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# For the Pantagraph: Annual Report

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# Creativity Flourishes

For *The Pantagraph* Annual Report
March 21, 2012

We recently held a special ceremony during the winter meeting of our board of trustees to honor Bloomington's own Flo Armstrong, class of 1943, for a very special gift she made to Illinois Wesleyan. The gift made in her name and that of her late husband, Vic, brought a dramatic piece of glass sculpture to the recently completed rotunda entry of the Ames School of Art.

*The "Triple Helix" sculpture graces the rotunda entrance of Ames School of Art at Illinois Wesleyan University, Bloomington.*

This glass sculpture, by Arizona artist Lyle London, literally lights up the Eckley Quadrangle and is a stunning reminder to everyone that art is alive and well at Illinois Wesleyan. If you have not visited campus recently, we hope you'll come to see this new sculpture, especially at night, and the many other changes that have taken place recently thanks to our generous alumni and friends.

The dedication of the sculpture was a memorable occasion for several reasons. Over the years, Flo and Vic have made many contributions to the university and have always had a special interest in what I will describe as the "public art" on campus. Before Vic's death in 2009, they provided gifts for Evelyn Chapel's bell and the bronze John Wesley Powell sculpture at The Ames Library.

This latest gift continues that tradition in dramatic fashion.

The idea for the sculpture came about when Chuck, class of 1950, and Jay Ames, class of 1949, made the decision to provide funds for a new rotunda entry to the School of Art. When we first discussed the project, they wanted to find a way to draw attention to the arts on campus.

Since the art building is nestled in a corner of the campus between Buck Memorial Library and McPherson Theatre, we focused on a dramatic entry addition that would draw the attention of those walking across the quad.

As the design was developed, it became clear to everyone that we needed a major piece of art to accent and enhance the new rotunda. Flo's gift made that possible.

What we did not expect was that artist Lyle London would not only embrace the project but also the mission of the university. He enlisted student help re-assembling and raising into position the glass sculpture, which was created in his Arizona studio and shipped here in pieces.

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He consulted with us on the computer lighting system, which changes the look of the sculpture throughout the day and night. And, he suggested that we leave three program channels open for students in theatre lighting design classes to conduct experiments as part of class assignments.

He also spoke to our art students about his journey as an artist and the artistic elements of the "Triple Helix." We could not have imagined a more productive relationship between an artist and the university.

The impact of this addition to campus was confirmed for me in a recent email I received from one of our students. His message said that his walks across the quad soon after this project was completed gave him the feeling of being "in awe of the new art building rotunda."

Later this spring, we will dedicate the new entry and other improvements made to the Ames School of Art and pay tribute to Jay and Chuck for their dedication to Illinois Wesleyan and the generous support they have provided for this beautiful addition to campus.