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Actor Frankie R. Faison To Address Illinois Wesleyan Commencement

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Actor Frankie R. Faison, whose 30-year career includes numerous theatre, motion picture, and television credits, will deliver the commencement address at his alma mater, Illinois Wesleyan University, on Sunday, May 5.

The University's graduation ceremony in its 152nd year will take place at 1 p.m. on the Eckley Quadrangle. In the event of inclement weather, the ceremony will be held at the Shirk Center, 302 E. Emerson.

IWU will award bachelor's degrees to approximately 484 students at commencement. The graduating class includes students from 19 states and from 15 foreign countries. Individual honors will be recognized at commencement.

Born in Newport News, Va., Faison started acting in grade school plays and studied theatre at IWU's School of Theatre Arts where he had leading roles in such productions as *A Raisin in the Sun*, *The Tempest*, and *Oh, What a Lovely War*. While at Illinois Wesleyan, Faison also was a member of the varsity football team. Following his graduation in 1971, Faison went to New York University from which he earned the M.F.A. in theatre before beginning his professional career.

On Broadway, Faison earned a Tony and Drama Desk nomination for Best Supporting Actor for his portrayal of the brain-damaged Gabriel to James Earl Jones's Troy Maxon in August Wilson's award-winning play, *Fences*. His other Broadway appearances include *Getting Away with Murder*, the Brooks Atkinson Theatre production of *Of Mice and Men*, and the Circle in the Square revival of *The Iceman Cometh* and *Shadowbox*.

Faison's motion picture credits include *Silence of the Lambs* and *Hannibal* in which he played the memorable role of the conscientious prison guard, Barney, to critical acclaim. He has also appeared in *Mississippi Burning*, *Do the Right Thing*, *Coming to America*, *Manhunter*, *The Money Pit*, *Ragtime*, *The Chosen*, *Rich Man's Wife*, *Sommersby*, *The Thomas Crown Affair*, and *I Love Trouble*.

His most recent credit is the 2002 release of *Showtime* and will soon be featured in *Thirteen Conversations About 1 Thing*, *Gods and Generals* with Robert Duval, and *Red Dragon*, the formally released *Manhunter*, in which he will again portray Barney to Anthony Hopkins's Hannibal Lecter.

Starting in June, Faison will be part of the ensemble featured in the new HBO series, *The Wire*. His other television credits include appearances as a regular in *True Colors*, in which he played opposite IWU alumna Stephanie Faracy, and the ABC series *Prey*. He has also guest-starred on *Cosby*, *New York Undercover*, and *Law and Order*. In addition, he has been featured in the mini-series *The Langoliers*; the made for television movies *Sessions* and *Common Ground* as well as in the PBS specials *King Lear* and *Tomorrow's Families*.