

SIUE Takes Part in Illinois Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation Program

by Tyten Nalley
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CHICAGO - Seventeen science students at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE) taking part in the Illinois Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation program (LSAMP) presented their research at a professional conference in Chicago, February 28 – 29.

For Chemistry Senior Dalia Hassan, the LSAMP program has been a four-year journey for which she measures her growth and development as a student.

“It’s definitely a valuable program to be in and is great for gaining the skills you need if you are going to work in future research settings or job settings,” said Hassan. “You’ll have that background knowledge and the experience.”

The conference gives minority students studying in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields the chance to demonstrate their knowledge and passion for research. It also provides the chance for students to network with others interested in the same field.

“It’s been really nice actually,” said Hassan. “At the conference there are people from other schools I get to see again. So you kind of get a recap of their research once a year. I want to be able to nurture that network that I have because I can take that with me anywhere that I go.”

Associate Professor of Biology Myron Jones, Ph.D. serves as the coordinator for the SIUE program. He works with Assistant Professor in Chemistry Dr. Michael Hankins, Ph.D., and Assistant Professor in Biology Dr. Danielle Lee, who serve as co-coordinators.

This year the conference theme was "Building an Inclusive STEM Future."

"Every year, we take students to the annual Spring Symposium in STEM in Chicago. This year we had **17** attendees," said Jones. The 2020 Spring Symposium in STEM was sponsored by the Illinois LSAMP and the Center for STEM Education and Research at Chicago State University.

Jones also stressed the importance of networking between minority students in STEM fields.

"The annual conference is important because it provides students with an opportunity to present their work in a professional-like conference," Jones said. "They have opportunities to network with students from a variety of other institutions including North Eastern, Chicago State, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, DePaul, Illinois Institute of Technology, Illinois State University, University of Illinois, Northwestern, Governors State, St. Augustine College and others."

Jones stressed that the work of faculty mentors at SIUE makes the program possible.

"We could not be successful if it weren't for the many other faculty members serving as mentors for these students. We absolutely must make sure we acknowledge and thank them for all the support they provide these students. Every LSAMP student has a research mentor who guides them with their research projects, and that help can't be understated."

Chemistry Senior Kennedy Epps co-presented a research poster on measuring antioxidant content in Beastman Iced Tea, brewed in the Metro East.

"It was wonderful. I got to meet new people and experience new things. The weekend was inspirational seeing all different types of research from schools from all over the state and to meet people and network. It was pretty awesome," said Epps.

Hassan's research presentation involved measuring the glyphosate content in beer products. Glyphosate may be carcinogenic in very large doses but not at low doses sometimes found in food products.

"People need to know that it's at a certain concentration in their beer that they need to be aware of," Hassan said. "We help people who aren't familiar with these sciences to see things they can't see with their eyes in their everyday lives."

Jones hopes to extend the program at SIUE beyond chemistry and biology where it is already popular. "We are working to improve the professional development component of our program, and we need to seek more participation by students in engineering, mathematics and physics."

Hassan stressed that the program would be valuable for SIUE students across several STEM fields. "It was a great experience, and is definitely a good conference to have your first exposure to collaboration, connection, and learning about new innovations in science. There were posters about psychology, biology, computer science, engineering, chemistry, and environmental science, so there was definitely a different range of sciences and it was nice to learn about what's new in those areas."

The LSAMP Program continues to work toward increasing recruitment, retention, and graduation rates of underrepresented students in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, according to Jones.

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