



2014

Presidential Milestones

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Recommended Citation

Obermiller, Tim (2014) "Presidential Milestones," *Illinois Wesleyan University Magazine*: Vol. 23: Iss. 4, Article 2.
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/iwumag/vol23/iss4/2>

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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President Wilson announces plans to retire

Richard F. Wilson announced that he plans to retire July 31, 2015, or as soon thereafter as a new president assumes office.

Describing his tenure as “enormously rewarding,” Wilson said: “What I have found especially meaningful has been the dedication of the faculty and staff, the talent and engagement of students, the loyalty of alumni, and the special relationship that the University enjoys with the Bloomington-Normal community.” He added that, with several major projects and strategic initiatives recently completed, it seemed like an ideal time for a leadership transition.



Wilson has served as Illinois Wesleyan's 18th president. A favorite part of his job was meeting alumni across the country.

“President Wilson’s leadership and service to Illinois Wesleyan over more than a decade have truly been outstanding,” said Board of Trustees Chair George Vinyard ’71. “Our alumni, students, faculty, staff and trustees deeply appreciate the many ways in which he has made this a better and stronger institution. We are profoundly grateful for the president’s foresight and dedication and will be for many decades to come.”

In his tenure, Wilson led two strategic planning efforts, guided the University through a very turbulent decade economically and led the successful completion of the *Transforming Lives* campaign, which raised \$141 million, surpassing its \$125 million goal.

These efforts have resulted in substantial progress on several fronts. They include: 1) increased attention to assessment of student learning; 2) expansion of efforts related to student leadership, volunteerism and community engagement; 3) growth in domestic and international student diversity; 4) focused attention to issues related to social justice and global citizenship and 5) increased commitment to sustainability, including construction of the first LEED-certified building on Wesleyan’s campus.

Important capital projects completed during his tenure include the State Farm Hall classroom building and Kemp Commencement Plaza, Minor Myers, jr. Welcome Center, Joslin Atrium, Joyce Eichhorn Ames School of Art Rotunda, the Gates at Wesleyan student apartments and installation of artificial turf at Tucci Stadium. The creation of a new quadrangle to the north of State Farm Hall and a fitness center addition to the Shirk Center are now underway.



President Wilson with his wife, Pat.

Under Wilson's leadership, the number of endowed chairs and professorships grew from 11 to 31; a foundation for the Summer Undergraduate Scholars and Artists Program was established and the University's commitment to development and alumni relations as well as scholarship support for students was strengthened. As part of the recent comprehensive campaign, a total of \$27 million was received in annual and endowed scholarship gifts, which supported 380 student scholarships.

According to Vinyard, the University has already begun its national search for IWU's next president. Following essentially the same process that brought Wilson to the campus, a special committee including trustees, faculty, staff and students will be appointed to carry out the search. It is anticipated that the search committee will begin its work this semester, with the goal of having the new president on board before the beginning of the upcoming fall semester.

Wilson holds master and doctoral degrees in higher education from the University of Michigan. He held several leadership positions over a 26-year period at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign prior to his appointment at Illinois Wesleyan.

Wilson has served on boards of the McLean County Chamber of Commerce, the Economic Development Council and the McLean County Historical Society. He took part in the Achievement Gap Task Force, and he and his wife, Pat, were honorary co-chairs of the American Red Cross of the Heartland Evening of Stars. On a national level, his contributions include chairing the Federation of Independent Illinois Colleges and Universities and serving on the board of Educational and Institutional Insurance Administrators.

Read President Wilson's [letter of reflection](#) on his retirement announcement.