

# SIUE, WSIE alum reflects on career

Segue • SIUE

Published Friday, November 3, 2017



Each year, the Southern Illinois University Edwardsville Alumni Association recognizes and honors alumni who, through leadership, character and hard work, have made exceptional contributions in their chosen field, in their community and at SIUE.

On Friday, Oct. 6, nine inductees, including two College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) alumni, were honored at the “Night Among the Stars” Alumni Hall of Fame banquet in the Morris University Center’s Meridian Ballroom.

On this week’s episode of Segue, SIUE’s premier radio show on WSIE 88.7 FM The Sound that discusses the ideas and issues on campus at SIUE and beyond, Greg Budzban, PhD, CAS dean, has a conversation with Thomas Schamberger, one of the College’s two inductees.

Schamberger is the retired executive director of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award Foundation. He also served the foundation as treasurer and chief financial officer.

Born and raised in the Metro East, Chamberger came to SIUE after serving in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War. He went on to study mass communications and was awarded bachelor’s and master’s degrees in 1974 and 1981, respectively. During his time at the University, he was a student worker at WSIE radio and had a behind-the-scenes glimpse at iconic musicians while working at the Mississippi River Festival. He worked in the broadcast radio industry as an announcer and news reporter before taking a monumental risk and entering the human resources field.

“The thing I remember most about my time at SIUE was the closeness and camaraderie I had with other students,” Chamberger reminisces. “We all had such a tight bond and as a commuter school, it was even more unique.”

“Even though you left the mass communications field to pursue other opportunities, I bet some of the lessons you learned from the distinguished faculty in the Department of Mass Communications helped you on your next step,” Budzban says.

“When I got out of the military in 1971, I had two collegiate opportunities: study at Notre Dame or SIUE,” Chamberger says. “I made some calls and asked around to see where I should go. Everyone I asked knew I wanted to go into broadcasting, and each person in the broadcast business told me to go to SIUE.

“SIUE’s mass communications department was thriving at the time, and professors like Jack Shaheen and Bill Ward were my mentors. They taught me to be grounded, be myself and be ethical. All these things became the foundation of what I thought was very important to my career endeavors.”

Since joining the human resources field, Chamberger worked in quality control at Barnes Jewish Hospital, in various positions at McDonnell Douglas/The Boeing Co. and as vice president of performance excellence for Premier Inc. in San Diego.

“When I was with Barnes Hospital in the 1980s, we created the first quality control circle program in the healthcare industry,” Chamberger explains. “The program was based on improvement, getting ideas from the employees, and implementing them to make efficiencies and improvements to quality and profitability.

“From there, it spring boarded me into doing other human resource elements, including quality improvement, process improvement, process management, and helping organizations grow and be successful. It was like I went into a cocoon; I went in as a caterpillar and came out as a butterfly. I found my niche.”

After finding his true calling, Schamberger played an instrumental role in implementing quality control criteria to improve the organizations he served. While working in quality control at Barnes and leading Premier’s organizational efforts as an advisor to the CEO, each company received the highest presidential award for performance excellence in the U.S., the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, from President Clinton in 1998 and George W. Bush in 2006. He served as the foundation’s executive director from 2006 until his retirement in 2014.

“I was very pleased that I was able to help each company make improvements and move on their journey to be successful,” Schamberger said.

As dean of CAS, Budzban is significantly involved in the College’s recruitment of potential students. Well aware of Schamberger’s expertise, Budzban inquires, “What might be the best way to recruit students to come to SIUE?”

“If you ask a small business owner how their business became successful, they will nearly always say by word-of-mouth referrals,” Schamberger answers. “A student that comes to campus, studies all four years and graduates, are the best ambassadors for getting new students to come to SIUE.”

“We’d have to you have to back on campus to implement some of your strategies,” Budzban says. “As a mathematician, I love seeing actual, objective numbers that result from our situation, get feedback from students and faculty, and utilize that data for the betterment of our University.”

Catch this episode of Segue in its entirety by tuning in at 9 a.m. on Sunday, Nov. 5 to WSIE 88.7 FM The Sound.

*By Madelaine Gerard, SIUE Marketing & Communications*