

May 9, 2003

Contact: Nancy Zimmers or Ruth Slottag
217-545-2155

SIU Med School to Graduate 71 New Physicians

Commencement exercises for the 29th graduating class of Southern Illinois University School of Medicine will be held at noon Saturday, May 17. Seventy-one physicians and three doctoral students will graduate during the ceremony, which is held in the Sangamon Auditorium at the University of Illinois at Springfield. One of the medical students is completing a six-year combined program for a M.D./J.D. dual degree.

Dr. Abraham Verghese, a physician and author, is the commencement speaker. He currently is a director of the Center for Medical Humanities and Ethics at the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio. His book, "My Own Country: A Doctor's Story," was nominated for the National Book Critic's Circle Award. His most recent book, "The Tennis Partner: A Doctor's Story of Friendship and Loss," has been a national bestseller. His works have appeared in many magazines such as *The New Yorker*, *The Washington Post*, *Esquire* and *The New York Times*.

Verghese graduated from Madras Medical College (1979) and completed an internal medicine residency at East Tennessee State (1982) and a fellowship in infectious disease at Boston University (1985). He later attended the Writers Workshop at the University of Iowa, earning a master's of fine arts (1991) while working at Iowa's outpatient AIDS clinic. He is board certified in internal medicine, infectious disease, pulmonary medicine and geriatrics.

Jessica R. Weinstein of Peoria, class chair, will deliver remarks on behalf of the graduates. Dr. Erik Constance, associate dean for student affairs, will present the medical students for degrees while Edward J. Moticka, Ph.D., associate dean for research and faculty affairs, will present the doctoral candidates. Walter V. Wendler, Ph.D., SIUC Chancellor, will confer the degrees. John A. Koropchak, Ph.D., vice chancellor for research and graduate dean for SIUC, will present diplomas to the graduate students. Dr. J. Kevin Dorsey, Ph.D., dean and provost of the School of Medicine, will award diplomas to the medical students.

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SIU School of Medicine graduation – add 1

The graduates will honor two of their teachers with roles during the ceremony. Dr. David A. Rogers, associate professor of surgery, will read the Hippocratic Oath and Dr. Sharon K. Hull, associate dean for student affairs and assistant professor of family and community medicine in Carbondale, will hood the graduates.

The Humanism in Medicine awards will be announced during the ceremony and presented to both a faculty member and graduating senior who “embody compassion and sensitivity in the delivery of care to patients and their family members.” The class previously honored J. Hurley Myers, Ph.D., professor emeritus of physiology, and Jaime A. Estavillo, Ph.D., professor and chair of anatomy, as the Carbondale Teachers of the Year for their contributions during the students’ first year.

Other faculty will be honored at the graduation reception Friday evening. Dr. John Murphy, professor and chair of pathology, will receive the Golden Apple Award for outstanding teaching. The AOA Volunteer Faculty Award will be presented to the community physician who “effectively and generously donates time, skill and experience teaching students clinical skills.”

During the ceremony, an alumna will receive the medical school’s distinguished alumna award. The award from the School’s Alumni Society Board of Governors recognizes outstanding contributions to medicine and distinguished service to humankind. The 2003 recipient is Dr. Roxanne Guy, Class of 1977. A native of Galesburg, Guy also completed both her general surgery and plastic surgery residencies at SIU. Since 1984, she has been an attending plastic surgeon at Holmes Regional Medical Center in Melbourne, Florida. She has given more than 100 professional and community talks and published 15 reviewed publications, book chapters and reviews. One of her nominators described Guy as a “very warm and caring person who is highly ethical and is very clear in her belief systems.”

The new SIU physicians will begin their residency training in their chosen specialty fields in July. Thirty of the graduating seniors will enter primary care programs. SIU and its affiliated hospitals in Springfield, Carbondale and Decatur attracted 14 SIU graduates for residency training. Another 16 students picked other Illinois programs and 22 others selected Midwest programs, making a total of 52 students that will stay in the Midwest for training.

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NOTE TO MEDIA: An interview time with Dr. Verghese can be provided after the commencement ceremonies at about 1:45 p.m. (His address will occur at approximately 1 p.m.) Please confirm your interest in an interview with SIU Public Affairs in advance.