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Sledgehammer Swinging Students to Start Demolition That Will Clear the Way for a New IWU Student Center

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--Students will be swinging sledgehammers on April 12, when demolition work symbolically begins to make way for Illinois Wesleyan University's new \$6-million Hansen Student Center.

All IWU students are invited to the "wallbreaking" at 3 p.m. at the former Memorial Gymnasium, Beecher St. and Franklin Blvd., Bloomington.

Joining the IWU students at the "wallbreaking" will be Tom O. Hansen, a 1982 IWU business-administration graduate, whose \$2-million family gift is spearheading the student-center project.

"The 'wallbreaking' is in place of a groundbreaking ceremony," explained James D. Matthews, IWU dean of students, "since the Hansen Center will take shape in the old Memorial Gymnasium, a campus landmark since the 1920s.

"Students have been part of the student-center planning since day one," he added, "so we wanted them to have a role--a physical role--in the demolition work that's the first step in constructing the new facility. The Hansen Student Center is their building."

Each student attending the "wallbreaking"—garbed in a hard hat and goggles—will have the chance to take a single whack at a designated wall with a 10-pound sledgehammer as long as the wall stands. The "wallbreaking" will be supervised by professionals to ensure safety at the construction site.

Michael Balsley, a 1999 English-writing and theatre arts graduate, is expected to take the first swipe at the wall on behalf of IWU's student body. He was Student Senate president at the time when planning for the new student center began.

"He provided critical and important leadership for the project," Matthews said, referring to Balsley.

Active Ingredient, IWU's jazz quartet, will provide musical entertainment prior to the "wallbreaking" ceremony.

After students take a whack at a wall, they will be treated to refreshments as part of a party under a tent marking the official start of the Hansen Student Center project, which is targeted for full occupancy in late August, 2001.

Among those expected to participate in the "wallbreaking" ceremony are Craig C. Hart, president of IWU's Board of Trustees; Matthew Glavin, a junior political-science major who is Student

Senate president in 2000-2001; Harold Gauthier, senior political-science major who was Student Senate president in 1999-2000; Hansen, and Matthews.

Students attending the "wallbreaking" also will be able to view an architect's model of the student center as well as posters scattered throughout the facility describing the building's key features.

Student Center Background

The new student center, a 33,000-gross-square-foot facility, will feature a two-story bookstore, cafe, grille, information center, offices for student government and other student organizations, conference rooms, a newsstand/convenience store, and an outside patio.

The Hansen Student Center was designed with a sense of student ownership in mind.

"In fact," Matthews explained, "students have been deeply involved in the building's planning process. A group of students, for example, traveled to four eastern campuses, known for having varying styles of student centers, to explore ideas for the Hansen Student Center. Their report played a key role in planning the new student center."

Key Features

The building's main level will feature a lobby, an information desk, newsstand, cafe, and a large, student "hang out" space with trees and plants. This area will have a flexible design, enabling it to be easily reconfigured for concerts, dances, meetings, and speeches. It will have lounge-style seating and moveable furniture.

The two-level bookstore will be located opposite the building's front door on the main and lower levels. The bookstore will stock trade books, textbooks, school supplies, gifts, novelties, and sportswear. To reach the bookstore, students and others will pass through an area with a large lounge on the left, a cafe (serving coffee, pastries, and other snacks) on the right, and a newsstand/convenience store will be adjacent to the pathway.

The building's top level, a semi-circular mezzanine, will house an array of student-government offices, meeting rooms, and workspaces for student organizations.

Construction of the new student center will include replacement of all mechanical equipment--heating, lighting, and air conditioning--in the Memorial Gymnasium, as well as windows and refurbishing the skylight.

The building will be handicapped accessible and equipped with elevators. Parking is adjacent to the building.

Tom Hansen

Hansen, who lives in Orlando, Fla., is chief executive officer of ACCENT Marketing Services.

His family includes wife, Kathleen, and his children: Matthew, Christian, and Patrick.

Hansen, who held several high-level positions at General Electric before founding ACCENT Marketing, received IWU's Outstanding Young Alumni Award in 1998.

He was named 1998 "Entrepreneur of the Year" in the service industry for the Kentucky/Southern Indiana Region, and Inc. Magazine has recognized ACCENT as one of America's fastest-growing companies.

About IWU

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 \$26 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 top 1,600 private colleges in providing a top-quality education at an affordable cost. Also sharing IWU's rank are Princeton and Dartmouth.