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# Unity Gala Aims to Bring Joy, Celebrate Campus Community

BY JULIA PEREZ | FEBRUARY 26, 2024

## NEWS



BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — A celebration of the cultural richness within the community at Illinois Wesleyan University will take place at the sixth annual Unity Gala from 7-11:30 p.m. on Saturday, March 2 at Hansen Student Center.

[Guests are encouraged to RSVP here in advance.](#) Questions may be directed to [senate.diversity@iwu.edu](mailto:senate.diversity@iwu.edu).

The event is organized by [Student Senate](#), [The Alliance](#), the [Office of Diversity and Inclusion](#) and the [Office of the Provost](#). Student Senate commissioners Mannat Kaur Kandal '27 and Michael Ashton '27 worked closely with ODI staff and Alliance members to arrange the gala, along with Sodexo and Physical Plant staff.

As Student Senate Diversity and Inclusion Commissioner, Kandal said she is hopeful that attendees gain a sense of gratitude for the multifaceted groups at Illinois Wesleyan.

“The Unity Gala is meant to bring together our students, faculty and staff for an event that celebrates diversity, friendship and the strong connections that make IWU so special,” she said. “It’s an evening to allow everyone to find joy despite the shortcomings in our world, and to truly cherish the beautiful community we have on campus.”



Students embrace during a past Unity Gala in Hansen Student Center.

The theme for the event is “Around the World.” The gala will feature live music from the IWU student jazz band, entertainment from DJ Green B, food and refreshments. The dress code for the event is semi-formal. Guests are encouraged to embrace their own cultural roots when dressing for the event. Organizers ask that attendees be considerate and respectful of traditions from other cultures.

Director of the IWU Office of Diversity and Inclusion Sharla Brown-Ajayi describes the Unity Gala as an “authentically IWU atmosphere” where students, faculty, staff and alumni can gather for an evening that highlights the strength and pride of the campus community.

“I’m always proud of our students and how they work together with their peers to bring about this event. I’m proud of the continued and unwavering support the event has from faculty, staff, administration and our alumni,” said Brown-Ajayi. “That sense of pride is closely followed by a sense of hope. It’s awesome to see students dressed up, enjoying themselves, interacting with faculty, staff and alumni, and uplifting our campus community. I hope that everyone carries a bit of that with them throughout the semester.”