



5-20-2011

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Recommended Citation

Connelly '12, Jackie, "IWU Alumna Guenzler-Stevens is a Woman of Distinction" (2011).
News and Events. 1716.
<https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/news/1716>

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IWU Alumna Guenzler-Stevens is a Woman of Distinction

May 20, 2011

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Illinois Wesleyan University alumna Marsha Guenzler-Stevens, '78, will receive a Women of Distinction Award from the American Association of University Women (AAUW) and NASPA-Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education at the 26th annual National Conference for College Women Student Leaders (NCCWSL). Presented each year at the conference, the Women of Distinction Awards recognize female role models who have made powerful contributions to their professions and communities.

The Women of Distinction Award will add to a string of honors earned by Guenzler-Stevens, director of the Adele H. Stamp Student Union at the University of Maryland, College Park. She has not only been named one of the University's Women of Influence (1995) as well as Woman of the Year (2009), but also received various awards for her contributions to the school's diversity, public service and mentoring initiatives.



Marsha Guenzler-Stevens

"This award is really about my work in advancing women," said Guenzler-Stevens, who will join over 100 women leaders the Women of Distinction Award has honored since its establishment in 1985. "It's about helping people find their voice and use their passion to advance their dreams and enhance the community."

Guenzler-Stevens, who graduated from IWU in 1978 with a bachelor of arts degree in biology, serves on both IWU's Board of Trustees and Board of Visitors and is currently President of the Alumni Board. A founding member of the Council for IWU Women, she continues to be active in the organization and attributes her passion for leadership and activism to the intimate classroom environment and inspiring faculty members she encountered during her undergraduate experience at IWU.

"I have always told my mentees I am repaying the debt I owe to my mentors who lovingly challenged me to grow into life," said Guenzler-Stevens, expressing deep gratitude for IWU professors Wendell Hess and Dorothea Franzen and staff members Gary Grace and Claudia Grace for their roles in fostering her intellectual development. "What I will always remember is that in a liberal arts college, there is the sentiment that every student matters, that every student's story matters. That sentiment has pervaded my sense of how to embrace the world."

In addition to being named a Woman of Distinction, Guenzler-Stevens will also lead the NCCWSL's opening session "Finding Your Voice," which she has presented at the conference for over 15 years. According to Guenzler-Stevens, the session focuses on "unleashing the stories of women."

"Stories don't let us forget where we come from," said Guenzler-Stevens. "They help us heal, they launch our dreams and they remind us that we are inexorably linked to one another."

The NCCWSL was designed to develop networking opportunities between college-age women and those who hold leadership positions in the community. It is presented as a joint effort by the AAUW, an organization working to expand educational equity for women and girls, and NASPA, a leading voice for student affairs administration that focuses especially on diversity, learning, integrity and service. On Friday, June 3, the conference expects over 500 participants from around the country to attend more than 50 workshops and presentations.

The Women of Distinction Awards Ceremony, sponsored by the Barbara Fetterhoff Honorary Fund, will be held at the University of Maryland, College Park on Thursday, June 2 from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.

For more information about Guenzler-Stevens and other IWU alumni, visit the alumni website at www.titanpride.org. To learn more about the NCCWSL and for a full list of supporters and conference events, please go to www.nccwsl.org.

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