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Council Supports Women at 10th Annual Summit

March 3, 2016

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— As a college senior, Ade Olayinka '11 was encouraged to attend the Council for IWU Women's annual summit. Olayinka was so impressed by the commitment to current students she witnessed that she became a member of the council herself just a year later.

The [Council for IWU Women](#) is a group of over 80 alumnae and friends from throughout the United States and one member currently living in Thailand. Each year several members return to campus to offer their talents and resources to support the personal and professional development of the women of IWU.

At her first summit as a student, Olayinka met alumni who had taken many different paths to achieve success in their respective fields. "These women were doing amazing things individually, and they were doing amazing things for Illinois Wesleyan," Olayinka recalled.

"So when I was asked if I would join the council, it was kind of like the opposite question: Why wouldn't I join?" she adds. "It was definitely a no-brainer."

At this year's summit, the 10th annual, Olayinka moderated a Saturday morning speed-networking event connecting current students and alumnae. That was just one of many sessions and events, including practice interviews, breakout sessions, and the awarding of scholarships to students Paula Amat Norman '19, Megan Mink '18, Rachel Dolan '17 and Nicole Chlebek '16. New this year was a well-received PechaKucha-style event, where 11 IWU faculty, staff, alumnae and students presented visual essays on topics ranging from female tech entrepreneurs in Jordan to being a first-generation college student. All summit meals, sessions and funds for the scholarships are funded entirely by Council for IWU Women members.



Ade Olayinka '11 talks with Associate Professor of Sociology Meghan Burke at this year's summit. Olayinka was so impressed by alumnae commitment to current students that she became a member of the Council for IWU Women soon after she graduated.



Rosie Mallet '16 shares a laugh with other students and alumnae at the summit.

Nursing alumna Karen Zander '70 presented the address at Friday's kickoff luncheon. Zander is president and CEO of The Center for Case Management, a Massachusetts-based, clinician-owned company providing case-management leadership to the healthcare industry.

Zander told the audience she awoke from surgery in September 2007 to find she was paralyzed. She said she had a second surgery two days later that prevented her from being a quadriplegic.

Before she was paralyzed, Zander surrounded herself with winners, she said. When people ask how she has been able to survive in nursing so long, she said it's because she "picks out the winners and doesn't listen to the complainers and the whiners. It's not helpful, it's not constructive, and you won't find your own strength if you find yourself with people who are complaining."

Positivity and support were on display throughout the summit. During the career connections event, nursing major Rosie Mallet '16 (Portland, Ore.) noted several alumnae offered to bring her resume to the appropriate people at their places of employment. "It's just nice to feel so supported," said Mallet. "It's great to be part of that kind of community."

Her friend Cindy Basilio '17 said she came to the summit because she'd heard great things about the event from other friends. "Hearing about the alums' experiences and opinions about jobs has been very important," said the mathematics major. "Especially for me, someone who has too many passions and can't focus on one."

Olayinka can relate to those feelings. "I so remember that kind of flux in the spring of my senior year," said Olayinka, who is now a Ph.D. student in public policy and political science at Duke University. "I'm not sure how much I have to offer current students other than talking about graduate school processes. I feel like I'm still benefitting from this event, too, because I'm still getting a lot back from other council members."

