

# Student Life

**D**an Sadowski is a first-year student from LaSalle. He chose medicine as his career because he finds the human body fascinating and enjoys working with people.

He selected SIU because of the noncompetitive environment and the emphasis on interactive small group learning. *“As a first-year student, I like interacting with classmates as colleagues and friends rather than as competitors.”*

Many parts of the curriculum are training students for the real world, explains Dan. *“Whether it is doing a history and physical exam with standardized patients or embracing the value of life-long learning, SIU is preparing us for becoming a physician.”*

Dan has been pleased with the clinical mentor program.

*“I have the opportunity to work with a practicing physician and apply my clinical skills. Early exposure to patients allows me to connect my coursework with the real clinical experiences and gives me the motivation to succeed.”*

It takes dedication of both time and effort to make it in medical school, says Dan. *“But I feel the people here at SIU School of Medicine make the difference. Faculty members are eager to help students.”*



**A**manda Velazquez, a second-year student from Oak Park, chose medicine as a career because she experienced challenges to her own health during her childhood.

Amanda, who is bilingual and Hispanic, wants to bridge the communication gap between Hispanic patients and physicians.

*“I selected SIU because of the small class size and early clinical exposure. SIU feels like a family...everyone knows you.”* She appreciates the support system she shares with other students.

SIU’s faculty tutors and nurse educators are invested in the students and are always checking to make sure students understand the material, explains Amanda.

*“On a personal note, accomplishing the work in anatomy and histology labs, as well as grasping the method of self-directed learning were significant achievements for me. The SIU tutors and teachers were indispensable in this process.”*

Her advice to incoming students is simple. *“Strive to reach your full potential. You are what you work towards...how much you put in is what you get out. Work hard and you will succeed.”*





**S**teven Gentry, a third-year student from Peoria who is married, chose SIU because of its self-directed learning style, hands-on experiences and flexible learning environment.

*“It is easier to study as a group and not compete against each other. The learning environment at SIU is less stressful.”*

Steve says SIU faculty members are very easy to work with and they want the students to succeed. *“It seems the faculty is more approachable here, more than at other schools.”*

Steve’s father is a doctor, so Steve was always interested in medicine and wanted to be able to care for people.

*“As a physician, I want to serve the community, not just practice medicine. I want to understand the whole patient and make a connection to them as a person and not just as a disease.”*

Steve is completing his clinical clerkships and enjoying the daily patient interaction as well as contacts with simulated patients. *“I can learn by experience rather than just through lectures and textbooks.”*

**A**s a fourth-year student from McLeansboro, **Sara Rubenacker** has been enjoying the freedom of choosing electives. Her comfort level working in the hospitals with patients has increased and her skill has earned her the trust of faculty and physicians.

As she completes her training and prepares for an obstetrics and gynecology residency, Sara says she is happy with her medical school choice.

*“People make the program and SIU has a welcoming and supportive atmosphere. You get a great education for lower cost.”*

Sara believes that the problem-based learning (PBL) used at SIU, which includes group learning, has taught her much.

*“With the constant changes in information and technology, PBL has given me the tools to stay current with medicine going forward into my residency.”*

Sara has enjoyed how much people at SIU want students to succeed. *“We learn respect for each other and this respect carries over to being a doctor.”*

Her advice to an incoming medical student is to keep focused and you will learn. *“Enjoy your education - you are going to make it.”*

