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Inauguration of Eric R. Jensen

Eric R. Jensen

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Welcome

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Welcome
by Jonathan D. Green Provost and Dean of Faculty

“From this center, mighty pulsations, for good or evil, must in the future flow, which shall not only affect the fortune of the republic, but reach in their influence other and distant nations of the earth.”¹

So wrote our founders 166 years ago, proclaiming their optimism of this great university and the role it would play in the expansion of our nation and their faith in the limitless possibilities they dreamt for the succeeding generations of students who would be transformed by this institution and the men and women who committed themselves as faculty and staff to that noble cause.

Ours is a business of beginnings, beginnings that unfold in myriad directions, the measure of which is seen in the span of the lives of those who call this place alma mater. Walt Whitman acknowledged these generational perspectives in his poem for the inauguration of a public school in Camden, New Jersey in 1874:

AN old man's thought of school,
An old man gathering youthful memories and blooms that youth
itself cannot.

Now only do I know you,
O fair auroral skies - O morning dew upon the grass!

And these I see, these sparkling eyes,
These stores of mystic meaning, these young lives,
Building, equipping like a fleet of ships, immortal ships,
Soon to sail out over the measureless seas,
On the soul's voyage.²

One of the great rewards of university life is that we enjoy a state of perpetual renewal. Each day we have the opportunity to chart a new course in Whitman's proverbial soul's voyage. Each year we are

¹ Illinois Wesleyan Founders' inscription

² Walt Whitman: “For the Inauguration of a Public School, Camden, New Jersey, 1874,” in *Leaves of Grass*, 1891.

renewed as we send forth a class of students we have come to know and love, whom we have provoked and nurtured, and from whom we too have learned much, and we are born anew as we welcome a new class in turn. Each generation, we inaugurate a new president, which gives us cause to take stock of what we do and who we are and to celebrate our role in the creation of knowledge and the fruition of our students and alumni.

We have joined together today: students, faculty, staff, alumni, trustees, friends of the university, and representatives from sister institutions from across the nation, for the inauguration of Eric Jensen as the 19th president of Illinois Wesleyan University. We are here today to commemorate our rich past, to celebrate our dynamic present, and to contemplate our propitious future.

Welcome to you all as we prepare yet again to “sail out over the measureless seas, On the soul's voyage”