



## Dr. Durbal: Thank You for 20 Years of Teaching Excellence

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After 20 years in Bloomington, Dr. Ilaria Ossella-Durbal made the decision with her husband to move to New Jersey to start a new job. However, this change still involved her biggest passion, teaching. Dr. Durbal has spent the past year familiarizing herself in a new environment, Kent Place School, an all-girls independent college-preparatory school. She has been teaching courses in Mathematics and hopes to help build the Mathematics department to encompass economic ideas and learning to prepare these young women for AP Economics and the future.

Very early on during the interview with Dr. Durbal it was clear that she is an individual who has always had a passion for education but even more so, teaching. She began her career 20 years ago right out of her PhD program and was interested in finding a small liberal arts school. Illinois Wesleyan provided her the environment she was looking for, a place where she could really get to know the students and develop meaningful professor-student engagement. When looking back on it she stated, "I found a home in Wesleyan."

During her time at Wesleyan, she explained that she focused her independent research on development projects that have been carried out on the regional or national level. Said projects have the focus of promoting aspects such as manufacturing, trade, and growth. She also mentioned how she greatly enjoyed helping students with their own research endeavors. Additionally, she said that she "...got to make cross-connections across interdisciplinary aspects of Wesleyan," something that was important to her with her additional interests in mathematics and the political economy.

Upon being asked about women in the field of Economics, Dr. Durbal shared that she was one of two women in her PhD program. She also shared that she believes so much more progress can be made in the field for encouraging more women to study Economics. When asked specifically if she had any advice for females interested in the field of economics she stated simply, "Do it. Don't doubt yourself." It was also noted that the field of economics typically provides a lot of training for PhD programs, but that it is important to fill the holes in your economic undergraduate degree with the proper mathematic courses as well. It was abundantly clear that Dr. Durbal wants to do anything she can to encourage more females to join the field and help them flourish in a male dominated environment. Thus, it comes as no surprise that she has taken a passion in the education of young women interested in the field of mathematics and economics. She said that she wants to encourage young women to know that "Your voice matters."

Moving forward with her career she is interested in researching more household level and community-based approaches to development in areas such as poverty alleviation. However, she also thinks her time would be well spent exploring pedagogy, the method or practice of teaching. It was noted how many different types of students need different types of learning methods. Additionally, the development of the brain allows for certain types of thinking to be introduced at certain times. Thus, with her new career path she can learn and utilize this research for her very own professional development.

Regardless of where her research takes her it can be said with resounding confidence that Dr. Durbal has forever impacted the lives of many students at Illinois Wesleyan. Dr. Durbal was the type of professor who would take hours every day out of her schedule in addition to office hours to help students. She would explain economic concepts and teach the mathematic strategies again and again until her students not only had a grasp of it but could be confident about their understanding. She was a professor who truly cared for her students and wanted the very best for them, not only in the field of economics but in their daily lives of sports, theatre, research, etc. Illinois Wesleyan was extremely lucky to have Dr. Durbal for twenty years and can only hope and wish her the greatest successes in her future.