Illinois Wesleyan University
Digital Commons @ IWU

2012 Highlights | Commencement

2012

Trustee Greetings

George A. Vinyard '71
Illinois Wesleyan University

Recommended Citation
Vinyard, George A. '71, "Trustee Greetings" (2012). *2012 Highlights.* Paper 4.
http://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/comm_2012/4

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by The Ames Library, the Andrew W. Mellon Center for Curricular and Faculty Development, the Office of the Provost and the Office of the President. It has been accepted for inclusion in Digital Commons @ IWU by the faculty at Illinois Wesleyan University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@iwu.edu.
©Copyright is owned by the author of this document.

Trustee Greetings

George A. Vinyard '71

Chair, Board of Trustees

Sunday, April 29, 2012

Scientia et Sapientia + Peter Bergman

Graduates, Parents, Family Members... Faculty, Staff, and Friends of Illinois Wesleyan —

Greetings from the trustees and alumni. On their behalf I am here to say — Congratulations, Welcome and Thank You.

We **Congratulate** each graduate for your individual achievements. We**Welcome** you to the fellowship of Illinois Wesleyan alumni. And we**Thank You** for your contributions to the University community.

To parents, family, friends, faculty and staff — we share your pride in the accomplishments of these young men and women, and we join**them** in **Thanking You** for all you have done to help them arrive at this auspicious day.

The great physicist, Richard Feynman said, “when you get older you find nearly everything is really interesting if you go into it deeply enough.” This afternoon we can test this aphorism — at least the getting older part. That is guaranteed to happen. As for deep thoughts, I will limit myself to offering some observations about our University motto and quoting some words of what might be called wisdom from a writer who has recently passed away.

I commend for your careful consideration the words that appear on the University seal designed in 1866 by the great John Wesley Powell and another less famous member of the faculty. This Latin phrase, *Scientia et Sapientia,* is generally translated as “Knowledge and Wisdom.”

“Knowledge” suggests the acquisition of true information and understanding grounded in objective observation and logical reasoning. “Wisdom” has been defined as the capacity to **exercise sound judgment** and **act rightly** in matters of life and conduct, choosing **proper mean**s to achieve **good ends**. This suggests something that goes far beyond the search for objective truth and reaches deeper into the realm of what it means to be part of humanity in all its historical, social, esthetic, moral and spiritual dimensions.

It is my fervent hope and confident expectation that you are going forth well prepared, both intellectually and morally, to fulfill all of the aspirations reflected in our motto. But while exhorting you to be seekers of knowledge and wisdom I will not presume to suggest I know how you should go about it. I will only share my personal suspicion that part of achieving wisdom may involve learning to identify and appreciate, which is to say laugh at, absurdity and cosmic irony wherever you may find them. In this regard, our world today may be considered a “target rich environment.”

Which brings me to the quotation. Peter Bergman, who died last month, studied economics and drama at Yale and was one of the founding geniuses of the Firesign Theatre comedy troupe whose satirical recordings included titles like “I Think We Are All Bozos on this Bus,” “Give me Immortality or Give Me Death” and “Boom Dot Bust” and inspired something like a cult following starting in the 1960s and continuing through the turn of this century. In his final Radio Oz podcast Bergman said:

"Take heart, dear friends. We are passing through the darkening of the light. We're gonna make it and we're going to make it together. Don't get ground down by cynicism... The flag has been waved. It says ‘occupy’. Occupy Wall Street. Occupy the banks. Occupy the nursing homes. Occupy Congress... Occupy... yourself.” Peter Bergman understood better than most that in order to make sense of the world as often as not you have to deal with nonsense.

In conclusion, as you pursue your life’s goals and grow wiser, we ask that you remember and honor your University and your fellow alumni. We hope that you will continue to think of this community as your extended family and as your home. We bid you farewell as students and welcome you home as alumni. We invite you to return to your University often, whether in person or in spirit. You will always be welcome here — and anyplace where Titans gather.