

Beetner Family Endowment Supports SIUE School of Engineering Experiential Learning Opportunities

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EDWARDSVILLE - Experiential learning opportunities build on knowledge gained in the classroom to enrich the student experience and prepare future leaders to shape a

changing world. But, these co-curricular activities come with associated costs that can make it difficult for students to participate and compete in national opportunities.

Now, the Beetner family has contributed \$35,000 to create an endowment that will provide additional resources for Southern Illinois University Edwardsville School of Engineering (SOE) student organizations to continue to excel in such activities and competitions.

“The SIUE School of Engineering deeply appreciates the Beetner family’s generous gift to sustain our student organization activities,” said SOE Dean Cem Karacal, PhD. “We currently have 35 student organizations, all of which need resources to organize events, community outreach projects, and attend regional and national conferences. Furthermore, many of our competition teams need funds to purchase materials and devices to build their designs. These are noncredit extracurricular activities completely driven by students, so funding is difficult to secure.”

The Beetner family’s SIUE roots run deep. Generations of family members have experienced the value of SIUE as students, former and current, and employees. Their generous contribution is their way of paying it forward.

“We want to help others reap the benefits of a great education,” said Daryl Beetner, PhD, who earned a bachelor’s in electrical engineering from SIUE in 1990. From 1997-98, he was a visiting professor in SIUE’s Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering. Daryl was inducted into the SIUE School of Engineering Hall of Fame in 2015.

“Student design competitions, like the SIUE solar car, formula race car or robotics team, are an outstanding way to develop both technical and soft skills. And, they’re a lot of fun to boot!” Daryl explained. “Students learn many skills that aren’t easily taught in the classroom. They get to do the kind of work that motivated them to become engineers in the first place.”

“Unfortunately, design teams are also expensive and increasingly difficult to support with ever-shrinking higher education budgets,” he added. “We hope this endowment will help SIUE students participate on these teams and win competitions for many years to come.”

“Daryl Beetner understands the importance of investing in people early in their careers,” said George Engel, PhD, professor in the SOE Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering. “His experiences emphasize the importance of investing time and effort in

promising young people. He is motivated to give back to society. He wants to help others do well, to see others develop healthy, happy and productive lives, and to see them make the world a better place.”

Daryl’s father Emmet Beetner also has a long history with SIUE, as an employee and administrator adding value in multiple roles since 1969. He retired in 2001, but remains associated with the University, working part-time as extra help at the SIUE East St. Louis Center.

Emmet has contributed his time and expertise throughout the years in roles involving education programming, teaching mathematics, and as East St. Louis Center assistant to the director/budget director.

“My wife, all three children and their spouses, and one granddaughter have SIUE degrees,” Emmet said. “One son has an engineering degree and two grandsons are current engineering students. I even have a great-grandson at the SIUE Early Childhood Center.”

“I enjoyed my time at SIUE, and am proud of the work we did, especially to advance the educational experience of public school students and preschool students in the East St. Louis area,” he added. “My college major was engineering, and my interest has continued even though my career path took me in different directions. There is great value in student projects and competitions. Our endowment will aid such opportunities by providing some financing for project materials and travel costs to off-campus competitions.”

“Students involved in extracurricular organizations definitely shine among competitors and are rapidly recruited, because of their improved skills,” Karacal concluded. “Thanks to the Beetner family, SIUE School of Engineering students will have increased experiential learning opportunities.”

The SOE’s new Fowler Student Design Center offers innovative space for students to conduct hands-on activities that not only sharpen their technical skills, but also teach them about teamwork, time management, organizational skills, people and leadership skills. For more information on SIUE School of Engineering student organizations, visit siue.edu/engineering/students-life.

The SIUE School of Engineering offers one of the most comprehensive and affordable engineering programs in the St. Louis region with eight undergraduate degrees, five master’s degrees and a cooperative doctoral program. Students learn from expert faculty, perform cutting-edge research, and participate in intercollegiate design competitions. Companies in the metropolitan St. Louis area provide students

challenging internships and co-op opportunities, which often turn into permanent employment. Students gain hands-on experience in the School's state-of-the-art facilities, including the new Fowler Student Design Center.