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IWU Wins National Recognition for Nuclear Disarmament Course

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--Illinois Wesleyan University was among 28 campuses tapped for the first national symposium last month on Science Education for New Civic Engagements and Responsibilities (SENCER), a program supported by a Washington, D.C.-based higher-education association and the National Science Foundation.

IWU's recognition focuses on a physics course, Problems of Nuclear Disarmament, created in 1979 by Raymond G. Wilson, now emeritus associate professor of physics.

"Throughout the course," Wilson explained, "there is a parallel and simultaneous development of: the science, technology, and effects of nuclear war; and the social, economic, ethical, political, and international implications of the nuclear policies of nations.

"Major emphasis is placed on the Hiroshima/Nagasaki experience," Wilson added, referring to the atomic bomb attacks on Japan by the United States during World War II.

The symposium, held Jan. 20-22 at the annual meeting of the Washington, D.C.-based Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), capped Phase I of SENCER, a new initiative supported by the National Science Foundation (NSF).

"SENCER's aim is to improve undergraduate science education by supporting approaches that teach 'through' complex, unsolved public issues 'to' basic science," said David Burns, senior policy director at AAC&U and SENCER director.

"We were delighted with the nomination received from Illinois Wesleyan University," Burns added, "and impressed by their commitment to high quality, innovative instruction in the sciences."

SENCER received nominations of courses that teach science through a focus on biomedical issues, HIV/AIDS, the emergence of new diseases, the human genome project, environmental issues, and nuclear disarmament, the focus of the IWU nomination.

The IWU course, Problems of Nuclear Disarmament, was designed to help students learn science, appreciate the power as well as the limitations of science, and engage students in the real-world problems that require science for their solution.

Information about the course is available on the Internet at <http://titan.iwu.edu/~rwilson/>.

"Throughout the course," Wilson explained, "there is a parallel and simultaneous development of the science and technology of nuclear war, and the social, economic, ethical, political, and international implications of the nuclear policies of nations.

"Most people do not realize," Wilson continued, "that over the 50 years following 1945, on average, the destructive power of the Hiroshima atomic bomb was recreated in world arsenals 70 times per day, every day of those 50 years."

Commenting on IWU's course, AAC&U's Burns said: "We are grateful to Illinois Wesleyan for the leadership they are showing on this very tough issue of science education. Our efforts are certainly benefiting from our association with the important work Professor Wilson is doing."

SENCER will be developing a comprehensive national dissemination strategy so that the work of Illinois Wesleyan and others will be shared with those committed to improving science education. The SENCER website is: <http://www.aacu-edu.org/sencer/>.

"Students need to be engaged with the great issues of our day," Burns said, "and increasingly, more than a modest scientific literacy is required in understanding the choices we need to make in democracy. Courses that enlist students in the analysis and solution of complex problems will not only help us teach science better, but we hope that students who complete them will be able to be more effective citizens, as well."

Founded in 1915, AAC&U is the leading national association devoted to advancing and strengthening undergraduate liberal education. AAC&U's membership represents some 700 institutions who collectively enroll more than four-million students.

About Illinois Wesleyan University

IWU, founded in 1850, enrolls about 2,070 students in a College of Liberal Arts, and individual schools of Music, Theatre Arts, Art, and Nursing. Since 1994, these facilities have been added to the IWU campus: a \$15 million athletics and recreation center, a \$25 million science center, a \$6.8 million residence hall, a \$5.1 million Center for Liberal Arts, and a \$1.65 million baseball stadium. A \$23 million library and a \$6 million student center are under construction.

Kiplinger's Personal Finance Magazine ranks Illinois Wesleyan University 12th among the nation's 1,600 private colleges in providing a high-quality education at an affordable cost. Also sharing IWU's rank are Princeton and Dartmouth.

