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IWU New Admissions' Website Ranked No. 8 Nationally

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IWU New Admissions' Website Ranked No. 8 Nationally 175,000 "Hits" Recorded in the Last Six Months

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--The Illinois Wesleyan University admissions' website has recently received the No. 8 ranking in the country, according to a study conducted by the National Research Center for College and University Admissions (NRCCUA), a non-profit organization which provides communications links among high schools, college-bound high school students and colleges and universities.

Also sharing IWU's rank in the top 25 are Pennsylvania State University, Kenyon College in Ohio, Marquette University in Wisconsin, and Pratt Institute in New York.

The study, conducted during the summer of 1999, included more than 800 colleges and universities nationwide.

Since the new IWU admissions' website was posted late last summer, IWU's Information Technology Office estimates the website has been accessed more than 175,921 times from prospective students in the United States, Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe and South America in the last six months. In the five months prior to the revision, the admissions' website was accessed 20,336 times.

Revision of the admissions' website last summer was a cooperative effort among James Ruoti, IWU dean of admissions, Bob Murray, IWU associate dean of admissions, Tony Bankston, IWU assistant director of admissions, Jeff Mavros, IWU admissions counselor, Curtis Kelch, IWU webmaster, and Tim Mills, an IWU senior English major from Decatur, Ill.

One important result of the revision of the admissions' website is the dramatic increase in the number of applications received via the Internet. Domestic applications received from the Internet account for approximately 10 percent of total domestic applications received by IWU, and international applications received from the Internet account for an estimated 30 percent of total international applications received by IWU. Ruoti estimates these figures are increasing at a rate of 10 to 12 percent each year.

"The Internet is going to be the means of communication for admissions and will be, in many respects, replacing the brochure as a tool for recruiting prospective students," said Ruoti. "The Internet allows us to update our information virtually daily or weekly. A brochure is updated once a year."

"I think the ranking is a hats off to the admissions office," said Kelch. "They knew what they wanted, and they knew what made up a really good website. They picked the right elements for the site. They deserve a lot of the credit."

Located at www.iwu.edu/admissions, the admissions' website is tremendously different from its original incarnation. While the first version contained basic information needed by prospective students, the text was static and did not incorporate significant elements such as animations, graphics or downloadable materials that are now included.

"If you want to sell something, you have to draw people in and spicing up the website just seemed to be the perfect way," said Mills, who was responsible for the flashy graphics and animation. "I wanted to keep people entertained."

Most importantly, the old version of the website did not contain the two elements separating the IWU admissions' website from other university websites--a virtual tour of the IWU campus and a "choose your counselor" page.

The virtual tour of the IWU campus features 360-degree shots allowing prospective students to view a panoramic image of specific IWU academic buildings, residence halls or athletic facilities. Prospective students are also able to zoom in and out from the images. Sites on the virtual tour include Buck Memorial Library, Center for Liberal Arts, Center for Natural Sciences, Harriett Fuller Rust House, Jack Horenberger Field, Presser Hall and Shirk Athletic Center. Future plans for the virtual tour will include the addition of other university buildings and facilities.

The "choose your counselor" page enables prospective students to select their home state on a map of the United States and contact the IWU admissions counselor responsible for recruitment in that area. For prospective students outside of the United States, an image of a globe is available for selection.

Kelch and Mills spent at least a month developing and incorporating each significant element of the website--the "choose your counselor" page, the virtual tour and the on-line applications.

The websites included in the study were rated on nine indicators. Each indicator was assigned a weight that reflected the analyst's judgment about the significance of each guideline. The colleges and universities were then ranked on the basis of the composite score.

Criterion used in the study included: a link to the admissions' website on the university's home page, prominence of the link to the admissions' website on the university's home page, graphics included on the admissions' website, ability to apply to the institution on-line, ability to download an application, ability to provide a secure credit card transaction site for the payment of applicable admission fees, availability of application information and materials, ability to maneuver within the website and inclusion of additional information about the university.

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. Construction is underway on a \$26 million library and \$6 million student center. Kiplinger's Personal Finance Magazine ranks Illinois Wesleyan University 12th among the nation's 1,600 private colleges in providing a top-quality education at an affordable cost. Also sharing IWU's rank are Princeton and Dartmouth.

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