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Growth of RSOs Boosts Sense of Community on Campus

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BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — Registered Student Organizations are thriving at Illinois Wesleyan University, with students registering at least seven new organizations with the Office of Student Involvement so far during the 2022-23 academic year.

New RSOs include Encounter, Debate Club, Women in Finance, Investment and Trading Scholars Club, International Student Organization, Muslim Student Association and Inside the Human Psyche.

"I love seeing new organizations form on campus," said Assistant Director of Student Involvement Julie Henderson. "When a student initially talks to me about starting a new group and what inspired them to do so, it really just goes to show the amount of leadership we have here. IWU simply wouldn't be IWU without our RSOs. I'm so grateful to work with students that increase our sense of community and belonging through their involvement and make our campus what it is."

[The Office of Student Involvement](#) serves as IWU headquarters for RSOs. The office is designed to stimulate an interchange of ideas, activities and opinions; to develop an appreciation of diversity; and to contribute to an enjoyable campus environment. More information about the [dozens of organizations established](#) on campus, [steps to register a new student organization](#) and more can be found on the office website.

"Our office prides itself on helping students at Illinois Wesleyan University find a sense of

belonging and home," said Director of Student Involvement, Tyler Manning.

"Student organizations provide a space for students to engage with one another, build community and enhance their knowledge and skills in areas that are important to their overall success on campus."

Several of the new organizations on campus were created to offer support, shared community and to provide representation for specific student groups at IWU, including the International Student Organization (ISO).

Bea Manlapaz '25, one of the founding members of ISO, noted that the number of international and exchange students enrolled at Illinois Wesleyan has nearly doubled since she first arrived on campus.

"We wanted to create a space to accommodate this growing community," said Manlapaz, who serves as the ISO public relations chair.

ISO's founding members include:

- President, Luisa Jhong Chung '23 (Peru)
- Vice President, Varvara Kuznetsova '24 (Russia)
- Secretary, Anjali Malali '26 (India)
- Treasurer, Rem David '26 (Philippines/Saudi Arabia)
- Public Relations Chair, Bea Manlapaz '25 (Philippines)
- Programming Chair, Jarry Liang '26 (China)
- Student Representative, Vale Suarez '26 (Venezuela)

ISO's mission, according to their [Instagram](#) page, is "to celebrate and promote diversity within the international student community and to encourage unity and intersectionality within the students. We strive to familiarize our campus with the richness of the diverse cultures the international students bring through our experiences and traditions."

According to Manlapaz, the most exciting part about founding this RSO is that "the organization has the potential of making a huge cultural impact on campus and possibly getting more international students to attend IWU."

ISO members hope to partner with the Language Resource Center and other cultural RSOs in the near future. Those interested in attending future events should follow ISO's Instagram to stay updated.



Members of the IWU International Student Organization gather for food and fellowship. Courtesy of International Student Organization

IWU faculty and staff often identify a need for an RSO and help guide students in taking the first step to organize a group. Assistant Professor of Finance Mikhail Munenzon encouraged Klaudia Wyszynski '23 to form an RSO to support women in finance and provide mentorship after he noticed an underrepresentation of women in his classrooms.

“Being a finance major since sophomore year, I and many others have recognized the unproportional representation of men over women within finance courses. After professor Munenzon asked to speak with me after class one day and offered an idea to start a club in hopes of providing mentorship and building confidence within the male-dominated field of finance, I was eager to bring this new idea to the IWU community,” Wyszynski said.

Women in Finance was founded by:

- Klaudia Wyszynski '23
- Kayleigh Hall '23
- Maggie Mascari '23
- Megan Moody '23
- Lauren Wong '23

Women in Finance is looking forward to co-sponsoring future events with the Investments and Trading RSO, which is also a recent addition at IWU. All events are advertised on the bulletin boards in State Farm Hall.



The Muslim Student Association recently hosted an event to educate the campus community about hijabs and how they are worn. *Courtesy of the Muslim Student Association.*

“The establishment of Women in Finance is an asset to Illinois Wesleyan University. With the extraordinary support from professor Munenzon, women like myself are gaining the

confidence they need to become successful in the field of finance,” Wyszynski said.

Another newly established RSO, the Muslim Student Association, was founded with the intent to uplift and support Muslim students while offering other students on campus the opportunity to learn about Islamic culture.

MSA was founded by:

- President, Yahyobek Mamirov '26
- Vice President, Asyah Hussein '24
- Secretary, Hadi Imtiaz '25
- Treasurer, Idania Silva '23
- Public Relations Chair, Emily Arteaga '24
- CEO, Mukhammadaziz Khusenov, '26

According to their [Instagram](#) page, MSA's mission is to “provide a friendly atmosphere for our students to unite

and develop together. Islamic teachings have shown a great positive impact in the lives of many Muslims, bringing peace and success, and we want to share them with you through weekly gatherings. We will celebrate various Islamic holidays and learn more about Islamic culture.”

“[While the founding of] MSA was crucial for Muslim students who were missing their home, families, traditions, prayers in the congregation, Quran recitations, food and many

others, MSA's mission goes beyond these conditions,” said RSO president Yahyobek Mamirov '26. “Because Islam encourages people to study from birth to the end, MSA has to provide such conditions where students are able to learn more and benefit from Islamic teachings.”

Mamirov said being able to reserve rooms on campus for prayer is critical for this aspect of the RSO's mission.

“It is crucial for Muslim students to be reminded and have an atmosphere similar to their home,” he said. “It is important for non-Muslim students who are interested to learn more about Islam. It is important for all students regardless of their nationality, religion, race or identity to unite and live, study, explore together.”



Members of the Muslim Student Association meet regularly for evening prayer on campus. *Courtesy of the Muslim Student Association.*