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Aug. 25, 1997

Contact: Bob Aaron, 309/556-3181Laura Williams, Fishers, Ind.

22 National Merit Scholars in IWU Freshman Class

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--Laura Williams, Fishers, Ind. (Southeastern High School in Fishers) is one of 22 National Merit Scholars in the 1997 freshman class at Illinois Wesleyan University.

Williams is among more than 1,900 IWU students--including about 560 freshmen, members of the class of 2001--who began classes today (Aug. 25) to start the 1997-98 school year. These are enrollment estimates available before classes began. Final enrollment statistics will be reported later.

Williams' interests include biology, chemistry, and natural sciences. Among her extracurricular activities in high school were the marching band (drum major), wind ensemble (flutist), French Club (secretary), the Academic Team, and the student newspaper (features editor). She is a member of the National Honor Society and was a five-time Student of the Month.

As a group, the 22 freshman IWU National Merit Scholars averaged a score of 32.1 on the American College Test (ACT), a widely used college entrance exam with a top score of 36. They also averaged a score of 1420 on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), another popular college entrance exam with a maximum score of 1600.

The IWU freshmen merit scholars are planning to major in biology, chemistry, computer science, English, political science, psychology, religion, theatre, and other fields.

Last year's IWU freshman class enrolled 14 National Merit Scholars.

Sixty-nine IWU students are National Merit Scholars. In addition to financial support they receive from Illinois Wesleyan, some IWU National Merit Scholars are assisted by the State Farm Companies Foundation, Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation, Inc., Dun & Bradstreet Corporation Foundation, Motorola Foundation PPG Industries Foundation, Storagetek Foundation, FMC Foundation, Ortho-McNeil Pharmaceutical, National Starch and Chemical Foundation, Inc., Nalco Chemical Co., PepsiCo Foundation, W. W. Grainger, Inc., Maytag Corporation Foundation, UPS foundation, and Albany International.

IWU, founded in 1850, enrolls about 1,900 students in a College of Liberal Arts, and its Schools of Music, Theatre Arts, Art, and Nursing. Since 1994, these facilities have been added to the IWU campus: a \$15 million athletic center, a \$25 million science building, a \$6.8 million residence hall, and a \$5.1 million liberal arts center. The Carnegie Commission for the Advancement of Teaching ranks Illinois Wesleyan a "Baccalaureate I" institution, a classification that places it among the 161 highly selective National Liberal Arts Colleges. IWU won the 1997 NCAA Division III men's basketball championship.