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2006 CFW Initial Planning Meeting

Illinois Wesleyan University

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COUNCIL FOR IWU WOMEN

October 26, 2006

To: Council of IWU Women Members
From: Marsha Guenzler-Stevens
Re: Minutes of our Inaugural Meeting

Friends, it was so great to meet in Bloomington on October 6-7, 2006. Many of you were able to join us for that "inaugural meeting" of the Council for IWU Women. Some of you were not able to be in Bloomington for this great event, but you were with us in spirit. Our conversations were enlightening and inspiring and our working agenda is simply amazing. I will offer a synopsis of both and I will also forward to each of you a copy of the list of names of women present, a list of contact information, and a "new and improved profile form." The Council discussions were greatly enhanced by the participation of the wonderful undergraduate IWU women leaders. They came ready to relate how the Council could affect women's lives in the IWU community. Thanks to Darcy Greder, who enticed them to join us during our weekend gathering.

Let me begin by sharing some of the statistics which I shared with members of the Alumni Association Executive Board on October 6. When we began this venture, we identified 68 women and men for our first invitation to the Council for IWU Women. Of those 68 individuals, 36 people agreed to join us on the Council. We are awaiting replies from 13 individuals who are contemplating joining our group. Three women indicated they were unable to join us at this time due to life circumstances that precluded their involvement. Sixteen individuals had contact information that was not correct and/or we left messages and have not yet talked to them about their participation in our efforts. Those individuals who agreed to join the Council of IWU Women were encouraged to give a gift or pledge to our self-supporting program. Our members have already committed gifts and pledges of \$11,000. This is a fantastic beginning. Twenty-nine women were in attendance at our inaugural meetings on October 6 and 7. We are especially grateful for the enthusiastic involvement of the IWU staff members during our time together.

I would like to offer my appreciation for the work of each of the members of our early working group. They spent valuable time contacting prospective Council members. The enthusiastic invitations offered by these good souls produced marvelous results. My thanks to Steve Siebring, Ann Harding, Beth Raboin-Gettleman, Marilyn Neis, Sammie Robinson, Pat Wilson, L. Tracy Wych, Mark Aubry, and Darcy Greder.

Our Mission:

The Council for IWU Women advances the involvement and leadership of women students, faculty, staff, friends, and alumnae. The Council is committed to strengthening the experiences of all those affiliated with Illinois Wesleyan. The Council for IWU Women exists to promote democratic citizenship and life in a global society, and it works to support the intellectual and personal growth of women while emphasizing the spirit of inquiry and intergenerational exchange among campus constituents. We do this by offering guidance and role models to the extended university community.

Expectations for Council for IWU Members:

- Council members will exhibit willingness to open doors to opportunities for women students which may include such things as internships, graduate study, employment, and civic engagement.
- Members will mentor women and share their own stories. Mentorship may include interfacing both through real time and in electronic communication.
- Members will model different life choices and present a rich tapestry of the diversity that is true of the Illinois Wesleyan community.
- Members may include both women and men.
- Council members will return to the campus at least once per year.
- Council members will share their time, talent, and financial support in a manner consistent with the persons means. The expectation is that members will give these resources in addition to what they already give to IWU.
- The Council and all of its programs and efforts will be self sustaining.

Friday Afternoon Conversation

At the beginning of our first meeting we talked about the creation of the Council for IWU Women. Almost 18 months ago a task force was commissioned by the Alumni Council Executive Board. This group convened to discuss current research at Illinois Wesleyan and other higher education institutions which found that women students showed diminished self-esteem and declining participation in leadership roles in campus programs. The studies also concluded that at a time when university women appeared to be equally, if not more, academically prepared than their male peers at the point of admission and/or graduation, they exhibited low self-esteem and decreased confidence in their own abilities. The women students within the IWU community were not immune from these statistics. Therefore a working group from the Alumni Council, and that included members from the staff and faculty at IWU, was formed to research how other institutions were using alumnae to intervene with the students and if their efforts enhanced their self esteem. The group studied the action of councils for women at Cornell University, Northwestern University, and Radcliffe/Harvard. The results of this research were presented to the Executive Board of the Alumni Association. They approved a mission statement and list of expectations for the Council for IWU Women members (see above). A list of possible candidates for this new council who were alumni, faculty and/or staff members was presented to the working group. They were

asked to compose a letter of invitation to 68 women and men. They followed this mailing with a personal phone call to secure involvement. The statistics of that effort appear above.

