

**For Immediate Release**

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## **The Wedge and Southern Illinois University Edwardsville Announce Transformative Partnership**

**ALTON, IL – Monday, March 10, 2025** - The Wedge and Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE) are proud to announce a groundbreaking partnership that will transform the economic landscape of the greater Alton Metro Region. The collaboration, branded as "The Wedge Powered by SIUE," will create a dynamic ecosystem for innovation, education, and community development when The Wedge officially begins operations on April 7, 2025.

This strategic alliance builds upon AltonWorks' community revitalization efforts and leverages SIUE's academic excellence to catalyze regional economic transformation. The Wedge will serve as a 55,000-square-foot social impact hub, research lab, thinktank, and workspace that drives innovation across Illinois and Missouri and ultimately extend across the Midwest.

"This partnership represents a pivotal moment for our region," said John Simmons, AltonWorks CEO. "By bringing together SIUE's research capabilities and educational programming with The Wedge's innovative workspace, we're creating unprecedented opportunities for economic growth, workforce development, and community engagement."

Dr. James T. Minor, SIUE Chancellor, added, "SIUE is committed to reaching beyond the classroom to foster innovation and drive economic growth in the region. Our partnership with The Wedge allows us to advance our commitment to economic and community development but also, in service to our mission, provide high quality educational opportunities to students and families."

### **Regional Economic Impact**

Following the investment of a \$20 million 10G fiber network made possible by funding from the State of Illinois, The Wedge is positioned to drive sustainable growth and build a workforce prepared for the digital economy.

"The Wedge will provide another opportunity for SIUE to offer timely and responsive programs, to meet the needs of our community," said Dr. Denise Cobb, Provost and Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs. "This partnership allows us to provide applied research, technical support, and data analytics in partnership with municipal and county government leadership while developing talent to drive today's workforce and our future needs. We look forward to building even stronger partnerships with our communities and expanding opportunities throughout the region."

The Wedge and SIUE will actively collaborate with the business community and local agencies to inform opportunities to engage SIUE faculty, staff, and students with a focus on applied creativity, data analytics, science, and innovation. This partnership stands as a cornerstone of AltonWorks' commitment to rebuilding communities for optimal social impact and serves as a signature project designed to ignite innovation, build a culture of entrepreneurship, and create job opportunities across the region.

### **SIUE's Significant Presence at The Wedge**

SIUE will maintain a dedicated space within The Wedge, draw on institutional strengths, and expand our reach through specialized programming and technical expertise. The following SIUE Centers will be central to this effort:

- **GeoMarc Program:** Led by Dr. Randy Pearson, providing geospatial mapping, applications, and research capabilities
- **Center for Predictive Analytics:** Led by Dr. Carrie Butts-Wilmsmeyer, delivering data-driven insights to business and community partners
- **Center for Sustainable Communities and Entrepreneurship** Supporting SIUE's community engagement, innovation, and entrepreneurship throughout the region. SIUE is interested in partnership opportunities and to expand programming related to **Cybersecurity Sustainable Energy Solutions**, and
- **Supporting innovations in Food/Agricultural Systems**

SIUE is committed to offering responsive programming to meet community needs and seeks to expand offerings based on stakeholder feedback.

### **Professional Development Programming**

SIUE leadership is working with the School of Business and the Office of Online Services and Educational Outreach to offer a comprehensive range of professional development programs addressing both personal and professional growth. These programs can span multiple categories including entrepreneurship, innovation, wellness and mindfulness practices, career development, digital and technology skills training, grant writing instruction, workplace effectiveness courses, and various industry-aligned non-credit programs.

This diverse programming portfolio is designed to meet the evolving needs of the community and local businesses while providing accessible, high-quality educational opportunities that support workforce development and economic growth in the region.

### **About The Wedge**

*The Wedge is a 55,000 sq ft social impact, research lab, think tank, and workspace serving as a hub for the digital economy in the Alton Metro Region. Born out of the community revitalization efforts of AltonWorks and leveraging the assets of SIUE, The Wedge brings together entrepreneurs, researchers, and professionals under one roof, combining coworking spaces with cutting-edge research facilities.*

### **About Southern Illinois University Edwardsville**

*Southern Illinois University Edwardsville provides students with a high-quality education that powerfully transforms the lives of individuals and improves communities. With a strong commitment to community engagement and applied research, SIUE serves as a catalyst for economic development throughout Southwestern Illinois and the greater St. Louis region.*

### **About AltonWorks**

*Founded in 2018, AltonWorks is a social impact redevelopment company focused on the revitalization of historic downtown Alton as a healthy, thriving, walkable city and as a regional hub for reinvention and resiliency in the Alton Metro Region. AltonWorks was founded on the principles of livability, environmental stewardship, social justice, and inclusivity and believes in rebuilding communities for optimum social impact.*

from l. to r.) Southern Illinois University (SIU) System President Dan Mahony, PhD; John Charles, SIU System Executive Director of Government & Public Affairs; John Simmons, AltonWorks; SIUE Chancellor James T. Minor, PhD

