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First Year Convocation
Remarks by President Richard F. Wilson

August 22, 2006

Good morning and welcome to Illinois Wesleyan University; we are all delighted to have you here!

Today you represent one of the 565 members of the class of 2010. Look around at your classmates and do your best in the days and years to come to get to know as many of them as possible. My own experience suggests that the next four years will be among the most profound and exciting years your life, and in large measure that will be because of the friendships that you form and conversations that you have with classmates, with faculty and with members of our staff.

You come to us from across the nation and around the world. Some of you are from Bloomington-Normal and had a ten-minute drive to campus while others have spent 15-20 hours on transatlantic flights to get here. Some are walking in the footsteps of other family members who have attended Illinois Wesleyan, while others may be the first in their families to attend college. Each of you brings something special along with you. The diversity of your backgrounds, outlooks, interests, talents and ideas add to the vitality of our campus community and to the richness of the broader community in which you will live for the next four years.

The reasons that you have selected this University are also many and varied. However, I would venture to say that for most of you, one important reason was the way you felt when you visited campus or talked with our representatives—a feeling of belonging that said this is a special place, I feel at home here. Today I want to say that we will do our best to make that feeling last for you; and, please don't hesitate to let us know if we forget that pledge. This is indeed a special place, and one that we hope will hold the same place in your heart as it does for those who have preceded you.

Those of you who have been on campus for one of our Open Houses have heard me comment that you should resist the pressures to define your undergraduate experience as preparation for a job when the more compelling reason is preparation for life. We hope that you will indeed approach your years here with this thought in mind. Your life at the University, and when you move on from us, can be as rich and as varied as you want it to be. I urge you to explore and expand your interests while you are here. Learn not only inside the classroom, but outside of it as well. Participate in the many activities, events, organizations and groups that are available to you. If you do this, you will find your life transformed.

I think one of those transforming experiences will occur this week as a result of the Summer Reading Program for First Year Students. Barbara Ehrenreich's book, *Nickel and Dimed*, was selected as summer reading for all of you. Later this week, many faculty and staff will join you in small groups to discuss this book, making this experience one that is shared by many people on this campus and one in which you will learn much from others. I have read the book myself and found my emotions ranging from despair over the way some people in society are treated to

admiration for their ingenuity and concern for others. Whatever reaction you have had to this book will be further enhanced when Barbara Ehrenreich comes to campus in a few weeks to deliver the keynote address at the President's Convocation. I am very excited about this program and know you will enjoy it as well.

Now, in order to become an official student at Illinois Wesleyan, I would like to ask the members of the Class of 2010 to please stand.

"Congratulations to you all. You are from this point forward matriculated students at Illinois Wesleyan University and, as such, part of our community of scholars.
In this capacity, bear forth the University's norms, bear forth its hopes,
And make the most of your own gifts for yourself and for others."