



Southern Illinois University System
ONE SYSTEM | MANY LOCATIONS | STATEWIDE IMPACT

SIU System Office of Community Engagement

July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024¹

System Connections and Networking Highlights

1. November 1, 2023: Research Discovery Workshop on Climate and the Environment at Carbondale. Met and observed presentations provided by 21 SIUC researchers.
2. March 27, 2024: IRH-OCE Open House at Carbondale. Participants shared insights regarding Carbondale students and housing.
3. March 29, 2024: met with SIUC Provost Tucker, APAP Dunston, VC Burgin, Sarah Vanvooren. I provided an overview of SIUE's Successful Communities Collaborative and the Office of Community Engagement; and provided an update regarding potential opportunities with IL DCEO.
4. May 2, 2024: Illinois SBDC at SIUC, SBDC of the Year ceremony. Networked with members of the Carbondale community in attendance.
5. June 18, 2024: met with Dina Timmons (Public Administration, Graduate School Coordinator) and Gena Albert (SIUC First Year Experience, Director). Toured academic departments with which I had not yet connected.

System Strategic Plan teams

- 5: OCE, Chair
- 6: IRH
- 7: Workforce Development
- 15: Sustainability

Grants submitted

1. NSF SCC IRG Track 2: Equitable post-disaster resource allocation for enhancing resilience of underserved communities exposed to floods through AI
PI: Debarshi Sen, Assistant Professor, Civil, Environmental and Infrastructure Engineering
Co-PI: Ajay Kalra, Associate Professor, Civil, Environmental and Infrastructure Engineering
Co-PI: Connie Frey Spurlock, Director, Office of Community Engagement
Project Summary:
With the increase in natural disasters over the past few decades due to the effects of climate change, enhancing community resilience is imperative. A key component of enhancing community resilience is the allocation of human and financial resources after a hazardous event in an equitable manner. Mathematically, this is a computationally intractable task when considering interdependent infrastructure and various socioeconomic variables in a region. In this path-breaking multi-disciplinary project, we will develop an Alenabled data-driven post-disaster resource allocation framework that will engage the community and aid

¹ July 1, 2023 – March 31, 2024, the OCE director was staffed at 0.80 FTE. As of April 1, 2024, the position is 1.0 FTE.

policy makers to take decisions that lead to equitable community resilience. This project will specifically address the regular flooding of the Mississippi river and its impact on the underserved and underrepresented population in East St. Louis, IL. The proposed framework can then serve as a benchmark for other scientific developments in the future for transferring to other types of disasters and multi-hazard scenario, as well as, scaling to regional, state, and national scale.

Requested amount: \$ 580,696; SIUE subaward: \$75,000

2. Recompete Plan Approval: Building Resources, Innovation, and Development for Gainful Employment (BRIDGE) Metro East
 - a. U.S. EDA Distressed Area Recompete Pilot Program
 - b. Collaboration between SIU OCE, University of Illinois Urbana Champaign, and Danforth Plant Science Center
 - c. \$39,000,000
 - d. Status: Not funded.

Project Description:

The complex local conditions, employment barriers, and geographic considerations in the BRIDGE communities of East St. Louis, Venice, and Washington Park require comprehensive, evidence-based investments in a continuum of services. This project seeks to leverage the foundational work of BRIDGE coalition partners to implement interventions that have proven success with improving employability skills and job placement in resource-challenged communities, as well as scaling novel approaches such as the Lansdowne UP construction program.

While BRIDGE proposes four distinct investment projects as detailed below, two overarching themes are embedded across all projects: 1) Diversity, equity, inclusion, and access as a key planning, design, and implementation component across all phases; 2) Interagency collaboration with public and private partners to better align programs, policy, and resources in service of project goals and leverage unprecedented state and federal investments to effect lasting change in these communities.

Grant-funded Projects

1. Partners for Reentry Opportunities in Workforce Development (PROWD)
 - a. Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity
 - b. Status: Ongoing.
2. Broadband READY, Year 2
 - a. Hosting 1 American Connection Corps Lead for America fellows at SIUE
 - b. \$150,000 (Carbondale and Edwardsville)
 - c. Illinois Innovation Network
 - d. Status: Complete
3. Developing Capacity in Grant Development and Management for Non-Profits and Underserved Communities
 - a. Midwest Climate Collaborative, Primary Applicant; OCE, Partner and Subaward
 - b. Awarded April 29, 2024.
 - c. Project Timeline: July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2026

- d. \$400,000. SIUE subaward: \$100,000

Project Description:

During the Midwest Climate Collaborative Mosaic Momentum project period, SIUE faculty and staff will conduct the following activities to support non-profits and community outreach efforts in developing capacity in seeking and obtaining external funding sources. In order for SIUE to successfully conduct the following activities the Midwest Climate Collaborative will conduct all recruitment and logistical arrangements for the following activities: Grant Ready Workshops; Grant Management Modules; Grant Development Modules; and Grant Processes Overview.

