

Biology, Geography Double Major Inspired to Become College Professor, Researcher

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EDWARDSVILLE - When College of Arts and Sciences senior Samantha Gallatin, of Machesney Park, came to Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, she wanted to become a secondary education biology teacher. After joining the GEOPATHS Scholars Program, however, her interests shifted toward geography, and she became inspired in pursuing a career as a researcher and professor at the collegiate level.



“My career goal changed, because I want to teach and encourage motivated individuals about the elaborate components of science,” Gallatin said. “Through my courses, involvement as a GEOPATH Scholar and student research opportunities, SIUE has provided the fundamental experience I need.”

Gallatin is among 2,356 eligible graduates whose degrees will be conferred during SIUE's spring 2022 commencement exercises slated for Friday-Saturday, May 6-7. All ceremonies will be streamed live on siue.edu/tv.

As a student leader, employee and researcher, Gallatin was heavily involved on campus. She held several positions as committee chairs in the Honors Student Association, served as secretary and co-president of the Wildlife and Conservation Biology Club, tutored in the Tutoring Resource Center (TRC), and worked as a peer led team learning leader (PLTL) in the Department of Biological Sciences.

Drawing on her experience as a PLTL and a tutor in the TRC, she gained a better understanding of academic concepts and how to communicate a topic to cater to different types of learners.

“As a PLTL, I learned how to stand in front of a group of people and teach complex information in a way that was understandable; and as a TRC tutor, I learned there are many ways to teach a single subject, and there is no correct way to teach because of the myriad ways individuals interpret information.”

Perhaps the most influential experience she has had on campus has been her involvement with a research project alongside Alan Black, PhD, assistant professor in the Department of Geography and Geographic Information Sciences.

“I have been working on a research project with Dr. Black for nearly one and half years now,” she explained. “This project has strengthened my leadership skills by making me more decisive and independent. It also taught me patience and problem solving, and increased my ability to think forward.”

Gallatin was recognized by The Lincoln Academy of Illinois as a 2021 Student Laureate during the 47th annual Lincoln Academy Student Laureate ceremony, which was held [virtually on November 10, 2021](#).

“This award is a recognition of the effort I have put into my college career and a sign that the work I have submitted to my professors is dependable and noteworthy,” said Gallatin. “It is also a sign that I can be a proud representative of SIUE, with the time I have spent being a student researcher, student leader and community volunteer.”

The Lincoln Academy annually honors one senior from each of Illinois' four-year, degree-granting colleges and universities for demonstrating leadership and a desire to make a difference in the world through civic engagement.

“Samantha is an extremely talented student who embodies the desired characteristics of the Lincoln Laureates – courage, empathy, honesty, and integrity – in everything she does,” said Black. “She is a leader in the classroom, among the groups in which she participates, and in the community.”

At the [2022 CAS Honors Day celebration](#), held Sunday, April 10, Gallatin was presented with both the Senior Award in Genetics and Cell Biology and the Dr. Carl Lossau Distinguished Student in Geography Award.

Next, Gallatin plans to pursue a master’s in geosciences. She hopes to one day earn a doctoral degree and become a researcher and professor at the collegiate level.