



SIUE Difference Maker Jacks Gets Creative, Remains Dedicated to Students

by Megan Wieser

February 28 2022 6:40 AM



EDWARDSVILLE – The pandemic has taken a marked toll on all individuals, presenting a variety of challenges as it has engendered salient adjustments in personal lives, learning environments and workplaces. Realizing and sharing in these challenges, numerous Southern Illinois University Edwardsville faculty, staff and students have gone above and beyond to support each other.

In response to a social media call to highlight “SIUE Difference Makers,” nominations were abundant. Among those acknowledged for their positive impact was Tim Jacks, PhD, associate professor of computer management and information systems (CMIS) in the School of Business.

“I’m incredibly fortunate to have a meaningful career where I’m able to make an impact on people at a personal level,” shared Jacks, who joined SIUE in 2012. “I am profoundly humbled by this Difference Maker recognition. The School of Business is full of faculty, staff, and administrators who make a difference in the lives of our students and I couldn’t do my work without their support. I’m not a one-man show. Our students are the real difference makers!”

Amid the pandemic, Jacks quickly realized the need for educators to be especially creative in order to capture students’ attention during online classes.

“While we were all little tiny boxes on a computer screen, I’d wear funny hats and play music videos and students would give recommendations on the music they were listening to,” Jacks said. “I’ve found that music is something that really brings people together. I’m not afraid to be silly on camera, and that helped break the ice for the online class environment.”

Senior Matthew Cobb expressed admiration for Jacks’ exceptional qualities. “He’s the best professor I’ve ever had,” said Cobb. “His passion for teaching combined with his passion for the material itself made for the best learning experience I’ve had at any institution.”

Another acknowledgment of Jacks’ excellent teaching service came from CMIS major Tyme Dappert. “‘Uncle Tim’ is a professor who truly cares and is very knowledgeable,” Dappert shared. “He made 2021 better for all of his students.”

In the same vein, Jacks recognized his students’ critical impact on his long-standing career.

“Students inspire me to go above and beyond because they go above and beyond,” said Jacks. “It's not uncommon for students to be going to school full-time while they are working part-time or even full-time. Some are trying to support a family. It's important to recognize that college is one of the hardest things they've ever attempted and it makes you want to root for them.”

Jacks derives pleasure in experiencing learners break out of their shells. “Seeing the light bulb go off is the best feeling in the world,” he shared. “The students gets a smile on their face and says, “I think I'm starting to get it!” and that can keep me motivated for a long time.”

A cybersecurity expert, Jacks is co-author of the book, *The World IT Project: Global Issues in Information Technology*, officially released by World Scientific Publishing in May 2020. He has also authored numerous articles on the occupational culture of IT professionals and how it differs from the typical business management culture.

As a paragon of SIUE's teacher-scholar model, Jacks remarked, “It's hard for me to separate the two roles. They go hand in hand. I'm on sabbatical now in order to remain current on cybersecurity best practices, specifically DevSecOps which is a huge trend in the industry. While I'll get several publications out of this research, I will also be integrating this new knowledge into the classroom to share with students and keep them as marketable as possible.”

New strategies developed and lessons learned through the pandemic will support students, both current and former, in the dynamic workforce.

“The future is all about working remotely,” Jacks noted. “Being able to thrive in that environment will take a new set of skills and techniques that we are all still trying to figure out.”

“I'm always proud of the high-tech jobs our CMIS students are getting once they graduate,” he added. “I've been teaching long enough that I'm starting to get my former students coming back to talk to current students about their successful careers in information technology. Keeping up with my LinkedIn newsfeed and seeing our alumni getting promoted and advancing their careers always motivates me and reminds me why I'm here.”

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