

Dr. Nate Williams Brings Years of Scholarship and Expertise In Critical Race Studies to SIUE

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“Liberating self through the pursuit of freedom, while chasing the shadow of justice” is an illuminating descriptor of the pedagogical philosophy, rooted in Critical Race Theory (CRT), held by a young Black educator who has pledged himself to socially-just, community-based teaching, scholarship and activism.

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville's Nate Williams, PhD, associate professor in the School of Education, Health and Human Behavior's (SEHHB) Department of Teaching and Learning, has been on campus for five months and is already knee-deep in classes, programs and initiatives that seek to secure the educational liberation of marginalized people and amplify knowledge for everyone.

"My teaching is intimately linked to my community-engaged research," offered Williams. "The fundamental questions I ask about the nature of schooling emerged from the daily injustices I witnessed, and was implicated in during my time as a student and classroom teacher in urban schools.

"In response, I intentionally characterize my pedagogy by three elements, regardless of the course I am teaching. These elements are facilitation, critical reflection and creativity. As an educator, my responsibilities center on promoting opportunity and hope, while liberating my students through content acquisition and critical reflection. I employ collaborative learning and reciprocal teaching, which allows my students to take ownership in the classroom by assisting in the design of lessons covered."

Williams' expertise is vast, some of which includes critical race pedagogy, critical race praxis, bi-racial identity development culture, politics and education, bi-racial identity development, and inquiry assessments and design.

He is also co-vice president elect of the [Critical Race Studies in Education Association](#) (CRSEA) with Dr. Timberly Baker, associate professor in educational leadership at Arkansas State University. CRSEA is an interdisciplinary consortium of experts who recognize global implications of race and education for minoritized people. Through scholarship, they identify and expose inequities for the ultimate eradication of white supremacy.

"Critical Race Theory is a tool for scholars and scholar-activists to label and analyze asymmetrical systems of racialized power in the world," explained Williams. "CRT is an established, yet evolving conceptual framework that is an amalgamation of Critical Legal Studies, Black Intellectual Thought and a Black liberation tradition, centered on deciphering the legacy of white supremacy and racialized tyranny in society.

"CRT is important, because it is the best tool to understand and disrupt the dehumanization of practices of white supremacy, which mitigates success, access and humanity for all peoples."

Williams' knowledge and passion can be discovered in various campus duties and projects that include:

- Lead designer/architect for SEHHB's secondary education program redesign, which involves reconceptualizing the secondary education licensure program through a critical race pedagogy framework
- Faculty member of the DREAM (Dismantling Racism through Education, Advocacy and Mobilization) Collective at SIUE, where he helps develop, coordinate and participate in podcast episodes and webinars
- SEHHB liaison for the SIUE East St. Louis Charter High School, where he has designed an enrichment program for Black males, supports food security efforts, and has created the new Project T.E.A.M. (Transformative Education Achievement Model) @ SEHHB to be launched in the spring

Williams, who was an assistant professor in the Educational Studies Department at Knox College in Galesburg, became interested in SIUE as a result of learning about some of its progressive ideas and happenings from his mentor and friend SEHHB Dean Robin Hughes, PhD.

“After first hearing about SIUE from Dean Hughes, I did my own research and liked what I discovered,” he continued. “The aesthetics of the campus continue to leave me awestruck. As well, the anti-racist feats SIUE is attempting to accomplish is noteworthy. For example, SIUE is headed in the right direction with many of the new hires, specifically Black faculty and administrators across campus. Admittedly, I have to emphasize though, that there still aren't enough Black employees. However, the new hires and campus-wide initiatives (like the DREAM Collective) provide hope for authentic change. Although the path before us is arduous, we will march forward and make SIUE an anti-racist institution.”

Williams has plans to accomplish many great things at SIUE, some of which include:

- Help to make SIUE #1 in graduating licensed Black male educators
- Help to increase the number of Black male educators by creating a pipeline to the SEHHB from area high schools
- Help make SIUE the go-to institution for CRT work and CRT scholars

“I choose to engage in the work I do, because I know that I am not here by my own doing,” Williams added. “I am also motivated by those whom I believe should be in a similar professional status as myself, but bullets (literally and metaphorically) of inequity, injustice and racism have struck them down.”