There were early ideas that were introduced by the working group as possible agenda items for the Council for IWU Women. Those ideas included:

- Augmenting the mentoring program currently used by the Career Center. The Council planned ways to implement these plans work with women students.
- Internships that might occur during May Term or Winter Term or Spring Break.
- Create opportunities for job shadowing
- Prepare a possible conference hosted by the Council on the IWU campus.
- Design workshops that would highlight career areas, about leadership, and life choices, etc.
- Sharing our stories via panel discussions or “firesides” or via networking discussions
- Host conversations during meals with women students.
- Find ways to encourage alumnae, faculty, and staff relationships with women students.
- Provide an inspirational speaker or speaker’s forum at a campus event.
- Create an award similar to the Northwestern University “Trailblazer Award.” This award is a cash prize given to a woman who demonstrates courage, initiative, innovation, risk taking and leadership.
- Provide special outreach to first year women (a letter or reception)
- Sponsor a shared service project
- Research issues related to university women and their career and life choices, emotional well-being, and leadership skill-building.
- Create a newsletter or e-newsletter
- Host regional events that would improve the climate on campus and increase specific skills for IWU women.
- Create a web site (Katie Coleman even volunteered to work on this already!)
- Nurture relationships with agencies on campus that sponsor programs that support women students. These agencies might include the Office of Admissions, the Career Center, the Dean of Students, and the faculty in the Women’s Studies department.
- Provide topical workshops for women students (e.g. interview skills, financial planning, financial literacy, life balance, health and well being, self-esteem, networking).

These early brainstorming ideas were augmented by our lively discussion during the Friday afternoon session. The following is a list of comments that came from this conversation. I have provided bold print for any item that might require action on the part of the entire Council or specific Council members.

- We decided that a questionnaire for women students should be designed to help us discern their needs and desires. This would help us plan our future actions. The questionnaire would be distributed to all or a random sample of women students. We also would encourage further discussion with RAs, women in Women's Studies classes, and students in Dr. Sammie Robinson's Women in Business classes. **(You will note in our plan of action on Saturday that we have identified a working group for this project.)**
- We think working with the Career Center to mentor women is a great idea **(If you have time and the inclination, will you sign up on the Career Center site to be a mentor. It isn't difficult to do so. You can access this via the IWU web site.)**
- We'd like to write a letter for first year women that would welcome them and introduce them to the long legacy of IWU Women. **(DesaRae indicated she would be willing to work on this.)**
- We need to work with the Counseling Center to see how we might provide particular resource to women. **(Susan Getz indicated she would be willing to work on this, particularly with regard to depression and women.)**
- We need to devise an outreach vehicle for second year women. This is a difficult year for many students during their college journey.
- We need to think about a one day encounter with each other. This might take the form of a conference on campus.
- We need to talk about the role of motherhood and careers
- We need to think about internships and externships for women (e.g. some of our members would do medial externships for women)
- We need to reassure women about life choices
- We need to provide encourage for all women in the IWU community.
- We need to provide the power of a network for women
- We need a website **(We keep coming back to Katie Coleman!)**
- We need to expose women in college to the plethora of possibilities for life and career
- We need to encourage women to engage a global view when making life choices.
- We need to provide opportunities for the students to learn presentation skills. A workshop would allow them to exhibit these skills and receive critique and feedback from our members.
- We need to consider providing a written guide or presentation(s) to encourage students to "dress for success." This information would highlight proper clothing for interviews and a variety of other settings. **(Lorene Jukovich indicated an interested in this)**
- We need to talk about how to make the best of women's strengths and assets.
- We need to teach young women that it is "better to beg for forgiveness than to ask for permission!" This might suggest to women that they can step bolding into the world.

