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Griffith and Irby Honored with University Leadership Awards for Inclusive Excellence

April 28, 2023

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — Kyle Griffith '07 and Courtney Irby have been named the 2023 recipients of the Illinois Wesleyan University Leadership Award for Inclusive Excellence due to their efforts to foster a climate of inclusion and advocacy on campus.

The sixth annual awards ceremony took place Thursday, April 27, during the Employee Recognition Celebration — the first in-person recognition celebration since COVID-19. The event also celebrated retirees and marked milestone anniversaries for employees.

Each year, the Leadership Awards for Inclusive Excellence are presented to staff and faculty members who have upheld the University's values of advocacy, education and community building. The recipients were nominated by members of the Illinois Wesleyan community and selected by the University Council for Diversity.

Staff Leadership Award for Inclusive Excellence: Kyle Griffith '07

As Director of Residential Life, Kyle Griffith plays a critical role in creating a climate of inclusion for students in their residential experience as well as supporting staff and faculty committed to equity and social justice, said Vice President of Student Affairs and Dean of Students Karla Carney-Hall upon presenting the award.

Griffith supports residents of the Rainbow Floor, a living-learning community for LGBTQ students at IWU, and also served as a partner in developing the Josephine Mabel Jackson community in Kemp Hall, an affinity-based living and learning space for students of color.

"Not only does this recipient create communities, he also invests in student leaders through [resident advisors] training and a collaborative initiative to develop a social justice peer educator course," said Carney Hall.

In addition to his commitment to work with students, Griffith has also supported staff development through work with the staff advocacy group JEDI (Justice, Education, Diversity & Inclusion), the Intercultural Fluency Committee and other departmental training initiatives.

"Finally, he simply 'shows up' for students as a regular attendee at the Posse Plus Retreat, 3D programs and anything where diversity, equity and inclusion are at the heart of the matter," said Carney Hall.

Faculty Leadership Award for Inclusive Excellence: Professor Courtney Irby

Assistant Professor of Sociology and Director of the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies program Courtney Irby is known for her commitment to inclusion both in and out of the classroom, said Provost Mark Brodl.

While Kirby's academics focus on gender and religion, she also carries that passion for advocacy to other areas of campus, serving as the advisor for the Josephine Mabel Jackson community and developing a peer leadership course called "Mentoring for Inclusive Excellence," which focuses on interdisciplinary work and collaborative partnerships.

One of her nominators wrote, "Her work has shone through in the academic arena by bringing to the forefront conversations that are centered on building a sense of belonging, a respect for diversity and a call to action for inclusion."

A student nominator shared, "She opens her doors to anyone willing to challenge themselves to learn different things and has been a catalyst in my adjustment to Illinois Wesleyan. I know I have someone in my corner who can see me for who I am as an individual and student, rather than just seeing what color skin I have."



Director of Residential Life Kyle Griffith was recognized with the Staff Leadership Award for Inclusive Excellence.



Assistant Professor of Sociology and Director of the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies program Courtney Irby was recognized with the Faculty Leadership Award for Inclusive Excellence.

By Julia Perez