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Illinois Wesleyan Forges New Ties With Moroccan University

January 26, 2011

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Illinois Wesleyan University (IWU) has announced an agreement with Al Akhawayn University (AUI) in Ifrane, Morocco that includes a student exchange program beginning in the 2011-2012 academic year. The Agreement of Cooperation and Friendship was finalized during a Dec. 15 visit to AUI by IWU President Richard F. Wilson.

The agreement provides a framework for collaboration between faculty, staff and students at the two universities. It reflects a mutual commitment to student and faculty exchange programs and joint research projects. Two students from each university can take part in the exchange program each year. Future faculty exchanges and collaborative projects are in the planning stages.

Wilson sees benefits beyond the classroom for those involved from the two communities. "We believe this agreement will be of mutual value to both universities, not only as an academic exchange, but as a strong step toward developing an understanding between people and cultures."

Exchange of students and faculty internationally is key to sharing Moroccan culture, said Al Akhawayn University President Ouauicha during a visit by Illinois Wesleyan faculty and staff to the university in Ifrane. "We are embracing our founding mission to enrich the higher education landscape in Morocco and to provide global opportunities to our students, faculty, and staff alike. We are committed to embracing the American system within the society and culture of Morocco," he said. "We cannot do that without interaction with key partners in the United States, without learning from each other."

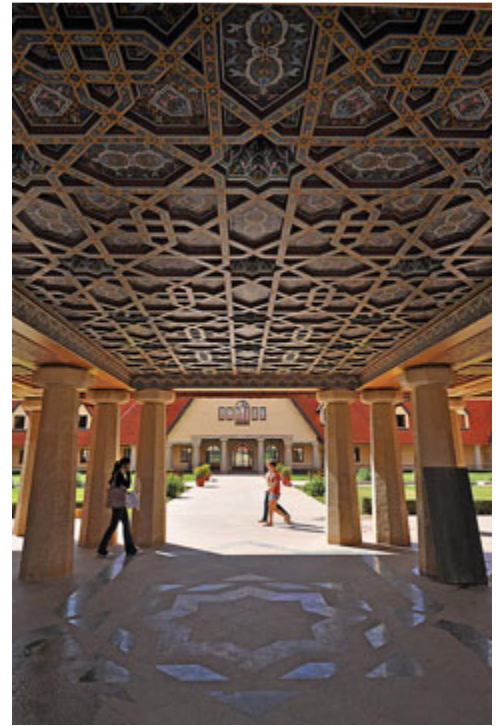
This agreement is the latest in a series of interactions between Illinois Wesleyan and Al Akhawayn that began in 2006 when the two presidents met in Turkey at a Hollings Center conference designed to create better understanding between universities in Western and Islamic countries. Following the conference, the Moroccan university welcomed two **visits from Illinois Wesleyan administrators, faculty and staff** who laid the foundation for collaborative projects and research. Illinois Wesleyan also hosted two professors from Morocco in the fall of 2009, one from AUI.

"We realized all campus constituencies could benefit from discussions with our counterparts in Morocco and bring their experiences back to Illinois Wesleyan," said Interim Provost Frank Boyd, who traveled to AUI in 2008.

The agreement between Illinois Wesleyan and Al Akhawayn marks the second direct student exchange agreement for IWU, which also partners with Keio University in Japan. The effort continues the University's impetus toward providing more international opportunities for students through direct exchanges and study abroad programs offered through the Study Abroad Office. Currently, more than 50 percent of the students at Illinois Wesleyan will study abroad during their time on campus.

Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane, founded in 1993 by royal decree and inaugurated in 1995, was created with a liberal arts approach and teaching principles based on the American model, valuing diversity and an international outlook. The only university of its kind in Morocco, Al Akhawayn has a residential campus in Ifrane, Morocco, 1,700 students, 131 faculty, and all classroom instruction is in English.

Illinois Wesleyan University, founded in 1850, is a highly selective liberal arts college in Bloomington, Illinois, USA, which works to foster students' spirit of inquiry and deepen their world view.



*Students head to class at Al Akhawayn.
(Photo by Diego Mendez-Carbajo)*

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