



SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY EDWARDSVILLE

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Segue: U. of Alabama's Christine Taylor On Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

This Sunday on Segue, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville's premier radio show that discusses the ideas and issues happening on campus and beyond, SIUE Chancellor Randy Pembrook, PhD, speaks with Christine Taylor, PhD, vice president and associate provost for diversity, equity and inclusion at The University of Alabama.

Taylor served as the guest speaker for approximately 265 guests at SIUE's 36th Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Week Luncheon Celebration on Jan. 23.

The duo's conversation will air at 9 a.m. Sunday, Feb. 3 on WSIE 88.7 FM The Sound and siue.edu/wsie.

In her address at the MLK Week Luncheon, Taylor reminded guests of Dr. King's address during the March on Washington. King spoke of a "fierce urgency of now," followed by a need for "vigorous and positive action." She believes the sentiment is needed in today's troubling climate.

"We need to look beyond ourselves and see where inequities exist in our communities. Secondly, we need to build our personal power and energy to address those inequities," Taylor says. "It's my hope that as we think about Dr. King and his legacy, we begin to think about issues like voter registration and suppression, and people get out there in vote.

"Democracy needs engagement, and it's imperative where I sit that we get out and engaged in our individual communities in order to make the biggest change."

Taylor's career in higher education, particularly in diversity, equity and inclusion, is formed by a wealth of personal experiences and a passion for seeing students succeed after they graduate.

"My mother would argue that my career in diversity education began in first grade when I was the first to integrate an all-white elementary school," Taylor says. "Part of how I supported myself in graduate school and through my school was [working in] residence life. I was involved in training and development of our student staff around issues of diversity, equity and inclusion, which were becoming more important in the context of a living and learning community.

"I was also fascinated in seeing how students were getting ready for their life outside of the institution, and these things launched my career in higher education."

"It is interesting how we have those pathways to higher education," Pembrook replies. "Certain things just resonate with us and take us in entirely different directions. For example, I entered college with the intention to become a high school band director, but I got involved in research and technology, and it took me in an entirely different direction.

“A lot of my colleagues in higher education have those stories where we found something that fascinates us that takes us on a new journey.”

“I tell people that it’s a true blessing that your personal goals and passions align with your professional goals and passions,” Taylor says. “It’s exactly what I’ve found in my work, and I’m honored to be able to do what I do.”

“If you love what you do, you never work a day in your life!” Pembroke quotes.

At Alabama, Taylor provides executive-level leadership to build on its core principles of inclusiveness in learning environments, programs, workforce and strategic partnerships.

“I look at who comes, who stays and who graduates in terms of faculty and students of underrepresented groups,” Taylor says. “I want to make sure our campus is more welcoming, which involves all students, faculty and staff.

“I also want to make sure we as an institution are prepared to deal with an increasingly global society. That means we collectively develop culturally competencies, so we can effectively interact with people that are different from ourselves.”

In order to help their students develop those cultural competencies, both Pembroke and Taylor are firm supporters in national and international immersion experiences. These travel study programs, according to Taylor, require students to use critical thinking skills, become empathetic, and take actions once outside the realm of possibility.

“While at a different university, Dr. Timothy Staples (interim director of the SIUE East St. Louis Center) and I took a diverse group of students to Washington, D.C., for a social justice experience,” she recalls. “We visited the Holocaust Museum, the King monument, and partnered with students from American University to witness the inauguration of President Barack Obama.

“The most powerful part of the experience was witnessing the students, from the bus ride from Indiana to the Capitol, learn everything about each other. It created a bond, and these students still meet and contact each other on social media long after graduation.”

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-SIUE Today Article-

“The Fierce Urgency of Now” Reverberated Again at SIUE’s Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Luncheon

January 23, 2019, 4:19 PMG. Christine Taylor, PhD, vice president and associate provost for diversity, equity and inclusion at the University of Alabama, witnessed a cross burning in her neighborhood, was among the first to integrate an all-white elementary school at the age of five, and was welcomed and empowered by her white first-grade teacher to learn and succeed. These experiences and more fueled her in becoming a champion of diversity, equity and inclusion, and positioned her to continue the work in today’s troubling climate, Taylor told her audience Wednesday, Jan. 23 at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville’s Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Week Luncheon Celebration.

