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## February 2009 Newsletter

Career Center, Illinois Wesleyan University

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# Beyond the Bubble

a look at life outside Illinois Wesleyan University

## Alumnus Profile:

**Jason Dennis**

**History Major, Psych & Education Minor, Class of 2000**

**Dean of Students**

**Oak Park and River Forest High School**

### **What's a typical day like for you?**

Typical = Unpredictable. I am responsible for the behavior and attendance of 800 high school students. Students get sent to me when they are excessively tardy, skip class, are disruptive or defiant, get caught with a cell phone, get into fights, etc. I spend most of the day speaking one on one with students who have been sent to my office. Between my meetings with students, I am speaking with teachers, parents, and my colleagues. I am part disciplinarian and part counselor. The job is both extremely demanding and extremely rewarding.

### **How did you decide to go into education?**

I wanted to make a difference in the world and decided that children are the most easily influenced. I also love learning and sharing that passion. I should mention that like many people, I entered college certain that I would not teach, but after taking Introductory Education and working as a noon supervisor at an elementary school, my feelings changed dramatically.

### **How did your experiences at IWU help prepare you for your job?**

Although my class work at IWU was rigorous and beneficial, I found everything I did outside of the classroom equally as beneficial. While at IWU I was treasurer of Student Senate, played two sports, gave some speeches for the admissions office, did research in Psychology, and worked conferences in the summers. The people I met and

lessons I learned through those activities left me far more prepared than many of my peers in the "real world." The confidence I gained through sports and speaking to a thousand people in the Shirk Center for the admissions office



has been invaluable in my life. I had so many wonderful experiences at IWU that my resume required two columns.

### **What sports do you coach and how has that experience been for you?**

I participated in football and track at IWU and now coach both at the high school level. In almost every respect, teaching and coaching are identical. The only difference is the venue and the content. Having always loved school and sports, teaching and coaching have just been a great combination for me.

### **What has been the most rewarding**

### **aspect of your work?**

Being someone's coach is a profoundly rewarding experience. Watching young people accomplish things they never thought possible, at least partly because of some advice that you have given them, is unbelievably rewarding. The same applies to watching young people listen to my advice and actually change their behaviors for the better. Sometimes they even come back and thank you for helping them.

### **What has been the most challenging?**

The most challenging is trying to deal with parents who don't trust that you have their child's best interest at heart. It is difficult to pour your heart and soul into a job and then to be disrespected and distrusted by a stranger. Fortunately, that only happens once and awhile.

### **Any career advice you'd like to give to current Wesleyan students?**

The best way to pick a career is to get out and try different things. Do several different internships. Shadow a few people in different professions. Then, when you have found something that you are interested in, get involved. It is important that when you sit down for an interview that you can speak intelligently and from experience about the position you're applying for. I also guarantee that you will find more happiness and success in a profession that you are passionate about than one you just fall into. As cliché as it may be, you need to get out from behind the computer or TV and try different things.

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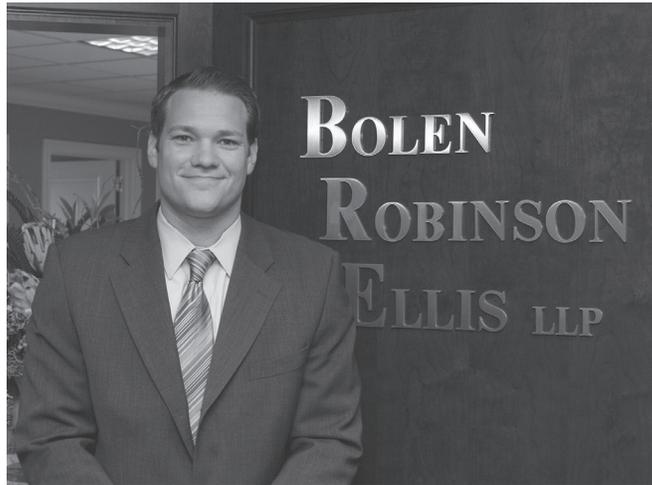
Editor/Writer: David Buesing \* Director: Warren Kistner

## Is Law School Right For You?

You're standing in front of a jam-packed courtroom, eyes piercing daggers through you as you deliver an impassioned plea on behalf of your client. Everyone – judge, jury, and American society – is sure your client is guilty of murder.

Still, your dizzying array of wordplay leaves the audience stunned. With your razor sharp intellect and humble mannerisms, you have melted their hearts and minds. Soon, all everyone is wondering is how you could be so vivaciously attractive.

At the end of the trial, you say something quotable like, "Another one bites the dust" (relevant, of course, because you just proved that your client is highly allergic to dust and therefore could not possibly have slain three innocent people in the dusty room in which they were found murdered). In short, you are living the life of a lawyer. And it feels good.



### IWU alum Chris Ellis established a career as a practicing attorney

Although this certainly could be what life as a lawyer is like, in reality the dramatic courtroom scenes we see on TV are only a microcosm of the legal profession. The actual legal world demands long hours, extreme pressure, and incredibly hard work. For those IWU students interested, though, law is a very real possibility. Law schools accept students from every major and background, so whether you're a political science, physics, or English major, law could be the career for you.

