

## SIUE seeks deeper community involvement

Segue/Logan Cameron | Posted: Friday, March 25, 2016 11:42 am



### S.J. Morrison.

This week on Segue, SIUE Interim Chancellor Stephen Hansen, PhD, welcomes SIUE alumnus S.J. Morrison, director of marketing and planning at Madison County Transit (MCT).

Having Morrison is a first for Segue as Hansen's initial off-campus guest. A man committed to both SIUE and the Edwardsville community, Morrison received a bachelor's in mass communication from the University in 2002. He has since settled in the community, leading the marketing and advertising efforts for MCT's bus and bike trail operations, as well as scheduling of bus

routes and frequencies.

Together, Morrison and his wife, Emily, passionately serve communities in Madison County through tireless volunteerism and public service efforts, having both received awards and recognitions for their outstanding achievements. Cougar pride runs deep in the Morrison household. S.J. proudly serves as immediate past president on the SIUE Alumni Association Board of Directors, and Emily holds both a bachelor's and master's in English from SIUE. The family has been SIUE basketball season ticket holders for more than 10 years and recently gave birth to their son, who has already attended four games.

Hansen and Morrison primarily focus their discussion on the benefits of organizational and community involvement. Morrison mentions the stress-free nature of community service and volunteerism, while also expressing the joy that he finds in servicing many organizations.

As a student, Morrison was involved with SIUE's web radio station and the on-campus radio station WSIE-FM. He also served as a writer for the student newspaper The Alestle and was involved with various faith-based organizations on campus. He now carries that passion into his post-graduation life, citing a phrase he once heard, "It's easier to create the place you want to live than to find it."

Hansen mentions the improving opportunities for cooperation and collaboration between SIUE and the Edwardsville/Glen Carbon communities, to which Morrison agrees.

"This institution has so much to offer, in terms of ongoing education, scholarship, culture, Division I athletics – the list goes on and on," Morrison explains. "I think that we start small – maybe we do coffee hours with professors.

"We're talking about doing a 'Hash Brown Huddle' with student government and city government at the beginning of every school year where the mayor and city council make breakfast for student government and talk about issues in the coming school year. Little things like that can bring people together and engage them to talk about what we can do better."

They continue by explaining the community enrichment benefits the University lends to the St. Louis metropolitan area, citing topics such as economic impact and availability of affordable education. They also express the need to instill a sense of ownership and advocacy to the University within community members and fellow alumni.

“We have to find ways to harness their energy, resources and time to say, ‘Look, this is a tremendous asset here, and you need to help support it,’” Morrison says.

Sharing examples of interactions with local community members, who haven’t been on campus since graduating from SIUE many years ago, Morrison expresses a need for creating tradition at the University.

“This university is pregnant with possibilities,” he says. “It is a sleeping giant in the Midwest – if not the world – and I think that people are hungry for community and being a part of something that’s bigger than they are.”

They wrap up their conversation by discussing attributes that make the Edwardsville/Glen Carbon community special to its inhabitants. “When my wife and I first retired in 2012, we stayed in Edwardsville,” shares Hansen. “Not only because we loved the community, but also because we loved the University. It was our community – we wanted to stay connected to it, and I think that’s important to have your sense of roots.”

Morrison follows by explaining, “It truly is. I have found places that are absolutely magnetic in events and activities, with campuses that are electric – you’re drawn in. I wonder and I ask, ‘What is it about this place that draws me in like a moth to the flame and makes me hungry for more?’ These experiences are almost intoxicating for me.”

Both Hansen and Morrison agree that SIUE’s campus has a special aura that attracts students, parents, alumni and others to the campus in remarkable ways. “When I first interviewed for a job here back in 1984, I felt it then,” recalls Hansen. “I thought, ‘Wow, this place has an energy and a vitality – it has broad horizons.’ That’s what brought me here in the first place, and I can still feel it.”

Morrison responds, “There’s no doubt about that – I felt that as a student. There absolutely is an energy that makes you feel like something important is about to happen.”

Before going off the air, Morrison shares what the acronym “S.J.” stands for, while also revealing his special talent for hitting the high note.

Tune in to WSIE 88.7 FM every Sunday at 9 a.m. as weekly guests discuss developments at SIUE.

*By Logan Cameron, SIUE Marketing & Communications*