

# Paying it forward: SIUE's Washington learns value of mentorship

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EDWARDSVILLE - Personal drive and community involvement, supported by strong mentorship, have been the cornerstones of success for senior [Keelah Washington](#) during her academic journey at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.

In her four years on campus, the English major with a concentration in secondary English language arts, has tallied a long list of achievements. Maintaining a spot atop that list is the personal growth she has gained by having strong mentors by her side, and her influence in others' success by being mentor herself.

“Mentor relationships often unfold naturally,” said the Chicago native. “It’s important to have that person in your life, or those people, because they will help support and

cultivate your strengths and push you to strive for more. They adapt to your needs and help you find resources.”

SIUE’s Arielle Weaver, assistant director of Residence Life for Community Standards, has been one such advocate for Washington. She says her sincere hope is that all SIUE students will find a positive mentor during their time on campus.

“It’s incredibly valuable for students to see people, especially people who look like them, being successful,” said Weaver. “They need someone who can answer their questions, provide advice and be there to push them to reach their goals and graduate.”

“Keelah is one of the hardest working student leaders on campus,” she added. “She does a ton to improve the student body. She’s passionate about issues facing students of color, and I know she wants to use that passion for good as she goes into education.”

Washington has been involved or worked in Student Government, Black Girls Rock, the School of Education, Health and Human Behavior’s Dean’s Dozen, University Housing, Dining Services and Campus Recreation, among others. In November, she received the esteemed Abraham Lincoln Civic Engagement Award, on behalf of SIUE, for her leadership, service and overall excellence in curricular and extracurricular activities.

“My involvement on campus has helped me in more ways than I can count,” Washington said. “Each activity or job has opened doors to more involvement opportunities. I’ve met friends, mentors and created a network that will help me after graduation, too.”

“My best advice to other students is to not give up,” she added. “As you go through your journey, not everything is going to be easy. You have to work hard. I’ve been rejected for things, too, but with those rejections have come better opportunities that have helped me get to where I am now. A ‘no’ is just for now. It’s not always the end.”

[Southern Illinois University Edwardsville](#) provides students with a high quality, affordable education that prepares them for successful careers and lives of purpose to shape a changing world. Built on the foundation of a broad-based liberal education, and enhanced by hands-on research and real-world experiences, the academic preparation SIUE students receive equips them to thrive in the global marketplace and make our communities better places to live. Situated on 2,660 acres of beautiful woodland atop the bluffs overlooking the natural beauty of the Mississippi River’s rich bottomland and only a short drive from downtown St. Louis, the SIUE campus is home to a diverse student body of nearly 14,000.