

SIUE's CAS Recognizes More Than 300 Students at Annual Honors Day Celebration

by Megan Wieser
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EDWARDSVILLE – The Southern Illinois University Edwardsville College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) hosted its 2022 Honors Day convocation on Sunday, April 10 in the Morris University Center Meridian Ballroom, honoring 303 students with 357 scholarships and awards, marking the first live, in-person celebration since 2019.

SIUE’s largest single gathering outside of commencement recognizing student achievement, Honors Day celebrates the scholarships and awards of outstanding students throughout nearly two dozen departments and programs within the College.

“We are thrilled have hosted our annual Honors Day on campus this year,” said CAS Dean Kevin Leonard, PhD. “Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have not been able to gather in person to celebrate the achievements of our students and the generosity of our donors and sponsors since 2019. Through all the challenges of the pandemic, our scholarship and award recipients have persevered, excelling in their classes and making a difference through their leadership and community service activities.”

This year’s student speaker was junior Sabria Bender, a double major in theater design technology and philosophy. She was honored with the Friends of Theater and Dance (FOTAD) William Vilhauer Merit Award in Design and Technical Theater and the John Mareing Philosophy scholarship.

“My highest purpose within speaking today is to show you that what you all are doing is good,” Bender said during her Honors Day speech. “It is important work. It impacts young people’s lives. It allows each and every single student here to create who we want to be.”

Bender noted the difficulties and heartbreak of studying theater during the pandemic after being forced to shut down productions, and the support of the department in ensuring students still received a valuable education.

“Our amazing faculty found ways to educate us in whatever way they could,” Bender said. “Through online classes and performances, we managed to advance in our learning despite the circumstances.”

On how studying philosophy has changed her as a person, Bender said, “I have learned a tremendous amount and have slowly become a much kinder and fulfilled person.”

She thanked several SIUE faculty members for their support and encouragement of her learning, growth and education, including James Wolfson, associate professor in the Department of Theater and Dance, as well as Matthew Schunke, PhD, and Matthew

Cashen, PhD, both associate professors in the Department of Philosophy. Also acknowledging SIUE's ACCESS, she stated the support she and other students received gave them the necessary tools to succeed and flourish.

Bender concluded her speech by thanking scholarship and award sponsors for their generosity.

“Through these scholarships, you are directly investing in our futures, and therefore the future of humanity and what we, as a society, will become,” she shared. “These scholarships are incredibly humbling and directly affect our lives for the better.”

Visit the CAS Honors Day website at siue.edu/cas-honors-day to watch a recording of the event and to view an archive of past Honors Day events.

Central to SIUE's exceptional and comprehensive education, the College of Arts and Sciences offers degree programs in the natural sciences, humanities, arts, social sciences, and communications. The College touches the lives of all SIUE students helping them explore diverse ideas and experiences, while learning to think and live as fulfilled, productive members of the global community. Study abroad, service-learning, internships, and other experiential learning opportunities better prepare SIUE students not only to succeed in our region's workplaces, but also to become valuable leaders who make important contributions to our communities.