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Orientation Programs Welcome New International and ALANA Students to Illinois Wesleyan

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – When Illinois Wesleyan University's class of 2013 arrived on campus Tuesday, Aug. 18, they met a group of 55 first-year students who had already settled in at IWU. This group had participated in International Student Orientation and ALANA Student Orientation, which were voluntary programs intended to enhance the experience of Turning Titan: New Student Orientation for certain groups of students.

International Student Orientation began on Thursday, Aug. 13 welcoming 27 international students from 12 different countries, while ALANA Student Orientation welcomed 28 African-American, Latino-American, Asian-American and Native American students to campus on Saturday, Aug. 15.

The International Student Orientation program helped ease the transition to life at Illinois Wesleyan, in Bloomington-Normal, and in the United States at large, for students from other countries. During the program, activities for international students included tours of the campus, meetings with faculty panels, bus rides to key locations around town and a crash course in personal banking. New international students also had a chance to bond with each other at social activities such as bowling, shopping, playing "Jenga" and a scavenger hunt.

"The idea is to connect international students with our community," said International Student and Scholar Advisor Reenie Bradley. "Many students may arrive wondering 'what is the norm?' in places from our communities to our shopping centers to our classrooms." To answer these questions, Bradley worked throughout the days and nights of International Student Orientation helping new students feel at home, occasionally working as late as 1:30 or 2 a.m. This round-the-clock support may have inspired her addition this year of a naptime to the daily schedule to help new international students relax and regularize their sleep schedules.

Another new addition this year was the evening scavenger hunt on campus. "Many international students voiced concerns about walking around campus at night this past year, and this event gives new students a chance to become familiar with the campus after dark as well as

learn about safety,” said Bradley. According to International Office Director Stacey Shimizu, this is one example of how the program adapts throughout the year to the needs of the students. “Every year we tweak the program to improve it,” she said. “We are always working on making students aware of the resources available to them and helping them to feel like a part of the community.”

ALANA Student Orientation introduced its participants to the community by introducing them to minority professionals from Bloomington-Normal and members of the IWU Minority Alumni Network at a “Mentoring Mixer.” Another way for students to connect with the community and a new feature of ALANA Student Orientation this year was a trip to Bloomington-Normal’s annual Cultural Festival. This allowed students to explore instances of cultural performance at Miller Park and participate in cultural activities. “We want to show our ALANA students that the greater community cares about cultural issues too,” said Acting Director of Multicultural Student Affairs Roshaunda Ross.

Also, new to ALANA Student Orientation this year was a dinner at the Multicultural Center. “The dinner introduced the students to a space they can call their own, and encouraged them to make use of it,” said Ross.

ALANA Student Orientation is an option for all African-American, Latino-American, Asian-American, and Native American students in the acronym ALANA. There are 73 ALANA students among the class of 2013, and Ross’s office calls every potential participant personally to make sure they are aware of the opportunity. “This year’s participants represented all of the letters in the acronym,” said Ross. “The group has been fantastic, and they make me excited to meet the rest of the ALANA students in the class of 2013.”

For more information about International Student Orientation, contact Shimizu at (309) 556-3190. For additional information about ALANA Student Orientation, contact Ross at (309) 556-3412.