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English Major Designs New Web Site For Illinois Wesleyan's

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www.iwu.edu/admissions

English Major Designs New Web Site For Illinois Wesleyan's Admissions Office

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.—Just point and click . . . and Illinois Wesleyan University comes alive.

High-school students interested in finding out if IWU is the school for them now have a new user-friendly tool on the World Wide Web at www.iwu.edu/admissions.

IWU's new admissions' web site—featuring lots of photographs, glitzy graphics, animation, and 360-degree shots of buildings, inside and out, as part of a virtual campus tour—was designed by senior English major Timothy Mills of Decatur, Ill.

Mills crafted the state-of-the-art marketing and student-recruitment site as a summer project when he worked in IWU's admissions office.

"I tried to keep the design simple, but visually interesting," Mills explained, adding: "I want to go into web site or CD-ROM design after I graduate. This project will be a good experience for me to put on my resume."

A Great Communications Tool

Mills believes in the World Wide Web.

"The web," he said, "is one of the greatest communications tools of all-time. It can be used for so many different things—it's public, it can disseminate news, and information can be found on it about anything."

Mills is no rookie when it comes to computer graphics, which he has dabbled with since grade school.

"Personally," the 1996 Decatur Eisenhower High School graduate said, "I see us moving away from the printed page, so web and CD design seem to be the way to go."

Students around the world will be able to go on-line to explore IWU and find out how to apply to the university.

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IWU Admissions Website/2

The Future of College Admissions

"This web site represents where college admissions is going in the years ahead," said IWU's veteran Dean of Admissions, James Ruoti. "A key ingredient in the college-selection process is seeing the campus. Now, students and their families will be able to see IWU from the comfort of their living rooms. But, that's just a start. There's really no substitute for a campus visit.

"The higher-education marketplace is increasingly competitive," Ruoti added, "as students and families search for the right fit in terms of programs, location, and finances. That's why campuses always are looking for new approaches to marketing. Consequently, the Internet and other high-tech tools—like CD-ROMs—are playing an increasingly large role in the college admissions process."

Web Site Showcases IWU Student Talents

IWU's web site, Ruoti explained, is different in one important way.

"It showcases just the type of unique opportunities students have at IWU," he said. "In many ways, that's our best marketing tool. The web site is hard evidence of just what type of professional, innovative, and imaginative work liberal-arts students—like Tim Mills, an English major—can do at Illinois Wesleyan. It shows the creativity, analytical thinking, and problem-solving and organizational skills students develop at a liberal-arts university like Illinois Wesleyan.

"The web site," Ruoti added, "is an example of just how much confidence IWU has in its students. Marketing and student recruitment are our life blood—and we had all the confidence in the world that an IWU student could give us what we needed to be successful in the new world of 'electronic' recruiting."

Web-Site Features

The colorful web site features hot buttons guiding users to general information about IWU, admission criteria, financial information, a virtual tour of the campus and a map, biographies of admissions' counselors and their e-mail addresses, and an IWU application. Web-site visitors can tour

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IWU Admissions Website/3

academic, athletic, and residential buildings. The site also includes quotes from students, faculty, and others, as well as "factoids" about IWU such as the annual utility bill for the Center for Natural Sciences tops \$1 million.

Mills was tapped for the web-site assignment after he showed a CD-ROM he created to Ann Harding, assistant director/internship coordinator at IWU's Career Center. Harding suggested to Mills that he contact the admissions office about the possibility of designing a CD-ROM for use in student recruitment. The web site evolved out of that initial idea.

Lessons Learned

Mills learned several key lessons developing the web site. Among them are the need for patience when working with a diverse group of colleagues and the need for photographs and other graphics to supplement text for effective communication.

"People want to do more than read," Mills said, "they want to see the campus. I came to Illinois Wesleyan, in part, because of what the campus looked like. They also want to see the campus in relation to the community—for example, the residential area around the campus provides a contemplative, park-like setting."

Mills also learned much about marketing, especially marketing himself in terms of honing his self-confidence and verbal communications skills as part of the project.

Technically, he discovered that compatibility is a big issue in web-site design. There are many web browsers on the market, Mills explained, with varying levels of sophistication.

"I created two versions of the web site," Mills said, "so people with lower-tech equipment could use it. This was a management decision. I also opted for simplicity in design. When a site is too cluttered, it's too difficult to get around. When people can't figure out a web site, they're more likely to leave it."

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Mills is the son of Paul and Shelley Mills, 23 Glenview Dr., Decatur.

About IWU

IWU, founded in 1850, enrolls about 2,070 students in a College of Liberal Arts, and individual schools of Music, Theatre Arts, Art, and Nursing. Since 1994, these facilities have been added to the IWU campus: a \$15 million athletics and recreation center, a \$25 million science center, a \$6.8 million residence hall, a \$5.1 million Center for Liberal Arts, and a \$1.65 million baseball stadium.