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Student's Research to be Part of National Ethics Symposium

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Student's Research to be Part of National Ethics Symposium

Truesdale Studied Implications of Incentivizing Organ Donation

March 19, 2015

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— As a result of his analysis of incentivizing organ donations, Illinois Wesleyan economics and political science double major Daniel Truesdale '15 (Tinley Park, Illinois) has been selected to participate in a national ethics symposium April 9-11 at DePauw University.



Daniel Truesdale

"I became interested in organ donation after interning at the [conservative think tank] American Enterprise Institute (AEI) my junior year in Washington, D.C.," said Truesdale, who interned at AEI through IWU's affiliation with the Washington Semester program at American University. "At AEI I came across, *When Altruism Isn't Enough* (AEI Press, 2009), and was moved by the positive and normative aspects of the work. Though it focused on living organ donation, I began to wonder if incentivizing cadaver donation could be a middle ground for those opposed and in favor of a monetary system."

In the fall of 2014, Truesdale conducted his senior project in economics on a potential strategy to increase cadaver organ donations among Illinois drivers. Titled "Incentivizing Cadaver Organ Donors," his study focused on ways to increase the number of individuals declaring themselves candidates for organ donations at the time that they renew their driver's licenses. After he administered a series of surveys and notional experiments, Truesdale's study concluded that a small incentive such as waiving the fee for driver license renewal could have a significant impact increasing the number of cadaver organs among students at Illinois Wesleyan and Bloomington-Normal residents.

Truesdale decided to take his research a step further during his Advanced Research Seminar class this spring semester. Exploring connections between his data-driven research and the ethical implications of incentivizing organ donor candidates, Truesdale wrote a proposal to participate in the 2015 Undergraduate Ethics Symposium.

"First and foremost, I hope my research brings attention to the organ shortage in the United States and across the globe," Truesdale said. "If we were to entice individuals to become organ donors by use of monetary incentive, we could save lives."

According to data reported by the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network (OPTN), someone is added to the national transplant waiting list every ten minutes, and approximately 21 people die each day waiting for a transplant. One organ donor can save eight lives. According to OPTN, the gap between supply and demand continues to widen despite advances in medicine and technology, and an increase in awareness of organ donation and transplantation.

Truesdale has recognized the obstacles that come with incentivizing donations, including concerns with coercion and exploitation, both of which he addresses in the project.

"There are those against this approach because they believe it undermines human dignity and all donation should be altruistic," he said. "I acknowledge altruism is a beautiful feature of the human spirit, but it should not bind us from utilizing additional measures if it can not produce a desired outcome."

Truesdale will address these issues and more at the symposium. With the theme of "Value and Virtual Spaces," the symposium is shaped around a series of workshops in which students present their best work on a subject of ethical concern. The selective honors symposium accepts a group of 25 to 30 submissions, and participants engage in a series of workshops and small-group seminars.

By Tia Patsavas '16