

School of Nursing continues to thrive

Each week on Segue, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville's premier radio show, co-hosts Randy Pembroke, PhD, SIUE chancellor, and Greg Budzhan, PhD, College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) dean, take the opportunity to interview various members of the University community to explore the ideas and issues occurring on campus and beyond.

On this week's episode, Pembroke speaks with Laura Bernaix, PhD, RN, dean of the SIUE School of Nursing (SON), about her dynamic career, as well as how the School prepares the next generation of medical professionals.

This episode of Segue will air at 9 a.m. on Sunday, Aug. 26, on WSIE 88.7 FM The Sound.

Bernaix received her PhD in nursing from Saint Louis University, a master's from the University of Evansville in Indiana, and her BS in nursing from SIUE. She has practiced in maternal newborn nursing for 40 years and has devoted the last 31 to teaching in the same focus area.

Prior to becoming dean, her positions at SIUE have included serving as a faculty member, chair of primary care

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and health systems nursing, associate dean for academic programs and interim dean. She has received national, regional and state grants to support her research and teaching endeavors.

"Whenever I have deans on the show, I like to give them the opportunity to talk a little bit about their school," Pembroke says. "Tell me a little bit about the School of Nursing."

"I'd love to!" Bernaix exclaims. "We have a total of 106 faculty members, 21 staff and over 1,400 students throughout our school. We offer three undergraduate degrees or three 'tracks' of nursing: our traditional baccalaureate program, our accelerated baccalaureate program and our accelerated RN to BS program."

"At the graduate level, we have two master's programs: the nurse educator and the healthcare nurse administrator. We also offer four doctoral degrees. To be specific, those are doctorates of nursing practice, and those include the nurse anesthesia DNP, family nurse practitioner DNP, the

MBA DNP and the post-master's DNP."

Bernaix shared a troubling statistic with Pembroke that might lead young students into the field of nursing. In 2016, The Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation found that the rate of nurses retiring will outpace the number of new nurses entering the workforce.

"The second major concern is that there is a shortage of nurse educators nationwide to educate these new nurses and get them into the workforce," Bernaix says. "We look at those reports and gauge how we manage our programs. We look at other areas of particular shortage, such as the need for psychiatric mental health nurse practitioners throughout the region."

Currently, the SON is in the process of forming that certificate program and hopes to address that need in our region next year.

"Our nursing program has an excellent reputation, but what elements do you think have played into the foundation of that reputation?" Pembroke inquires.

"There are two major factors relative to our program



Bernaix

that produce a qualified and sought after graduate: we have a wide-range of clinical experiences to offer our students," Bernaix says. "They are able to do clinical experiences in small rural or large metropolitan hospitals, health departments or clinics. Having that wide array of experience provides a strong foundation or background that helps them do anything when it is time to get out into the workforce."

"Secondly, I have to brag that our faculty are highly qualified, so they provide a quality

education to our students. They have a strong clinical background and excellent credentials, and therefore are able to prepare that graduating nurse to go out and do a great job."

The faculty are not only working diligently to educate the next generation of nurses or doctors of nursing practice, but they are also working on their own research and scholarly activities.

"Many faculty members are working on their own research, and some of their research topics include: medication adherence in patients who are diagnosed with hypertension; best practices in nursing education and simulation education; hot-spotting and geo-mapping for the prevalence of chronic illnesses in our geographic region and surrounding counties; suicide awareness and prevention; and pregnancy and family planning research."

To hear more of Pembroke and Bernaix's conversation, listen to this week's episode of Segue at 9 a.m. on Sunday, August 26, on WSIE 88.7 FM The Sound.

By Madeline Deardorff, SIUE Marketing & Communications