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Aguirre '17 Wins Luis Leal Endowed Scholarship

April 17, 2015

BLOOMINGTON — Martha Aguirre '17, a Hispanic Studies major from Chicago, has been named the 2015 recipient of the Luis Leal Endowed Scholarship. Presented by the Department of Hispanic Studies, the competitive scholarship is granted to qualified students who carry out Hispanic Studies research while enrolled in an IWU-affiliated program off-campus.

“Through this scholarship and with the help of my study abroad program, I hope to conduct a independent research project in Chile on bilingual education,” Aguirre said. “I think Chile at the moment is going through a progressive educational movement and it is important as educators to watch that closely.”

“I hope to gain a whole new insight about the way different countries value and approach education and how important it is to take the positive aspects of Chilean schools and apply it to our own,” she said.

At Illinois Wesleyan, Aguirre is a member of Collegiate Choir and the music fraternity Sigma Alpha Iota. She also volunteers with Mini Masters, a student-led program offering free music lessons to area youth. She is involved with the Office of Residential Life and the Spanish and Latino Student Association (SALSA).

Aguirre plans to present the information she learns to the Educational Studies and Hispanic Studies departments upon returning to campus. “As of now, my post-graduation plan is to teach abroad, hopefully with service programs like the Peace Corps,” she said. “If not, then I would like to get my certification in bilingual education and teach in Chicago Public Schools.”

In its second year, the scholarship is named for Luis Leal, a Mexican-American writer and literary critic. Leal was awarded the United States National Humanities Medal in 1997 for his service to his community and academic achievements, and the Aztec Eagle, the highest honor the Mexican government awards foreign citizens, in 1991. According to the Department of Hispanic Studies, the scholarship is named for Dr. Leal because throughout his life he realized his own individual intellectual potential and fostered that goal in others by living and teaching within a framework of social justice, global citizenship, and respect for diverse communities, values that both the Department of Hispanic Studies and IWU carry in their mission statements.



Volunteer Martha Aguirre '17 teaches guitar to Gabe Williams at the local Boys & Girls Club.

By Tia Patsavas '16