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## **River Region Evening News wins national award**

by Pete Rosenbery

CARBONDALE, Ill. -- Southern Illinois University Carbondale's acclaimed WSIU-TV Channel 8's River Region Evening News is once again one of the nation's top broadcast journalism programs.

The news program was third in the nation at the College Emmy Awards. The award-winning newscast aired at 5 p.m. on April 15, 2009. Students and faculty received the awards Saturday, April 10, in Hollywood, Calif.

"This is the first year that any of us can recall making the finals of the College Emmy Awards," news director Jim Gee said. "It's a thrill for all of our students ... from the soon-to-be graduating anchor to the newest camera operator ... to be recognized on the national stage."

The recognition continues to show the strength of the broadcast journalism program, said Gary P. Kolb, dean of the College of Mass Communication and Media Arts.

"The College is extremely proud of River Region Evening Edition and its accomplishments -- placing third in the country for this Emmy after being voted best in the country just two years ago signals continued quality performance by our students," he said. "We continue to have the best broadcast journalism program in the state of Illinois, bar none."

Gee emphasizes the award is a "win for the whole team." SIUC students produce, present and crew the show.

The executive producer for the newscast was Lou Uhler, a senior in radio-television from Chicago. Other former students, all of whom graduated in May 2009, were: executive Zlatko Filipovic, now a news producer at KXXV-TV in Waco, Texas; executive producer Kahla Holtz-Fazzini, now a production assistant at Country Music Television; and producer Sean Olsta, currently a graduate student in the public affairs reporting program at the University of Illinois-Springfield.

The newscast included an investigative report by Filipovic on snow removal issues at the University and how they affected disabled students, and an in-depth look at the criminal charges against former Gov. Rod Blagojevich..

About 70 students are involved with the Evening Edition each semester, Gee said. Olsta, Holtz-Fazzini, Filipovic and Uhler "certainly deserve high praise for their contributions to this particular episode," but Gee said that he, along with instructor Eileen Waldron, senior lecturer Joey Helleny, and Mark J. Wetstein, television production coordinator with WSIU Broadcasting Service, "see this as an award for the entire news team."

“It’s hard to find the words to express how proud we all are of the hard work our students put into the show on a daily basis,” Gee said. “This award represents just one episode; it’s a snapshot, just a small sample of what we do four times a week through most of the school year. If you add it all up that’s a staggering time commitment from student volunteers who want to learn to be better broadcast journalists and serve the public good at the same time.”