



SIUE School of Nursing Hosts Virtual ANEW Conference

by Megan Wieser
March 25 2020 4:25 PM



EDWARDSVILLE – It's consistently clear that nurses play a huge societal role as educated, compassionate medical professionals and abundantly so in the midst of the current world health crisis. Whether on the frontlines, as administrators, educators or aspiring healthcare workers, nurses continuously seek new knowledge and skillsets that will add value for their patients.

One of the latest examples of this dedication is the Southern Illinois University Edwardsville School of Nursing's (SON) innovative Advanced Nursing Education Workforce (ANEW) program. Despite the suspension of on-campus activities at SIUE as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the ANEW program held its first continuing education conference on Saturday-Sunday, March 21-22 in a virtual format.

Almost 300 attendees, comprising regional Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRN) and students, participated remotely in the regional conference as nationally-renowned speakers presented on topics of opioid crisis, non-opioid pain treatment options, recognizing addictive behavior, rehabilitation of the opioid dependent patient, and long-term follow-up strategies.

“The ability of healthcare providers, and in particular, nurse practitioners to appropriately serve a patient population struggling with opioid use disorders within rural areas of Illinois is of critical importance,” said SIUE SON Family Nurse Practitioner Clinical Site Coordinator and Instructor Melissa Bogle, DNP, FNP-BC, ACNP-BC. “I was incredibly impressed with the level of participation, engagement and best practice sharing from attendees. Despite the virtual environment, you could sense the collegiality of the group.”

“We received so much interest from healthcare providers in the bi-state area for this conference, so it meant a lot to us to be able to deliver on our commitment to provide educational credits to this group, despite current COVID-19 challenges,” Bogle added. “The majority of attendees are required to have this type of opioid-focused education to renew their licenses within the state of Illinois.”

SIUE SON Instructional Designer Jodie Nehrt helped with the successful transition to a virtual format, primarily through the use of Zoom and Mursion.

“We were fortunate to have a collection of speakers who were motivated to share their content, despite the last-minute change in venue, and attendees who were eager to engage and participate from the comfort and safety of their homes,” Nehrt said.

“Zoom was the technology that saved the day for us,” she explained. “We were able to schedule the sessions and offer virtual attendance to this free conference using a free communication tool. We coordinated with our presenters to fulfill their needs for attendee participation and question-and-answer management. Additionally, one of the sessions was a dynamic demonstration of a software we use on campus, called Mursion, which offers mixed reality for the practicing of professional skills.”

“Dr. Melissa Bogle worked nonstop on developing this conference from the beginning. Jodie Nehrt came in to work last week when the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic and we knew that our live campus event would likely be canceled,” said ANEW Program Director Valerie Griffin, DNP, PPCNP-BC, FNP-BC, PMHS, FAANP, assistant clinical professor and director of nurse practitioner specializations in the SON. “These incredible, dedicated women were able to transition this large event to a virtual format without exhibiting worry or stress over the process. They remained positive that we could pull this off, and we did!”

Attendees expressed their appreciation to the SON for their creative online management and successful execution of the ANEW Conference.

“During a time when faculty are stressed to get their classes online, I am amazed at your commitment to those who registered for this meeting,” noted Margaret Faut Callahan,

CRNA, PhD, FNAP, FAAN, senior vice president of Strategy and Innovation at Loyola University Chicago, in a post-conference email. “The skills required to make this happen so quickly, in just a week, are remarkable. Further, the lectures were of high-quality both from a content perspective and the technology used to bring this to us virtually. It was clear to those of us who participated that your faculty and support staff worked long and hard to provide this excellent conference.”

Funded by a four-year \$2.75 million grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), the ANEW program is a multi-faceted educational effort that is creatively designed to increase the number of nurse practitioners who practice in rural and underserved communities throughout Illinois by promoting a smooth and natural transition from the student role to practicing APRNs into those areas.

The SIUE SON and its clinical partners collaborated on the conference’s development. Clinical partners bolstering the success of the ANEW program are Chestnut Health Systems, OSF HealthCare, Southern Illinois Healthcare, Synergy Healthcare Solutions, LLC., and the SIUE We Care Clinic.

The SIUE School of Nursing’s programs are committed to creating excellence in nursing leadership through innovative teaching, evidence-based practice, quality research, patient advocacy and community service. Enrolling more than 1,700 students in its baccalaureate, master’s and doctoral programs, the School develops leaders in pursuit of shaping the nursing profession and impacting the health care environment. SIUE’s undergraduate nursing programs on the Edwardsville campus and the regional campus in Carbondale help to solve the region’s shortage of baccalaureate-prepared nurses and enhance the quality of nursing practice within all patient service venues. The School’s graduate programs prepare nurses for advanced roles in clinical practice, administration and education.