

# National Excursions Inspire SIUE Geoscholars, Highlight Summer

by Megan Wieser  
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EDWARDSVILLE— What has been the highlight of your summer? For seven Southern Illinois University Edwardsville scholars it was a 3,500-mile trek across parts of the U. S. to chase storms and visit interesting natural features.

The scholars are part of the collaborative GEOPATHS program, funded by the National Science Foundation. The program engages undergraduates in geoscience-related research opportunities.

“The GEOPATHs program as a whole has been one amazing, career-empowering experience after another,” said Logan Pelo, a senior geography major.

According to Alan Black, PhD, assistant professor of geography, the goal of the June trip was to give students the opportunity to put what they've learned about the atmosphere into practice to monitor weather conditions, make a weather forecast and observe storms.

Black and three other SIUE teacher-scholars participated in the trip, including Shunfu Hu, PhD, professor in the Department of Geography, Adriana Martinez, PhD, associate professor in the Departments of Environmental Sciences and Geography, and Sharon Locke, PhD, professor in the Department of Environmental Sciences.

"We saw a few major storms that were absolutely breathtaking," Pelo recalled.

"Watching our group of scholars open up to each other and share our enjoyment of science and weather was the best takeaway."

"This experience certified that I want to become a climatologist," said Samantha Gallatin, a senior double majoring in geography and biology, on the environment, ecology and evolution track. "It sparked a greater interest for the humanitarian aspect of geography. I am inspired to look into the connections between the physical environment and human practices within ecumenes. Ultimately, this should allow my future analysis to be more complete, my research to be more thorough, and my work to have lasting and germane impacts."

The geoscholars and program leaders will depart July 24 for a two-week excursion to western national parks. They will visit the Badlands, Devil's Tower National Monument and Yellowstone, Grand Teton, Arches, Bryce Canyon, and Great Sand Dunes National Parks.

As part of their excursion, the students will tour a coal mine in Wyoming, study natural hazards in the parks and their impacts on humans, and learn about Dark Skies and how to protect the night sky by doing astronomy via stargazing in the evenings.

NSF funding for SIUE's GEOPATHS program runs through June 2022. For more information and to apply for the program, visit [siue.edu/STEM](https://siue.edu/STEM).

[Southern Illinois University Edwardsville](https://siue.edu) 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.