



Summer 8-29-2022

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New Titans Welcomed at Convocation

Aug. 29, 2022

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — The power of place and the value of tradition were shared with incoming students during Illinois Wesleyan University's New Student Convocation on Wednesday, Aug. 24.

- [Watch the Convocation on video](#)

Cheers filled the auditorium of Presser Hall as President Georgia Nugent announced to the 430 students, "I have the opportunity to declare you are all officially Titans now."

[She went on to address the 2022-23 campus-wide theme: "The Power of Place."](#) Nugent encouraged students to consider the theme in three parts.

First, she explained "this place," referring to the IWU campus and surrounding community.

"Be present here. Explore this place. We are fortunate to have a beautiful campus with many nooks and crannies that may become your favorite hang-out," said Nugent. "Also get to know the Bloomington-Normal community. This is a community that is really supportive of students."

She also encouraged students to explore "that place," such as a physical location or experience outside of their comfort zone, including study abroad programs, internships, literature and new intellectual ways of thinking.

Nugent then addressed the importance of nurturing "your place."

"How do you want to place yourself as you have the opportunity and freedom here to determine that? This is an awesome responsibility — but it's why you're here and it's why your faculty are here — to help you find your place," she said.

Student Senate President Zehra Bakirdan '23 explained the value of tradition, support and life-long friendships that are found at Illinois Wesleyan.

"You are walking into a community that is full of support and encouragement that is backed by tradition. As your story begins to



Vice President of Student Affairs and Dean of Students Karla Carney-Hall welcomes the incoming Titans during the New Student Convocation at Presser Hall.



New students at Illinois Wesleyan University gather for a group photo in front of State Farm Hall during orientation.

come together, you will become part of these traditions, but even more, they become part of you," said Bakirdan.

Provost and Dean of Faculty Mark Brodl continued highlighting some of the traditions followed at Illinois Wesleyan in the last 172 years, including convocation events such as the new student welcome and eventual graduation ceremony. He asked the students to look around at their peers in the auditorium.

"You will be learning with them as well as from them. You will be learning both in the classroom and beyond. There is no doubt that this will be challenging but also richly rewarding," said Brodl. "As of today, you are now part of Illinois Wesleyan's community of scholars. Your faculty, staff members, classmates and also Illinois Wesleyan University alumni will be working with you to realize your very best."

He shared how [the annual summer reading program explored the many dimensions of the power of place](#) for the character of Kya in "Where the Crawdads Sing" by Delia Owens. Incoming students were invited to write an essay based on the novel. Brodl announced that Delainey Guiney '26 won first

place in the essay contest with Sam Fogarty '26 and Celina El Ghossaini '26 earning honorable mention.

Prior to the convocation event, students gathered for a group photo at State Farm Hall before writing their goals and dreams in chalk on the sidewalk surrounding Aspiration Fountain, yet another symbol of tradition and unity found at Illinois Wesleyan.

Vice President of Student Affairs and Dean of Students Karla Carney-Hall also welcomed the convocation audience and shared some statistics about the new students, including the Class of 2026:

- New Titans traveled to Bloomington from 21 states, plus Washington, D.C., and 25 countries.
- Individuals who self-identify as students of color make up 36% of the incoming class. The class includes 111 first-generation students along with more than 30 Titans who had a close family member or relative attend Illinois Wesleyan.
- Members of the class are interested in pursuing 33 different academic programs, while 13% haven't yet declared a major.

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

- Someone who does pigeon racing with her dad.
- A cancer survivor.
- Someone who plans to bowl professionally.
- A group of LGBTQIA+ advocates who are launching a gender equity non-profit.
- A certified scuba diver.

"Today you join the tradition of community," said Carney-Hall. "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. Each with a deep desire to build lasting relationships and build a strong community of mentors and friends. Today you begin a journey of shared experiences that build both individual character and community."



Students chalking their goals and dreams on the sidewalk surrounding Aspiration Fountain before participating in the New Student Convocation on Wednesday, Aug. 24.