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August 2, 2001

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Illinois Wesleyan University Fall Festival 2001

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--Beginning a college career, away from family and loved ones, can leave a student feeling unconnected and apprehensive about their new environment. Therefore, Illinois Wesleyan University's Division of Student Affairs, will host Fall Festival 2001, from Tuesday, August 21 to Friday, August 24.

Approximately 500 first-year students will arrive on campus a week prior to classes, and participate in a series of workshops and programs that will educate them about their home for the next four years. The festival serves as a gradual introduction to university life for the incoming student, and the university hopes that upon completion of the event, the students will have forged strong bonds with hall residents, and accumulated considerable knowledge about IWU and its faculty.

Angela Flinn, IWU assistant dean of students, said, "An incoming student's greatest fear is balancing responsibility with freedom. Hopefully, through the experience of interacting with staff and upper-class students, they will learn the responsibility of that freedom. We want to keep our students safe, and making good choices."

James Matthews, IWU dean of students, added, "As much as the students have wanted to make their own choices for the last few years, facing the reality of having to make those choices, and living with the consequences, I think anybody would be anxious about their first year at college."

Feelings of apprehension are not restricted to the students however, as Matthews recalled his experience running the inaugural festival in 1998. "Frankly, we were all concerned about the first festival," said Matthews. The program ran for several days and included many required activities for students, leaving them with a minimum amount of free time to reflect upon their new venture.

"We heard immediately that the program was too long. We learn a little bit every year through focus groups and surveys, and this year the length of the festival is shorter by several days," said Matthews.

According to Flinn, the festival themes this year, environmental impact and encountering difference, will be addressed with both passive and active programming. There also will be time allotted for students to meet with their academic advisors and an opportunity to attend information technology sessions that will allow the students to experience the services that IWU offers.

"The ecology initiative was passed unanimously by IWU's Student Senate and faculty," Matthews said. "With that much support, it seems like that is something our community has gone on record as valuing and it's something that our incoming students need to understand about our community as they begin their work at Illinois Wesleyan."

On the theme of diversity, Matthews said, "I want all of our students to understand that they have something to learn here about tolerance, diversity, and multi-cultural issues. All of our students are going to work in a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual workplace when they leave the university."

A Campus Fair and the Social Issues Play will again be offered as part of the festival. The fair, held on Thursday, August 23, will give students the opportunity to obtain information not only about IWU services, but information regarding the local Bloomington-Normal community as well.

Immediately following will be the Social Issues Play, presented by IWU theatre majors performing short, dramatic pieces that address many of the issues confronting college students such as date rape, drugs, and alcohol. After the play, an event titled "Spirit on the Quad" will feature a viewing of the movie "Remember the Titans."

"The movie has a great message of diversity and highlights team spirit," said Flinn.

The week closes with a festival of talents that encourages students to enjoy and acknowledge varied talents presented by fellow classmates.

Matthews wants students to realize, "The university provides them with the resources they will need to succeed. I also want our students to come out of orientation knowing that all the members of our community welcome them."