

# SEGUE: Ragsdale on the study of human migration

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On this week's episode of Segue, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville's weekly radio program exploring the lives and work of the people on campus and beyond, Greg Budzban, PhD, College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) dean, interviews Corey Ragsdale, PhD, assistant professor in the Department of Anthropology.

This episode of Segue airs at 9 a.m. on Sunday, Jan. 26. Listeners can tune in to WSIE 88.7 FM The Sound or [siue.edu/wsie](http://siue.edu/wsie).

Ragsdale has joined a group of distinguished archeologists and anthropologists across the globe to search for a better understanding of the history and causes of human migration. The group was formed in 2019 by the Coalition for Archaeological Synthesis, an organization founded to utilize archaeological data to further scientific understandings of human social dynamics and aid in solving contemporary world issues.

"How did you get to SIUE?" inquires Budzban. "What brought you here, and how did you get into anthropology?"

"I took an introductory anthropology class during my undergraduate, and I didn't actually know what it was," answers Ragsdale. "I fell in love with the idea of studying the history of people and understanding the world with a global context."

Upon discovering a passion for anthropology, Ragsdale joined the field of bioarchaeology, where he focuses on biological remains from the past. After completing his doctorate at the University of New Mexico, he spent a year at the University of Montana performing forensic work along with historical archaeology.

"After finding a job opening at SIUE, I visited for an interview and loved it here," continues Ragsdale. "While working with a great group of colleagues, I've been able to flourish and take my research into new directions."

"The study of human migration is a huge and relevant topic today," says Budzban. "Can you tell us how this committee was formed?"

"The coalition decided to start a synthetic project on the phenomenon of human migration by bringing together anthropologists and archaeologists to study the history of its effects and processes," responds

Ragsdale. "After a colleague encouraged me to apply, I gave it a shot and was selected as one of the committee members."

The human migration committee consists of 15 scholars of various disciplines within archeology and anthropology. Along with researchers from the United Kingdom, the Ivory Coast and Germany, Ragsdale is a part of a subgroup studying the archaeology of household items to learn more about migratory events worldwide during the course of human history.

“There may be consistency in migratory patterns between people who are moving to a new island for the first time in human history and people who are being relocated from one part of Europe to another today,” says Ragsdale.

“Food security and personal security have been some of the drivers of human migration throughout history,” notes Budzban. “Can you tell us how you’re going to approach that?”

“There have always been different reasons as to why people move in different frequencies,” says Ragsdale. “We’re studying the effects on human security as defined by the United Nations. Human securities are basic human rights such as food security, economic security and political security. We need a synthesis to see how these securities have been affected throughout history.”

“It’ll be fascinating to look at these different securities and understand how they interact and affect each other,” responds Budzban. “The historical perspective from this committee is going to be extraordinarily valuable.”

“While we all agree that migration is an important issue, it’s not just an important issue to anthropologists and academics,” adds Ragsdale. “We want everybody to understand the nature and humanness of migration. We need to have many directions to reach the different levels of society.”

To do this, Ragsdale’s team is creating children’s books to educate youth about both migration and refugees. Another one of his colleagues is creating a virtual reality video game where the player experiences life as a migrant crossing into new land and learning what changes they’ll need to make in order to survive.

“These days, the impact of using technology in the digital humanities and social sciences is critical,” says Budzban. “I’m glad to hear that your team is thinking about many ways to reach a broader audience.”

“It’s a big project, but none of us shy away from a challenge,” says Ragsdale, “We’re all looking forward to getting more involved.”

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