



2004

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IWU Magazine

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Recommended Citation

Magazine, IWU (2004) "Class of '08 gets acquainted with its alma mater," *Illinois Wesleyan University Magazine*: Vol. 13: Iss. 3, Article 9.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/iwumag/vol13/iss3/9>

This is a PDF version of an article that originally appeared in the printed Illinois Wesleyan University Magazine, a quarterly periodical published by Illinois Wesleyan University. For more information, please contact iwumag@iwu.edu.

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Class of '08 gets acquainted with its alma mater

Fall Festival activities introduce first-year students to campus and to each other.

On Monday, Aug. 30, 569 registered first-year students began classes for the 2004-05 academic school year. But, in fact, their Illinois Wesleyan experience had started the week before, as participants in Fall Festival, a program designed to help first-year students make a successful transition to academic and social life at the University.

Created in 1998 to replace a four-session orientation program, Fall Festival allows all first-year students to move into the residence halls during the week before classes start. "We moved to this model because we found that first-year students needed some time before the returning students were on campus to be able to find their way around and to bond as a class," said Angela Carver, assistant dean of students.

Over the festival's four days, first-year students attended mandatory sessions addressing everything from Illinois Wesleyan's technology resources to how to register for classes. They could also choose from a variety of informative sessions with titles such as "The Goods on Professors: What They Really Want," and "Preparing for Life After College While You Are at IWU."

The group was entertained by IWU theatre majors who presented "Real World 101," a collection of short dramatic pieces that touch on sensitive issues typically confronting young people in college. They were also encouraged to attend optional events, including the "Festival of Talents," a showcase of first-year performers, and "Playfair," an activity-filled event that Carver described as a "huge ice-breaker."



Physics Professor Narendra Jaggi (above left) warmly greets members of the Class of 2008 and their friends and families during the annual First-Year Convocation in the Shirk Center. Speaking on the lifelong value of a liberal arts education, Jaggi said, "What is missing from most definitions of liberal arts is character. ... What good is knowledge without character?" (Photo by Marc Featherly)



In the Shirk Center Performance Gym, new students complete their first day on campus with Playfair (above). The program's exercises are designed to help students make friends and gain a sense of class unity and identity. *(Photo by Marc Featherly)*

IWU President Richard F. Wilson extended a personal welcome to the new students and their parents at the Fall Festival's First-Year Convocation in the Shirk Center. Wilson told the audience that he felt "a special affinity to the class of 2008" because he had begun his own tenure at Illinois Wesleyan less than two months previously. "We're going to begin this journey together," he said.

Of the 569 students new to the University, 54 are enrolled in the School of Music, 31 in the School of Theatre Arts, 28 in the School of Nursing, and 14 in the School of Art. The remaining 435 students have selected majors within the liberal arts or are yet undecided.

Currently, the enrolled Class of 2008 includes 331 women, 238 men, 23

African-American, 18 Hispanic, 12 Asian, two Native American, and six multi-ethnic students. The class has students from 24 states and six countries — Nepal, Japan, Germany, Brazil, Nigeria, and Indonesia. For the total entering class, the average ACT composite score is 28.4.

Reflecting on this year's class, Dean of Admissions Jerry Pope '80 noted that "minority enrollment has increased from last year's 9 percent to 11 percent this year." Pope added that this growth is an encouraging sign that Illinois Wesleyan's commitment to multi-cultural expansion is having a positive impact.

Pope also commented on the enthusiasm of IWU's newest class. "These students are both multi-talented and excellent in academics, but their eagerness to be at Illinois Wesleyan is what is most exciting."