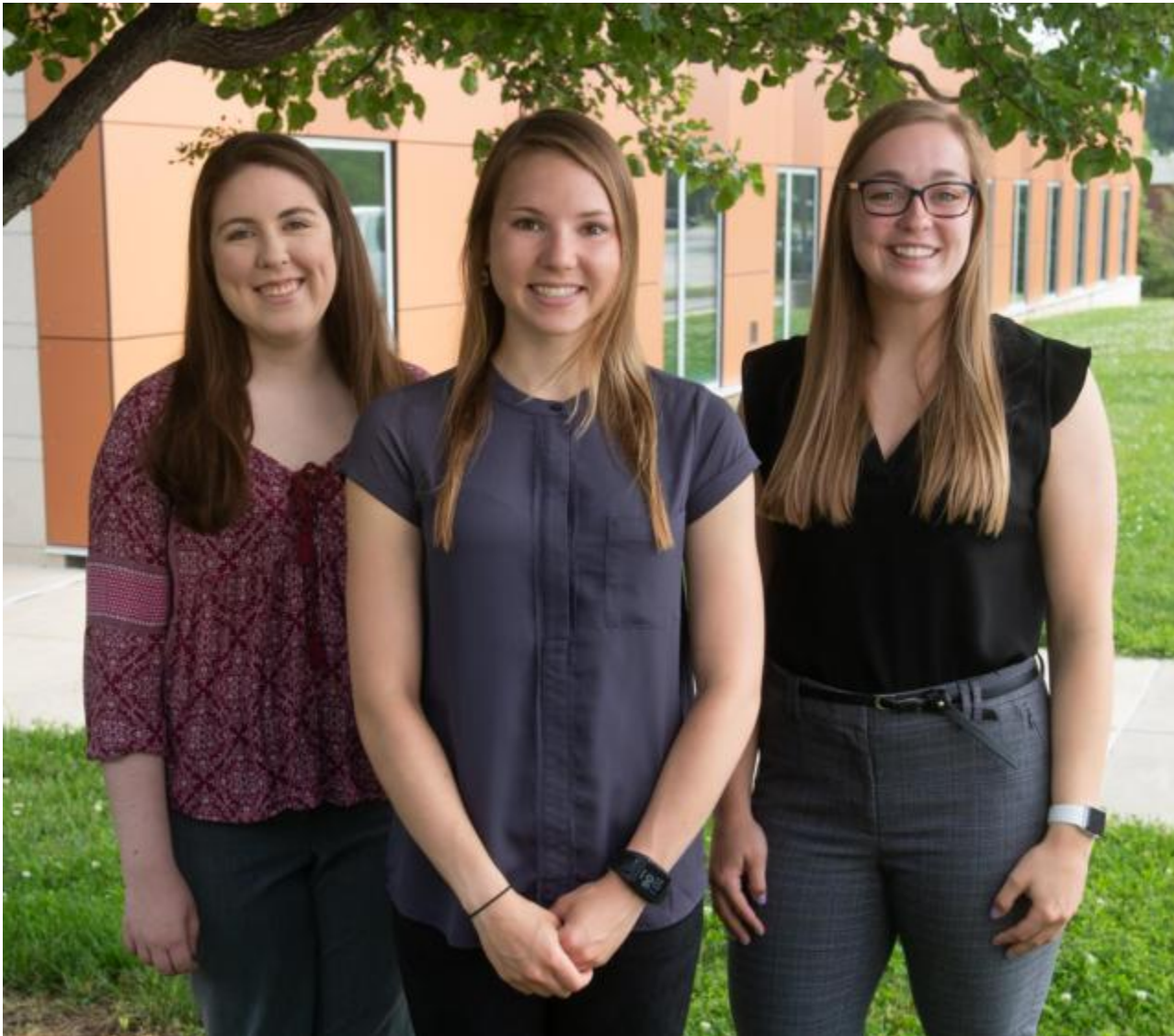


# **SIUE Pharmacy Students Finish Among Top 10% Nationwide in Research Competition**

by Megan Weiser  
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EDWARDSVILLE - A Southern Illinois University Edwardsville School of Pharmacy (SOP) team of three second-year students are celebrating their proud accomplishment of finishing as a finalist in the American College of Clinical Pharmacy (ACCP) Clinical Research Challenge (CRC). The team offered strong showings through three rounds of competition to land among the final eight teams nationally, and top 10 percent, of the 82 participating schools.

