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Making the Journey

The Class of 2007 found its collective destination through the diversity of choices made by each of its members.

Profiles by Sarah Zeller '07

As members of the Class of 2007 left home to begin their college experience four years ago, the University itself was in the middle of a big transition. That summer, IWU President Minor Myers had died of cancer, and a campus in mourning pulled together to welcome the newest members of its community.

Expectations were high for this incoming class: its students had been chosen among a record number of applicants, and collectively held the highest test scores of any previous entering class.

It was also a class that — in the wake of September 11 and the launch of the Iraq War — faced an increasingly uncertain world, while the explosion of digital technology made cell phones and iPods as common around campus as notebooks and backpacks.

So what would they be like, these 500-plus young men and women who met each other as strangers during Fall Festival orientation in August 2003? One clue can be found in that fall's first edition of the student newspaper, *The Argus*. It described the Fall Festival annual talent show in which one of the new students performed Elton John's "Tiny Dancer" — a bit nervously at first — and invited her new classmates to sing along.

When she spilled her sheet music on the floor and had to stop, the audience could have chosen to respond with groans and chuckles. Instead, they "sat quietly as she collected herself and was able to continue," *The Argus* reported. "When the music started again, so did the group's efforts to sing along, only this time louder and stronger."

Within the context of four years, such a moment may seem small. But in these moments, the Class of 2007 defined itself. The following profiles of seven seniors — written by their classmate Sarah Zeller prior to graduation — show how the surprise of self-discovery made these students' Illinois Wesleyan journey anything but predictable. — *Tim Obermiller*