Innovation Day event shows future footprint of AI and STEAM in Illinois

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Innovation & Technology (DoIT) co-hosted the first annual Innovation Day event at SIU School of Medicine in Springfield, conducting a statewide policy discussion around emerging technology and strengthening the STEAM pipeline, as well as recognizing Ilinois innovators from across the state.

Innovation Day developed after Governor JB Pritzker proclaimed the month of April as Innovation and Technology Month. DoIT partnered with the Illinois Science & Technology Coalition (ISTC), the Illinois Innovation Network (IIN), the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) for the event.

"From our economy to our infrastructure and healthcare, and so much more, innovation and technology can shape what comes next," **said Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton.** "Our state universities ensure that Illinois stands out and plays a critical role in health research by focusing on being ahead of the curve and leaning on the power of collaborations to break new ground."

Cynthia Faullin, Chair of the Illinois Innovation Network Committee on Entrepreneurship, kicked off the event recognizing 13 innovators across the state that have made advancements in research, technology commercialization and education. The following innovators were honored:

- Krishna Bavana, University of Illinois Chicago
- Cara Bognar, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
- Elham Khorasani Buxton, University of Illinois Springfield
- Laura Clements, Discovery Partners Institute
- Avani Flanagan, Eastern Illinois University
- Josh Furstoss, Northeastern Illinois University
- Reggie Greenwood, Governors State University
- Lahiru Jayakody, Southern Illinois University Carbondale
- Jon Klingensmith, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville
- Roy Magnuson, Illinois State University
- Sean Park, Western Illinois University
- Dr. John Vozenilek, OSF Healthcare
- Tao Xu, Northern Illinois University

"This was a fantastic day celebrating innovation in Illinois," **said Acting Secretary and State CIO Brandon Ragle.** "The event was a testament to the importance of coming together and bringing stakeholders to the table to make sure we are having conversations about some of the most advanced technology of our time. I can't wait to see how this event evolves and grows in the coming years."

The event featured two policy discussions around the challenges and potential of artificial intelligence as well as strengthening the STEAM pipeline and fostering equitable innovation. These panels addressed how artificial

intelligence is already altering the world and raised important questions for society, the economy and governance throughout the discussion. The panelists also encouraged participants to take action and start building up our youth so that they are prepared for the emerging technology around us.

"The energy and thoughtful panel discussions were an inspiring display of leadership across Illinois' innovation ecosystem" **said Colleen D. Egan, CEO of ISTC.** "We have always believed in the power of partnerships and we look forward to continuing our work with leaders in education, government, public and private sector to be a catalyst of change and a champion for future innovators."

To see a livestream recording of the program, pictures from the event, and to find information about IT Month, visit DoIT's STEAM [website](.).

###