

SIU Research Park A Partner In Business Development, Innovation For Three Decades



History is being made at the SIU Research Park and its Office of Innovation and Economic Development (OIED). Built in 1990, the Dunn-Richmond Economic Development Center, which houses the region's largest business incubator, is at capacity with a growing waiting list for the first time in its 31-year history. Also housed at Dunn-Richmond, the Illinois Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at SIU more than doubled its reach in the past year providing nearly 700 clients with confidential, no-cost business assistance and critical support during the COVID-19 pandemic. OIED's Center for Workforce Innovation and Research continues to provide testing services for certified nursing assistants throughout Illinois in addition to other healthcare worker training and testing programs. In 2019, OIED added the Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) to support area businesses seeking government contract opportunities. And the on-site Illinois Manufacturing Excellence Center (IMEC) provides resources to advance Illinois manufacturing.

"SIU has been privileged to provide a multitude of resources, expertise, and collaborative support to the region's entrepreneurship and innovation community for nearly 50 years," said SIU Research Park's Executive Director Lynn Andersen Lindberg. "From our foundational business development and incubator programs, to new activities in extended reality, value-added agriculture ventures, and community engagement, our staff work behind the scenes to support our region's business and economic success."

As the economic outreach arm of the university, the Research Park's activities are integral components of SIU's strategic pillars, especially in

partnerships, research, and innovation focus areas. SIU alumni are a big part of the success of these initiatives. Of the nearly 50 tenant and member business and organizations currently served onsite by the SIU Research Park and its business incubator programs, more than half are led by SIU alumni.

"We are always excited to welcome new, innovative companies and organizations to the SIU Research Park, and when we get to welcome alumni back to campus to help advance their own businesses and innovative ideas, it's really special," said SIU Research Park Associate Director and Business Incubator Programs Director Deb Barnett. "We are experiencing unprecedented growth and are proud to not only provide business development services through the incubator, SBDC, PTAC, and IMEC, but to also serve as a conduit to connect those companies with faculty and student talent." Barnett noted that

many of the companies housed at the SIU Research Park are not only alumni-led, but several employ SIU graduates and students.

Several current tenants and members with SIU alumni founders include Beaded Distribution Company LLC (co-founder Curt Jones, '81, '86) which produces an extraordinary product line including 40 Below Joe and other flash-frozen, beaded products; Levee Lock (co-founders Eric Gregg, '85 and Gerald DeNeal, '74), the company behind the patented process that is poised to become the new industry standard in levee remediation, pollution control, and agricultural waste containment; and DxR Development Group (Eldon Benz, '74), a leader in software solutions for healthcare education, business, and non-profits.

The SIU Research Park will host an Innovation and Entrepreneurship Showcase on Thursday, December 2nd, 2021 from 4:30 – 6:30 p.m., at the Dunn-Richmond Economic Development Center, 1740 Innovation Drive, Carbondale, to recognize the contributions made to economic development in southern Illinois over the past three decades, to showcase current innovative activities, and to serve as a springboard for future innovation at SIU Carbondale and the region it serves. The event is co-sponsored by the Carbondale Chamber Commerce and is free and open to the public. To learn more about SIU Research Park companies, organizations, their alumni connections, and opportunities to connect, visit researchpark.siu.edu.