

SIU SDM White Coat Ceremony marks milestone for aspiring dentists

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EDWARDSVILLE - Southern Illinois University School of Dental Medicine (SIU SDM) first-year students, along with students in the International Advanced Placement Program (IAPP) received the traditional coat of medical professionals, during the School's 17th annual White Coat Ceremony held Friday, Oct. 6.

The first-year cohort of 51 students, and six IAPP students, took the professional oath of ethics and committed to uphold the School's values of service, respect, integrity, compassion and competence.

"The White Coat Ceremony continues to provide a distinguished welcome to the profession," said SIU SDM Dean Bruce Rotter, DMD. "The ceremony conveys the importance of the respect, integrity and compassion necessary to successfully engage in the dentistry profession."

SIU SDM alumnus Christopher Larsen, DMD '88, was the keynote speaker. Larsen serves on the Illinois State Dental Society Foundation Board of Directors. He practices general dentistry with his daughter and fellow SIU SDM alumnus Jennifer Worner, DMD '15. Larsen is a past president of the SIU SDM Alumni Council, where he continues to actively serve as a member.

He expressed to the future dentists that the degree they are working toward would help connect the dots along their life journey. It will provide prosperous and impactful opportunities. It will change their lives, and importantly, the lives of others.

Larsen offered the students a few pieces of advice, "Number one, believe in yourself. There are naysayers at every turn. Don't list to them. Instead, listen to your heart. Second, have a vision and a goal. You should be hungry to make your mark in your community. Success is not by accident. It is planned."

He added, "Give back. There are many people who need care. Give of your time and talents. Join your local dental society. Join the American Dental Association. Give back to your dental school."

Ken Rawson, DMD, interim associate dean for academic affairs, led the ceremony. He introduced and celebrated biomedical and clinical sciences faculty, who will play an integral role in the professional preparedness and development of the two cohorts.

"Our dedicated faculty produce some of the finest dental practitioners in the nation and support our mission to improve the oral health of the region," Rawson said. "Together, we abide by our professional oath, and pledge to serve humanity, patients, the community and the dental profession."

The SIU SDM White Coat Ceremony was sponsored by the Central Illinois Academy of General Dentistry, Illinois Section of the American College of Dentists, Illinois State Dental Society Foundation and the Eighth District of the International College of 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.