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# Calderon and Milcik Awarded Luis Leal Scholarship

June 1, 2018

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — Yesenia Martinez Calderon '20 (Chicago) and Nicholas Milcik '20 (Bloomington, Ill.) are this year's recipients of the [IWU Luis Leal Endowed Scholarship](#) to support their respective research in Chile and Spain.

The scholarship is awarded by the Illinois Wesleyan University [Hispanic Studies Department](#) to two qualified Hispanic Studies students engaging in off-campus research through an IWU-affiliated program, during which the students will document and share their experiences abroad.

A Hispanic Studies and secondary education double major, Calderon will engage with the educational system in Chile as well as the surrounding culture.

"One thing I want to learn from studying abroad in Chile is putting social justice conversations into actual research," Calderon said. "I have always wanted to help people and learn their stories, so I am conscious of how other people live and what things make them unique."

Calderon has previously explored these interests as a May Term study abroad student in Queretaro, Mexico, as a member of the [Council for Inclusion and Awareness](#) (CIA) and as vice president of the [Spanish and Latino Student Association](#) (SALSA). She is also a Resident Advisor (RA), a thrower on the track and field team and a club volleyball player.

Meanwhile, an ocean away from Latin America, Milcik looks forward to fully immersing himself in the language and culture of Spain.

"While abroad, I hope to achieve both lingual fluency in the Spanish language and the degree of cultural competency I consider to be an essential part of a liberal arts education, by engaging directly with global diversity on a daily basis."

Milcik, a Hispanic Studies and physics double major, has engaged with the campus community as a competitor on the IWU Ethics Bowl team and as vice president of the [IWU Society of Physics Students](#) (SPS). In addition, Milcik spent the summer of his freshman year interning at the Geriatrics Research Lab at Southern Illinois University School of Medicine.

The scholarship is named in honor of Luis Leal (1907-2010), one of the foremost critics of Mexican, Chicano and Latin American literature.

"As a first-generation Chicana student, I felt connected to this kind of legacy," Calderon said.

"I am truly honored that the Hispanic Studies department has chosen me for the award," Milcik added. "I plan to use their support to further Dr. Leal's mission of incorporating Latin American and Chicano literature into U.S. education."



Yesenia Martinez Calderon '20



Nicholas Milcik '20

*By Rachel McCarthy '21*