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# Five Faculty Appointed as Endowed Professors

May 3, 2022

BLOOMINGTON – Five Illinois Wesleyan University faculty members were honored as endowed professors during the 2022 commencement ceremony.

The tradition of appointing faculty as endowed professors and chairs is reserved for IWU faculty who have distinguished themselves through exemplary teaching and active engagement of students, outstanding scholarship or artistic achievement and service at the very highest levels of the University.

Professorships are named in honor of the generous donors who made the award possible.

“The guiding principle in awarding an endowed professorship or chair is that the individual represents our highest aspirations for faculty members on this campus,” said President Georgia Nugent during the ceremony.

The endowed faculty and their professorships include:



Professor of English **Joanne Diaz** was accorded Illinois Wesleyan University’s Isaac Funk Professorship. Diaz joined Illinois Wesleyan in 2008 and received the 2022 Kemp Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence. Diaz earned a master’s in creative writing from New York University and a doctorate in English literature from Northwestern University. Her poetry work has appeared in numerous publications, including *American Poetry Review*, *Poetry Magazine* and *New England Review*.



Professor of Biology **Edgar Lehr** was accorded Illinois Wesleyan University’s Robert Harrington Professorship. Lehr joined the faculty of Illinois Wesleyan in 2009. His research and publications have been recognized by National Geographic and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. Lehr earned a master's degree in biology from Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, Germany, and a doctorate degree in zoology from Johann Wolfgang Goethe University Frankfurtam Main, Germany. His primary research focuses on the biodiversity of amphibians and reptiles in the neotropics.



Professor of Physical Education and Head Men's and Women's Track Coach **Christopher Schumacher** was named a Ben & Susan Rhodes Professor of Peace and Social Justice. Schumacher joined the faculty of Illinois Wesleyan in 1997. He has led Titan track and field athletes to multiple NCAA Championships and has been named NCAA Coach of the Year several times. Schumacher earned his bachelor’s and master’s degree in physical education from the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse. He also serves as the IWU Athletics Diversity & Inclusion Designee.



Professor of Political Science **James Simeone** was also named a Ben & Susan Rhodes Professor of Peace and Social Justice. Simeone joined the faculty of Illinois Wesleyan in 1992. Simeone is the co-founder of IWU’s Action Research Center and the originator of IWU’s Advocacy Minor. He earned a bachelor’s, master’s and doctorate degree in political science from the University of Chicago. His research examines the development of liberal democratic values and institutions amid the pressures of free market capitalism and group identity politics.



Professor of Music and Director of Choral Activities **Scott Ferguson** became the Rosetta Sherff Professor of Music. Ferguson joined the faculty of Illinois Wesleyan in 1996. He earned a bachelor’s degree at Oberlin Conservatory, a master's degree in fine arts from the University of California, Irvine, and a doctorate in musical arts from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. His choirs have appeared on tour around the globe and he has presented choral workshops and lectures in the U.S., Europe and South America.

[A full list of Illinois Wesleyan Endowed Professorships can be found here.](#)

By Julia Perez