

# **SIUE partners with Mannie Jackson Center for the Humanities to support its "STEM Meets Humanities" program**

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EDWARDSVILLE - The Southern Illinois University Edwardsville Center for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Research, Education and Outreach, and the SIUE College of Arts and Sciences' (CAS) Interdisciplinary Research and Informatics Scholarship (IRIS) Center, are partnering with the Mannie Jackson Center for the Humanities (MJCH®) as it offers an exciting new "STEM Meets Humanities" program to young leaders in underserved areas of Madison County.

The initiative will begin with the renovation of the Kraft building in downtown Edwardsville. In November, the program will open in the historic building. It will address societal issues that the study of the humanities continuously works to understand, through instructional programming that teaches children to problem-solve using traditional humanities disciplines such as history, literature and philosophy, combined with STEM.

"Our young leaders will have an opportunity to find solutions to problems and social conditions through experimentation, communication and teamwork," said Mannie Jackson, founder and president of the Mannie Jackson Center for the Humanities Foundation. "If we instill these core values in our young leaders, while also teaching them marketable STEM skills, they will enter the workforce as capable and compassionate professionals."

"Ultimately, we want to remove barriers that hinder those in underserved groups from realizing their aspirations and full potential," said Sharon Locke, PhD, director of the SIUE STEM Center. "They need the opportunity and confidence to succeed. If we guide them toward STEM careers, and teach them the ultimate life-skill of compassion, they will learn that they can achieve anything."

Geared toward students in targeted school districts, including Brooklyn, Madison, Lovejoy and Alton, the programming will include the creation of sustainable food sources through urban gardening, the building and creation of content for websites, podcasts, documentaries and digital maps, and more. Funding will be provided by grants and donorship.

Additionally, 90 elementary students will take part in Math Games, a spinoff of a pilot program started by CAS Dean Greg Budzban, PhD. The original program included a group of Alton students who competed in and won a national championship at the National Math Festival. High school and college students will serve as near-peer mentors.

“Engagement, motivation and persistence are key factors in helping students develop a love of learning and excitement for mathematics,” Budzban said. “Gamifying mathematics and creating interactive learning opportunities achieves this. We hope to produce the same transformational effects we saw among students in Alton. I strongly believe we can change students’ life trajectory by engaging them in mathematics early, in a fun and interactive way.”

Hands on activities and curriculum will be used for finding critical solutions to fundamental social and human problems such as educational inequities, negative discourse, poverty, energy and water needs, using the MJCH®’s core principles of respect, dignity, understanding and forgiveness.

“The IRIS Center is thrilled to be participating in this interdisciplinary initiative,” said Jessica DeSpain, PhD, co-director of SIUE’S IRIS Center and associate professor in the Department of English Language and Literature. “By bringing together the humanities and STEM, the initiative’s programming will engage students in understanding the world’s most pressing problems from multiple perspectives and consider how we might solve them ethically and responsibly.”

According to Dr. Ed Hightower, executive director of the MJCHF, “The MJCHF is pleased to enter into a partnership with the SIUE College of Arts and Sciences, the SIUE IRIS Center, the SIUE STEM Center, the Madison County Regional Office of Education, Madison County Community Development, Lewis & Clark Community College and local school districts to develop such a dynamic and innovative STEM hub for Madison County youth.”

In 2018, the program expects to expand to include other schools throughout Madison County.

“This is an exciting opportunity for our public-school students throughout Madison County,” said Regional Superintendent of Schools Robert Daiber, EdD. “This type of learning is a fundamental component of being a human in the digital world and we should feel fortunate that the MJCHF, Lewis and Clark Community College and SIUE were able to bring it to Madison County.”

For more information about the Mannie Jackson Center for the Humanities Foundation and the STEM Meets Humanities program, email [drehightower@mjchf.com](mailto:drehightower@mjchf.com), visit [www.mjchf.org](http://www.mjchf.org) or call [618-655-2881](tel:618-655-2881).

The [Mannie Jackson Center for the Humanities](#) conducts activities that promote mutual understanding and respect among people of different cultures, races, ethnicities,

religions, and other distinctions; influence positive social change by transforming attitudes and perceptions towards greater acceptance, tolerance, and interaction among these groups; and ultimately remove barriers that hinder individuals and groups from realizing their aspirations and full potential.

The Southern Illinois University Edwardsville [Center for STEM Research, Education and Outreach](#) comprises an independent group of researchers and educators, innovating ways to engage students and the public in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Within the SIUE Graduate School, the Center brings together research faculty, graduate students and practitioners to conduct education research. The Center contributes educational expertise to SIUE undergraduate classes and provides professional development for K-12 teachers. The Center boasts a significant library of equipment and resources, which are available for loan at no cost to campus and regional instructors. For more information, visit <https://www.siue.edu/stem/about.shtml> or contact STEM Center Director Sharon Locke at [\(618\) 650-3065](tel:6186503065) or [stemcenter@siue.edu](mailto:stemcenter@siue.edu).

Founded in 2010, with a mission to support faculty and student research in the digital humanities, the [Interdisciplinary Research and Informatics Scholarship \(IRIS\) Center](#) is invested in connecting to, working with, and helping to document, the people, places, practices and histories of the region as well as a broader international community. Since the Center's founding, students and faculty have: travelled to Nepal to aid in the recording of endangered languages in order to build a digital atlas alongside native speakers; worked with the colorfully designed physical copies of nineteenth-century books as they built a comparative edition of one of the century's most popular novels; recorded the language practices and attitudes of lifelong residents of St. Louis's Metro East to better understand regional dialect variation; built an encyclopedia of Madison County history in partnership with local cultural institutions; and designed an educational outreach program for middle school students in East St. Louis to build a website about the history and culture of their city. The Center generally serves 50 students and faculty a semester through the Digital Humanities and Social Sciences minor, research opportunities for undergraduates and internships.

Central to SIUE's exceptional and comprehensive education, the [College of Arts and Sciences](#) has 19 departments and 85 areas of study. More than 300 full-time faculty /instructors deliver classes to more than 8,000 undergraduate and graduate students. Faculty help students explore diverse ideas and experiences, while learning to think and live as fulfilled, productive members of the global community. Study abroad, service-learning, internships, and other experiential learning opportunities better prepare SIUE students not only to succeed in our region's workplaces, but also to become valuable leaders who make important contributions to our communities.