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President's Welcome & Closing Remarks

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May 2, 2010, Commencement

President's Welcome
Richard F. Wilson

Good afternoon and congratulations to the Class of 2010!

After a week of monitoring the *Weather Channel*, I am both relieved and pleased to welcome you on behalf of the faculty and staff of Illinois Wesleyan to this our 160th Commencement.

Over the past six years, I have been reminded regularly of the quality of the music program at Illinois Wesleyan. Today is one of those occasions. I would like to thank Angela Born for an absolutely wonderful performance. I also want to thank Professor Eggleston and members of the Wind Ensemble for sharing their talents with us this afternoon.

This is a very special day for you, one that you have worked long and hard to experience. It is your day, and we are proud to share it with you.

Four years ago, the Class of 2010 arrived in Bloomington with a sense of exhilaration, anticipation, and anxiety. I suspect that those of you who joined this class as transfer students will recall those same emotions during your first few weeks in college. The irony is that for all you, today is another transition in your life, one that again is marked by exhilaration, anticipation, and anxiety.

At this point, you aren't worried about your roommate or your class schedule but rather whether you have selected the right graduate program, accepted the right job offer, established the right priorities in this uncertain economy, or, in some instances, how you will ever adjust to a wardrobe that is not built around blue jeans and flip-flops.

Commencement marks the beginning not the end. Today, we honor you and wish you well, wherever your journey takes you. We know what you have accomplished here and what you are capable of accomplishing as you move forward with your lives.

While this day and this ceremony properly focus on you as graduates, we must not lose sight of the fact that you didn't make this journey alone.

Therefore, it's only appropriate that we take a moment to thank those who helped you along the way.

• The faculty and staff are seated behind you. Please stand facing your professors and staff, and give this group of dedicated people a round of applause.

• Now, please turn in the direction of your parents and friends and extend a round of applause to those whose support and assistance has been so important to your college experience.

There is justifiably a shared pride on this occasion. I hope, and I trust, that you and your loved ones are proud of what you have accomplished and the person that you have become.

I can assure you that we share their pride and wish to celebrate the opportunity that we have had to get to know you as students. I sincerely hope that we can continue to be part of your lives in the years that lie ahead as you join the more than 20,000 Illinois Wesleyan alumni who can be found doing great things across our nation and around the world.

Two years ago, the Class of 2008 presented me and my wife with a concrete pineapple to replace the small one that used to sit atop the entrance to the President's House. We were pleased to receive this gift and decided we would start a new tradition. As you may know, the pineapple is often used to symbolize the spirit of friendship and gracious hospitality. After you receive your diploma and are leaving the stage, give the pineapple a friendly tap as a way of acknowledging the friendships you have formed on this campus and, in addition, the University's pledge that you are always welcome here. This may be Wesleyan's most enduring gift.

It is now my honor to present to you another member of our community, the President of our Board of Trustees, George Vinyard, Class of 1971.

May 2, 2010, Commencement

Closing Remarks
Richard F. Wilson

In a moment, we will rise and sing together the Alma Mater. With several years of practice, our expectations are high that you will know the words -- but just to be safe we have printed them in your program.

Following the Alma Mater, Chaplain Luckie will give the benediction and then we will adjourn to the graduation tradition of strawberries and scones.

I would also like to remind you that an easy way to see specific faculty members following this ceremony is to locate the departmental signs that are scattered around the quad. There is a map of departmental locations in the back of your program.

Before this ceremony is complete, however, I want you to know that it has been a great personal privilege to serve as your president during your time on campus. I have come to appreciate the many special talents and skills represented in this class:

• Your intellect and your passion,

• Your creativity and your enthusiasm,

• Your spirit and your determination.

We know you have spent much time preparing yourselves intellectually and commend you for that effort. We also hope you are leaving with greater understanding and sensitivity to several very important values: social justice; global literacy; ethical decision making; environmental sustainability; civic leadership; and community engagement.

I lift my hat to the Class of 2010 and offer one final admonition:

• Search for what is true,

• Embrace what you find inspiring,

• Commit to making a difference.

Congratulations and good luck.