

SIUE Students in National Guard and Reserves Deployed as Essential Workers

by Megan Wieser
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EDWARDSVILLE – When called into action, members of the National Guard and Reserves can always be relied on to offer help and support in a variety of ways. Units across Illinois have been deployed to assist as essential workers combating the COVID-19 pandemic.

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville is proud to have 157 students who are active members of the National Guard and Reserves. Many of those students are currently

spread throughout Illinois fulfilling their service duties, including freshmen Denver Duhs, of Mapleton, and Lucas Maue, of Maryville.

Duhs, a nursing major and aerospace medical technician in the Illinois Air National Guard, is stationed at the Bloomington COVID-19 Testing Site, with an array of responsibilities from swabbing patients, setting up new sites, equipment and supply control, and more.

“I enlisted in the Illinois Air National Guard for the education benefits they provide, and also to serve my country,” Duhs explained. “I wanted to be a part of something bigger than myself. It is humbling to be a part of this historic moment. I am working with some of the best Air Force and Army personnel, and it has been an experience I will not forget.”

Maue, a business finance major, aspires to be an Air Guard Pilot after college. His daily life has changed drastically since being activated to work at the McCormick Place Convention Center in downtown Chicago.

“I went from waking up to work on academic requirements each day to working long hours assisting in COVID-19 reaction measures,” Maue said. “I am working with members of all three Illinois Air Guard Units to construct an Alternate Care Facility. It’s a sort of overflow for the local hospitals. We work each day to prepare rooms for COVID-19 positive patients with mild symptoms to occupy as our hospitals run out of space to care for these people.”

As part of Phase A, Maue assisted in building a section of the center to consist of 500 rooms. Currently, Phase B is in progress, with teams constructing an additional 1,700 rooms.

“Phase A was a monumental task considering we had a blank, open space when we arrived on day one,” Maue explained. “Each item was packed in boxes and some of it wasn’t even assembled. For example, hundreds of IV stands that occupy a space in each room had to be put together. To go from nothing to something in just five days was neat to be a part of. We worked well together and were assisted by many civilian contractors.”

Upon learning of their deployments, the students connected with SIUE Military and Veteran Services and their course instructors to kindly request support and flexibility as they fulfilled their important duties.

“SIUE students are experiencing a series of challenges presented by our reaction to COVID-19,” said Kevin Wathen, director of SIUE Military and Veteran Services. “The

men and women of the National Guard and Reserves are being called to provide essential services. This is exactly what they are trained to do.”

“These military members are still trying to complete coursework for the semester. Several students reached out to discuss our deployment policy and the process available to complete courses,” he continued. “Because each student’s case is unique depending on class level, difficulty of class material, student capability and the particulars of the deployment, we rely on the student to have full communication with their professors. We are fortunate at SIUE to have supportive faculty who go above and beyond in working with our military.”

“I was transparent and honest with my instructors as soon as I got the notification that I was being activated by my unit, and each instructor has treated me with compassion and understanding,” Maue said. “All of the professors have either made exceptions to future requirements or allotted very forgiving timeframes on due dates, tests, etc. I have nothing but great things to say about how the institution has dealt with my situation.”

For more information on SIUE Military and Veteran Services, visit siue.edu/military.

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.

SIUE freshman business student Lucas Maue, a member of the Illinois Air National Guard, carries mattresses as he helps set up an Alternate Care Facility in the McCormick Place Convention Center in Chicago. (photo credit: U.S. Air Force Photo by Senior Airman Jay Grabiec)