

# Pinckneyville's Hawkins Receives National Dental Research Award

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Alexandria Hawkins, a fourth-year student in the Southern Illinois University School of Dental Medicine (SIU SDM), is one of four students nationally recognized for outstanding oral and visual presentations in the category of basic science research.

Hawkins appeared at the Hinman Dental Society's 20th annual Student Research Symposium Friday, Oct. 31, at the Peabody Hotel in Memphis, Tenn. This year's Symposium consisted of 88 students from 47 dental schools throughout the United States and Canada.

A Pinckneyville native, Hawkins was one of four dental students recognized in the basic science research group. Her award-winning presentation compared various endodontic procedures in their ability to disinfect instrumented root canals and to remove the smear layer formed during instrumentation.

Hawkins was joined by her project director, Dr. Jane Gillespie, SIU SDM professor and section head of microbiology, as well as third-year SIU SDM student Jacob Bleyer.

"I am extremely proud of Alex for the excellent job she did in representing herself, our research and the SIU SDM," said Gillespie. "The student participants at the Symposium are representing the finest dental research laboratories in the U.S. and Canada. To have a student selected as one of four outstanding basic science presentations, in what I know was a rigorously peer-reviewed competition, is truly an honor."

While the purpose of the Symposium is to showcase the work done by students, the conference also serves as an educational experience by providing students with the opportunity to connect with some of the most successful professionals in the dental industry today.

Several of the mentors in attendance relayed the same message: students should remain active in research, regardless of whether their career paths take them into dental practice or academics. The event emphasized the importance of working with others and the benefits of forming relationships with mentors.

The Symposium gathers dental medicine professionals from across North America, with this year's guest speakers representing Baylor University, the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio and the University of Alabama at Birmingham. This prestigious event has gained support from some of the largest health care companies in the world, including Procter & Gamble Co. and the Colgate-Palmolive Co.

The SIU School of Dental Medicine students manage approximately 35,000 patient visits each year at its patient clinics in Alton and East St. Louis. In addition, students offer oral health treatment, screenings and education to more than 10,000 people annually through a wide variety of off-campus community outreach events. These

opportunities provide students the training they need to graduate and become highly skilled dentists. The School of Dental Medicine is a vital oral health care provider for residents of southern and central Illinois, and the St. Louis metropolitan region.