

# SIUE Convocation and Cougar Parade Offer Students a Grand Welcome

by Megan Weiser  
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EDWARDSVILLE - The Southern Illinois University Edwardsville campus was abuzz with energy as administrators, faculty, staff, alumni and community members motivated and celebrated the Class of 2023 with an inspiring academic Convocation ceremony and a vibrant Cougar Parade on Friday, Aug. 16.

“My first couple days at SIUE have been fun,” said freshman Dylan Kinell, of Marion. “I’ve met a lot of new people and made some good friends already. I’m excited to start the semester.”

Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Denise Cobb, PhD, led the Convocation ceremony, welcoming the nearly 1,700 individuals comprising SIUE's Class of 2023. She noted the students are diverse in every sense of the word, coming from 436 different high schools in 16 states and 10 countries.

Chancellor Randy Pembroke, PhD, welcomed the students to campus, emphasizing its sense of community and unique strengths.

"We are ready to meet and exceed your expectations," Pembroke said. "We understand that your enrollment here is a major commitment from you and your families, and we're honored and highly prepared to ensure you have a great experience. Together, we will reach your goals, while also fulfilling SIUE's mission to develop professionals, scholars and leaders who will shape a changing world."

SIUE alumna Cynthia Chapple, who earned a master's in chemistry in 2015, inspired the students not to change who they are, but rather to innovate, curate and dominate their space.

"I want you to leave here knowing you do not have to compromise who you are to fit in," Chapple said. "Living in your values is the only way to survive and thrive. As an adult, being authentic and courageous has shown me how to own my place in any space."

"Some say you go to college to find yourself," she added, "but I would caution you against that logic. The word 'find' symbolizes not knowing. I say, you simply begin to manifest who you already were, exactly whom you were meant to be. You have to tap into your passion by leaning into discomfort. You must decide you are uniquely positioned to help, thrive or live in that passion. Finally, go unapologetically hard at whatever that something is."

Following Convocation, a drumline led the Class of 2023 across campus to soak in motivating, inspirational cheers during the Cougar Parade.

"The atmosphere here is great, just amazing," said Kirsten Cavotaje, of Streamwood. "I've been waiting for this day. I'm a little nervous, because I'm five hours from home, and there's no parent to look out for me. But, I'm excited to meet these new people who I'll soon be calling family."

"Today's events have been really fun," added Lexi Moser, of Springfield. "I'm looking forward to this new experience and meeting a bunch of new people."

“It feels like this could actually be my home,” shared Michelle Duong, of Bloomington. “I’m really excited about it.”

The Cougar Parade concluded with the capturing of the annual class photo. The Class of 2023’s SIUE Experience continues through the weekend with Friday night’s Cougar Kick-Off at Korte Stadium, Late Night at the “e,” and a Saturday service opportunity called, Citizenship in Action: Cougars in the Community.

A complete SIUE Experience schedule is available at [siue.edu/admitted/experience](https://siue.edu/admitted/experience).

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville provides students with a high quality, affordable education that prepares them for successful careers and lives of purpose to shape a changing world. Built on the foundation of a broad-based liberal education, and enhanced by hands-on research and real-world experiences, the academic preparation SIUE students receive equips them to thrive in the global marketplace and make our communities better places to live. Situated on 2,660 acres of beautiful woodland atop the bluffs overlooking the natural beauty of the Mississippi River’s rich bottomland and only a short drive from downtown St. Louis, the SIUE campus is home to a diverse student body of more than 13,000.