According to Chris Ellis '98, an attorney with Bolen Robinson & Ellis, the liberal arts education of IWU is the best preparation for a career in law. "The key to being a good lawyer is to be well rounded, creative and to be able to think logically through problems. You learn that not by taking any set course, but by having broad experiences that serve to shape the way you think," says Ellis.

Jennifer Cunningham Beeler '82, a senior attorney with Lois Kulinsky & Associates, agrees. Beeler was an English and Business double major at IWU who got a master's in media from Northwestern before finally deciding that she wanted to go to law school. Notes Beeler, "I would say that the diversity of your experience, making yourself as interesting as possible, is very important."

For Beeler, this diversity includes the business tax return knowledge and ability to tell a story she gained in both her ma-

jors. All in all, any courses or activities that develop task management, communication, or analytic and problem solving skills can be instrumental in your journey to law school.

As someone currently enrolled in the University of Illinois' College of Law, Chris Seps, who graduated Wesleyan in 2007, knows plenty about the law school experience. For Seps, a typical day at law school includes getting to school at 8 a.m., attending 2-3 classes, and heading home about 6 p.m. The work doesn't stop there, though.

Says Seps, "Each class requires 2-4 hours of reading even though it may only be 15-20 pages of text. The material is more tedious and complicated than any undergraduate reading."

Reading can be important, too, considering most law professors employ the Socratic method in class. As Seps explains, the process "entails them calling on a student for an extended period of time, [Law Continued on Page 2]

### make an Issue

Valuable career center resources you can use!

Interested in an Alumni Mentor?

Check out our new website on the back page

# Law Story Continued From Page 1

posing hypothetical situations, and asking various mind-bending questions.”

If all this still sounds appealing, internships are a great way to acclimate yourself to law and get into the best school you can. While at IWU, John Schreiner '02, had internships at a family law firm in Bloomington, as a Michael Foley Intern with the State of Illinois, and in Congressman Timothy Johnson's office while studying in D.C. as part of the Washington Semester.

Now an attorney with Bell, Boyd & Lloyd LLP, Schreiner says, “I found that in addition to strengthening my resume and law school applications, the experiences I had while interning helped guide me to select the legal career I ultimately chose.”

Schreiner also points out that “law

school admissions are based heavily on GPA and LSAT score,” and highly recommends some sort of LSAT preparation course as a result.

The numbers driven focus of law continues once you're in law school as well. As Schreiner puts it, “The biggest difference between law school and undergrad is that in law school, grades are based 100% on a single exam.”

So how can a current IWU student start prepping themselves for the rigors of law school? One great way is to get involved with the IWU Law Society. According to senior Kevin Lewis, the former president of the society, “IWU Law Society exists to help students who are considering a career in law, regardless of whether those students are certain they want to go to law school, or if they're not sure and want to learn more.”

One function of the Law Society is to bring lawyers currently working in the field to speak and answer students' questions. Says Lewis, “it's an excellent opportunity for pre-law students to network not only with their fellow classmates, but also with professionals in the field.” Contact Lauren Mussara to join.

Another option for curious students is to visit the Hart Career Center and ask for a copy of the Pre-Law Handbook. This guide into the realm of the legal world offers terrific explanations of everything from paying for law school to suggested pre-law courses.

As Chris Ellis concludes, “If you want to clock-in and clock-out every day, law is not the career for you. On the other hand, if you are willing to dedicate yourself to the profession, a career in law can be extremely rewarding.”

## Career Center Resources

It's not particularly scary here at the Hart Career Center, located in the brand new Minor Myers jr Welcome Center. In fact, it's downright warm and comforting. Still, if you simply do not like the idea of visiting with our terrific staff (many of whom do not even use teeth when they bite!) or making the trek across campus, there are plenty of online career resources you can use from behind the comfort of a locked, boarded, and padded door. Below you'll find a small sample of some of the better, lesser known ones:

- 1) NACELink - An additional service for students and alumni to help search and apply for jobs. More than 500 schools use this system which provides access to jobs offered by a variety of companies.
- 2) Bridge - Otherwise known as the Worldwide Music Connection, Bridge is an online database created to connect music majors with careers in education, performance and music-industry based positions. User id=iwusuccess, password=08musicareerIWU.
- 3) Graduatejobs.com - Your best single source for employment vacancies nationwide in the liberal arts, arts and humanities. Contact the Career Center for a username & password. User id=illinoiswes, password=cc61702.
- 4) Opportunities in Public Affairs (brubach.com/opawebversion4/opa.htm) - This useful link offers you all sorts of internship and job opportunities in the political hub of America, Washington, D.C. User id=iwu, password=wesleyan.
- 5) Environmental Career Opportunities - Extensive environmental career listing. www.ecojobs.com. User id=wkistner, password=tree.

