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Illinois Wesleyan Celebrates 2011 Graduates

May 1, 2011

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – At the **161st Commencement ceremonies** for Illinois Wesleyan University on Sunday, President Richard F. Wilson congratulated the nearly 460 graduates of Illinois Wesleyan, who listened with family and friends nearby on the Robert S. Eckley Quadrangle.

"Commencement marks a beginning, not the end," said Wilson. "Today we honor you and wish you well wherever your journey takes you. We know what you have accomplished here, and are excited to follow you throughout your journey in life."

George Vinyard '71, the president of the University's Board of Trustees, also celebrated the graduates, telling them "it is my reverent hope and confident expectation that you are leaving this campus well prepared – both intellectually and morally – to fulfill all of the aspirations reflected in our motto Knowledge and Wisdom."

During the ceremony, Vinyard and Wilson conferred an honorary doctor of laws degree upon Guggenheim Fellow and poet Linda Gregerson. A 2007 National Book Award finalist, Gregerson delivered the Commencement address "Just in Time" after receiving her honorary doctorate.

Gregerson called to the class of 2011 to use their newly honed skills as graduates of a liberal arts education and help the world rediscover the art of cooperation and communication. The graduates of today had spent the last four years in an "intense experiment," said Gregerson, in which they have "learned people of intelligence and good will can see things through different lenses." That ability to confront differences and learn from them is coming just in time, she said, and noted along with contributions to science, education and art, the class of 2011 is needed for "your advocacy on behalf of the poor, the ill and the excluded, your skill with foreign languages, your delight with new technologies, your outrage at injustice, your triage of a battered planet."

The poet, who is the Caroline Walker Bynum Distinguished University Professor of English Language and Literature at the University of Michigan, urged the graduates to use their unlimited potential for "the restoration of civil discourse, civil conversation – the thoughtful exploratory engagement of heart and mind."

As alumni of Illinois Wesleyan, Gregerson told graduates they were in an ideal place to safeguard the future. "You are the products, yet also the makers of a living tradition that says education is for the many and not the few, that considered thought is the right and duty of the many, not the few," she said. "You are in a position to secure this heritage for yourself and those who come after."

"We need your skills," she said. "We need your powers of discernment, we need your voices and your talents for engaged listening. We need you to teach us what we have forgotten."

Also receiving an honorary degree was Emmy Award-winning documentary filmmaker Almudena Carracedo, who is the director and producer of the award-winning documentary *Made in L.A.* (2007), which she brought to campus in 2009. [Read more about Carracedo and Gregerson.](#)



Linda Gregerson delivered the Commencement address.

▶ [Read or Watch Gregerson's Address](#)
or more [Commencement Highlights](#)

▶ [See the Commencement Photo Gallery](#)

Senior Class President Sean Gower '11 assured his fellow graduates they were ready for the next chapter in their lives. "As truly well-rounded individuals and students of the world, we've benefited greatly from the liberal arts degree we are receiving today," he said. "I'll ask that all of you join me in embracing the unknown future that lies ahead with excitement and great anticipation, not trepidation. We ARE prepared to determine our own paths."

Gower announced the senior class gift – the planting of a tree in honor of former University President Lloyd Bertholf's beloved Tree of Knowledge, planted in 1959. The 2011 Tree of Knowledge will be a tribute to the University's connections around the globe, and will be immersed in soil along with the front page of student-run newspapers from a number of national and international universities. According to Gower, the gift "embodies the academic spirit of globalization" at Illinois Wesleyan.

Also speaking was the **2011 Student Senate Professor of the Year James House**, who said he was honored so many of the students had shared their triumphs and hopes with him over the course of their time at Illinois Wesleyan. "Our dreams could never be realized without your dreams becoming reality," he said of the faculty. "My greatest joys have been when some of you have knocked on my door with great excitement to tell me about some phase of your dream that has come to pass."

President Wilson also honored three professors during Commencement ceremonies, all of whom have been named to endowed professorships and chairs at the University. Endowed professorships and chairs honor faculty members who have distinguished themselves in terms of teaching, research and service. **Professor of Hispanic Studies and Chair of the Hispanic Studies Department Carolyn Nadeau** was honored as the inaugural Byron S. Tucci Professor; **Professor of Biology R. Given Harper** was honored as the George C. and Ella Beach Lewis Endowed Chair of Biology; and **Professor of Religion Carole Myscofski** will be honored the McFee Professor of Religion.

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