

Global trade representatives "Discover Southwest Illinois" with stop at SIUE

May 21 2018 10:34 AM



The International Trade Center (ITC) at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville welcomed consuls and trade commissioners of the Chicago International Trade Commissioners' Association (CITCA) representing countries worldwide for a luncheon and special introduction to the economically flourishing development hot spot that is southwestern Illinois.

The visit to SIUE was the welcoming stop along the "Discover Southwest Illinois" tour held May 15-16. The Southwest Illinois Trade and Investment Council (SWITIC) hosted the event in cooperation with the ITC at SIUE, the SIUE School of Business, the Illinois Office of Trade and Investment, and numerous regional leaders.

“We are thrilled to welcome you to southwest Illinois,” said David Kniepkamp, president of SWITIC’s board of directors and president of Smart Controls LLC, during the luncheon sponsored by the SIUE School of Business. “We are eager to demonstrate the viable foreign direct investment and exporting opportunities that exist across our region and connect you with local businesses to develop long-term international trade and investment relationships.”

The inbound trade mission showcased the region’s manufacturing, warehouse and distribution assets, and connected businesses with international trade and investment professionals to develop long-term relationships.

Eleven represented countries included the Philippines, Ecuador, China, Italy, Spain, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Argentina, Chile, Czech Republic and Belgium-Flanders.

“It is a pleasure to have you here as we recognize the positive global impact of our University and understand the impact the world has on SIUE,” Chancellor Randy Pembroke told the tour attendees. “One of our University’s main values is diversity and inclusion. Last year, we welcomed approximately 400 students representing 58 different countries. I believe strongly in international travel which provides cultural experiences that broaden our perspectives and strengthen our understanding of the world.”

Tour participants were educated on SIUE’s significant contributions to the growth and vitality of the area. It was noted that SIUE’s School of Business is among the elite five percent of business schools worldwide that have earned the prestigious accreditation from the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB International).

“We hope that during this visit you’ll experience what we all know, and that is that Madison County and southwest Illinois are great places to live, learn, work, and certainly, do business,” said SIUE School of Business Interim Dean Tim Schoenecker, PhD.

“The mission of our School of Business centers on the concept of adding value,” he explained. “We want to add value for our students by enhancing their career prospects. We want to add value for our corporate partners by supplying them with the workforce talent they need to help their businesses grow and expand. We also add value through our business outreach organizations. The ITC is proof of that successful commitment, as it is one of the top performing centers in the state in terms of economic impact.”

“SIUE is a jewel of Madison County,” said Kurt Prenzler, CPA, Madison County Board Chairman. “This County also boasts the largest oil refinery in the Midwest, growing logistics and warehousing industries, and wonderful multi-modal transportation options.”

While in Southwest Illinois, the trade representatives learned of lucrative investment opportunities, saw strategic air and water transportation systems, and toured cutting-edge manufacturing and warehousing companies.

The two-day tour included stops at the NCERC at SIUE, Gateway Commerce Center, Walgreens e-Commerce Fulfillment Center, World Wide Technology, America's Central Port, MidAmerica Airport, Boeing St. Clair, North Bay Produce Inc., Sauget Business Park and Rock City Business Complex.

Ronda Sauget, executive director of the Leadership Council of Southwestern Illinois, highlighted the area as a strong transportation hub in the center of the U.S., boasting the second largest population center in the state behind Chicago.

She emphasized southwest Illinois' key economic power zones including:

- Advanced and light manufacturing
- Energy and green energy firms
- Agricultural and food processing areas
- Chemical and other manufacturing facilities
- Warehouse distribution supply chain activities
- Multi-modal transportation
- Military and cybersecurity expertise

“Our Leadership Council is uniting the region for growth, comprising 250 of the area's most prominent companies and organizations working together to ensure the economic fabric of this community is strong and continues to thrive,” Sauget said. “We represent business, industry, education, labor and government.”

“This area is prime for economic development and expansion,” she added. “More than half of the U.S. population can be reached in a single day's travel from this location. Therefore, we drive transportation infrastructure within our Leadership Council to make sure we have the necessary assets for a strong multi-modal hub. What's phenomenal in southwest Illinois is available, affordable land near those transit corridors which makes this an incredible place for business investment.”

The [Southwest Illinois Trade and Investment Council](#) (SWITIC) has been in existence since 2015. The nonprofit organization educates, equips and connects area businesses with the expertise and contacts to begin and expand exporting their products.

The [International Trade Center at SIUE](#) serves businesses in southern Illinois by providing individualized, no-cost export consultation, identification of foreign buyers, agents and/or distributors through trade leads, international market analysis, and more.

The ITC is funded in part by the U.S. Small Business Administration, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) and [Southern Illinois University Edwardsville](#). It has a longtime partnership with the Illinois Office of Trade and Investment (OTI), which maintains a full-time staff of both foreign and domestic-based international trade and marketing experts. OTI also manages 7 foreign trade offices located in Belgium, Japan, Hong Kong, Mexico, Canada, China and Israel.

[SIUE's School of Business](#) and the accountancy programs are accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International, representing the highest standard of achievement for business schools worldwide. *The Princeton Review* lists SIUE as one of the top 294 business schools in the U.S. for the 11th-consecutive year. Undergraduate and graduate degrees are offered in accounting, computer management and information systems, economics, finance, management and marketing. More than 27,000 alumni have earned degrees from the SIUE School of Business. For more information about the School of Business, visit siue.edu/business.