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SIUE Graduate School announces Outstanding Teaching Assistant and Thesis Award Recipients

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EDWARDSVILLE - The Southern Illinois University Edwardsville Graduate School has selected Belleville native Allison Newton as the University's 2017 Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant. A current master's student in biological sciences, Newton earned a bachelor's in biology with a genetics and cell biology specialization from SIUE in spring 2016.

Newton has served as a graduate assistant for two semesters in biology 319, cell and molecular biology, under the guidance of Darron Luesse, PhD, and Faith Liebl, PhD. The award is designed to recognize and reward graduate students for outstanding performance in teaching and instruction.

"Allison displays excellent preparation, sound classroom judgment and a knack for connecting with the students," Luesse said. "She strikes an excellent balance between personal attention for every student, and a "no-nonsense" style that keeps students focused and on-task."

Newton is primarily responsible for instruction in three laboratory sections of the course: preparation of the materials, writing pre-laboratory quizzes, and grading lab quizzes, activities and lab reports. She spends her time during lab interacting with and helping students, and she is engaged with the students during the entire exercise.

As an extension of her desire for her students to succeed, Newton also spends time with them outside of class, providing instruction, suggestions and comments to help students write quality lab reports. She has met with many of her students outside of class time to help improve their writing and make suggestions about content. Having a strong work ethic, she is extremely prepared for class, and her knowledge and confidence positively shape her interactions with students, often taking time to work through part of the lab herself, so she can better understand students' questions.

The Graduate School also selected Mariel Schroeder as the University's 2017 Outstanding Thesis Award recipient for her thesis, "Investigating the Learnability of a Rogue Grammar: Null Subject Parameter Resetting in Second Language Acquisition." Schroeder graduated in May 2017 with a master's in linguistics.

The Outstanding Thesis Award recognizes and rewards a graduate student whose thesis has been identified by the Graduate School as outstanding among all those submitted during the previous academic year.

"Mariel completed the most ambitious thesis project I have ever seen in my 20 years at SIUE," said professor Joel Hardman, PhD, Schroeder's thesis advisor and chair of the Department of English Language and Literature in the College of Arts and Sciences. "She was seeking answers to one of the most fundamental questions in our field – do

people learning a second language have access to universal human abilities to learn a first language?

“I was most impressed by her ability to master a variety of literatures connected with her topic, which covers universal grammar, second language acquisition and artificial languages. Her research method was complex and labor-intensive, yet she accomplished in two semesters what would normally take most of our graduate students two or more years.”

Schroeder presented a poster on her thesis work at the spring 2017 American Association of Applied Linguistics conference, the most prestigious conference in the field. The thesis can be reviewed at [Proquest](#) in SIUE's Lovejoy Library.

By preparing the next generation of leaders in a knowledge-based economy, [SIUE's Graduate School](#) fulfills the region's demand for highly trained professionals. Graduate school offerings include arts and sciences, business, education, engineering, nursing and interdisciplinary opportunities. SIUE professors provide students with a unique integration of theoretical education and hands-on research experiences. Students can obtain graduate certificates or pursue master's degrees, and be part of a supportive learning and rich intellectual environment that is tailored to the needs of adult learners. The Graduate School raises the visibility of research at SIUE, which ranks highest among its Illinois Board of Higher Education peers in total research and development expenditures according to the National Science Foundation. Doctoral programs are available in the Schools of Education (Ed.D.) and Nursing (DNP). The School of Engineering and the Department of Historical Studies feature cooperative doctoral programs (PhD), and the College of Arts and Sciences features an Environmental Resources and Policy cooperative PhD.