



Fall 8-12-2020

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Recommended Citation

Twork, John, "New Students Welcomed at Virtual Convocation" (2020). *News and Events*. 4052.

<https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/news/4052>

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New Students Welcomed at Virtual Convocation

Aug. 12, 2020

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — Illinois Wesleyan University first-year and transfer students received an official welcome during New Student Convocation, held virtually via Zoom, on Tuesday, Aug. 11.

New students, who primarily arrived on campus Tuesday, watched the convocation from their respective residence hall rooms amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Beginning her second year as Illinois Wesleyan’s president, S. Georgia Nugent told the virtual audience, “We are so thrilled to see students moving in. It’s been five months since we had students on campus, and it’s just wonderful to see the campus come to life again.”

Nugent added, “There have been many, many people working all summer to ensure that it’s a great year.”

Provost and Dean of Faculty Mark Brodl noted, “So very much about this year and the start of your college careers will be marked by the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Brodl said, fittingly, this year’s academic theme is *Health, Healing, and Humanity* . “The litany of what ails our world should not be discouraging — the world needs you to prepare to tackle these challenges. You can see them as opportunities. Your IWU education will prepare you well so that you can do your part.”

Related to the academic theme, incoming students were invited to write an essay based on their reading of Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha’s book *What the Eyes Don’t See: A Story of Crisis, Resistance, and Hope in an American City*. Brodl announced that Mara Mulvin ’24 won first prize for *Acceptable Losses* , and Anusha Bhojanam ’24 and Albert Sterner ’24 earned honorable mention for their essays.

Student Senate President Freya Jennison ’22 joined in welcoming the newest Titans to campus, and reminded them to wear their masks — *over their noses* . Jennison offered a word of encouragement based on personal experience: “I promise you the opportunities are out there for you to grab, you just need to trust yourself, trust your ideas, and trust that Wesleyan will be there to guide you.”

Vice President of Student Affairs and Dean of Students Karla Carney-Hall told the virtual convocation audience that:

- New Titans traveled to Bloomington from 31 states, plus Washington, D.C., and 10 different countries.
- Individuals who self-identify as students of color make up more than 27% of the incoming class.
- The class includes 62 first-generation students along with 130 who had a close family member or relative attend Illinois Wesleyan.
- Members of the class are interested in pursuing 53 different academic programs, while 10% are undeclared.

Carney-Hall added that, among many notable student accomplishments, the incoming class consists of:

- An intern at the Bio Technical Institute of Maryland.
- A Magna Cum Laude award winner from the National Latin Exam.
- A volunteer who ran a week-long medical clinic in rural El Salvador.
- A co-founder of a high school mental health club.
- A certified scuba diver.

“You join us today as individuals, each with a unique set of experiences that have shaped who you are. Each with thoughtful goals for what you hope your college career at IWU will bring,” Carney-Hall told the new students.

She concluded, “You will be changed by your goals, your priorities, your values, your dreams, and your passions. As one of my favorite graduates said, ‘I think my freshman self would be very proud of the person I have become.’

“Take stock in who you are,” Carney-Hall urged, “so you can celebrate who you are becoming.”



President S. Georgia Nugent welcomed first-year and transfer students virtually via Zoom during New Student Convocation.

By John Twork