

# **SIUE Senior Combines Biology and Art to Prepare for Career in Dentistry**

by Megan Wieser  
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EDWARDSVILLE - From the art studio to the biology laboratory, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville senior Haley Gouchenour, of Rockford, creatively combined her interests to prepare for a career in dentistry.

Gouchenour is slated to graduate in May from the SIUE College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) with a bachelor's in biological sciences and a studio art minor. Next, she will pursue a doctorate at the SIU School of Dental Medicine.

“I’ve always had a natural curiosity in science, but I also love art,” Gouchenour explained. “The combination is fitting, because dental school requires you to have the knowledge of a scientist, but the manual dexterity of an artist.”

Gouchenour emphasizes how her work in ceramics, metalsmithing and glassblowing classes put her science background to important use.

“Each one of those classes presented its own challenges using a variety of mediums,” she explained. “They taught me more about science, because I had to understand the composition of the medium to get the desired result.”

The aspiring dentist is an Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities (URCA) Assistant in a biology research lab where she compares structures of Swift fox and gray wolf mandibles.

“Specifically, we measure landmark distances to see size difference and correlate that with their chewing muscles needed for their diets,” Gouchenour said.

“Haley’s been wonderful to work with, as she brings an interest in mandibles, teeth, biology, form and function. She’s interested in the details,” noted Luci Kohn, PhD, associate professor in the CAS Department of Biological Sciences, and Gouchenour’s URCA mentor.

“Many individuals interested in dentistry pursue some art work during their academic preparation for that dexterity practice,” Kohn added. “But, I’ve not seen it done as creatively and seamlessly as Haley.”

Gouchenour is excited to move on to the SIU School of Dental Medicine. She says like SIUE, it is a large university that offers small class sizes and high-quality academic and research opportunities.

Central to SIUE’s exceptional and comprehensive education, the College of Arts and Sciences offers degree programs in the natural sciences, humanities, arts, social sciences, and communications. The College touches the lives of all SIUE students helping them explore diverse ideas and experiences, while learning to think and live as fulfilled, productive members of the global community. Study abroad, service-learning, internships, and other experiential learning opportunities better prepare SIUE students not only to succeed in our region's workplaces, but also to become valuable leaders who make important contributions to our communities.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rn6QvPedfV0>

