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Annual Report for The Pantagraph

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Annual Report for The Pantagraph by Eric Jensen

“New president points to successes at IWU”

March 20, 2016

I'm closing out my fourth month on campus. There's much good news to share with you, since my arrival in November and over the past year while Dick Wilson was president. I'm serving as correspondent, reporting on the hard work of a large number of faculty, staff, students, alumni and friends of the university.

We've had a number of programmatic successes:

- We introduced a new and unique academic program this year — Design, Technology & Entrepreneurship — that will help our students learn entrepreneurial skills related to a wide range of fields. Majors choose from one of three areas of emphasis: product design, engineering design, or entrepreneurship. The closest program elsewhere is one at Stanford University's School of Design, but ours is unique in its breadth.
- The Freeman Foundation is providing a \$400,000 two-year grant for more than 30 of our students to take part in internships in Hong Kong, Japan and the Philippines this summer and next.
- Our latest \$350,000 grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation brings to over \$1 million in support we've received from this foundation in recent years. This latest award is for the development of a comprehensive, three-year program to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes.
- For the third time in five years, the Ethics Bowl team at Illinois Wesleyan qualified for the national Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl competition.
- Nobel Prize winner and former vice president of Egypt Mohamed ElBaradei spoke on campus about recent world events and in particular the Middle East, in conjunction with the Stevenson Lecture Series that we co-host with Illinois State University.
- Academy Award-nominated actor and author Jesse Eisenberg spoke on campus last fall about his debut story collection "Bream Gives Me Hiccups." Eisenberg was nominated for an Academy Award for his portrayal of Mark Zuckerberg in "The Social Network" and his latest film, "The End of the Tour," is the story of local writer David Foster Wallace.

I was taken from the start by our beautiful campus. The campus you see today, and the institution itself, is a reflection of more than a century and a half of the hard work of faculty and staff and the support of alumni and other friends of the university. A special point of pride for all of us is that gifts from donors have covered the cost of these building projects.

Two changes visitors to campus may have noted:

- We recently dedicated a 20,000-square-foot addition to the Shirk Center, which not only is home to our Titan teams and student recreation but also hosts more than 300 community events each year. The addition, made possible through the generous support of the Shirk Family Foundation and other donors, doubles the size of our fitness facilities.
- The Jerome Mirza Foundation made a significant gift to our theatre program to honor our alumnus and local attorney, Jerome Mirza '60. In recognition of that gift the theatre in McPherson Hall has been named the Jerome Mirza Theatre.

We're here for the students, and they have been typically successful:

- Soccer player Skyler Tomko was named our 118th Academic All-American.
- Four of our women's Titan teams won conference championships — soccer, golf, volleyball and basketball -- and our women's indoor-track team currently is ranked number one in the country.
- Our Action Research Center brings students together with local not-for-profit organizations to work on projects and the Hart Career Center connects local businesses and not-for-profits with student interns and volunteers. To find students interested in helping your group or organization go to <http://www.iwu.edu/volunteers/>

And finally, from Hollywood:

Three of our alumni were honored with Emmy Awards last fall. Actors Richard Jenkins '69, who was named Outstanding Actor in a Limited Series for HBO's "Olive Kitteridge"; Kevin Dunn '77, cast member of HBO's Outstanding Comedy "Veep"; and, executive producer Kat White '85 who was honored for her documentary, "The Trials of Muhammad Ali," which chronicled the life of the legendary boxer.