

SIUE theater a smart classroom



SIUE photo

Smart spaces

Ashley Jabs, instructor of biological sciences in the SIUE College of Arts and Sciences, prepares to lead an anatomy and physiology course in the newly renovated Dunham Hall Theater.

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Southern Illinois University Edwardsville continues its commitment to excellence and innovation with the launch of two enhanced learning spaces during the spring semester.

Dunham Hall Theater was transformed into a “smart classroom,” making it the largest classroom space on campus, with seating for up to 372 students. Additionally, classes have begun in the University’s first Adaptive Learning Environment (ALe) classroom.

“SIUE continues to experience positive enrollment growth,” said Bill Retzlaff, associate dean of the SIUE College of Arts and Sciences (CAS). “Our goal is to provide exceptional learning environments and utilize our space on campus more efficiently and effectively for our students.”

Students entering Dunham Hall Theater Monday were intrigued by the idea of learning about anatomy and physiology in a fully functioning theater. Instructor Ashley Jabs was ready for the challenge.

“I’m eager to get started,” Jabs stated. “I plan to roam around more and use this space in a positive way. Change is good, and I’m excited for the opportunity to teach this many students at once.”

Renovations to the theater include the installation of a tablet desk arm to each seat, a mobile podium and a 20 by 30-foot screen. The projection and sound systems were also upgraded.

“This is unique, since the theater will still be in use throughout the semester and the scenery will change,” Retzlaff added. “This effort involves multiple academic units. We are working together to accommodate growing numbers of students in multiple programs within the College of Arts and Sciences, and the SIUE Schools.”

This semester also marks the launch of the ALe. The donor-funded, technologically advanced teaching space in Peck Hall allows small student groups to work closely together with faculty by utilizing a flexible learning space, continuous whiteboard throughout the classroom and video projection areas.

From such courses as “United States History & Constitution: 1877-Present” to “Popular Literature: The Anatomy of Harry Potter,” the space allows for an adaptive learning experience across multiple disciplines. Students in Jeffrey Manuel’s history course were the first to utilize the new ALe classroom Monday.

“This innovative classroom aligns with the direction we are taking history education at SIUE,” said Manuel, associate professor of historical studies. “Instead of a lecture-based, names-and-dates style of teaching, we are moving toward lab-type classes where students work collaboratively to analyze historical documents and other sources.”

“Continued development of advanced teaching spaces demonstrates SIUE’s commitment to instructional innovation to best-serve students in the information age,” said CAS Dean Greg Budzban. “We are constantly striving to improve the delivery of our academic programs to enhance the success of our students and we look forward to further development of these teaching spaces to achieve our educational goals.”