



Spring 4-8-1998

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Recommended Citation

Wallace, Sherry, "IWU Professor/Student Duo Receive Grant to Study in India" (1998).
News and Events. 6978.
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April 8, 1998

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IWU Professor/Student Duo Receive Grant to Study in India

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--Illinois Wesleyan Assistant Professor of Religion and Humanities Brian Hatcher and IWU senior history major Andrew Busch (LaGrange, Ill.) were recently awarded a Freeman Foundation Student-Faculty Fellowship to support research in India this summer. The \$13,000 fellowship, administered through ASIANetwork, a consortium of liberal art colleges, will fund the pair's travel and research expenses in and around Calcutta.

During their six-week stay, Busch plans to examine the on-going interpretation and contemporary significance of the late 19th century Bengali mystic, Sri Ramakrishna, while Hatcher hopes to continue his current work on the historiography of socio-religious reform in modern Bengal.

According to Hatcher, the life and works of Sri Ramakrishna are "not just arcane pieces of history, but pertinent in contemporary Indian society. He is a cultural icon with his picture displayed in cabs and in homes." Hatcher describes Ramakrishna as "quite a charismatic figure, a rustic Bengali who is said to have taught a form of religious universalism around the turn of the century."

Today the monks of the Ramakrishna mission are active on many fronts, and an Institute of Culture in Calcutta. This institute continues to preach the message of religious universality.

Busch became interested in the project after taking Professor Hatcher's course, "Hindu Religious Tradition," in the spring of 1997. Hatcher became aware of the grant opportunity--the first year such fellowships have been offered--through the consortium, of which IWU is a member. Both were awarded the grant in February, 1998.

The ASIANetwork, which funded the project, was formed to promote Asian Studies. The consortium began in 1992 when 45 liberal arts college representatives met to discuss curriculum design, faculty development, study abroad programs, and grants and resource development for Asian studies.

The organization now includes over one hundred North American colleges and universities focused on strengthening the role of Asian Studies within liberal arts education, to prepare undergraduates for a world in which Asian societies will play a prominent role.

IWU, founded in 1850, enrolls about 2,000 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 center opened in fall 1995. The \$5.1 million Center for Liberal Arts, a facility housing 60 faculty offices, six classrooms, and other facilities for social science, humanities, business and economics, and interdisciplinary studies' faculty, opened in August 1997, as did a new \$6.8 million residence hall. The Carnegie Commission for the Advancement of Teaching promoted Illinois Wesleyan to a "Baccalaureate I" institution in 1994, a classification that places it among 159 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.