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IWU's Fall Festival Welcomes First-Year Students

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — Students shaking hands, engaged in conversation, smiling, laughing—it may look like a typical social scene at Illinois Wesleyan University, but this is not a typical day. It is Fall Festival, a milestone event for 557 of IWU's newest community members, the class of 2008.

From Tuesday, Aug. 24, to Saturday, Aug. 28, Illinois Wesleyan will host its seventh annual Fall Festival. IWU President Richard F. Wilson and Narendra Jaggi, professor and chair of physics, will kick off the event and welcome the class of 2008 at First-Year Convocation on August 24 at 2:45 p.m.

Created in 1998 to replace a four-session orientation program, Fall Festival allows all first-year students to move into the residence halls during the week before classes start. It is administered collaboratively through IWU's divisions of Academic and Student Affairs and comprises independent, complementary programs and activities designed to assist first-year students with the transition to life at the university.

Specifically, the mission of Fall Festival is to introduce students to the concept of a liberal arts education and the opportunities for curricular and co-curricular academic engagement. The multi-day event also provides for the completion of institutional processes required of students, such as registration for classes, and completion of language placement exams and assessments.

"We moved to this model because we found that first-year students needed some time before the returning students were on campus to be able to find their way around and to bond as a class," said Angela Carver, assistant dean of students.

At last year's festival Carver was especially pleased by the students' "assertiveness in meeting one another" and expects the same from this year's incoming class. "Even on the first night, after an exhausting day of move in, students were eager to get to know each other," said Carver.

First-year students will attend 12 mandatory sessions addressing everything from how to use Illinois Wesleyan's technology resources to class registration. In addition, they will be entertained by IWU theatre majors who will present "Real World 101," a collection of short dramatic pieces that touch on many issues confronting college students.

Students are also encouraged to attend optional events including "Festival of Talents," a showcase of performers from the class of 2008, and "Playfair," an activity-filled event that Carver describes as a "huge ice-breaker."

During the day, students can choose to visit informative sessions such as "The Goods on Professors: What They Really Want," "Exposure, Exploration, and Engagement--Three Levels of Student Research Activity," and "Preparing for Life After College--While You Are at IWU."

Late night activities will also be offered including a performance by hypnotist Fredrick Winters, a dance party and "Big Bonanza Bingo," a large-scale bingo game offering prizes like laundry detergent and microwave popcorn. The Hansen Student Center will have extended hours and the Shirk Center will be open for first-year students who wish to play pickup games of basketball or volleyball.