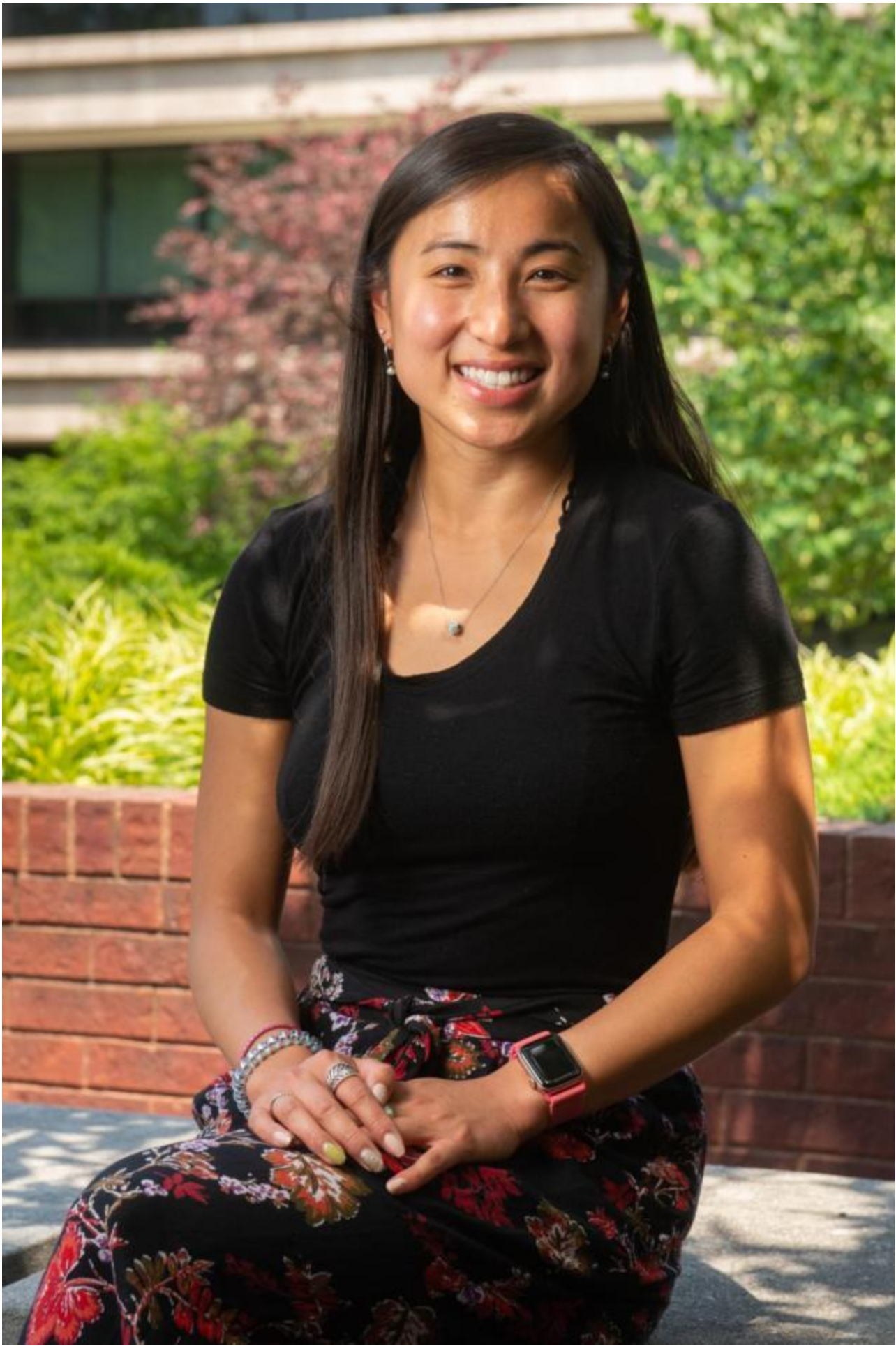




SIUE's Barnes Receives NASP's Student Leader Champion Award

by Megan Wieser
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EDWARDSVILLE – Southern Illinois University Edwardsville graduate student Zoe Barnes has received the National Association of School Psychologist’s (NASP) 2021 Student Leader Champion Award for her work to advance social justice for students, families and schools within the local and broader community.

“After a careful review of nominations, and with great pleasure, the NASP Graduate Student Committee has chosen to honor Zoe Barnes as one of two 2021 Student Leadership Champions,” wrote the NASP Committee. “We were greatly impressed by the many ways in which Zoe has served as a leader within the SIUE school psychology program and the broader community by connecting colleagues to resources, promoting advocacy and professional development related to social justice and equity, and serving as a source of strength and inspiration for those around her.”

Barnes, of Grand Rapids, Mich., is pursuing the Department of Psychology’s clinical child and school psychology specialist degree program and is slated to graduate in May 2022. She will be honored at NASP’s 2022 Annual Convention in February.

“I am extremely honored to be a recipient of this award and am grateful to NASP for placing such importance on topics like social justice advocacy,” said Barnes. “Over the past year, I’ve worked to facilitate discussions with those in our program about social justice and injustice, current domestic or international events, experiences that impact our racial identities, and how to lean into the uncomfortable to have productive future conversations surrounding these topics.”

Throughout her time at SIUE, Barnes has remained heavily involved in events and organizations that work to create a more diverse and equal space for the campus community. She previously served as a social emotional specialist at SIUE’s Head Start program, where she utilized her fluency in Spanish to communicate with families and students to ensure they received proper support and resources.

“I am passionate about promoting advocacy and professional development related to social justice and equity because it’s the right thing to do,” shared Barnes. “Our school systems have such diverse student populations that we need to have the proper training and resources to help all students, regardless of how they identify or what they look like.

“The world, and its people, are constantly changing, and we need to make sure we’re as informed as possible. It’s important to check your own biases and understand how they might influence your interactions with a student.”

Barnes recently served as the social justice chair of the Graduate Organization for Child and Adolescent Psychology Students (GOCAPS). Before holding this position, she frequently met with other graduate students to collaborate and discuss steps necessary for dismantling racism on campus. The group, Graduate Students for Social Justice, held discussions surrounding injustices with students and faculty, and brainstormed ideas of how to address social justice within their respective programs.

“A key part of success in promoting social justice, diversity, equity and inclusion is working with groups of people who share that same passion,” said Barnes. “I am fortunate to be part of a cohort that creates such amazing and meaningful discussions.”

Barnes aspires to continue creating positive change and make a difference in her community. “Whether it be big change, like implementing culturally affirming practices in my school, or small change, like helping one student, I want to make a difference,” she said.

The [SIUE School of Education, Health and Human Behavior](#) prepares students in a wide range of fields including public health, exercise science, nutrition, instructional technology, psychology, speech-language pathology and audiology, educational administration, and teaching. Faculty members engage in leading-edge research, which enhances teaching and enriches the educational experience. The School supports the community through on-campus clinics, outreach to children and families, and a focused commitment to enhancing individual lives across the region.