The ACCP CRC is a unique competition that invites teams of three students to compete nationally by participating in an online journal club, and submitting a letter of intent and a clinical research proposal.

The SIUE SOP team comprised Kristin Engelhardt, of Lincoln, Lauren Ratliff, of Wood River, and Kristen Ingold, of Freeburg. The students earned the opportunity to represent the SIUE SOP by achieving the highest scores on an internal journal club review exam.

“Encouraging students to participate in these co-curricular competitions is incredibly important,” said the team’s faculty mentor Terri Poirier, PharmD, MPH, professor and senior scholar in the Department of Pharmacy Practice. “The motivation of students to participate and learn beyond what is addressed in the curriculum is commendable, and reflects the quality of our student body at SIUE. These students have learned so much about clinical research through this process without actually yet participating in research. Hopefully, this will encourage students to further explore pursuing research as part of their careers.”

The trio’s research proposal focused on: Would pharmacy involvement in continuum of care for patients with type 2 diabetes result in reduced disease-related hospital readmission rates and ER visits, and improve quality of life and clinical outcomes?

Along with Poirier, the students were assisted by McKenzie Ferguson, PharmD, BCPS, associate professor in the Department of Pharmacy Practice and director of the SOP Drug Information and Wellness Center.

“Our study was looking at pharmacy involvement in inpatient to outpatient transition of care by utilizing point of care testing, medication reconciliation and appropriate discharge counseling and follow up for the duration of 12 months,” explained Ingold. “Many studies have shown the benefit of pharmacy involvement in the transition from hospital to home care, and we wanted to highlight this benefit further in patients with type 2 diabetes.”

Ratliff emphasizes how the experience fostered her love for data-based decision-making and problem-solving, and helped prepare her for future success.

“My ability to critically evaluate medical literature has greatly improved, and I have newfound clinical writing and study design skills, all of which I’m eager to use in my future career,” Ratliff said. “I am incredibly proud of our team. We spent countless hours collaborating on this project, even when we were hours away from each other on our clinical IPPE (Introductory Pharmacy Practice Experiences) rotations, and pushed ourselves to do our best work.”

Team captain Engelhardt noted how their choice of exploring a “hot topic” in pharmacy presented not only challenges, but also great reward and academic development.

“As future pharmacists, we wanted to choose a topic that would show the value of our knowledge in patient care,” Engelhardt explained. “While our team’s end product turned out to have significantly evolved from our initial idea, I believe this only aided our success. I have gained a lot of knowledge from this competition, and am confident that it will prove immensely useful throughout the remainder of my academic endeavors, in my fourth-year capstone research project and in my professional career.”

“While our classroom material on this topic focused mostly on interpreting and evaluating clinical trials,” she added, “this competition gave us a great amount of insight into the actual design components of creating a clinical trial. I am extremely excited to use this new information in the future.”

This marks the SIUE SOP’s best finish in the national competition to date.

Today’s pharmacists improve patients’ lives through the medication and education they provide. Dedicated to developing a community of caring pharmacists, the SIUE School of Pharmacy curriculum is nationally recognized as a model that offers students a unique combination of classroom education, research, community service and patient care. The School of Pharmacy’s areas of excellence include a drug design and discovery core; pediatric practice; chronic pain research and practice; and diabetes research and practice. As the only downstate Illinois pharmacy doctorate program, the SIUE School of Pharmacy is addressing the growing need for highly trained pharmacists in a rapidly growing field.

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Photo: Representing the SIUE School of Pharmacy in the ACCP Clinical Research Challenge were (L-R) Lauren Ratliff, Kristen Ingold and Kristin Engelhardt.