

SIUE initiatives support the ecosystem

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Bill Retzlaff.

In this week's segment of Segue, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) Dean Greg Budzban, PhD, hosts Bill Retzlaff, PhD, CAS associate dean and professor of biological sciences.

They discuss "sustainability," an issue of growing importance in our society. While identifying the current sustainability programs at SIUE, they discuss "green" roofs, the impact of society's environmental footprint, SIUE student excitement about sustainability and how SIUE is doing its part to maintain an eco-friendly campus.

Retzlaff arrived at SIUE in 1999 as a dually-appointed assistant professor in biological sciences and environmental sciences.

Prior to his arrival, he had been performing plant research at the Boyce Thompson Institute, located on the campus of Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y.

In his SIUE tenure, Retzlaff has held appointment as chair of the Department of Biological Sciences, and currently is associate dean of CAS. Specializing in the study of environmental issues, Retzlaff thrives on student engagement in his research labs and has educated hundreds of SIUE students of the importance of sustainability, as well as the impact individuals can make on our ecosystem.

Recognized as among the best in the field of environmental scientific research, Retzlaff was recently named the recipient of the 2015 Research Award of Excellence from Green Roofs for Healthy Cities.

In this week's show, Budzban discusses the benefits of green roofs with Retzlaff, as well as their shared belief in the importance of including students in campus research opportunities.

Retzlaff explains both in great detail, but particularly emphasizes that, "SIUE students are being trained on cutting-edge technologies, so when they go into the workplace, they are familiar with the new tools of 'being green' and being sustainable."

Once the renovation of the original Science Building is completed and it is Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified, SIUE will have seven LEED buildings. The two scholars discuss the eco-friendly features of each building on campus, along with the significant energy savings that each building is providing both the campus and the ecosystem.

Budzban is particularly interested in the future of environmental sciences and sustainability practices.

He asks Retzlaff questions about future sustainability initiatives for the University, the impact that such projects have had and will have in the future on sustainable communities, and whether or not he foresees "green" roofs being a more common construction feature in the domestic housing market in the future.

The men conclude their conversation by discussing SIUE's Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities (URCA) program, Retzlaff's experience when being recognized for his award in New York, and the possibility of building robots to perform daily duties on SIUE's "green" roof garden.

Tune in to WSIE 88.7 FM every Sunday at 9 a.m. as weekly guests discuss issues on SIUE's campus.

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