



# **International Trade Center at SIUE recognizes "Immigrants in Our Midst"**

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EDWARDSVILLE - Southern Illinois University Edwardsville's International Trade Center (ITC) and College of Arts and Sciences (CAS), TheBANK of Edwardsville, and additional partners will host a conference on Friday, Oct. 5: "Immigrants in Our Midst," that focuses on how to better serve U.S. immigrants' financial, legal and social needs. The event will take place from 8 a.m.-4 p.m. in SIUE's Morris University Conference Center.

SIUE alumnus Raffi Mikaelian is helping to coordinate the event that includes presentations by regional specialists in the fields of banking, immigration law, Latino outreach, employment services and more. Professionals and students, who seek to increase their involvement with immigrant communities in and around St. Louis, are expected to attend.

"It seems everyone I speak with expresses appreciation for the inspiring presentations offered at the 'Immigrants in Our Midst' conference," Latino Roundtable President Mercedes Collado said. "The years of research and the depth of understanding our presenters convey are informative and eye-opening. Latino Roundtable has been putting together this type of conference for the past 10 years, and will continue with its mission and vision of creating awareness about Hispanic culture and our immigrant community in Illinois."

Past conference participant and immigration law practitioner Jessie Chappell, founder of Chappell Grant Immigration LLC, says the SIUE ITC conference is valuable not only for immigrants, but also for professionals who have been working in the international community for years. "Even though I work with immigrants daily, I am still surprised by all of the new information I gain at this program," said Chappell. "Seeing how vital immigrants are to our neighborhoods and our economy helps me recognize the instability that mass deportations would cause."

“This conference teaches me how to effectively research local immigration trends. I also learned how to connect foreign and U.S.-born communities. This expertise provides the tools to connect my clients with the many resources that can help them succeed in their personal and professional lives.”

Along with Collado representing the Southern Illinois Health Foundation, speakers at the conference will include Greg Budzban, PhD, dean of the SIUE College of Arts and Sciences; Onesimo Sandoval, PhD, of Saint Louis University; Fairmont City Library’s Katie Heaton; Leticia Seitz from Latinos En Axion; Geoffrey Soyiantet of Vitendo 4 Africa; Kristine Walentik from St. Francis Community Sciences; Nicole Cortés of Migrant & Immigrant Community Action (MICA); Kristen Shinn from Puentes de Esperanza; Illinois State Police officers; Kingdom House’s Emily Stuart; Maria Torres-Wedding of the Migrant and Immigrant Community Action Project; and Sara John from Interfaith Committee on Latin America.

The event is open to the public and costs \$25. To register, visit [bit.ly/2PIvIQD](http://bit.ly/2PIvIQD). For additional assistance with registration or questions, contact Cynthia Cobetto in SIUE’s Office of Educational Outreach at 618-650-2164 or [cgorsag@siue.edu](mailto:cgorsag@siue.edu).

The International Trade Center at SIUE serves entrepreneurs and small businesses in southern Illinois by providing individualized export consultation, identification of foreign buyers, agents and/or distributors through trade leads, international market analysis and more.

The [International Trade Center](#) at SIUE is funded through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, and SIUE as a service to the region’s entrepreneurial and business community.

For more information on conducting business globally, contact the ITC at [International-Trade-Center@siue.edu](mailto:International-Trade-Center@siue.edu), (618) 650-3851 or by visiting [siue.edu/business/itc](http://siue.edu/business/itc).

[The Illinois SBDC for the Metro East](#) assists existing companies as well as new businesses headquartered in the nine-county Metro East region of Calhoun, Jersey, Madison, Bond, Clinton, St. Clair, Washington, Monroe and Randolph. It is a no-cost service to the community supported by the U.S. Small Business Administration, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, and [SIUE](#).

By aiding entrepreneurs and companies in defining their path to success, the SBDC network positively impacts the Metro East by strengthening the business community, creating and retaining jobs and encouraging capital investment. It enhances the region’s economic interests by providing one-stop assistance to individuals by means of

counseling, training, research and advocacy for new ventures and existing small businesses. When appropriate, the SBDC strives to affiliate its ties to the region to support the goals and objectives of both the [SIUE School of Business](#) and the University at large. To learn how the SBDC can help your small business, contact the Metro East SBDC at (618) 650-2929 or [sbdcedw@gmail.com](mailto:sbdcedw@gmail.com).