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From the President's Desk, Richard F.  
Wilson

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Spring 2007

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From the President's Desk

*This letter appeared in the Spring 2007 issue of the Illinois Wesleyan University Magazine*

At the beginning of each semester, my wife, Pat, and I host a reception for all students who have studied abroad during the previous four months. These events fill the President's House with much storytelling and laughter but also remind us why it is important for students to experience life in another culture if at all possible. We are told at every reception that students feel they will never be the same, that they view themselves differently, and that they certainly view the world differently.

In the strategic plan approved last year, we affirm the importance of providing students with a "comprehensive worldview" and to prepare them to succeed in an "interconnected global community. " One only has to meet and talk with our students and faculty, many of whom come to us from great universities around the world, to understand that these are not just hollow words.

Each year 150 or so students take part in foreign study. Some enroll in programs we operate in London and Madrid, while others choose to study in over 65 countries or regions in Europe, Asia, Australia, Africa, and Latin America. Another 200-300 students each year get foreign travel/study experience through our May Term program. In addition, we have broadened the experience for students on campus by doubling the number of international students in the last two entering classes.

Our faculty regularly bring a worldview to the campus classroom through their international experiences. For example, Associate Professor of English Alison Sainsbury's literary interests in the Middle East led to her participation in an intensive academic program in Jordan during the month of January. Brian Hatcher, a professor of religion and humanities, was selected as a Fulbright Hays Faculty Research Abroad Fellow and is conducting research and studying in India this spring. We also had a Fulbright Scholar from Russia on campus during the fall and expect to host a faculty member from the Scholars at Risk network next fall.

We respond to the burgeoning student interest in global citizenship in the co-curriculum as well. Sunday night has become a wonderful time for student-led cultural dinners and programs. I have attended many of these events and have thoroughly enjoyed the food, pageantry, and education that occur. In February, Stephen Lewis - former Canadian ambassador to the United Nations and special envoy to Africa for AIDS/HIV- delivered a captivating address on the devastating plight of women and children in Africa during the Founders' Day Convocation. His speech was one of those special occasions when students were not only inspired but also inspired to act.

The result of all of these activities and initiatives affirms in my mind why it is absolutely essential for a global perspective to become part of the educational experience of all undergraduates. There is no doubt that issues like international trade, national security, and the environment require that students have a global perspective. As a liberal arts institution, we must strive to provide that perspective, and we also must be forthright in our commitment to eliminate cultural ignorance and improve the human condition.

All the best,

*Richard B. Wilson*