

# SIU School of Dental Medicine Welcomes Students Back for the Academic Year

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EDWARDSVILLE – The Southern Illinois University School of Dental Medicine (SDM) fall semester is underway, and to set the tone for a productive and collegial year, students gathered for a welcome event on Tuesday, Aug. 9.

The SIUE Division of Student Affairs coordinated the event which included a taco lunch, wellness bags with health essentials, and Dairy Queen blizzards handed out by SIUE Chancellor James T. Minor, PhD and Alton Mayor David Goins. Students also enjoyed participating in various games and creative activities.

“I’m excited to start year three at the SIU School of Dental Medicine,” said Julissa Quinonez, of Rochelle. “I’m really jumping into clinics. I’m seeing a lot more patients now than I did in the summers and am eager to try new procedures.”

“This is basically home,” said first-year dental student Alyssa January, of St. Louis. “Everyone is incredibly friendly and helpful on campus. The whole transformation from not being in dental school to starting as a first-year dental student (D1), all the way up to D4 is going to be a smooth transition.”

January is pursuing a career in dentistry so that she can inspire and impact lives, just as hers was growing up.

“Dentistry was very transformative in my life,” said January. “I used to have a big gap between my two front teeth before I had braces. I was very reserved and did not want to interact with people. I was bullied a lot. After having braces, I was inspired to reach out to other people and talk about my experience with dentistry.”

Fellow first-year student, Nicholas Yuhas, of Decatur, shares the same passion for dentistry and has always known that dentistry is the career he wants to pursue. He acknowledges his path to SIU School of Dental Medicine may have taken longer than most, but is ready to dive in and learn more.

“Dentistry is fun. It’s art. It’s creative,” Yuhas said. “You can help people and affect them in a positive way. SIU SDM has a great reputation. I worked for a dentist that was a 2020 SIU SDM graduate and he taught me a lot. He was an inspiration, I am confident that he got a lot of his skills from this school.”

SIU School of Dental Medicine students manage approximately 35,000 patient visits each year at patient clinics in Alton and East St. Louis. In addition, students offer oral health treatment, screenings and education to more than 10,000 people annually through a wide variety of off-campus community outreach events. These opportunities provide students the training they need to graduate and become highly skilled dentists. The School of Dental Medicine is a vital oral health care provider for residents of southern and central Illinois, and the St. Louis metropolitan region.