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Campus Community Reading *The Unlikely Disciple*

June 16, 2015

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— While his classmates at Brown University studied abroad in Paris, Barcelona or Munich, Kevin Roose opted for a domestic immersion experience in a culture foreign to his own. As a self-described fairly typical Brown student who “studied English lit, drank fair-trade coffee, attended the occasional anti-war protest, and sang in an a cappella group,” Roose became fascinated with Liberty University, a Christian liberal arts college founded by the late Rev. Jerry Falwell. Roose wanted to know more about his Christian peers, so in his junior year he spent a semester attending Liberty as a way to understand the nation’s “God Divide.”

Roose’s experiences resulted in *The Unlikely Disciple: A Sinner’s Semester at America’s Holiest University* (Grand Central Publishing, 2009). The book is Illinois Wesleyan University’s Summer Reading Program selection, and was chosen in response to the University’s 2015-2016 intellectual theme of “Nation(s) Divided?”

Incoming first-year students are expected to read the book and complete reading questions before Turning Titan: New Student Orientation in August. IWU faculty, staff and alumni are invited to read the book as well; many participate as small-group discussion leaders for incoming students on Aug. 19.

New this year is the Summer Reading Essay contest, open to all members of the Class of 2019. Essays should be 500-750 words and must be submitted by Aug. 3 to advising@iwu.edu. Winners will be announced at New Student Convocation on Aug. 18. First prize is dinner with Roose on Sept. 8 at the IWU president’s home and a \$250 gift card to the IWU Bookstore.

Roose grew up in Oberlin, Ohio, in a secular, liberal family. Enrolling at Liberty University as a transfer student, Roose writes that he “sang in Jerry Falwell’s church choir, took classes in Creationism and Evangelism 101, lived on a hall with 60 Christian guys, went on a spring break trip to Daytona Beach to convert lost souls, and made some unexpected friends amidst the chaos.”

Critics and reviewers at news outlets ranging from *ChristianityToday.com* and *Jewish Week* to *The Paris Review* praised Roose for his respectful and thoughtful reporting and analysis. He also won admiration for his use of humor and highly entertaining writing style.

Roose is also the author of *Young Money: Inside the Hidden World of Wall Street’s Post-Crash Recruits*, a 2014 *New York Times* bestseller looking at the lives of eight young Wall Street bankers. He has written for *GQ*, *Esquire*, the *New York Times*, and *New York* magazine, among others. He is currently a senior editor and co-executive producer at Fusion, the joint venture between Univision and Disney/ABC.

Roose is scheduled to speak at the President’s Convocation on Wednesday, Sept. 9, at 11 a.m. at Westbrook Auditorium.

