of Pharmacy, Nursing and Dental Medicine,” said Lakesha Butler, PharmD, camp coordinator and associate clinical professor in the SOP. “We are servicing a diverse world. We’re seeing a change in our demographics, and we want to make sure that our student body mirrors that and is adequately prepared to service the healthcare world that they will encounter. We want to make sure that we are producing students who have a heart for all types of people.”



“Diversity camp is significant, because it provides students with the opportunity to see individuals that look like them, who are successful in their particular area, and that is extremely influential,” added Jerrica Ampadu, PhD, assistant professor in the SON and director of the Student Nurse Achievement Program. “It’s important to offer students this hands-on approach, because sometimes there’s a disconnect between what healthcare professionals really do, versus what is perceived.”

Sponsored by Walgreens, with additional support from CVS, students who have expressed interest in the health sciences, were invited to attend camp. They explored SIUE’s campus and spent a day at each of the professional schools. They also took an ACT crash course in preparation for college admissions requirements.

“I really liked this camp, because it had the three areas of healthcare we got to experience,” said Taityanna Beard, a senior at Pattonville High School in St. Louis. “I

wasn't sure how I wanted to be in healthcare, but I knew I wanted to interact with people and help them in some way. This camp helped me get more knowledge, and I feel like my interest in pharmacy has strengthened."

"We want these students to know that we're here to help them, educate them and empower them to do better," said Cornell C. Thomas, DDS, assistant dean of admissions and student services at the SIU SDM. "We want them to be at a place where they know that they can achieve, and they know that they can be successful. That's what's important."



SIUE pharmacy student Deja Finley, a native of O'Fallon, helped mentor the students and answer their questions about college life during their time on campus.

"Healthcare Diversity Summer Camp gave them unique insight that a lot of other people don't get in high school," Finley said. "They're open-minded and they're not set on what they want to do just yet, so they were willing to explore the health sciences. It was exciting to hear about their experiences at the end of each day."

"This camp was amazing. My favorite activity had to be the nursing simulation," added Antwone Leroy, a junior at Collinsville High School. "It made me feel like I was helping people. When I first came to camp, I wanted to be a neurosurgeon. Now I want to be a surgical nurse."

“This particular interprofessional collaboration builds a bridge between our three health disciplines,” Butler said. “It models what we want to achieve within our student body and out in practice. We all have our desires to improve or increase the diversity within our individual schools. But, our ultimate goal is to bring in students who have a desire to go into healthcare and expose them to what SIUE offers.”

[SIUE School of Pharmacy](#): Today’s pharmacists improve patients’ lives through the medication and education they provide. Dedicated to developing a community of caring pharmacists, the SIUE School of Pharmacy curriculum is nationally recognized as a model that offers students a unique combination of classroom education, research, community service and patient care. The School of Pharmacy’s areas of excellence include a drug design and discovery core; pediatric practice; chronic pain research and practice; and diabetes research and practice. As the only downstate Illinois pharmacy doctorate program, the SIUE School of Pharmacy is addressing the growing need for highly trained pharmacists in a rapidly growing field.

The [SIUE School of Nursing’s](#) fully accredited programs are committed to creating excellence in nursing leadership through innovative teaching, evidence-based practice, quality research, patient advocacy and community service. Enrolling nearly 1,400 students in its baccalaureate, master’s and doctoral programs, the School develops leaders in pursuit of shaping the nursing profession and impacting the health care environment. SIUE’s undergraduate nursing programs on the Edwardsville campus and the regional campus in Carbondale help to solve the region’s shortage of baccalaureate-prepared nurses and enhance the quality of nursing practice within all patient service venues. The School’s graduate programs prepare nurses for advanced roles in clinical practice, administration and education.

[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.