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Balina Wins 2008 *Pantagraph* Award

April 18, 2007

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Illinois Wesleyan Professor of Russian Studies Marina Balina was named as the 2008 winner of *The Pantagraph* Award for Teaching Excellence at the University on Wednesday (April 18) at the annual Honors Day Convocation in Westbrook Auditorium of Presser Hall (1210 Park St., Bloomington).

[Listen to the Convocation.](#)

“This is the highest honor that Illinois Wesleyan can give, and I am honored and thrilled and happy and overwhelmed,” said an emotional Balina as she received hugs of congratulations from fellow faculty members and staff.

The \$1,000 teacher-scholar award is the University's top teaching honor and is sponsored by the daily newspaper headquartered in Bloomington that services eight counties and more than 60 communities in Central Illinois. The honoree is selected by Illinois Wesleyan's Promotion and Tenure Committee based on nominations received from members of the faculty.

A native of Russia who earned her Ph.D. at Leningrad State University (now St. Petersburg), Balina joined IWU's faculty in 1989 and is now a member of the University's department of modern and classical languages and literatures. Along with teaching the German and Russian languages and Russian literature, she has published 23 articles and seven books in three different languages, and earned an international reputation for work with children's literature. She has been the recipient of grants from the U.S. Department of Education, the Austrian Ministry of Culture, the American Association of Learned Societies, the National Endowment of Humanities and the Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies of the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars.

“Her life has been like a fairy tale. She grew up in a distant land and has traveled to be with us at Illinois Wesleyan,” said IWU Provost Beth Cunningham. “Her students love her and understand that she will do virtually anything to support them in and out of the classroom.”

The principal address at the Honors Day Convocation was delivered by the 2007 *Pantagraph* winner, James Sikora. A professor of sociology professor at Illinois Wesleyan, Sikora formally received his prize from LJ Lusk, community relations director of *The Pantagraph*. Sikora's address was titled “Social Capital and the New Individualism.” Balina will deliver the 2008 Honors Day Convocation speech.

In addition to the announcement of *The Pantagraph* winner, the Convocation was an occasion to recognize numerous student award winners, and to honor upcoming University retiree, Mona Gardner.

Director of Institutional Research and Planning and Adlai H. Rust Professor of Insurance and Finance, Gardner came to Illinois Wesleyan 19 years ago. “She is frequently the person called upon for help,” said University President Richard Wilson. He noted that Gardner was the University's first May Term director in 1994, first director of the Andrew W. Mellon Center for Faculty and Curriculum Development in 1995, first associate dean of faculty in 1996 and the first to hold her current title. “We give her our heartfelt thanks,” he added, and announced she is being granted the status of professor emerita.



Marina Balina with a class at Illinois Wesleyan.