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SEP: Deciding Who You Will Be

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SEP: Deciding Who You Will Be

Aug. 16, 2017

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — Twelve Illinois Wesleyan University students completed a 9-week [Summer Enrichment Program](#) (SEP) this summer, remaining on campus for workshops, speakers, service projects, and an internship at a local business or non-profit organization.

Considered one of the University's premiere leadership programs, SEP serves as a microcosm of the Illinois Wesleyan experience: students engaging with the community, with faculty and staff, and with one another as they learn and develop who they are and how they want to impact the world. Current IWU international and MALANA (Multiracial, African-American, Latino-Hispanic, Asian-American and Native American) students are eligible to apply for selection to the program each year.

"This summer at SEP I realized that I want to continue working for a non-profit organization," said Olivia Padilla '19, who interned at YWCA. "My hope is to continue to make a difference with the work that I am doing."

In conjunction with the University's annual intellectual theme, The Evolution of Revolution, each SEP student read the Summer Reading Program selection [Between the World and Me](#) by Ta-Nehisi Coates, and engaged with speakers on topics of social justice.

"My breakthrough moment (was) when Professor (Ky) Ajayi came to speak to us," said Vandhana Rajarathnam '18. "His talk really inspired me and made me want to take action."

Vishnu Velupula '18 said the program "opened my eyes to how much power students have.

"I always relied on people older than me to bring about change, but never realized in history, it has always been the people around my age who start revolutions and fight for what's right. This made me think of how to get more involved and not rely on others to change the world."

Other students participating in this year's program were Gus Castro '19, James Edmond '18, Antoinette Jackson '20, Anna Kney '18, Alpha Moreno '19, Monica Munoz '19, Jasmine White '20, BreAnna Williams '18 and Yangyuan Xu '18.

Students said program highlights also included informal time with other SEP students, and the long-favorite tradition of a weekly lunch at a local ethnic restaurant. Internship sites included the University's Action Research Center, Biology Department, the local YWCA, MarcFirst, Illinois JusticeCorps, Multicultural Leadership Program, Mid Central Community Action, Advocate BroMenn, and Allied Health.



Twelve students participated in the 2017 Summer Enrichment Program at Illinois Wesleyan.



SEP student presentations & closing event

By Beth Madigan