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# New Students Welcomed at Convocation

Aug. 21, 2019

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — Illinois Wesleyan University welcomed new Titans to campus, including the Class of 2023 along with transfer students, during New Student Convocation on Tuesday, Aug. 20.

New Titans traveled to Bloomington from 22 states, one territory and 10 countries, and more than 27% of the incoming class self-identifies as a student of color, said Vice President of Student Affairs and Dean of Students Karla Carney-Hall.

She told the convocation audience that their new classmates include: 73 students who have had a close family member attend Illinois Wesleyan and 57 students who are among the first in their families to go to college. Carney-Hall said the incoming class also includes someone who hosted a benefit for a friend who is a quadriplegic, raising several thousands of dollars; an individual who saved a friend from choking using lessons learned as a member of the Boy Scouts; someone who designed and built his own board game, Clash of Nations; and, an individual whose parents read medical journals and textbooks to him before bed to help him fall asleep.

Interim President Georgia Nugent warmly welcomed the new students. “We’ll be sharing our first-year experience together,” she told them. “My hunch is that many of you are really wondering what to expect,” Nugent



Watch the convocation.

continued. In an attempt to ease any feelings of uncertainty, she shared excerpts from a survey of nearly 200 current students regarding their Illinois Wesleyan experiences.

Nugent said responses to the survey question “what is the greatest strength of IWU?” included:

- Job placement after graduation.
- It’s a collaborative community for all people who enjoy learning.
- We have a wide variety of things to get involved in on campus and offer students so many opportunities to succeed.
- The really amazing faculty and staff members who work here.
- I have experienced so much support and kindness from many of the staff.
- Giving each student the tools to pursue opportunities.

“Current IWU students sent me what amounts to 55 single-spaced pages of comments like that,” Nugent said. “And the excerpts I just gave you were not unusual — they were the norm.

“If you want to bring your gifts, talents and passions to a community where they’ll matter, then you’re a Titan, and you’ve come to the right place,” Nugent told the new students. “Welcome to your new home.”

Student Senate President Que Jackson ’21 echoed Nugent’s welcome and encouraged his fellow Titans to become active and engaged students. He also highlighted Illinois Wesleyan’s commitment to diversity and told the convocation crowd, “Don’t be afraid to go outside of your comfort zone. Make a friend that you wouldn’t have made before. No matter your background, race, religion, sexuality. We are all Titans.”

Provost and Dean of the Faculty Mark Brodl announced the winners of the Summer Reading Essay contest. Incoming students were invited to write an essay based on their reading of Educated by Tara Westover. Elise Damasco ’23 (Skokie, Illinois) won first prize for her essay “A Multitude of Truths,” and Shivam Dharmendra Patel ’23 (Galva, Illinois) earned honorable mention for his essay “The Innocence of the Innocent.”

Keynote speaker Timothy Rettich, a professor of chemistry and recipient of the [2020 Kemp Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence](#), the University’s highest teaching honor, likened the new students’ upcoming college journey to the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

“My limited role now is to tell you about a few navigational landmarks and points of interest along the way — a general direction to steer your academic progress,” Rettich said. He told students that the first such landmark is their Gateway Course or [First-Year Experience](#).

“This course is not an arbitrary obstacle to your safe passage,” Rettich said. “It is a vital training session to help you navigate many future challenges, not only in subsequent college courses, but also in the uncharted waters beyond graduation.”

A second landmark, Rettich said, is the intellectual theme for this academic year, “[Fact or Fiction](#).” “Your college experience will help you discern fact from fiction, and thereby steer a true course,” he told the incoming students.

He continued by identifying “[general education](#)” as the third landmark. “This is the basis of the liberal arts — those studies that liberate us, making us free from ignorance and prepared to take on the wide-ranging responsibilities of personal independence.”

Rettich concluded by naming the fourth and final guidepost, “[Signature Work](#).”

“This work is unique to each student and his or her interests, it serves as a capstone IWU experience, and it can serve as a portage to your next voyage of discovery — be it graduate school, professional school, or that first job,” Rettich said. “I hope you enjoy your college journey. I hope you avail yourself of all the resources IWU provides.

“And, I hope you will look around at your fellow travelers here tonight and resolve to be a good crew member — assist and encourage each other. All are in the same boat.”



New Titans are welcomed to campus at New Student Convocation.



Interim President Georgia Nugent addresses new Titans at New Student Convocation.



The Class of 2023 and transfer students pose for a photo following New Student Convocation.