“As I look around and see the bias incidents in our nation and on our campuses, such as African Americans being stopped for living while black,” said Taylor, “I have come to a better understanding of one of Dr. King’s sayings regarding justice and fairness.”



Taylor was the guest speaker at the 36th MLK Week Luncheon, presented by the Center for Student Diversity and Inclusion (CSDI), which drew approximately 265 people.

“Even though King’s speech was 50 years ago, please note the relevancy for 2019,” said Taylor. “We are now faced with the fact, my friends, that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. There is such a thing as being too late. Procrastination is the thief of time.

Let us rededicate ourselves to the long, bitter, but beautiful struggle for a new world.



“I’m convinced,” she added, “that we are living in the words of Dr. King – the Fierce Urgency of Now: the Sequel.”

SIUE Chancellor Randy Pembrook welcomed the audience and offered several of King’s quotes. “One of my favorites is, ‘Life’s most persistent and urgent question is what are you doing for others?’ SIUE has responded to that concept of doing for others, because we share Dr. King’s dream.”

Pembrook noted several ways the University has and is doing well in the area of diversity and inclusion:

- The expansion of the Dr. Martin Luther King Celebration
 - University’s new strategic goals and objectives
 - The opening of the CSDI
 - Regularly scheduled inclusive conversations opened to students, faculty and staff
 - The SIUE Black Faculty and Staff Association being recognized as a constituency group
 - The reinvigorated Diversity Leadership group’s development of the 2019 Diversity and Inclusion Spring Summit
 - SIUE receiving the Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award for the fifth consecutive year
- Another highlight of the luncheon was the award presentations. The following were honored for their outstanding achievements and contributions:

- Faculty Humanitarian – [Myron W. Jones](#), PhD, assistant professor in the SIUE Department of Chemistry
 - Scholarship – [Vernon Tremain Smith, Jr.](#), SIUE mass communication major
 - High School Essay – Jacob Bradley Renfer, Notre Dame High School, St. Louis
 - High School Poetry – Andrew Normington, St. Louis University High School, St. Louis
 - High School Visual Arts – Samantha Ramay, Notre Dame High School, St. Louis
- MLK award winners reflected on their winnings and the legacy of the civil rights leader and giant.

“Dr. King once said that ‘Everyone can be great, because everyone can serve,’” said Myron. “I have tried to serve by helping others achieve their educational goals and by supporting diversity in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education.”

“Upon Dr. Sadegh Khazaeli’s retirement, I assumed responsibility for maintaining the Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP) at SIUE,” continued Myron. “This program supports and encourages underrepresented groups to pursue and complete undergraduate degrees in science and engineering.”

Smith says his MLK scholarship will help him continue his education, which in turn will assist him in furthering his leadership skills and community service.

“Dr. Martin Luther King embodies the kind of person I hope to become: a persuasive leader, a man of confidence, a devoted religious member and an excellent speaker of the truth,” said Normington, who plans to major in English or business communications in college.

“I most admire Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s ability to peacefully fight for his beliefs, even when faced with hatred,” said Ramay, who aspires to major in biology or genetics in college.

“King’s vision of racial equality was not beyond the outer limits of human capability,” said Renfer, who plans to major in computer science. “Rather, it was a goal for people to achieve through honest discussion and listening.”

Photos:

G. Christine Taylor, PhD, vice president and associate provost for diversity, equity and inclusion at the University of Alabama, was the keynote speaker at SIUE’s Annual MLK Week Luncheon. 2018-19 SIUE Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration Award Recipients (L-R) Samantha Ramay, visual arts; Jacob Bradley Renfer, essay; Vernon Smith, scholarship award; and Myron Jones, PhD, faculty humanitarian. Not pictured is Andrew Normington, poetry.

The SIUE East St. Louis Center for the Performing Arts performed “Kambeng” (Unity), which displayed a series of West African drumming and dancing techniques.