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Illinois Wesleyan New Home for Former Tulane Student

Stew Salowitz
Illinois Wesleyan University

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CONTACT: Stew Salowitz, 309-556-3206

Illinois Wesleyan New Home for Former Tulane Student

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — On the second floor of Illinois Wesleyan's Gulick Hall, Minh Nguyen says some of his floormates have been kind of loud and have been knocking on room doors in the middle of the night.

Nguyen, who arrived at IWU on Labor Day after being evacuated from Tulane University in New Orleans 10 days earlier, is not complaining about his Gulick Hall neighbors. He is just glad to be, finally, in college.

An 18-year-old Vietnamese citizen, Nguyen spent his senior year in high school as an exchange student in Fort Worth, Texas, and had applied (and been accepted) at both IWU and Tulane for his college education. He opted for Tulane and arrived, with his Texas host family, for first year orientation at the New Orleans school on the morning of Saturday, August 27.

He was there for a half a day.

With the path and ferocity of Hurricane Katrina bearing down on New Orleans, Nguyen was encouraged by Tulane officials to leave his four suitcases in the dorm room he had been assigned and evacuate the campus for a few days.

"Classes were to start the next Wednesday (August 31) and they thought we'd all be able to be back on campus by then," said Nguyen, who returned with his host family to Fort Worth with only one of his suitcases and his laptop computer.

Tulane officials were right about the evacuation but when the levee broke, leaving the city and environs submerged in floodwaters, all 13,000 Tulane students, including Nguyen, were displaced.

In Fort Worth, with the knowledge that a return to Tulane was impossible for an undetermined amount of time, Nguyen started making calls to some colleges and universities who were still accepting the displaced students, and ended up back at Illinois Wesleyan, where he had been accepted last year and had a financial aid plan already in place.