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President Wilson Announces Plans to Retire

Dec. 15, 2014

Richard F. Wilson, Illinois Wesleyan's 18th president, announced today that he plans to retire July 31, 2015, or as soon thereafter as a new president assumes office. When Wilson leaves office he will have served the University for 11 years.

"The opportunity to serve as President of Illinois Wesleyan has been enormously rewarding," said Wilson. "What I have found especially meaningful has been the dedication of the faculty and staff, the talent and engagement of students, the loyalty of alumni, and the special relationship that the University enjoys with the Bloomington-Normal community." Wilson added that several important projects and strategic initiatives had been completed in recent years, making this an ideal time for a leadership transition.



President Richard F. Wilson

Over the last 10 years, Wilson has led two strategic planning efforts, guided the University through a very turbulent decade economically, and successfully completed the *Transforming Lives* fundraising campaign, which raised \$141 million and surpassed its \$125 million goal. These efforts have resulted in substantial progress on several important initiatives, including: increased attention to assessment of student learning; expansion of efforts related to student leadership, volunteerism and community engagement; growth in domestic and international student diversity; focused attention to issues related to social justice and global citizenship; and increased commitment to sustainability, including construction of the first LEED certified building on the Wesleyan campus.

"President Wilson's leadership and service to Illinois Wesleyan over more than a decade have truly been outstanding," said the University's Board Chair George Vinyard, a 1971 graduate of Illinois Wesleyan. "Our alumni, students, faculty, staff and trustees deeply appreciate the many ways in which he has made this a better and stronger institution. We are profoundly grateful for the president's foresight and dedication, and will be for many decades to come."

According to Vinyard, the University will lose no time in launching a national search for Illinois Wesleyan's next president. Following essentially the same process that brought Wilson to the campus, a special committee including members of the Board of Trustees, the faculty, staff and the student body will be appointed to carry out the search. It is anticipated that the search committee will be established and begin its work in January with the goal of having the new president on board before the beginning of the upcoming fall semester.

During Wilson's tenure, a number of important capital projects were completed, including the State Farm Hall classroom building and Kemp Commencement Plaza, Minor Myers, jr. Welcome Center, Joslin Atrium, Joyce Eichhorn Ames School of Art Rotunda, the Gates at Wesleyan student apartments, and the installation of artificial turf at Tucci Stadium. The creation of a new quadrangle on the north side of State Farm Hall and a fitness center addition to the Shirk Center are currently underway.

Other important accomplishments have included increasing the number of endowed chairs and professorships from 11 to 31, establishing a foundation for the Summer Undergraduate Scholars and Artists Program, strengthening the University's commitment to development and alumni relations, and increasing scholarship support for students. As part of the recent comprehensive campaign, a total of \$27 million was received in annual and endowed scholarship gifts, which supported 380 student scholarships.

A West Virginia native, Wilson earned master and doctoral degrees in higher education from the University of Michigan. He holds a bachelor's degree in education from his home state's Alderson-Broaddus University. Wilson is a member of both Phi Beta Kappa and Phi Kappa Phi, national honor societies.

Prior to his appointment at Illinois Wesleyan, Wilson held several leadership positions over a 26-year period at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, serving as Associate Chancellor for Development and Vice President of the University of Illinois Foundation prior to being selected to lead Wesleyan.

During his time as president, Wilson has served as a board member of the McLean County Chamber of Commerce, the Bloomington-Normal Economic Development Council, and the McLean County Historical Society. He also participated in the work of the Achievement Gap Task Force and was honorary co-chair with his wife, Pat, of the American Red Cross of the Heartland Evening of Stars.

At the state and national levels, he has served as the chair of the Federation of Independent Illinois Colleges and Universities and as a board member of Educational and Institutional Insurance Administrators. He also has served on the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities' Committee on Accountability and the American Council on Education's Commission on Women in Higher Education. His service also included chairing the College Conference of Illinois and Wisconsin Council of Presidents and serving on the Division III President's Advisory Group and the Membership Committee of the NCAA.

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