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10th Anniversary of Hispanic Studies is Call for a *Fiesta*

Sept. 20, 2010

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – *¿Habla español?* For the last 10 years, the Hispanic Studies Program at Illinois Wesleyan University has been helping students learn more than the Spanish language. It has aimed to help students develop an awareness of the Hispanic culture, heritage and history. On Oct. 9, Illinois Wesleyan will celebrate the anniversary of the Hispanic Studies Department during this year's [Homecoming](#) festivities.

Alumni, faculty and friends will gather for a reception from 4:30-6 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 9, at the Joslin Atrium in the Memorial Center (104 E. University St., Bloomington).

Spanish has long been a major for students at Illinois Wesleyan, but the program began to evolve in the 1990s, reflecting the needs of students. "Our program was growing exponentially with the increased interest in Spanish in the United States," said Byron S. Tucci Professor and Chair of Hispanic Studies Carolyn Nadeau. "Our needs were changing, as were the needs of the other languages." By 1998, University faculty and officials recognized the need for Hispanic Studies to stand alone, and founded the program, which began in the 1999-2000 academic school year.

"Hispanic Studies is about more than language," said Associate Professor of Hispanic Studies Christina Isabelli. "A student majoring in Hispanic Studies is not specializing in the language per se, but rather is introduced to the literature and works of art in Spanish, the cultures that speak Spanish, and finally reasons why Spanish has evolved as a language and its functions in today's society in the U.S. and around the world," she said.

Nadeau added that one of the greatest strengths of the Hispanic Studies Program at Illinois Wesleyan is the liberal arts' influence to explore a global perspective. "One of the things we're most proud of is the nice balance," she said. "When students finish the major, they have received studies influenced from Spain, the Peninsula, from Latin America – premodern and modern – Spanish in the U.S. and linguistics, which is a rarity for a small, liberal arts program."

Alumna Rachel Slough said she "fell in love with the rhythm and sounds of the Spanish language" when she took a class from Nadeau. The 2007 graduate decided it was "understanding how a language's histories and cultures expanded my worldview" that prompted her change in major to Hispanic Studies. Slough, who graduated with a master's degree in library science this year, plans to work as an e-learning librarian at the University of Wisconsin, LaCrosse in August, where she hopes to work with non-native English speakers.

With the increase of Spanish-speaking residents in the United States, more students from other majors are exploring Hispanic Studies. The U.S. Census Bureau estimated the nation's Hispanic population was 46.9 million in 2008, making that group the country's largest minority. "We have a lot of education students that end up majoring in Spanish because they want to teach in elementary, junior high and high school as bilingual educators," said Nadeau. "For a lot of international studies majors, or students studying other social sciences, Hispanic Studies is serving as a traditional double major."

The program has also been instrumental in the addition of a Hispanic Studies minor in the Illinois Wesleyan School of Nursing. "The minor has been very successful," said Nadeau, who noted classes available for the minor are also of interest to premed students, including a medical Spanish class. "The

wonderful support and cooperation of the Hispanic Studies Department is really what made this minor work,” said Professor of Nursing Emerita Donna Hartweg, who was director of the School of Nursing at Illinois Wesleyan when the Spanish minor was added. “The department modified the minor over time, adding Medical Spanish and internships, so students had practice opportunities.” The emphasis on culture is infused throughout our revised curriculum and has been enhanced in the current Hispanic Studies minor for nursing majors,” added current Director and Associate Professor of Nursing Vickie Folse.

Nadeau hopes the Hispanic Studies Program will continue to expand. Already over the last decade, she has seen the number of full-time, tenure-track faculty positions rise from four to six. As long as the interest in Spanish continues, students will explore Hispanic Studies. “Its prevalence in our society in the U.S. means there’s increased interest in it,” said Nadeau. “Of course, any second language – and the culture of that language – is fundamental to learning and to a liberal arts education. Languages open doors and give new perspectives, which really embodies who we are at Illinois Wesleyan.”

For additional information on Homecoming activities, visit the [Titan Pride website](#), or call the Alumni Office at (309) 556-3251.

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