

# Aspiring Educators Connect with Record Number of Employers During SIUE Education Career Fair

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EDWARDSVILLE - Southern Illinois University Edwardsville's Education Career Fair, hosted by the Career Development Center (CDC), featured a record 47 prospective employers from the bi-state area on Tuesday, March 19 in the Morris University Center

Conference Center. Employers were eager to meet with young educators ready to make a difference.

“The Career Development Center works to continuously create engagement and networking opportunities between SIUE students and prospective employers,” said Carrie Smolar, assistant director for employer relations in the CDC. “Our career fairs are growing tremendously as more employers continue to show interest in the talented SIUE students and alumni as they look to recruit the next generation of employees.”

Job-seeking students expressed their nervousness, but excitement about the opportunity to meet with an array of prospective employers.

“I’ve known since I was in kindergarten that I wanted to be a kindergarten teacher,” said early childhood education major Hannah Boehme, of Taylorville. “I’ve always loved kids, and I know this is what I’m meant to do. It’s awesome to be on the job hunt, as it’s evidence that graduation is almost here and my dreams are coming true.”

“I grew up in the adoption system, and school was my outlet,” said early childhood education major Jami Gibbs, of Belleville. “I want to give back to children in similar circumstances, and be a leader and role model for them. I’m thankful to have the skills to converse, interact with and teach young minds.”

“I love working with kids,” said elementary education major Zachary Meinhart. “There are not a lot of male elementary school teachers, so I’m excited to be a positive male role model in my future students’ lives.”

SIUE students have proven to be valuable additions to the work environment of many of the employers who return annually to recruit the latest group of high-quality educators.

“I know going into this particular institution the quality of the candidates we’re going to meet,” said SIUE alumna Catherine Elliot, director of special education at Alton Community Unit School District No. 11. “We know from experience that these candidates are highly prepared to make a strong difference as educators.”

“It’s great to see so many eager young educators,” added Lyn Becker, assistant director of Mid-State Special Education. “Our special education cooperative covers 13 districts in central Illinois. We want to make sure we get the word out about our available positions.”

Timadj Wellmaker earned a bachelor's in special education from the SIUE School of Education, Health and Human Behavior in 2018. After completing her job search last year, she attended the career fair to tell others about the Urban Education Residency Program.

"I received great applied experiences working with children of all abilities while pursuing my degree at SIUE," Wellmaker remarked. "It was during one of my placements that I decided a pre-kindergarten, special education setting was for me. I'm glad to be here to tell more students about the post-college opportunity I chose."

With graduation nearing, SIUE students were grateful for the chance to make significant progress on their application process.

"I thank SIUE for offering this opportunity, because it's a competitive environment and can be hard to find jobs online alone," Gibbs concluded. "Having this face-to-face opportunity to interact with different districts makes me more confident in my job search."

The SIUE School of Education, Health and Human Behavior prepares students in a wide range of fields including community and public health, exercise science, nutrition, instructional technology, psychology, speech-language pathology and audiology, educational administration, and teaching. Faculty members engage in leading-edge research, which enhances teaching and enriches the educational experience. The School supports the community through on-campus clinics, outreach to children and families, and a focused commitment to enhancing individual lives across the region.