

SIUE Graduate School Announces 2022 Outstanding Thesis and Dissertation Awards

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EDWARDSVILLE - Southern Illinois University Edwardsville's Graduate School has announced the recipients of the Outstanding Thesis and Dissertation Awards. The awards recognize a master's student's thesis and a doctoral student's dissertation that have been identified as outstanding among all those completed in the previous academic year. The recipients were recognized at the Graduate School Awards Reception in October and received a \$500 cash prize.

Alexa Agne completed a master's in kinesiology in August and was awarded the Outstanding These Award for her thesis, "Acute Glucose Responses Following Combined Arm and Leg Cycling." Patrick Ayres, PhD, who completed his degree in August, earned the Outstanding Dissertation Award for his work, entitled "The Conservative Heart of the Nation: Political Conservatism in the Civil War Era West."

"Alexa is the best graduate student I have ever worked with thanks to her energy, enthusiasm, and work ethic," said Bryan Smith, PhD, assistant professor in the Department of Applied Health. "She essentially composed a mini dissertation in a span of a little more than one year, even though her thesis project required her to become familiar with a completely different area of research than what she had done previously."

Agne's project resulted in surprising and promising findings regarding the benefits of short bouts of activity breaks in improving glucose metabolism. The data will be used as pilot data to submit for external funding for additional research. Her project was presented at the 2022 American College of Sports Medicine Conference and the resulting manuscript was submitted for review to the Journal of Activity, Sedentary and Sleep Behaviors. Agne was also awarded an American College of Sports Medicine Young Scholar Professional Development Award. She is currently pursuing a doctorate at the University of Missouri Columbia, where she received a prestigious Life Science Fellowship.

"Ayres' dissertation is exceptionally researched and an outstanding piece of scholarship," said Erik Alexander, PhD, associate professor in the Department of History and Ayres' dissertation chair. "His dissertation offers important contributions to our understanding of the sectional conflict in the nineteenth century, complicating the traditional interpretation of the conflict as one strictly between the North and South."

Ayres persevered during the pandemic when many archives had not yet opened their doors to scholars by identifying important and relevant sources through digital databases and other published collections. It is expected that his dissertation will prove to be an important contribution to historical debates surrounding the causes of the Civil War and the evolution of conservative political ideology in America. It is a groundbreaking addition to the emerging field of Midwest History.

Ayres also received the Outstanding Thesis Award following completion of his master's in history in fall 2019. Ayres is currently working on submitting an article for publication, and he plans to enter academia in the near future.

By preparing the next generation of leaders in a knowledge-based economy, SIUE's [Graduate School](#) fulfills the region's demand for highly trained professionals. Graduate program offerings include arts and sciences, business, education, engineering, nursing and interdisciplinary opportunities. SIUE professors provide students with a unique integration of theoretical education and hands-on research experiences. Students can obtain graduate certificates or pursue master's degrees, and be part of a supportive learning and rich intellectual environment that is tailored to the needs of adult learners. The Graduate School's Office of Research and Projects supports and raises the visibility of research and creative activity at SIUE, which ranks highest among its Illinois Board of Higher Education peers in total research and development expenditures according to the National Science Foundation's Higher Education Research and Development Survey.