Grant proposals in development

1. Environmental Justice Community Challenge Grant Program
 - a. Partnership with [Clean City Coalition NFP](#)
 - b. \$20,000,000
 - c. 2024-2027
 - d. Environmental Protection Agency
 - e. Submission date: July 15, 2024

Project Description:

The East St. Louis Renaissance (EStLR), with lead applicant Clean City Coalition NFP (CCC) and Statutory Partner Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE), is a project focused on increasing climate resiliency and decreasing climate risks and pollution exposure in the City of East St. Louis and the Village of Washington Park. EStLR is a long-term strategy to transform the region, starting with East St. Louis over this CCG Project. The adjacent communities are both disadvantaged, underserved Justice40 communities in St. Clair County, Illinois where 42.4% of Washington Park residents and 31.6% of East St. Louis residents live below the poverty line, a number that is higher than the national average of 11.5%. East St. Louis, furthermore, has a low life expectancy value of 23% while Washington Park's value is 22%, 3 and 2 percentage points higher than the state and national averages.

External Relationships Established

1. Digital Equity
 - a. [LatinX Digital Leaders Now](#)
 - b. [Hoyleton Youth and Family Services Puentes de Esperanza](#)
 - c. [TechSTL](#)
 - d. [Alton Forward](#) – Member of the Alton Digital Equity Task Force
 - e. [T.A.G. \(Tech Access Group\)](#)
2. Community Development
 - a. Alton Housing Authority – Invited to guide a strategic planning process.
 - b. City of Cahokia Heights – Invited to coordinate cultural and historical efforts to unite residents of Cahokia Heights.
 - c. No. 9 Community Group and Development, Unincorporated Colp, Illinois
3. Environmental Justice
 - a. EPA Region 5 – Coordinated SIUE support for the Metro East Environmental Justice Academy, March through October 2024.
 - b. [Environmental Protection Network](#)

- c. [Midwest Climate Collaborative](#) – SIU System became a member in March 2024.

Membership benefits include letters of support from the MCC; first to receive RFCs (Requests for Collaboration) for joint grant proposals; development opportunities; funding opportunities; collaboration opportunities; and leadership and influence opportunities.

Ongoing External Relationships

1. Federal Emergency Management Agency – OCE director attended FEMA Grants Capacity Training Workshop April 29, 2024.
2. United Way of Greater St. Louis
 - a. 211 Advisory Committee member
 - b. St. Clair County COAD (Community Organizations Active in Disaster) Case Management / LTR (Long-Term Recovery) Team member
3. Illinois Innovation Network Social Innovation Subcommittee member
4. Leadership Council of Southwestern Illinois, Workforce Development Committee Member

FY 24 Goals Update

- Finalize external advisory group.
 - o OCE Implementation team has met to discuss criteria for membership.
- Use the Illinois State Appropriation (\$266,000) to build OCE staff.
 - o The administrative aide position has closed. OCE and IRH directors are currently waiting for the approved applicant list from SIUC Human Resources.
 - o The job description for a shared project coordinator is currently under development.
- Establish OCE procedures for working with communities.
 - o Progress has been made. A clear statement of the process will be developed in the near future.
- Launch a communications and marketing plan that includes:
 - o Internal (e.g., campus tours and print/digital materials) and
 - As noted above, Dina Timmons recently provided a tour of the Carbondale campus, highlighting academic programs that the OCE director had not yet connected.
 - An OCE flyer featuring major focus areas and sample projects, mission and vision and statement, and contact information has been created. The flyer has been shared with internal and external audiences.
 - o External communications (print/digital materials for community and for legislators; a much more robust website for OCE).
 - The OCE director is working with the SIU System Executive Director of Marketing and Communications to develop a communications plan that includes digital and print materials, as well as a more engaging OCE website. To that end, OCE has purchased [Canvas Enterprise](#) memberships for OCE and Marketing and Communications to share.
 - Beginning January 2024, OCE director began working with Courtney Breckenridge, Carrie Butts-Wilmsmeyer, and Riley Hankins, an undergraduate SIUE Mass Comm student serving as OCE's Press Intern. Several stories have been generated and shared. See for example: [SIU System joins Midwest Climate Collaborative](#).

Other FY 24 Outcomes

- OCE and IRH purchased 10 3-year [Lightcast](#) data licenses to distribute across the system, including IRH and OCE. Once licensees are trained to generate reports, members of the SIU System will be able to request reports for research purposes and grant development.
- OCE invited [Strategic Doing](#) to Edwardsville in June 2024 to provide a Strategic Doing Practitioner training for the OCE director, IRH director, WE CARE Clinic director, and the SIUC Business Innovation and Research director.
- OCE directed was invited to be a panelist on two panels at the 2024 [Illinois Broadband Summit](#)
 - o “Campus Connectors,” moderated by Jay Walsh, Vice President for Economic Development and Innovation, University of Illinois System.
Panelists: Connie Frey Spurlock, Director, SIU Office of Community Engagement; Todd Kleine, Chief Information Officer, Dominican University; Nathalia Cardenas, Project Manager, Chicago State University
 - o “Grant Recipients’ Perspectives on Research,” moderated by Caroline Stratton, Senior Research & Data Manager, NDIA
Panelists: Anne Deeter, Executive Director of Planning, Grants, & Foundation Relations, Dominican University; Chieh-Li “Julian” Chin, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign; Evan Allgood, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign; Jorge Rojas Alvarez, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign; Connie Frey-Spurlock, Director, SIU Office of Community Engagement; Carrie Butts-Wilmsmeyer, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

FY 25 Goals

- Hire a shared project coordinator.
- Hire a shared grant writer.
- Hire a shared director of strategic development.
- Finalize the External Advisory Board.
- Finalize processes for working with communities.
- Introduce and implement Strategic Doing to the OCE implementation team.