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President's Welcome

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May 5, 2019 Jensen COMMENCEMENT WELCOME

Good afternoon and Congratulations to the Class of 2019!

On behalf of the faculty and staff, I am pleased to welcome you to the 169th Commencement Ceremony at Illinois Wesleyan University.

This is truly a moment to remember:

- Thousand of your relatives and friends have gathered here to witness one of the most significant events in your life.
- We're all in our academic regalia, reliving centuries of academic tradition intended to emphasize the momentous nature of the day.
- And finally, you're moving from being a student to a proud graduate of Illinois Wesleyan.

As President, I frequently have the opportunity to listen to wonderful performances by faculty and students from our School of Music. Today, that talent is on display for all of us. I'm grateful to **Kelly Riordan '19** for leading us in singing "America the Beautiful" and to **Professor Lev Ivanov** and the members of the Illinois Wesleyan Wind Ensemble for sharing their talents with us this afternoon.

Transitions are exciting, but unsettling times. However you first arrived in Bloomington--just after high school, as a transfer student, or in some other way--you came with with a heightened sense of exhilaration, anticipation, and anxiety. Today marks another distinct transition in your life, one that again is fueled by a mixture of excitement, anticipation, and uncertainty.

I speak for all of the faculty and staff when I tell you what a privilege it is to share with you those wonderful first days, this great (great) day, and of course your journey over the intervening days. This Commencement ceremony honors you for your accomplishments at a truly spectacular liberal arts and sciences colleges. There is much to say about these accomplishments, but it's appropriate to pause for a moment to thank those who helped you along the way.

And so, please stand and face the faculty and staff who are seated behind you and give this group of dedicated people a round of applause.

While you are standing, please turn now in the direction of your parents and friends and extend a round of applause to those whose support and assistance have been so important to your college experience.

We also gather to celebrate the potential you represent and the differences you will make in your communities, the nation, and the world that you will make. I sincerely hope that you will remain loyal to Illinois Wesleyan as you join a family of more than 20,000 alumni doing great things.

You see before you a concrete pineapple. Apparently in past years a small wooden pineapple that used to sit atop the entry portal to the President's House would mysteriously travel around campus in unpredictable ways. The newer pineapple, a gift from the class of 2008 to President and Mrs. Wilson, made of concrete and very heavy, would seem less prone to ramble. Alas, no. It too has made unscheduled trips around campus. We are very happy to have it with us here today.

The pineapple is often used to symbolize the spirit of friendship and gracious hospitality. After you receive your diploma and are leaving the stage, give the Titan Pineapple a tap as a way of acknowledging the friendships you have formed on this campus. Remember the hospitality it symbolizes, and the University's pledge that you are always welcome here. This is one of Wesleyan's enduring gifts.

Speaking of enduring gifts, George Vinyard has served the University faithfully, beginning with a stint in Student Government. Next came a job on campus after his **1971** graduation as an assistant to then-President Robert Eckley. He went on to law School at the University of Michigan and great professional success, but continued to serve his Alma Mater as a **member and officer of the Board**, most recently serving as the **Chair of the Board of Trustees**. The Board Chair traditionally addresses new graduates.

George is stepping down as Chair at the end of this month, and today marks his final Commencement address as Board chair.

It is now my honor to present the Chair of our Board of Trustees, George Vinyard, Class of 1971. Please join me in thanking him for his service and dedication to this school--this place--that he loves so much.

George-----

Jensen Closing Remarks

Let's hear it for the graduating Class of 2019!

In a moment, we will rise and sing together the Alma Mater. I've memorized the words, and I'm sure you have, too -- but just to be safe we have printed them in your program.

One of Elizabeth's and my favorite things at the graduation ceremonies of our own children was the chance to meet faculty and staff members who had made a difference in our kids' lives. If you'd like to find specific faculty members following this ceremony, look for the departmental signs that are scattered around the the area at the reception.

Finally, I want you to know what a privilege it is for me to serve as President of Illinois Wesleyan. The first year on campus for today's graduates was my first year on campus, and so it's especially sweet to have the opportunity to award diplomas to you all. We're kind of classmates! You're a spectacular group who will always have a prominent place in my memories.

My parting words to you are simple: Remember who you are, remember how you got there, and remember Illinois Wesleyan. Congratulations and good luck.