

Dr. James T. Minor Makes History As 10th Chancellor At Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE - Dr. James T. Minor, the Assistant Vice Chancellor and Senior Strategist to the Office of the Chancellor in the California State University system, was appointed to be the 10th Chancellor at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville in a meeting of the school's board of directors on Thursday. He is the first African-American as chancellor in SIUE's history.

Minor, 47, comes to SIUE from his position in the Cal State system, the largest and most diverse university system in the United States, and helped in the increase the

graduation rates of minority and underrepresented students to an all-time high in the system, and also cut the rate of equity gaps of both minority and underrepresented students.

"I am both excited and extraordinarily humbled by the opportunity to lead such an amazing institution,' Minor said in an interview that was broadcast on YouTube. "I am very appreciative of the board's confidence as well as president Dan Mahoney's confidence in my leadership for the next season, next chapter at SIUE. I also am deeply grateful for the engagement and the work of the campus committee, and I also want to appreciate their work. But I think it's a tremendous season to go forward in public higher education, and I'm very much looking forward to SIUE being at the forefront."

Minor is aware of the history he'll be making as both the 10th chancellor, and first African-American chancellor in the school's 65-year history and what it means to many people on the campus.

"I think it's so interesting," Minor said. "I will say that throughout the process, it hadn't occurred to me that would be a part of the narrative associated with my appointment. I'm certainly very proud, but I will tell you that I am interested in my appointment being more than a historical fact. I fully recognize the significance of that, but I think that must be now converted into realizing greater inclusion in the university, and it being symbolically understood as a place for everyone in the state and beyond to be welcomed, and accomplish their educational goals.

"One interesting thing where I think that matters, I don't want to underestimate the importance of my appointment symbolically," Minor continued, "as the first African-American chancellor at SIUE. During my visit, I had a chance to spend some time at the charter high school at the East St. Louis campus, and in that town hall meeting, there were some high school students, young African-American high school students. Males in particular, who asked questions. And one of the ways I think it matters is I very much saw myself in those young men, and I very much wanted them to see themselves in me, potentially as the next chancellor. And so, I think I have to be clear about what I represent to others. But again, it's very important to me that it be just more than the historical fact in the arc of the institution's history."

Minor sees much symmetry in the strategies of the Illinois Board of Higher Education and the school's assets and opportunities in meeting their goals.

"I think, as I stated earlier, I think there's a lot of symmetry, if you look at the strategic priorities of the Illinois Board of Higher Education," Minor said, "look at the strategic priorities of the system and you look at the ongoing work that has been done with the SIUE strategic plan, and you see a lot of symmetry. Retention, degree completion and

preserving affordability, impact and outreach. So I think those are the three big strategic priorities. Now how we operationalize them at SIUE I think will be determined once I'm on the ground, and I have the benefit of listening and engaging the campus community. But I think the shorthand for the plan will be to really focus on accomplishing the institution's mission by ensuring that a greater percentage of students who enroll are crossing the commencement stage four or five or even six years later. And it means that we are having an increasingly positive impact on our local community, on our region and on the state."

Minor, who also served as the Deputy Assistant Secretary in the office of Postsecondary Education in the Department of Education during the administration of President Barack Obama, is looking ahead to being part of the SIUE system.

"Yes, I think there's tremendous power in the system," Minor said, "and this idea of the system is one university, many locations. I think there's enough work for us all. There's a saying that says many hands make light work, and when you look at that degree completion needs of the state, you look at where that workforce is going, and what the needs will be there. I think it will take every part of our system to meet the demand, and what's required to serve the state of Illinois. So I am very much looking forward to being a part of the system and advancing public higher education as a system."

Minor is also pleased with the recent decision to declare SIUE as an anti-racist institution and feels his background will help support those efforts.

"It's really pretty remarkable," Minor said. "As I mentioned, public institutions of higher education for the last 25 years have conceptually committed to diversity, equity and inclusion work. I believe that the president and the board stand to be commended for such a bold declaration on being an anti-racist institution, which to me suggests a level of activism that goes beyond such a conceptual commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. I am very encouraged by the fact that this is an ongoing conversation at SIUE, I'm very encouraged that the task force has already been established and has been engaging in constituents across the university, and I very much expect that when I arrive, I will be joining a conversation and joining efforts that are already in progress, which is very exciting."