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Outstanding students recognized at SIU Board of Trustees meeting

The Southern Illinois University System Board of Trustees and the Student Advisory Committee for the SIU System (SACSS) honored outstanding students with the 2023 SIU System Distinguished Student Service Award at the April meeting held this week in Carbondale.

The SACSS advises SIU System administrators on student-related issues pertinent at the system level. It also serves as a vehicle to discuss matters impacting the campuses, share ideas and projects, find solutions to problems, and work together on vital student concerns. In one of the SACSS's first acts when it was created in 2021, it worked with the president's office to create this award to recognize student achievement.

The committee received applications from throughout the system and selected one undergraduate student and one graduate student each from SIU Edwardsville and SIU Carbondale, as well as one student from the School of Medicine, the School of Dental Medicine, the School of Law, and the School of Pharmacy.

"Congratulations to all of our winners. On behalf of the SIU System, I want to extend our appreciation for the work they have done as representatives of the system and individually on their campuses. Once again, thanks goes to the dedicated work of the SACSS Advisory Committee led by Co-Chairs Isaiah Overton from SIUC and Hailee O'Dell from SIUE who are continuing this important tradition of student recognition," said SIU System President Dan Mahony.

The 2023 SIU System Distinguished Student Service Award recipients are:

SIU Carbondale Undergraduate Student: Alexis Hamon - As a junior at SIU Carbondale, Alexis Hamon studies ovarian cancer in a laboratory focused on developing prevention strategies for ovarian cancer using natural products. Involved in the Pre-health Professions Association, Hamon has recruited the organization to help with Gumdrops, a local charity that distributes food packets to children in food-insecure households. A passionate Saluki, Hamon has led nearly 100 campus tours, served as a student advocate for the Physiology department, participated in student panels, and spoken in University 101 classes.

SIU Carbondale Graduate Student: Natalee Hite - Natalee Hite is a fifth-year in the PhD program at the Southern Illinois University School of Medicine. As a TA, Hite mentors over 20 undergraduate students. She has also judged SIU research fairs and served in executive positions

on the board of Alpha Chi Sigma, a professional chemistry fraternity where she has judged science fairs for local middle and high schools, helped Boy Scouts earn STEM merit badges, proctored chemistry Olympiads, and created interactive science experiments that the local Science Discovery Center.

SIU School of Law Student: Alexandra Williams - A third-year Law student, Alexandra Williams interned in the drug unit at the McLean County State's Attorney's Office where she worked with local drug units and performed her many tasks with competence, confidence, and a close attention to detail. After receiving her 711 license, Williams presented cases to the Grand Jury, conducted custody bond court hearings, and presented plea agreements, remission hearings, and fitness hearings, among many other tasks. Supporting the larger community, Williams makes and delivers baked goods to first responders.

SIU School of Medicine Student: Kanicia Green - Kanicia Green is a third-year medical student and serves as the Class of 2024 Service Coordinator, where she has organized donation drives for the unhoused, served as a volunteer and mentor for underserved kids in her community, and co-founded Capitol City Dance Team, where she trains kids in hip-hop techniques and offers Zumba classes for adults. As the coordinator for Black History Month, Green visited local schools to spread awareness about health, organized a violence prevention town hall, and a panel about black mental health.

SIU Edwardsville Undergraduate Student: Sai Medavaka - A senior at SIUE, Sai Medavaka has dedicated extensive time to helping new students and their families with the transition to college. He has served as Co-Captain of the eSports 'Brawl Stars' team, Pre-Medical Ambassador for the Pre-Health Hub, At-Large Representative for the Honors Student Association, Undergraduate Liaison for the Indian Student Association, and a Peer Mentor for the Honors Program and two first-semester transition courses. Medavaka has also served as a Rural Parish Mobile Clinic Volunteer for uninsured and underserved individuals.

SIU Edwardsville Graduate Student: R. Andrey Ayers (Andrey) - R. Andrey Ayers is a graduate student at SIUE where she has helped with the Hearing Panel Committee, volunteering during New Student orientation, Welcome Week, Homecoming, Spring Fest, the Black Student Welcome Reception, and the Always a Cougar Celebration. She has also established Adopt-A-Spot Highway clean-up programs for Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority. The Founder and President of the Student Diversity Club, Ayers also organized an event where students were taught how to publicly advocate for the needs of marginalized communities.

SIU School of Dental Medicine: Mitchell Muller - Mitchell Muller, a Year IV (four) Dental student is the Student Body Secretary and Treasurer for the Student Council, the IFC Chair for the Xi Psi Phi dental fraternity, and a student member of the American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine, the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, and the American Dental Association. Muller dedicates time to tutoring pre-clinic dental students and has volunteered at Give Kids a Smile and the Medical School's Veteran's Day Clinics, while also providing dental screenings and oral health information to children at local schools.

SIU School of Pharmacy: Anthony Bissey - Anthony Bissey, a third-year student in the School of Pharmacy was selected to serve as the Pharmacy Student Team Leader for the 2023 Jamaica Dental Mission. An avid learner, Bissey dedicates time in the Student Resource Center tutoring classmates and students. In addition, Bissey has created a video for first year pharmacy students explaining wound care triaging. His support of his fellow learners extends into his recruitment efforts as he helps with events like Open House and the Leadership Education and Advocacy for Pharmacy Students Program.

In addition, 23 students from across the SIU campuses were recognized with honorable mentions.

“The idea of service is an important characteristic that was long ago woven into the DNA of our SIU campuses. Looking at the recipients of our 2023 distinguished service award, we know that idea is alive and well,” said SIU Board of Trustees Chair Phil Gilbert. “I want to offer the Board’s congratulations to these outstanding students for the work they have done and the example they have set.”

“This is the story we want everyone across and beyond Illinois to know, how the SIU campuses are producing the quality of students like those we are recognizing. It is important to note that this award is not just a tribute to our students, but it also shines a positive light on our dedication to give them the tools and resources to excel in academics and in service,” said SIU Board of Trustees Vice Chair Dr. Ed Hightower.

“The System Student Advisory Committee has worked very hard to be a voice for their fellow students and to ensure their outstanding peers are recognized for their efforts. Our distinguished student award winners represent the best of the best across our campuses and we thank them for their leadership and the great example they are setting for their peers,” said Vice President for Academic Innovation, Planning and Partnerships Dr. Gireesh Gupchup.

The announcement of the award winners can be viewed at the SIU Board of Trustees YouTube channel (beginning at the 12:35 mark) at this [link](#).

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