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**SIUE School of Nursing Secures $2.75 Million HRSA Grant for Advanced Nursing Education Workforce Program**

The Southern Illinois University Edwardsville School of Nursing (SON) continues its pioneering advancement of the nursing profession across Illinois with its receipt of a competitive four-year $2.75 million grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) for its innovative Advanced Nursing Education Workforce (ANEW) program.

The multi-faceted educational effort is creatively designed to increase the number of nurse practitioners who practice in rural and underserved communities throughout Illinois, by promoting a smooth and natural transition from the student role to practicing Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRN) into these areas.

Bolstering the success of the program will be academic clinical partnerships between the SIUE SON and Chestnut Health Systems, OSF HealthCare, Southern Illinois Healthcare and the SIUE We Care Clinic.

“We are thrilled to receive this award,” said SON Dean Laura Bernaix, PhD, RN. “We strongly believe that as a result of this project’s efforts, not only will the nurse practitioner workforce increase in these rural and underserved communities, but also there will be improved access to quality care and improved health outcomes for the residents in these areas.”

Under the leadership of project direct Valerie Griffin, DNP, PPCNP-BC, FNP-BC, PMHS, FAANP, SIUE assistant clinical professor and FNP program director, the ANEW program will provide financial support to student participants, as well as focused clinical educational experiences through deliberate placement in rural and/or underserved settings in the targeted region for a significant portion of their clinical practicum requirements.

Academic clinical partnerships will be strengthened through a preceptor development program, including avatar clinical simulation experiences for providers focused on primary care mental health cases and student/preceptor interaction scenarios.

The SIUE SON and its clinical partners will also collaborate on the development of a regional conference for primary care settings highlighting mental health treatment, the opioid crisis, non-opioid pain treatment options, recognizing addictive behavior, rehabilitation of the opioid dependent patient, and long-term follow-up strategies.

“We are excited to receive this funding, not only for our students, but also for our collaborating partners and the patients we serve,” said Valerie Griffin. “Primary care providers face difficult clinical decisions related to opioid prescribing and mental health management. The SIUE School of Nursing will focus continuing education and training on evidence-based guidelines in these areas. By providing students with focused clinical training in underserved regions, we hope to increase access to quality primary care throughout Illinois.”

“We understand the importance of collaboration in serving people and communities,” said Dave Sharar, CEO, Chestnut Health Systems. Chestnut offers a variety of primary and behavioral health services in the Metro East area of St. Louis and in Central Illinois.

“Chestnut is acutely aware of the issues facing rural and underserved areas – from the perspectives of both primary health care and addiction treatment,” Sharar added. “We’re confident that the clinical partnerships possible under this grant will benefit students, patients seeking care, and communities as a whole.”

“As a three-hospital system in rural southern Illinois, having a team of skilled nurses is critical to Southern Illinois Healthcare’s (SIH) mission,” said Philip L. Schaefer, FACHE, senior vice president, ambulatory services and chief care and network development officer with SIH Medical Group. “With the many practice avenues available to advanced practice nurses, the value of these skilled practitioners is growing rapidly.”

“Additionally, a focus on mental health and opioid priorities makes the HRSA grant both timely and of great importance to our region,” Schaefer added. “We at SIH applaud Southern Illinois University’s commitment to nursing education and congratulate SIUE on this advancement of nursing workforce education. We look forward to working together in the future.”

OSF HealthCare also expressed its excitement to collaborate on the innovative ANEW program. Headquartered in Peoria, the integrated health care network serving patients of all ages across Illinois and Michigan will assist in clinical placement.

The decision to focus a portion of this effort on mental health and opioid priorities was supported by recent changes to the Illinois Nurse Practice Act, which states: “An Illinois-licensed advanced practice registered nurse certified as a nurse practitioner must complete a minimum of 50 hours of continuing education, including no less than 20 hours of pharmacotherapeutics and including 10 hours of opioid prescribing or substance abuse education every two years.”

For more information on the SIUE School of Nursing, visit [siue.edu/nursing](http://www.siue.edu/nursing/).

The [SIUE School of Nursing’s](http://www.siue.edu/nursing/) programs are committed to creating excellence in nursing leadership through innovative teaching, evidence-based practice, quality research, patient advocacy and community service. Enrolling nearly 1,400 students in its baccalaureate, master’s and doctoral programs, the School develops leaders in pursuit of shaping the nursing profession and impacting the health care environment. SIUE’s undergraduate nursing programs on the Edwardsville campus and the regional campus in Carbondale help to solve the region’s shortage of baccalaureate-prepared nurses and enhance the quality of nursing practice within all patient service venues. The School’s graduate programs prepare nurses for advanced roles in clinical practice, administration and education.

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**Photo:** ANEW Project Direct Valerie Griffin, DNP, assistant clinical professor and FNP program director in the SIUE School of Nursing.