



# **Professor Howard Rambsy Earns SIUE's Distinguished Research Professor Rank**

by Megan Wieser

January 18 2022 10:21 AM



EDWARDSVILLE – The distinction and award only add to what many at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville and elsewhere believe and feel about [Howard Ramsby II, PhD](#) – that he is an illustrious educator with years of innovative scholarship, culturally-based research, creative teaching, and substantial mentoring to his credit.

A faculty member in the College of Arts and Sciences' (CAS) Department of English Language and Literature, Ramsby, known for his depth of expertise and experience in the field of African American literary studies, has achieved the University's highest academic rank of Distinguished Research Professor. He achieved the recognition in fall 2021, making him the first Black professor at SIUE to do so.

Ramsby teaches courses in American and African American literature. Since he arrived at SIUE in 2003, Ramsby has published two books *The Black Arts Enterprise* (2011) and *Bad Men: Creative Touchstones of Black Writers* (2020). He has published 25 scholarly articles on African American literature and culture, and he edited or co-edited four special issues of scholarly journals. Ramsby has curated several exhibits featuring black artistic culture in a variety of places, including Illinois, Missouri, Virginia, and Ibadan, Nigeria. He has co-developed and directed two Summer Institutes on Frederick Douglass in 2019 and 2021.

Ramsby's primary reason for coming to SIUE was the opportunity to work with [Dr. Eugene B. Redmond](#), SIUE emeritus professor of English and East St. Louis poet laureate. SIUE's Lovejoy Library opened the Eugene B. Redmond Collection and Learning Center in 2015. Ramsby continues to embed the scholarship of Redmond in his teachings of literature.

"I am honored to have received this award," said Ramsby. "But I do have mixed feelings about being the 'first' Black person to receive the distinction. I'm mindful that so many Black scholar-professors were far more distinguished than I, yet never received this acknowledgement for their contributions."

Since joining the SIUE faculty, Ramsby has received approximately \$1 million in external grant funding, where he has served as principal investigator (PI) or co-PI. His research has been supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Illinois Humanities Council.

"Dr. Ramsby is an especially prolific scholar who has produced an impactful body of work in African American Studies," said Jerry Weinberg, PhD, associate provost for research and dean of the SIUE Graduate School. "Notably, in addition to garnering the attention of his scholarly community, Dr. Ramsby is a remarkable public scholar. Through his books, presentations, invited talks and many funded grants, he has

introduced numerous people outside of academia to African American studies. As a dedicated teacher-scholar, he also brings his remarkable work into his classes, which creates a richness to his teaching that is one of the hallmarks of SIUE.”

“With his record of excellent scholarship and outstanding teaching, Dr. Ramsby has led the Department of English Language and Literature to the forefront of programs in African American literature,” said CAS Dean Kevin Leonard, PhD. “The Department offers more courses in African American literature than almost any other U.S. university.”

“Dr. Ramsby has served as a role model for the hundreds of Black students who have enrolled in the FAME (Females of African-Descent Modeling Excellence) and GAME (Goal-Oriented African American Excel) programs since 2004,” continued Leonard. “Students in these programs recognize that they can excel in their programs of study and become successful graduate students and professionals. The College of Arts and Sciences is thrilled that Dr. Ramsby is being recognized for his extraordinary achievements.”

“Dr. Ramsby is committed to increasing access to African American literature and scholarship at the University and beyond,” offered Tisha Brooks, PhD, chair and associate professor in the Department of English Language and Literature. “His teaching and research are inextricably linked. Dr. Ramsby is an excellent model of what it means to be a teacher-scholar.

“He is deeply invested in breaking down barriers to education, especially for Black students,” continued Brooks, who says Ramsby has served as a key mentor for her since coming to SIUE in 2013.

“Dr. Ramsby gives a lot of his time to students personally and collectively,” said Lydia Jackson, assistant to the provost for library and community engagement and associate dean of Lovejoy Library. “His style of teaching imparts a unique level of comfortability that captures students’ interest and encourages further research. Dr. Ramsby is also there to be of support to his colleagues, which further demonstrates his humanity.”

Earleen Patterson, PhD, SIUE associate vice chancellor for Student Opportunities, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, emphasized the “monumental” impact Ramsby has had on students, and praised him for his longtime commitment to [FAME](#) and GAME.

“Student Opportunities for Academic Results (SOAR) is appreciative for the opportunity to partner with Dr. Ramsby to serve underrepresented students at SIUE,” shared Patterson. “Through the Johnetta Haley Scholarship Reading Project, we provide opportunities for otherwise marginalized students to express their thoughts and opinions

on contemporary issues and grow as informed readers and scholars. Dr. Rambsy's leadership has been invaluable to that project."

"Our students and the entire SIUE community are tremendously fortunate to have the talent, passion and commitment to advocacy that Dr. Rambsy consistently pays forward," added Patterson. "He is truly distinguished among college professors, not only at SIUE, but also throughout the United States."

Central to SIUE's exceptional and comprehensive education, the [College of Arts and Sciences](#) offers degree programs in the natural sciences, humanities, arts, social sciences and communications. The College touches the lives of all SIUE students, helping them explore diverse ideas and experiences, while learning to think and live as fulfilled, productive members of the global community. Study abroad, service-learning, internships and other experiential learning opportunities better prepare SIUE students not only to succeed in our region's workplaces, but also to become valuable leaders who make important contributions to our communities.

By preparing the next generation of leaders in a knowledge-based economy, SIUE's [Graduate School](#) fulfills the region's demand for highly trained professionals. Graduate program offerings include arts and sciences, business, education, engineering, nursing and interdisciplinary opportunities. SIUE professors provide students with a unique integration of theoretical education and hands-on research experiences. Students can obtain graduate certificates or pursue master's degrees, and be part of a supportive learning and rich intellectual environment that is tailored to the needs of adult learners. The Graduate School's Office of Research and Projects supports and raises the visibility of research and creative activity at SIUE, which ranks highest among its Illinois Board of Higher Education peers in total research and development expenditures according to the National Science Foundation's Higher Education Research and Development Survey.