For a complete listing of helpful online resources visit our website at <http://www.iwu.edu/ccenter/resources>. You'll almost certainly be able to find the career search tool that is right for you.

## Career Center Events

Date: 2/10  
Event: **Health Professions Panel**  
Time: 7 p.m.  
Location: Welcome Center Auditorium

Date: 2/13  
Event: **CareerFest**  
Time: 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
Location: Drury Lane Theatre, Oakbrook Terrace, IL

Date: 2/17  
Event: **IWU/ISU Spring Internship Fair**  
Time: 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.  
Location: ISU, Bone Student Center

Date: 2/18  
Event: **IWU/ISU Spring Job Fair**  
Time: 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
Location: ISU, Bone Student Center

Date: 2/19  
Event: **TeacherFest**  
Time: 12:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.  
Location: Drury Lane Theatre

# Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship

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Are you worried that you won't have the opportunity to travel abroad during your time here at IWU? Or maybe you've already been abroad and simply want to explore new borders? Well, every year The Rotary Foundation offers around 1,000 Ambassadorial Scholarships which allow just the sort of international study you might be looking for.

The scholarships comes in two forms: Ambassadorial (\$25,000 for one year in a different country) and Cultural (either \$17,000 for six months or \$12,000 for three months). According to the Rotary Foundation's website ([www.rotary.org](http://www.rotary.org)), Ambassadorial Scholarships are "awarded to those further advocating Rotary's objectives of world peace, international understanding, eliminating disease, conquering hunger and fostering literacy."

Patrick Beary, a 2007 IWU graduate, was granted the year long scholarship and chose to live in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Beary's objectives in Argentina were threefold: serve in his role as an Ambassadorial Scholar, engage himself in his graduate studies (a Masters pro-

-gram in international relations), and to enjoy himself and the new culture.

For Beary, the most rewarding part of his stay was "meeting local Argentines either through Rotary or otherwise and casually giving them a different impression on how they view Americans." Although the slower pace of life in Argentina took some time getting used to, and picking up a



package from the post office could be a six hour event, Beary says, "it was a good long experience in persistence and building patience."

As the most recent IWU student to receive a Rotary Scholarship, senior Martin Ceisel will be traveling to Bratislava, the capital city of the Slovak Republic. Ceisel says he chose that area largely because "My mother was born in a small city not far from Bratislava, and Slovak culture has influenced me significantly

during my upbringing."

During his time abroad, Ceisel hopes to "develop my Slovak speaking, writing, and reading skills so that I might use them throughout my career."

Likewise Ceisel says this opportunity appealed to him because "I recognized that this scholarship would open doors for me upon my return in terms of a career. This experience will teach me many valuable things that I can carry into my professional life."

If you'd like to explore a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship don't hesitate to visit the Hart Career Center for more information or an application. **Applications are due by July 1 of this year.**

That said, anyone with interest in international relations or continuing their studies should consider Rotary a viable post-graduate option. Advises Beary, "Go for it. It's an opportunity to see the world, possibly do some graduate work and have experiences that are very atypical for recent college grads."

## Helpful alumni offer knowledge and advice as mentors

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Whether it's Mr. Miyagi teaching you how to wax on, or Mr. Feeny guiding you through life as an adolescent, it's all too clear that mentors can be invaluable resources through life. Of course, finding the perfect mentor all on your own can be a challenge. That is why the Hart Career Center offers the Alumni Mentoring Program, available to all IWU students.

What is the program? Well, according to the Hart Career Center's website, the Mentoring Program "exists to quickly and easily connect students with alumni and friends of Illinois Wesleyan in order to assist students in the career search process." This connection can be as simple as a conversation via e-mail or the telephone, or it can extend to job shadowing or an informational interview. Either way, the Mentoring Program is a great way to receive career advising information from alumni that

specialize in your field of interest.

The best part about the Program is that you're saved the agony and anxiety of a true cold call. Says Katie Coleman '03 who currently serves as a mentor, "the people in the Alumni Mentoring Network have VOLUNTEERED to help you already – so they won't say 'no!'" Likewise, although Coleman admits contacting someone you've never met can be difficult and awkward, she says "they're not really strangers because they already have Illinois Wesleyan in common with you."

Each mentor has the ability to share a wealth of knowledge about the realities of their profession, too. There are recent graduates who have just undergone the enormous transformation from IWU to the real world, as well as more experienced IWU graduates who know the ins and outs of their professional worlds about as thoroughly as anyone in

America might be expected to.

To get started searching for a mentor, you simply need to log into your eRecruiting account and click the mentoring tab at the top of the page. For help with anything eRecruiting related feel free to call our office at x3071 to set up a convenient tutorial.

From here you'll be able to search by job function or job title, meaning you can search eRecruiting for alums in law, healthcare, and many, many more.

According to Coleman, "every single opportunity I've ever pursued has been the result of a conversation I had with one of my mentors. You just never know what other people know until you start talking to them." If you're curious to discover for yourself what IWU alums already know, don't hesitate to take advantage of the Alumni Mentoring Program today.