

SIUE Difference Maker Sarah Andersen Leads With Compassion

by Kalli Collins

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EDWARDSVILLE – The compassion Sarah Andersen, lecturer in Southern Illinois University Edwardsville’s Learning Support Services, has for her students is what makes her stand out as an SIUE “Difference Maker”. Andersen works with students in the Grade Recovery and Academic Sustainability Program (GRASP) program and supports their academic journey through graduation.

"The impact that her and the GRASP class has had on myself, and the student population entirely, cannot be praised enough," said one of Andersen's nominators, Chris Hoogland, a senior computer management and information services major. "I would not be where I am at in my schooling without the help Sarah has provided. I went from under a 1.0 GPA to being able to graduate in fall of 2023."

Andersen is available 24/7 to her students during their time in the GRASP program and after they are off probation. She works with each student teaching them how to self-advocate for themselves and be a resource to them to work through any struggles they may be facing.

"I am so passionate about my position and making sure all my students realize they can be successful at SIUE," said Andersen. "Watching a student realize they are more than capable of being a successful student is all the recognition I need."

"When I attempted my return to SIUE, I had financial and academic obstacles that I needed to overcome," said another one of Andersen's nominators Chantel Irving, who graduated with her bachelor's in integrative studies this past winter. "Sarah's assistance enabled me to pursue a degree I thought would be unachievable due to my work-life schedule. I begin a Master of Arts in Special Education this summer and would not have been able to accomplish this without Sarah going above and beyond for me."

Andersen's compassion is contagious to her students. Former GRASP students, including Hoogland and Irving, have created a student-driven service initiative called Take2Action to work with students that enter the GRASP program. They hope to make an impact on their peers just as Andersen has impacted their lives.

"Having former students come back and share their success with current classes is a moment of absolute pride," Andersen concluded.

[Southern Illinois University Edwardsville](#) provides *students with a high-quality education that powerfully transforms the lives of all individuals who seek something greater. A premier metropolitan university, SIUE is creating social and economic mobility for individuals while also powering the workforce of the future. 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 12,500.*

Video: [SIUE Difference Maker Sarah Andersen](#)