



SIUE School of Pharmacy Kicks Off 2021 In-Person Commencement Ceremonies

by Doug McIlhaga
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EDWARDSVILLE – Southern Illinois University Edwardsville School of Pharmacy (SOP) began the commencement season Saturday, May 1, at Korte Stadium as Chancellor Randy Pembroke and Dean Mark Luer conferred degrees upon 79 graduates in the 2021 class. The outdoor ceremonies were the first held at SIUE since the early 1990s.

To return to in-person commencement exercises during the COVID-19 era, Pembroke is overseeing a series of 10 smaller outdoor ceremonies for 2,325 eligible graduates during the first two weekends in May. All ceremonies are streamed live on siue.edu/tv.

The School of Pharmacy combines its traditional hooding ceremony with commencement. Conner McClain, of St. Louis, earned a doctorate in pharmacy and provided the student address.

McClain praised his classmates for their perseverance. “Our class has utilized our competitive nature to propel us forward amid adversity,” he said. “Our perseverance and ambition began when we exceeded expectations on difficult exams that have left our professors saying they should have written harder questions. It continued when we ranked number one on the Pharmacy Curriculum Outcomes Assessment exam out of 142 pharmacy schools in the United States. And it was further exemplified amid the pandemic as we upheld the prestigious nature of the SIUE School of Pharmacy despite the drastic changes made to our clinical rotations.

“We have proven that no matter the obstacle, not only will we overcome it, but also we will grow as individuals and further develop our pharmaceutical knowledge and skills along the way.”

The remaining exercises are scheduled for Thursday-Sunday, May 6-9.

At noon on Thursday, May 6, SIUE alumni, who were unable to celebrate with an in-person experience for their respective spring or fall 2020 ceremonies as a result of COVID-19 mitigations, have the opportunity to cross the stage.

At noon on Friday, May 7, School of Business students receive their undergraduate and graduate degrees. The School has two student speakers with Samuel Childerson, of Altamont, who is earning a bachelor’s in economics and finance, and Ronald Akpan, of Dunlap, who is earning a bachelor’s in accountancy.

Later that day, the School of Nursing combines its traditional pinning ceremony with commencement at 3 p.m. Bailey Johnston, of Benton, is earning a doctor of nursing practice (DNP)/family nurse practitioner (FNP), and serves as the student speaker.

Ceremonies resume at 9 a.m. Saturday, May 8, with the first of three College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) exercises. Student speaker Kenzie Holzinger, of Highland, is earning a bachelor's in fine art with a specialization in drawing and an interest in painting.

The School of Education, Health and Human Behavior will have two exercises on Sunday, May 9, beginning at 9 a.m. and noon. The student speaker is Peter Romero, of Edwardsville, who is receiving a bachelor's in elementary education.

Spring 2021 Commencement concludes at 3 p.m. with the School of Engineering. Leanne Montgomery, of Belleville, who is receiving a bachelor's in mechanical engineering, is the student speaker.

SIUE will also offer virtual spring 2021 ceremonies to be posted on the virtual commencement website Friday, May 7 at 1 p.m. These pre-recorded virtual ceremonies will include brief remarks from Chancellor Pembroke, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Denise Cobb, and SIU President Dan Mahony along with the student speakers.

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 nearly 13,000.

Photo: School of Pharmacy 2021 commencement ceremonies at Korte Stadium.