President’s Convocation

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President's Convocation (2018 Program and video)

Illinois Wesleyan University

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Summer Reading Program

The Summer Reading Program is an opportunity for incoming students to:
- participate in a shared intellectual conversation with the IWU community;
- express ideas about a common text that many IWU students, faculty, staff, and alumni are reading;
- respond respectfully to ideas others bring to the discussion.

It is also an opportunity to model for and mentor students on faculty expectations and the engaged classroom dynamics they will encounter at IWU. The Class of 2022 was further invited to participate in the First-Year Summer Reading Essay Contest to apply their voices and perspectives by reflecting on their reading of *Becoming Nicole: The Transformation of an American Family*.

Students were challenged to respond to the prompt, “What did you learn from this book that might be significant as you begin this new chapter in your life?” Students responded with submissions, and a diverse group of first-year advisors and faculty representing disciplines across the curriculum evaluated responses and chose the three outstanding essays, which will be made available on the digital commons later this month.

This year’s winners:
- **First Prize**: *The Power of Transformation* by Jared Schneider
- **Honorable Mention**: *Parallel Transitions of American Towns and Families* by Kathryn Vogler
- **Honorable Mention**: *Girl in a Boy Body: The Complexity of Being Oneself* by Amanda Smith

Celebrating the New Academic Year
Pulitzer Prize winner Amy Ellis Nutt is the author of Illinois Wesleyan’s Summer Reading Program selection Becoming Nicole: The Transformation of An American Family, which tells the story of Wyatt Maines in her journey of asserting her gender identity and “becoming Nicole.” In the process, Nicole challenges those around her to reassess their previously held beliefs in light of a rapidly changing world. Similarly, the University’s annual intellectual theme of Changing Climates challenges the campus community to examine and re-examine the racial, religious, political, environmental and economic climates present in our world.

Currently a neuroscience and mental health writer at The Washington Post, Nutt holds a prolific background in journalistic writing as a Nieman Fellow in Journalism at Harvard University, a Ferris Professor of Journalism at Princeton, and an instructor of journalism at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism.

Nutt was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 2011 for her feature series The Wreck of the Lady Mary, about the 2009 sinking of a fishing boat off the coast of New Jersey. She was also a 2009 Pulitzer Prize finalist in feature writing for The Accidental Artist, later made into a book, Shadows Bright as Glass. Becoming Nicole is Nutt’s second New York Times bestseller, following her 2014 co-authored book The Teenage Brain.

Nutt previously worked as a journalist for the Star-Ledger in Newark, New Jersey and Sports Illustrated, for which she received several honors. Her awards have included the Distinguished Writing Award (non-deadline writing) from the American Society of Newspaper Editors, the Pinnacle of Excellence Award from the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and the Front Page Award from the Newswomen’s Club of New York.

Nutt graduated from Smith College with a double major in English and philosophy. She holds master’s degrees in philosophy from M.I.T. and journalism from Columbia University. Nutt was born in Staten Island, New York, grew up in New Jersey and lives in Washington, D.C.
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