

# SIU SDM Celebrates Inaugural Graduates of Endodontics Program

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EDWARDSVILLE – Two recent Southern Illinois University School of Dental Medicine (SIU SDM) graduates Tara Habibi, of Springfield, and Priya Sapra Kullar, of India, have made history as the first to receive a Specialty Certificate in Endodontics from the SIU SDM.

The program, introduced in 2020, offers students an advanced educational curriculum and a clinical residency regimen focused on endodontics and is accredited by the Commission of Dental Accreditation (CODA) of the American Dental Association.

“By starting the advanced education program for endodontics at the SDM, we now have the ability to manage all complex cases and provide a resource for the surrounding area to manage cases for those who have limited means,” said Marvin Leigh Speer, DDS, director of the endodontics program. “Tara and Priya were exceptional students in their coursework. It has been a true pleasure to work with such outstanding students.”

“The SIU SDM feels like home,” said Kullar, who earned her doctor of dental medicine (DMD) from the SIUE SDM in 2020. “Having an opportunity to pursue further education at the school after completing my DMD was a perfect fit. I knew that I would receive great training with the diverse patient populations and the various subspecialty training offered by the faculty. The faculty is approachable and work closely with the residents in training and that was something that was very important to me.”

“I enjoyed the learning that we were able to receive at this level,” added Habibi, who also earned her DMD from the SIU SDM in 2020. “Being the first class of a smaller program was a huge plus. I am excited to see this legacy continue.”

Both Kullar and Habibi will be staying in the Metro East area to utilize their talents. Kullar will be joining a private practice in Swansea as a full-time associate endodontist. Habibi will be part of an associateship in Edwardsville. The two hope to return to SIU SDM one day and teach students who will follow in their footsteps.

*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.*