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## Class of 2022 Celebrated at Commencement on Quad

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# Class of 2022 Celebrated at Commencement on Quad

May 1, 2022

BLOOMINGTON, Ill – Illinois Wesleyan University celebrated the graduating class of 2022 on Sunday with the first outdoor, in-person commencement ceremony since 2019.

More than 400 graduating Titans accepted diplomas on the stage at Kemp Commencement Plaza on the Eckley Quadrangle with family, friends, faculty and staff in attendance beneath the budding trees.

- [See the Commencement program booklet](#)
- [Watch the Commencement ceremony video](#)

The resounding themes of the University’s 172nd commencement ceremony were perseverance and optimism for a brighter future.

President S. Georgia Nugent’s opening remarks included words of congratulations and encouragement for the graduates.

“To today’s graduates – I hope you will find that your studies here have been meaningful and will guide you in later life, maybe even unexpectedly,” she said, going on to refer to her own college studies of philosophy and how stoic philosophy continues to inspire her today.

Chair of the Board of Trustees Timothy J. Szerlong '74 greeted the sea of green gowns by commending the class for their ability to successfully navigate the college experience through an unusual environment brought by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“You adapted with discipline, flexibility and unselfishness that made a tough situation better and safer for all, which has demonstrated a compelling example of individual and collective leadership. We applaud you for that effort,” said Szerlong.

He explained how the skill of passionate leadership can be applied in every career.

“You do not have to be the boss to lead,” said Szerlong. “There is a great opportunity for each of you to contribute to the success of any organization you may be part of. Seize that opportunity, ignore the noise and skepticism around you – and there will be plenty of it – and step forward, use what you have learned and you will experience the gratification that comes with making a difference in your work, your community and in your advocacy for others.”

President of the Alumni Association Board of Directors Dirk Behrends '87 illustrated how each class of alumni are connected despite generational differences – asking members of the crowd to stand if they were the first in their family to graduate college, if they changed majors at least once while at IWU, if they were a member of a Greek organization or if they were a student-athlete.



He then welcomed the class of 2022 as the newest members of the Alumni Association.

“We were here to support you to get here today and now you will be one of us,” said Behrends. “My hope is you will do well in your chosen fields, but my expectation is that you will do good as an IWU alum who gives back to our alma mater in the way of your time, your talent and your treasure.”

Class President Julia Hilt '22 reflected on the experiences her classmates shared together at Illinois Wesleyan and how support from others helped ensure their success. Upon looking out over the crowd, she said while she could see future physicians, performers, architects and activists, she could also see lifelong friends.

“I see genuine people who have a shared experience and understanding,” said Hilt. “So I am grateful for my time here at IWU and the education and networking and professional opportunities, but I am so grateful for all of you because you have all helped shape me into the woman I am today.”

She went on to thank faculty, staff, her parents and peers, “because you are why I will forever call IWU my home.”

Representing members of the faculty, Class of 2022 Professor of the Year and Associate Professor of Educational Studies Maggie Evans remarked that despite the global challenges that unfolded during their college experience, the opportunity to make a change is possible through this next generation of Titans.

“You are smarter in your choices, quicker to consider others, healthier in the way you live your lives, passionate about issues of equity and incredibly creative,” she said. “Our society is at a time when life is changing so drastically – we are lucky that you will be the architects of that change.”

During the commencement ceremony, [five faculty members were honored as endowed professors](#): Professor of English Joanne Diaz, Professor of Biology Edgar Lehr, Director of Track and Field Christopher Schumacher, Professor of Political Science James Simeone and Professor of Music Scott Ferguson.

Commencement speaker, Dr. William Farrar '71, was awarded an honorary doctor of humane letters degree at Sunday’s ceremony before addressing the class of 2022. In his speech titled, “The Power of Passion and Perseverance,” Farrar acknowledged how the graduating class has balanced their college experience with the pandemic, persevering “through grit and grace.”

“You have seen your academic and personal lives upended as you’ve made big changes to protect yourselves and those around you from the coronavirus and its evolving strains,” he said. “Like me, you may have felt overwhelmed by these sudden and drastic changes, but I hope you have been inspired by the people around you.”

Farrar explained how his education at Illinois Wesleyan propelled him into a career in surgical oncology and led to multiple leadership roles at Ohio State’s James Cancer Hospital and Solove Research Institute – the third largest cancer hospital in the country – where he currently serves as the chief executive officer.

“Thanks to the well-rounded education I had received at IWU, my preparedness for medical school in many ways set me apart,” said Farrar. “To that point in my life, I had experienced my share of successes and failures. At IWU and later at the University of Virginia, I learned that although everyone will face obstacles and setbacks along their way, all of us can overcome them if we are fueled by perseverance and a desire to always do more.”



Farrar closed his remarks by encouraging students to “live a life of passion, serve others, surround yourself with good people, be honest and tell the truth, look for opportunities and confront obstacles.”

“And remember if you decide to return someday to these premises, IWU surely will welcome you home.”



Left to right: Provost Mark Brodl, Chair of the Board of Trustees Timothy J. Szerlong '74 and Dr. William Farrar '71.

By Julia Perez