

# "Phenomenal Women," Including Awardees From Not Only SIUE, But In SIU System Are Honored

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EDWARDSVILLE - Year-round, women strive to make significant efforts to engender equal and equitable space wherever they are. Owing to their broader contribution to the immediate community and beyond, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville's Inclusive Excellence, Education and Development Hub (The Hub) recognized 17

Phenomenal Women, comprising faculty, staff, students and community members, who are shaping society with their community involvement, public discourse and exemplary leadership.

A virtual event held in March honored the women, including awardees from not only SIUE, but also within the SIU System.

“Our campus is stronger with the presence of women like the ones celebrated at this event,” shared Lindy Wagner, assistant vice chancellor for Inclusive Excellence, Education and Development. “Our campus and the community benefit from all the hard work and dedication put in, be it visible or invisible labor.”

“This event provides a chance to lift up for all to see the true phenomenal women among us, and inspires us to remember that these women surround and work among us every day,” Wagner noted. “Moments like this should always be a reminder to celebrate and to consider what barriers still lie in the way of women achieving all they are capable of and reflecting on what we are doing to combat those barriers.”

The keynote address was offered by Sheila Caldwell, EdD, SIU System vice president for Antiracism, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and chief diversity officer.

“These are truly phenomenal women,” shared Caldwell. “We are not weak as evidenced by creative programming, problem-solving, community building and disruption of patriarchy and colonialism.”

“We are working toward building an authentic all-inclusive environment for the betterment of all, including those in the SIU System,” she said. “There is indeed much to celebrate, and I celebrate each of you for the splendid work you have done and the inspiring work you will continue to do.”

Awardees included:

Rebecca Bennett: founder and principal of Emerging Wisdom LLC

Jurnee Brewer: sophomore majoring in sociology, Campus Activities Board Black Heritage Month chair

Sheila Caldwell, EdD: SIU System vice president for antiracism, diversity, equity and inclusion (ADEI) and chief diversity officer

Cristina Castillo: coordinator of the Hispanic/Latino Resource Center at SIUC

Denise Cobb, PhD: provost and vice chancellor for Academic Affairs

Carol Colaninno, PhD: professor of anthropology, SIUE STEM Center

Carolyn Jason: interim Head Start/Early Head Start program director

Candi Johnson: program coordinator and resource center manager for the SIUE STEM

Center

Deirdre Johnson: research support services manager within Library Information Services (LIS)

Min Liu, PhD: professor in the Department of Applied Communication Studies

Dianah McGreehan: SIUC Graduate Professional Student Council (GPSC) president and SIUC graduate student in the CMST Department

Gertrude Pannirselvam, PhD: associate professor in the School of Business Department of Management and Marketing

Mahoggani (Mo) Pickett: senior double majoring in criminal justice and psychology, president of Black Girls Rock

Isabella (Izzy) Pruitt: junior majoring in public health, immediate Student Government vice president and director of health and wellness education for Alpha Phi Sorority

Telisha Reinhardt: assistant director in the Office of Military and Veteran Services

Bernadette Sobczak, DNP, APN, CPNP-PC, PMHS: assistant professor of nursing, FNP Clinical Site coordinator

Ashley Wittler, WHNP: instructor in the School of Nursing's Department of Family Health and Community Health

During the event, Rahmat Salau, a junior in the School of Business and Student Government president-elect, recited the poem And Still I Rise by Maya Angelou, from her third volume of poetry published in 1978.

In her closing remarks, Cobb charged women to address social, systemic and structural barriers while confronting local and individual challenges as well. She added that women must ensure they rise to the occasion of lifting one another to clear the path for others to realize their full potential.

“I hope you will all commit to working in the ways that you can on campus to address those barriers and obstacles that remain,” said Cobb. “Our task is to ensure biases and systems of oppression and subtle marginalization do not remain unchallenged. We can be agents of change.”

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.

[Megan Wieser also contributed to this story.](#)