

SIUE Achieves Historic Graduate Enrollment, Largest Fall First-Year Class in Six Years

by Megan Wieser
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EDWARDSVILLE – Landmark graduate enrollment, the largest first-year class in six years, increasing diversity, and growing international attendance highlight Southern Illinois University Edwardsville’s strong fall 2021 enrollment picture.

SIUE’s overall enrollment grew 1.2% (150 students) to 13,010 for fall 2021. The University welcomed 1,992 first-year students in fall 2021. Master’s and doctoral degree

program enrollment reached 3,043 students, the largest total in 44 years. Plus, international enrollment soared, growing 48% to 536 students, matching the largest number in University history.

Additional historic enrollment numbers were achieved by the School of Nursing, which grew to 1,906. Positive milestones also include the School of Business reaching 1,692 students (largest since 2001), and the School of Education, Health and Human Behavior growing to 1,851 students (largest since 2004).

“SIUE’s advancement is extraordinary, especially amid pandemic-related challenges,” said Chancellor Randy Pembroke. “Our fall 2021 enrollment numbers demonstrate dedicated and innovative approaches across all facets of the University from enrollment management and academic affairs to our Divisions of Student Affairs and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and beyond. I am proud to work alongside these individuals to welcome and foster growth in our new and returning students. We are indeed shaping a changing world.”

“The mix of growth from domestic and international students at both undergraduate and graduate levels is a testament to the innovation and agility of our academic deans, faculty, and staff throughout the University,” said Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Denise Cobb. “We amplified on-ground capacity in high-demand programs and remained committed to our tradition of high impact learning experiences. We have steadily increased our online offerings based on applicant interest. Our academic leaders have demonstrated the ability to serve traditional student experiences, offer innovative graduate programs, and meet the needs of adults who are ready to complete their degree. The changes we’ve made have strengthened the University and helped meet our goals of access and opportunity.”

The University is making positive strides in operationalizing inclusive excellence at all levels of the institution. SIUE’s student body is the most diverse in its history.

According to fall 2021 data, Asian American students represent 2.6% of the group, Black students 13.2%, Hispanic students 5.3%, international students 4.1%, with 3.2% reporting Multiple Races, White students 67.9%, and 3.4% not disclosing their ethnicity.

Numerous bright spots emerged in the initial enrollment picture, including a first-year class that grew 28% (438 students). In the first year of a test-optional environment, the entering class reflected an average high school GPA of 3.5, which has been the class average for each of the past four years.

“We are pleased with the quality of this first-year class, as we shifted away from using ACT/SAT scores in the admissions process this year,” explained Director of

Undergraduate Admissions Todd Burrell. “We worked with the SIUE Center for Predictive Analytics (C-PAN) and the Faculty Senate to identify and approve new admission criteria. Data from C-PAN showed that GPA is more important overall than ACT test scores as a predictor of student retention at SIUE. This policy shift is among the steps the University has taken to build a more just and equitable environment for all members of our community.”

Of the first-year students, 81% are from Illinois, and 142 of those Illinois residents benefitted from the University’s new financial program: [the SIUE Commitment](#). Overall, the student body represents 44 states and 62 countries.

Those families completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and had an income below \$63,575 per year. After Pell and MAP grants and any merit scholarships were applied, SIUE filled the financial gap by enabling the 142 students to enroll without using any out-of-pocket resources to cover tuition and fees.

Additionally, the SIUE Commitment filled the gap for 98 new transfers. Altogether, 240 students received an average of \$1,519 to cover full-time tuition and mandatory fees with aid that does not need to be paid back. SIUE will continue this program as long as the state of Illinois’ AIM High program is active.

“The SIUE Commitment is an ideal use of AIM High funds, which are deployed to keep talented Illinois students in-state,” said Associate Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management Scott Belobrajdic. “We were able to provide a new need-based aid source to deserving students. We are thrilled to have these students as part of our first-year class and SIUE’s Cougar family.”

International enrollment jumped 48% (174 students) over fall 2020 and matched an all-time high for SIUE. International students account for 4.1% of campus enrollment. Director of Graduate and International Admissions James Monahan attributes the rise to several years of relationship building with overseas partners, and a bit of pandemic-related built-up demand.

“I’m proud of our team’s efforts to remain in contact with international applicants over the past year and a half, so when embassies and consulates started opening mid-summer we were ready to work with hundreds of qualified admitted students,” he said. “Our Schools of Business and Engineering, and our immigration team in International Student Services remained flexible as students made last-minute decisions to join the University.”

[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.