

SIUE School Of Nursing Honors Outstanding Preceptors

by Megan Wieser
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EDWARDSVILLE - In recognition of the critical role preceptors play in preparing nurse practitioner students, the Southern Illinois University Edwardsville School of Nursing (SON) has presented four preceptor excellence awards.

“Preceptors are some of the most important mentors that our family and psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner students will have in their doctoral program,” said SON’s Bernadette Sobczak, DNP, clinical assistant professor, and family nurse practitioner program clinical site coordinator. “They spend many hours one-on-one with our students in the clinical setting, sharing their knowledge and time to mentor those new to our profession.”

The SON has agreements with preceptors in a variety of settings, providing care to a wide range of populations and at diverse sites in Illinois, Missouri, Wisconsin and even Florida. Students in the SON’s doctor of nursing practice (DNP) program were asked to nominate outstanding preceptors. A committee of SON faculty then reviewed the nominees, selecting winners in the categories of women’s health, mental health, pediatrics and family practice.

Family Practice: Tammy Vandermolen, DNP, APN, FNP-BC, BJC Medical Group Family Physicians of Alton

Vandermolen was nominated by DNP students Kourtney Chapman, of Edwardsville, and Katelyn Shaw, of Bunker Hill, for going above and beyond as a preceptor to demonstrate professionalism, compassion, and trust with her patients and students.

“Tammy provides constructive criticism that encourages the student to grow clinically as a professional,” Shaw said. “Each patient is treated equally and with treatment guidelines that correlate with up-to-date evidence-based practice.”

Women’s Health: Felecia Ernst, MSN, APN, FNP-C, Southern Illinois Healthcare Foundation, Alton

Chapman also nominated Ernst, along with DNP student Jordan Smith, of Waterloo. Both students recognized Ernst for promoting critical thinking and enabling clinical decision making while also modeling evidence-based practice.

“Felecia encourages students to be independent by guiding and allowing us to conduct patient interviews and assessments,” said Chapman. “She is always willing to explain treatment options and references various clinical resources often when developing patient care plans. Additionally, she was willing to take on several students per semester because she is aware that it’s difficult to find preceptors in the area of women's health.”

Mental health: Andrea Cutler, MSN, APRN, PMHNP, HSHS St. Anthony's Memorial Hospital Outpatient Behavioral Health Services, Effingham

Michele Hartke, DNP student of Dieterich, nominated Cutler, noting that she has been the only mental health provider in her rural community for the past few years.

“Andrea challenged me as a psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner student, yet provided me with explanations and evidence-based practice on why she assessed and treated as she did,” said Hartke. “She is caring to her patients and the relationships they have with her shows. I was very fortunate and grateful to have her as my preceptor.”

Pediatrics: Ashish John, MD, Memorial Health, Springfield, Ill.

John was nominated by DNP student Lindsay Staff, of Chatham, who explained she was initially apprehensive to be paired with a physician, particularly for a pediatric clinical rotation she was already nervous to undergo.

“Dr. John made my experience with pediatrics wonderful and extremely less nerve-wracking than I had anticipated,” said Staff. “Exposure to Dr. John for my pediatric clinical rotation has allowed me to go from completely terrified at the idea of assessing a newborn baby to excited and comfortable, a point I do not believe I would have reached without him as my preceptor.”

The SON plans to honor outstanding preceptors on an annual basis each fall.

“Our programs could not succeed without our preceptors,” said SON’s Valerie Griffin, DNP, clinical associate professor and director of nurse practitioner specializations. “They provide that connection between what is taught in the classroom to actual patient encounters, which helps students to solidify the foundational knowledge necessary to their futures as advanced practice registered nurses.”