- We need to think about a long term link with middle school and/or high school girls. This might be something we could do in partnership with admissions and/or with the daughters of alumnae of IWU.
- We need to engage women enrolled in the fields of Psychology, Sociology, and Women's Studies at IWU. They might be able to help us design questionnaires and run research projects for us as part of their curriculum.
- We need to think about an IWU Women's Servathon that would partner women students with alumnae in a day or partial day of service in the community.
- We need to introduce the Council for IWU Women to the faculty and staff. **(Sammie Robinson agreed to work on this.)**
- We need to think about a career day where students could interact with women working in a variety of careers. **(Debra Burt Frazier indicated an interest in this as did Lorene Jukovich and Amy Olson.)**
- We need to think about mentoring programs that link individuals from IWU with Council for IWU Women. It was suggested that the profiles we fill out could be matched with the students' profiles. **(Amy Olson and Dayna indicated they would want to work on this.)**
- We want to have a design prepared for the Council for IWU Women. This could be used on wearable art, future award materials, event logos, gifts for students, and publicity items. We do have several designs prepared by senior students for consideration. **(Barbara Lavalley, our Distinguished Alumna, agreed to work on a wearable art piece.)**
- We talked about an Alternative Spring Break opportunity that might link IWU women students and Council members in service
- We liked the idea of awards... such as a "trailblazer award"
- We wanted to encourage story telling on campus and regionally.

Saturday Working Session

Our faculty "Action Plan" that emerged from our discussion on Saturday is:

Friday, March 9 and Saturday, March 10

Members of the Council for IWU Women would gather in Bloomington to provide the following:

Friday

- Members of the Council would meet with women faculty and staff for a "coffee and conversation" on Friday morning. We will introduce our group's purpose and mission and open a dialogue with these critical advocates for women in the IWU community. A letter of introduction, with an invitation to

the coffee should be written and distributed to all women faculty and staff members. We should also include a request in this mailing to have Council members share their career/life stories in classrooms during the day on Friday.

To do:

- Invitations to women faculty and staff members
- Letter of introduction to faculty members (all)
- Outreach to faculty members to share our resource including our willingness to share with their classrooms on Friday
- Confirm Council members participation in classes with faculty and assign appropriate Council members

(Working Group for this: Sammie Robinson, Barbara Nathan, * Beth Raboin-Gettleman, Sarah Powell, Brianna Welch, Myrtis Sullivan)

Friday Lunch

- Members of the Council share conversation and lunch in the Dug Out and in the Dining Room. Tables might include some sign that Council for IWU Women is present there. We might have folks we met earlier in the day in their classes that we could invite to join us for lunch. We might also want to make sure we invited women who are student leaders of various groups to join us for these informal luncheons. We might also want to have members of the Council in the Dug Out all morning and early afternoon to engage in informal conversations with women students and/or faculty and staff that were not able to attend our coffee and conversation. These information conversations could be both by earlier invitation (e.g. invitations sent to women RAs, student leaders in the Senate, women student athletes, and Panhellenic women) and they could also be truly “happened upon experiences” for interested women.

Friday Evening

- The Council would meet at a local alumna's house to discuss the day and prepare for the next day. We might also enjoy time for fellowship and conversation with each other. **(Ann Harding has agreed to host us at her house, if that is of interest).**
- Council members would retire to hotels and/or friends or guest houses for the evening. **(Ann is looking into the IWU Guest House –with rates as low as \$15 – to see about availability. This might help defray the costs of participation in this two day event for Council members.)**