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New Weir Fellows Named

January 7, 2011

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Two Illinois Wesleyan University students have been named the 2011 Weir Fellows. Senior Kaitie Fancher of Noblesville, Ind., and junior Matt Hill of Lake Forest, Ill., were honored for their commitment to community service.



Weir Fellows Kaitie Fancher and Matt Hill

The \$2,000 fellowships are distributed through Illinois Wesleyan's **Action Research Center** (ARC), which links Illinois Wesleyan students with research projects with not-for-profit organizations. Students chosen as Weir Fellows must have previously worked closely with community partners and proposed collaborative projects with them. Both fellows have projects planned with the Western Avenue Community Center, a local not-for-profit organization.

Fancher, a political science major, has worked with ARC over the past year, and held an internship last summer with a lobbyist for a not-for-profit organization in Washington, D.C. Her project for the Weir Fellowship will assist eligible community members to sign up for SNAP, or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly known as food stamps). "There is a misconception that signing up for SNAP is a long, involved process," said Fancher. "It really takes about 15 minutes online." Last year, an ARC-involved program called **Blank Canvas** brought computers for several area not-for-profits, including Western Avenue. "The computer lab is situated right next to the food pantry at Western Avenue," she added. "My goal is to help everyone who visits the pantry sign up for SNAP." Fancher plans to use her fellowship money to recruit and train volunteers to assist with online SNAP registration. After graduation, she hopes to attend law school or a graduate program geared toward working with not-for-profit organizations.

Hill, an accounting major, took part in the ARC/State Farm Insurance Cos. **Community Partnership Program** last summer. His project for the fellowship involves financial literacy for not-for-profits. He plans to hold seminars with Western Avenue's program administrators on budget efficiency. "These meetings will offer a chance to get together and discuss topics such as allocation, budget structures and endowments," said Hill. "It will be an informal setting to talk about financial issues." Hill will use his Weir fellowship funds to update the accounting software at Western Avenue, and train employees to use it. After graduation, Hill said he will continue to volunteer for not-for-profits in his hometown.

The Weir Fellowship was founded by Elizabeth Weir, a 1950 Illinois Wesleyan graduate with a degree in sociology, who has been active in community service since her days with Illinois Wesleyan.

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