



2025 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DAY

**Morning Session:
Exploring Cross Nigrescence Model of
Racial Identity Development**

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STUDENT DEVELOPMENT THEORY

Overview and definition of student development theory



- Student development theory provides frameworks for understanding how students grow intellectually, psychosocially, and identity-wise throughout higher education (Patton et al., 2016).
- It offers lenses for student affairs professionals to support learning, identity formation, and holistic well-being inside and outside the classroom.

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Focus on a specific student development theory



- Cross's Nigrescence Model of Racial Identity Development describes the process through which Black individuals develop a healthy, affirming racial identity (Burnett, 2025).
- The theory highlights stages (originally Pre-Encounter, Encounter, Immersion–Emersion, Internalization, and Internalization–Commitment) that represent a transition from racial identity confusion to affirmation and empowerment.

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History of Cross's Nigrescence Model of Racial Identity Development



- First introduced in 1971 by William E. Cross, Jr. as a stage model emphasizing a transformative “conversion experience.”
- Revised in 1991 and 2001, evolving into a more multidimensional attitudinal model rather than a linear stage process (Worrell et al., 2023).
- The model has influenced racial identity scales and continues to be applied in education and psychology (Oxford, 2025).

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Pros and cons of the theory

Pros

- Provides a clear lens for understanding racial identity development among Black individuals.
- Offers a framework for challenging deficit-based models of Black identity (Worrell et al., 2023).
- Flexible revisions make it adaptable across different contexts.

Cons

- Early versions were critiqued for being too rigid and stage-based.
- May not capture the full complexity of intersectional identities.
- Application outside of Black populations is limited.

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Practical application of student development theory in the student affairs field



- Helps professionals design programs that meet students' developmental needs.
- Guides advising, mentorship, leadership programs, and diversity initiatives (Patton et al., 2016).
- Encourages practitioners to align support with psychosocial, cognitive, and identity-related growth.

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Practical application of Cross's Nigrescence Model of Racial Identity Development



- Can inform cultural competence training for staff and faculty.
- Provides a framework for supporting Black students navigating predominantly White institutions (Burnett, 2025).
- Helps shape inclusive programming, affinity groups, and safe spaces that affirm Black identity and resilience.

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Integration of the theory with a biblical worldview

- The Nigrescence Model emphasizes moving toward wholeness and affirmation of one's God-given identity, aligning with the biblical principle that all people are "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14, English Standard Version Bible).
- Student affairs professionals can integrate this theory by affirming dignity, justice, and belonging as spiritual practices.
- The model's emphasis on commitment and advocacy resonates with Micah 6:8, which calls believers to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.



REFERENCES

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