

Meet SIUE Alumnus Khari Garvin, Director of National Office of Head Start

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EDWARDSVILLE - More than 20 years ago, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville alumnus Khari M. Garvin worked in the SIUE Head Start/Early Head Start program to help educate, strengthen and advance preschoolers, families and communities. Today, he is still a leader in Head Start – but on a national scale.



[Garvin](#), who earned a master's in education in 2005 from SIUE, is director of the Office of Head Start (OHS) at the Administration for Children and Families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The OHS administers grant funding and oversight to the 1,600 agencies that provide Head Start services in communities across the country. OHS also provides federal policy direction and a training and technical assistance system to help grant recipients in providing comprehensive services to eligible young children and their families.

"I genuinely believe in Head Start's mission (to end poverty) and the thoughtful, research-based, two-generation approach of the program," said Garvin. "Head Start is not just a program, it is also a strategy and part of our nation's prescription to end poverty."

"When you think about it in those terms, you realize that there is a clear mission which is to make a range of supports (such as education, health/mental health and family engagement services) available to young children and families to aid their healthy development, and their ability to realize their full potential," continued Garvin. "This is such a critical function that directly impacts the health and well-being, not just of families served in Head Start programs but the entire society."

SIUE Head Start/Early Head Start Program Director Carolyn Jason remembers Garvin as someone who had passion and embraced the Head Start mission of improving the lives of children, families and staff.

"I remember him as such a selfless person, who was genuinely interested in helping others reach their goals," said Jason. "Although he was younger than most of us in management, he was willing to share his wisdom and knowledge in order see others excel. I knew Mr. Garvin was destined for much more. I am extremely proud to see he is at a new level with Head Start!"

"He did an amazing job, and our families appreciated all of his hard work," added Jason.

Garvin's first Head Start job was with SIUE Head Start. "I worked for SIUE Head Start for five years, beginning as a social services coordinator, overseeing the family /community partnership component of our program's services," he said, "and concluding my time as a program operations coordinator, overseeing a cluster of Head Start/Early Head Start sites."

"Carolyn Jason was a trusted and valued colleague during my tenure at SIUE Head Start," said Garvin. "She provided management oversight of one of SIUE Head Start's

critical school district partnerships, through which we collaborated with an area school district to provide comprehensive services for eligible children and families. A partnership like that was a bit ahead of its time back then, and Carolyn did an excellent job overseeing it!”

In looking to the future, Garvin offers the following call, “I am challenging all Head Start programs, including SIUE Head Start, to be bold and innovative while planning its strategy for service delivery,” he said. “I encourage all programs to step out of the shadow of our legacy and cast a new light forward, complete with a refreshed approach to serving children and families that is truly responsive to the evolving needs of each community. The time is now to create a Head Start system that is built for the 21st century!”