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Bob Aaron
Illinois Wesleyan University

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Contact: Bob Aaron, 309/556-3181

Model Illinois Government

IWU Freshman Eyes Role as State Senator in Four-Day Simulation of Illinois Legislature

Editor's Note: *Jacob Posey, an Illinois Wesleyan University freshman majoring in political science, is a 1995 graduate of Pinckneyville Community High School and a resident of Pinckneyville, Ill.*

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--He is only a freshman political science major, but for four days in February and March Jacob Posey will be an Illinois state senator, wheeling-and-dealing over legislation like a veteran Springfield lawmaker.

Posey, a Pinckneyville native, and five other Illinois Wesleyan University students will get a firsthand glimpse into state politics when they participate in a four-day legislative simulation, Feb. 29-March 3, at the State Capitol complex in Springfield.

The IWU students and approximately 300 others from about 25 campuses statewide will play the roles of state lawmakers, legislative staff, lobbyists, journalists, and others as part of the Model Illinois Government (MIG), a program launched in the late 1970s to show students about how the Illinois General Assembly operates.

Gun control, abortion, and education spending are some of the high-profile issues Posey and the other students are likely to grapple with in committee hearings and floor debates.

The student lawmakers will hold hearings in actual committee rooms and stage their legislative debates on the floors of the Illinois House and Senate.

Posey is spearheading IWU's participation. He joined MIG as a Pinckneyville Community High School student when he interned in the office of State Senator Ralph Dunn.

Posey outlined a typical daily schedule: committee meetings in the morning, afternoon Senate sessions, and night time caucus meetings to round out the 12-hour day. Student lawmakers gain experience drafting bills and moving them through

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the legislative process.

Jaime Ingle, a junior political science and English major from Maryville, Ill., a community near St. Louis, will work as a journalist on the State Capital beat during MIG.

Ingle, who has worked as a reporter-intern the past two summers for the *Edwardsville Intelligencer*, said: "Jacob brought up the Model Illinois Government program in our class on Congress and the Legislative Process. I hope to go into journalism as a career and this will give me my first chance to work on reporting political issues."

Ingle said that as a reporter she will cover committee hearings, bill markups, and floor votes. "I'll be making predictions," she said, "and I'll be interviewing members of the legislature and lobbyists as good sources of information."

A 10-member reporter-editor team will produce three, four-page newsletter-newspapers, reporting on legislative and other activities.

Other IWU students slated to participate in the MIG are:

- Dan Belasich, a freshman political science major from Wheaton, Ill.
- Minari Fernando, a freshman international studies major from Sri Lanka.
- John Krakowsky, a junior political science major from Chicago.
- Dana Oesterlin, a freshman from Hinsdale, Ill.

MIG also has a judicial dimension with a Moot Court that functions like the Illinois Supreme Court.

"Last year," Posey said, "the court ruled on the constitutionality of one of our laws and struck it down."

Other students will play the roles of governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, secretary of state, treasurer, comptroller, Chief Justice, Speaker of the House, and President of the Senate.

Students also will "work" as lobbyists, testifying before legislative committees and making political contributions to election campaigns.

Lobbyists, Posey said, bring a dimension of realism to MIG.

A dance, called the "governor's ball," will provide entertainment for MIG participants.

MIG, according to Ingle, gives students the chance to see the legislative process in action--something that's more interesting than just reading about it in

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books.

IWU, founded in 1850, enrolls about 1,850 students in a College of Liberal Arts, College of Fine Arts, and a four-year professional School of Nursing. A \$15 million athletics and recreation center opened in the fall of 1994; and a \$25 million science building opened in the fall of 1995. The Carnegie Commission for the Advancement of Teaching promoted Illinois Wesleyan to a "Baccalaureate I" institution in 1994, a classification that places it among 161 highly selective National Liberal Arts Colleges in the annual *U.S. News & World Report* rankings. *Barron's Profiles of American Colleges*, another respected college guide, rated IWU "highly competitive (+)" in its latest edition.