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# Inaugural Titan Choral Fest Brings High School Musicians to Campus

BY JEFFERY WOODARD | OCTOBER 02, 2024

## NEWS



BLOOMINGTON, ILL. — Nearly 100 Illinois high school students visited Illinois Wesleyan's campus on Wednesday, Sept. 25, for the inaugural Titan Choral Fest, led by the new Director of Choral Activities, Cody S. Parrott.

Organized by the IWU School of Music, high school students and teachers from across the state had the chance to sing and interact with the Illinois Wesleyan vocal community, including Parrott, the rest of the School of Music faculty and IWU music students.

"This was our first year, and for me, the sky's the limit," said Parrott. "I would love to see us outgrow the seats of Westbrook Auditorium. I am confident that after the first year, once word gets out about this type of event happening here at Illinois Wesleyan, we will be easily doubling [attendance]."

Parrott described the event as a non-competitive teaching and learning festival where "students from many schools combine their talents into a mass choir and share in the spirit of togetherness and singing."

"The Titan Choral Fest is the first of its kind for vocal arts within the School of Music at Illinois Wesleyan," said Parrott. "Throughout the history of this school, there has always been a strong presence from the choral area of the School of Music. This event will widen our profile with more high school vocal students, and hopefully give them the opportunity to seek out many resources that IWU and the School of Music offer, like our [Jennings Scholar program](#)."

The event included a recital and time for Q&A with current IWU voice students, a performance by the IWU Collegiate Choir and professional development courses for teachers. Students rehearsed three pieces — "Alleluia" by Elaine Hagenberg, "Oculi Omnium" by Charles Wood and "Elijah Rock" by Jester Hairston, all concluding in a final sing-fest at the end of the day.

"[Singing is something that Illinois Wesleyan is rather well known for](#)," said Parrott. "As I stepped into this new role as the director of choral activities, I wanted to establish a new precedent for high school recruitment as well as build on the legacy that has already been well-established by my predecessors."

Parrott took on the role at IWU after the 28-year career and retirement of J. Scott Ferguson, who was named the [Fern Rosetta Sherff Endowed Professor of Music](#) in 2022. Parrott said he was drawn across the country by the potential he saw in IWU's School of Music.

"I have seen such invigorating development and passion from the singers in our choirs," said Parrott. "Singing is in their blood, and they want to do it well. I'm so excited for what is to come, and it is truly a very exciting time to join the choral area at Illinois Wesleyan University."

Parrott, a Texas native, taught 12 years of high school choir there and held a year-long position as the Associate Director of Choral Activities at Mississippi State University before heading north to Illinois Wesleyan.

"There is already so much built into the [IWU] culture," said Parrott. "What I bring is a wide variety of experience with high school teaching, a passion for building voices through choral music and a real drive for bringing Illinois Wesleyan back to the forefront of the list of wonderful state-wide music schools."

Parrott said his passion for singing and teaching stem from a love of hymn singing, contemporary Christian music, country western music, gospel and the '90s big ballad singers like Whitney Houston and Mariah Carey.