



SIU School of Dental Medicine commencement celebrates the class of 2018

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EDWARDSVILLE - The Southern Illinois University School of Dental Medicine (SIU SDM) celebrated the achievement of 52 students with the bestowal of doctor of dental medicine degrees during its commencement ceremony held Saturday, June 2 in SIUE's Morris University Center's Meridian Ballroom.

The SIU SDM's 43rd class of graduates received their doctoral hoods, including six students who completed the School's inaugural International Advanced Placement Program, which began in 2016.

"During the last four years, you have worked extremely hard and successfully distinguished yourselves through your academic achievements, the high quality and broad scope of dental care you have delivered to your patients, your community outreach and service efforts, and your research accomplishments," SIU SDM Dean Bruce Rotter, DMD, told the graduates.

“Today, we also celebrate the commencement of our inaugural class of the International Advanced Placement Program,” he added. “You have navigated new and unique challenges, and we are proud of your remarkable achievements.”

The SIU SDM Class of 2018 achieved a 100 percent first-time pass rate on the National Board Dental Exams Part II, and a 94 percent first-time pass rate on clinical board exams. More than one-third of the graduates have been accepted into competitive graduate and specialty training programs throughout the country.

Thirty students graduated with academic honors. Brittany Pham, DMD, of Chillicothe, was named class valedictorian for earning the highest overall grade point average and was presented the Alpha Omega Award.

“Our class was defined by a spirit of camaraderie and collaboration, and while we were still a competitive group, I always sensed a spirit of general goodwill and that we were invested in each other’s success,” said Class of 2018 student speaker and Mattoon native Myles Hastings, DMD, a third-generation dentist.

“For our efforts and dedication, we have earned the opportunity to make a good living in a proud profession,” he added. “But, that’s not to say there isn’t work to be done in the field. Barriers to care and health disparities remain, and now the task falls to this new generation of dentists. In the Class of 2018, I have seen the dedication, intelligence and kindness necessary to address these challenges. If going forward, you show the same compassion you have shown your classmates and patients, as we have been trained to at the SIU School of Dental Medicine, your communities will be well-served.”

The ceremony’s featured speaker Leo E. Rouse, DDS, offered the graduates “pearls of wisdom.”

“Give back to the institution that has afforded you to be here today to receive this coveted degree,” Rouse said. “Always feel the ladder beneath your feet and think about the great education you received at SIU. Do not let this experience go to your head, because you have so much more to learn. Learning is lifelong.”

“Become an active member of organized dentistry and continue your professional development,” he continued. “Become a healthcare advocate for all. Become part of the access to care conversation. Not in silos, but in consensus building that is both ethical and professional. Continue your engagement in the conversation related to the core competencies for interprofessional collaborative practices. We deliberately work together with the common goal of building a safer and better person-centered and community population-oriented U.S. healthcare system.”

Rouse concluded by listing the “five fingers of dentistry,” including:

- Become and remain socially conscious
- Remain community oriented
- Stay civically active
- Be politically informed
- Always be professionally competent

“In my view, those five values are alive and well at this great institution and in you, its graduates,” he said. “Remember that every patient deserves your full attention, deepest respect and excellent care.”

The celebration concluded with a reception for students, faculty and family members in the Morris University Center Conference Center. The SIU SDM commencement ceremony can be viewed in its entirety [online](#).

[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.