



Illinois Wesleyan University Magazine

Volume 22
Issue 3 *Fall 2013*

Article 7

2013

Rave Reviews

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Recommended Citation

Obermiller, Tim (2013) "Rave Reviews," *Illinois Wesleyan University Magazine*: Vol. 22: Iss. 3, Article 7.
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/iwumag/vol22/iss3/7>

This is a PDF version of an article that originally appeared in the printed *Illinois Wesleyan University Magazine*, a quarterly periodical published by Illinois Wesleyan University. For more information, please contact iwumag@iwu.edu.

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Illinois Wesleyan shows strengths in key college rankings



The University's new classroom building, State Farm Hall, opened this fall. While students are taking advantage of improved learning facilities, "U.S. News" and other annual college rankings rated IWU as improved in key measures of student and institutional quality.

Among those who work in higher education, the period from mid-August to mid-October is known as rankings season. It's the time of year when *U.S. News & World Report* and several other well-known publications release their annual rankings of the nation's nearly 4,000 colleges and universities.

For its part, Illinois Wesleyan fared very well in the 2013 ranking season. In what is the most closely watched and widely read ranking, *U.S. News & World Report* moved the University up five places — to 65th, among the 240 national liberal arts colleges. Even more noteworthy was Wesleyan's move into the top 50 in terms of student selectivity (50th) and graduation and retention rate (48th), which are key measures of student and institutional quality.

"I always counsel caution when looking at rankings," said IWU President Richard F. Wilson. "However, we are pleased that the data used in these rankings confirms our quality. Being among the top 50 shows that we compete for and enroll top students nationally, and when they come here they have a great experience and graduate at rates far above the national average."

This marks the 11th consecutive year that Illinois Wesleyan has appeared in the top-tier of *U.S. News's* national liberal arts colleges rankings. In 1993 Wesleyan moved from the regional Midwestern rankings (where it held the No. 1 position since 1989) to the national liberal arts colleges grouping.

As was also announced during this ranking season, *Kiplinger's Personal Finance* called Illinois Wesleyan the 60th best value among the nation's private liberal arts colleges in its annual rankings of leading public and private colleges and universities.

This marks the seventh consecutive year that Illinois Wesleyan has been included among the national leaders in this ranking of academic quality and affordability.

"We have typically done well in *Kiplinger's* ranking because of our strong academic program and our commitment to making a Wesleyan education affordable for students and their families," said President Wilson.

Kiplinger's rankings measure academic quality and affordability. Academic criteria include the student admission rate (the number of students accepted out of those who apply), the test scores of incoming freshmen, the ratio of students to faculty members, and the four- and five-year graduation rates. On the cost side, *Kiplinger's* measures the sticker price, the availability and average amount of need-based and merit-based financial aid, and the average student debt at graduation.

This year also marked Illinois Wesleyan's 24th consecutive appearance in the *Princeton Review's* listing of America's Best Colleges. In addition to the main listing, Princeton Review also compiles rankings of

various academic, campus life and extracurricular aspects of the college experience. IWU was recognized for having the 16th most popular Study Abroad program and the 17th best College Theatre.

Washington Monthly, a relative newcomer in its eighth year of publication, has moved IWU steadily moved up in its rankings, advancing the University three places in 2013 to No. 47 among the 255 liberal arts colleges that are ranked.

In addition, in a new *Washington Monthly* value ranking dubbed the “Best Bang for the Buck,” Wesleyan was No. 47. The magazine’s rankings are based on three criteria: recruiting and graduating low-income students, producing cutting-edge scholarship and graduates moving on to earn Ph.D.s and civic engagement. The value ranking also considers loan indebtedness and default rates.