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John Twork
Illinois Wesleyan University

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Hopkins and Common Earn Inclusive Excellence Awards

April 5, 2019

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — Amanda Hopkins and Brandon Common have been named 2019 recipients of the second annual President’s Award for Inclusive Excellence at Illinois Wesleyan University.

The award recipients, announced at the annual [Faculty-Staff Recognition Celebration](#) on Friday, April 5, were nominated by students, faculty and staff, and selected by [The University Council for Diversity](#) (UCD).

Amanda Hopkins

An assistant professor of nursing, Hopkins was described by a student nominator as a “dedicated champion for diversity and inclusion.” Another student said, “Dr. Hopkins makes a conscious effort to be inclusive in her lectures and address issues of diversity as it applies to both nursing and our daily lives. She is constantly gaining knowledge and experience to share with us, which in turn enhances our understanding of the world around us. She has shaped the way I approach quality nursing care, it is our responsibility to treat each patient with respect and dignity.”

Colleagues noted Hopkins’ ability to use her own voice to speak on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves or who are not heard. “Dr. Hopkin’s passion for diversity and inclusion initiatives dominates her teaching, scholarship, and service,” according to a faculty nominator.

Hopkins has expertise in working with underrepresented and vulnerable populations, including children with chronic conditions and their families as a pediatric nurse and nurse educator. On campus, Hopkins has participated as a member of the University Council for Diversity (UCD) and the Faculty Committee on Diversity (FCD), and she chairs the Student Affairs Committee in the [School of Nursing](#) where she has lent her passion for inclusivity into creating a student handbook which includes more inclusive language. In addition to leading several University talks focused on diversity topics, Hopkins serves as the 2018-19 [Posse Foundation](#) faculty mentor and, according to a faculty nominator, she has “attended to the Posse students with a gusto, ensuring they are mentored in such a way to ensure their successful transition to Illinois Wesleyan University.” The Posse foundation is a national college access and leadership development program.

Hopkins is interested in the study of providing culturally competent, family-centered care. Her research has focused on creating culturally competent healthcare work environments and mother’s perceptions of the management of their children’s chronic conditions, specifically sickle cell disease and cystic fibrosis, within the context of the school setting.

Hopkins earned a bachelor’s degree in 1999 from the University of Illinois at Chicago where she later received a master’s (2005) and Ph.D. (2010). She arrived at Illinois Wesleyan in 2013 after beginning her teaching career at UIC.

Brandon Common

The Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs, Common was described by a nominating staff member as exemplifying “inclusive excellence in many ways that have benefitted campus constituents on all levels.” The nomination continued, “Dr. Common brings his whole-self to work and treats everyone with respect, sincerity, and a hearty dose of humor. Social justice work can be taxing, but Dr. Common takes on each day and every challenge with a genuine love for his work and a heartfelt dedication to supporting IWU’s mission of inclusive excellence.”

Common joined Illinois Wesleyan in 2014 as Director of the [Office of Diversity and Inclusion](#). In this role, Common developed the first campus-wide diversity and inclusion programming series that incorporates students, faculty, and staff, currently known as the [Diversity, Dialogue, and Dignity \(3D\) Series](#).

Common was named Assistant Dean of Students for Campus Life in 2016 before being promoted into his current role in 2017. Among his many job responsibilities, Common has provided leadership in developing inclusive hiring policies. He also serves as co-chair for the Inclusive Excellence Education Task Force for campus-wide diversity training implementation. “Most importantly, in the midst of his busy days, he finds a way to be a mentor, role model, and support system for the underrepresented student on campus,” a nominator stated.

Before joining Illinois Wesleyan, Common served as assistant director of fraternity and sorority affairs at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign where he also earned a Ph.D. At Ohio University, where Common received a master’s degree, he worked in residential life, serving as a peer mentor and advisor to the LINKS program that aids in the transition and success of first-year multicultural and disproportionately represented students. Common earned a bachelor’s degree from the University of Missouri.

About the President’s Award for Inclusive Excellence

The President’s Award for Inclusive Excellence – presented to a faculty member and staff member annually – is intended to recognize outstanding contributions made by individuals that champion diversity, inclusion, and sustained commitment at Illinois Wesleyan University. The Award for Inclusive Excellence is intended to recognize the commitment of Illinois Wesleyan faculty and staff who have made exceptional efforts in celebrating diversity and demonstrating a commitment to advancing inclusion to create a safe and supportive community.

Recipients of The Award for Inclusive Excellence are recognized at the springtime Faculty-Staff Recognition Celebration and receive a one-time monetary award of \$1,000 for their leadership. Awardees display understanding of the dynamic issues surrounding the intersectionality of race, gender, gender identity, ethnicity, religious heritage, national origin, socioeconomic status, disability, and sexual orientation. Assistant professor of nursing Wendy Kookan and Senior Administrative Assistant to the Provost Sharla Brown-Ajayi were named 2018 recipients of the inaugural President’s Award for Inclusive Excellence.

Alumni, students, staff and faculty will once again be invited to submit nominations next year. Nominations submitted this year will also be considered for 2020 President’s Award for Inclusive Excellence. The University Council for Diversity (UCD) and the previous recipient of the award will select awardees based on submitted nominations.

