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## President's Welcome at Commencement

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President's Welcome  
Richard F. Wilson

The Class of 2009, I have to say, will forever go down as the class that lived through a miserable winter, lived through a miserable spring, and brought sunshine to Commencement! Congratulations to the Class of 2009! On behalf of the Board of Trustees and the faculty and staff, I am pleased to welcome all of you to this our 159th Commencement.

Throughout the year I am reminded regularly of the quality of the music program at Illinois Wesleyan. Today is yet one more example of those occasions. I would like to thank Professor Eggleston and members of the Wind Ensemble for sharing their talents with us this afternoon.

This is a very special day for all of you in the senior class. It is your day, and we are proud to share it with you.

Four years ago, the Class of 2009 arrived in Bloomington with a sense of exhilaration, anticipation, and anxiety. My guess is that most of you can recall those emotions and in most instances can't believe how quickly the time has passed.

We have shared the last four years together, and you are not the same person today that you were four years ago. Yet, we know that the next transition in your life is about to occur, one that has stimulated once again that same sense of exhilaration, anticipation and anxiety.

And this time you probably aren't wondering "Will I like my roommate or have I selected the right major?" Instead, many of you are asking: "Have I selected the right graduate program or, perhaps, made the right career choice?" And yes, there are a few of you may even be pondering how you'll get by without Munch Money or Tobin's Pizza or with a job that requires your full attention at 8:00 in the morning!

Two weeks ago at the Senior Class Dinner, I commented on the fact that the medieval cartographers characterized the uncharted regions of the world with the simple phrase: "There Be Dragons." Well, we believe that your experiences at Illinois Wesleyan have prepared you for the dragons that you might encounter in the years to come.

Commencement marks the beginning, not the end. Today, we honor you and wish you well, wherever your journey may take you. We know what you have accomplished here and what you are capable of accomplishing as you move forward with your lives.

While this day and this ceremony properly focus on you as graduates, we must not lose sight of the fact that you didn't make this journey alone.

Therefore, it is only appropriate that we take a moment to thank those who helped you along the way.

I ask the members of the class to stand and offer a round of applause to the faculty and staff who are seated directly behind you.

While you are standing, I would like you to turn in the direction of your parents and friends and offer them a round of applause as well.

There is justifiably a shared pride on this occasion. I hope, and I trust, that you and your loved ones are proud of what you have accomplished and the person that you have become.

I can assure you that we share this pride, and the opportunity that we have had to get to know you over the past four years. I sincerely hope that we can continue to be part of your lives in the years that lie ahead as you join the more than 20,000 Illinois Wesleyan alumni who are scattered all across the country and around the world.

The Class of 2009 shall forever occupy a special place in the history of Illinois Wesleyan. Last year, we started a new tradition that recognizes the strength of that relationship, one that is now cast in concrete, both figuratively and literally.

Last year's graduating class presented me and my wife with a concrete pineapple to replace the wooden one that used to sit atop the entrance to the President's House. If you happen to know where that wooden one went to, that's OK, you can bring it back, no questions asked. But in the meantime, we were pleased to receive this gift and decided we would start a new tradition. After you receive your diploma and are leaving the stage, I invite you to touch the pineapple in order to acknowledge the friendships formed on this campus and to sense our best wishes for your future and our promise that you are always welcome here.