



Mr. Braska Williams Jr

Braska Williams Jr was born and raised in Newport News, VA where he graduated from Menchville High School.

His parents had the vision for him and his sister to attend and graduate from a four-year college; his father was a second generation shipyard worker who was a hard worker and wanted more for his children than he was able to obtain educationally. His mother is from rural North Carolina and grew up on a farm in Warren County; she is the only one of her six brothers and sisters to go to college out of high school. She graduated from North Carolina College which is now North Carolina Central University. Through the strong support of his parents, Braska attended North Carolina State University with the intention of becoming a computer engineer. After three years of engineering school, he felt that the Lord was leading him a different direction towards the field of education. Because he already had earned three years of credit hours towards an engineering degree and being an out of state student who was given a limit of five years to earn his degree from his parents, he changed his major to applied mathematics where he intended to go on to graduate school to earn a master's degree in education with teacher certification in high school mathematics.

In the fall 1987, he met Dr. Wandra Hill who became one of his mentors and advisors. His meeting with her changed his life. She gave him the vision that one day he would become a leader in educating minority students in math and science. After graduating from NC State University, he attended and graduated from the College of William & Mary with a master's degree in education and earned certification to teach high school mathematics. With this degree, he was able to return to his hometown of Newport News and began teaching at his alma mater, Menchville High School. He taught for five years, and he had the opportunity to transfer to one of the city's brand-new high schools which was opening an engineering and technology magnet program. The Lord would have different plans! The school district requested that he take over a new STEM program called CHROME (Cooperating Hampton Roads Organizations for Minorities in Engineering) which provided STEM enrichment for underrepresented minority students in all 45 schools in the Newport News Public School District from elementary through high school. Through this new position, he was able to use his background in computer science, engineering, and mathematics to serve as a role model to students of color. He served in this position for several years until he and his wife, Myrna, felt the call to come back to North Carolina.

In early 2004, Braska came back to NC State University and was hired to run the North Carolina Mathematics and Science Education Network Pre-College Program (NC-MSEN PCP). This program is located on several public university college campuses in North Carolina and has provided STEM enrichment and college pipeline access to thousands of underserved students since its inception in 1986. Today, under his leadership, the location at NC State University serves approximately 400 middle and high school students annually through a multiple week Saturday Academy, a math/science competition event, an awards day, a summer camp, and other activities

such as college tours, research opportunities, and other enrichment activities. He has participated and assisted faculty in winning over \$10 million in grants over his career; these grants have provided opportunities for his students to study various STEM fields more in depth, take industry and government agency tours, and to perform STEM research with university faculty.

Personally, he has been married for 29 years to his wonderful wife, Myrna. They have two children, Martia and Breyonna. Martia is currently a sophomore at NC State University where she is majoring in mathematics education on a full academic scholarship while their youngest daughter, Breyonna, is a senior in high school. She plans to major in civil engineering. She has been accepted into NC State University and also has earned a full academic scholarship. Martia graduated valedictorian of her high school class and her sister, Breyonna is current number two in her class. Education is very valuable in the Williams household, and he hopes to inspire and teach these same values to others.