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Critical Connection

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Pritts (left) and Ford learned their shared IWU connection while working together on a trauma team providing critical care.

Critical Connection

At Cincinnati medical center, alumni team up to save lives.

Story by DANIELLE KAMP '15

Saving lives is an everyday occurrence for Timothy Pritts '91 and Kris Ford '07, who first crossed paths at the University of Cincinnati Medical Center (UCMC). Timothy, assistant professor of surgery, and Kris, a third-year resident in the Department of Emergency Medicine, often work as part of a trauma team together, providing care for patients in critical conditions.

Timothy and Kris first established their IWU connection through sharing stories about biology professors Robert Hippensteele and Bruce Criley (emeritus). "Kris figured out I was an IWU grad after I baited him with a series of obscure references to Criley's developmental biology class and Hippensteele's physiology finals," said Timothy. "Kris is obviously a bit more caught up on the campus than I am, and I had fun hearing about all of the great changes at Illinois Wesleyan." Ford is about to start his final year of residential training to become an emergency medicine physician.

As trauma surgeon, Timothy leads the team of physicians and nurses from the emergency department, surgical intensive care unit and operating room in the treatment of each patient. Since UCMC has the only adult level I trauma center in the region, his team receives a large number of patients every evening.

Timothy is also an instructor for a training center at UCMC that helps train Air Force personnel on how to transport critically injured service members. There are only two other training sites of this kind in the United States.

The training center instructs doctors and nurses on how to work under the stressful, confined and high altitude conditions they will face in transport planes through training exercises in a simulation center. Timothy is currently working on multiple research projects for the program, including studying the effects of freezing red blood cells for extensive transport trips. By learning how microparticles form in stored red blood cells, doctors may be able to prevent inflammation and further injuries in patients.

“I get to play many roles in my job,” said Timothy. “I care for patients who are injured and critically ill; perform research on how to improve care for the injured; and educate physicians, residents and students.” Along with teaching and supervising Kris, Timothy has also worked with Brent Mardsden '00 and has interviewed many IWU grads for surgery residency positions. Timothy enjoys trading stories with fellow alums and also greatly appreciates the classes, professors and overall learning experience he received at Wesleyan.

“Each time I work on a problem, whether in the OR, trauma bay, ICU or lab, I think about Criley and Hippensteele,” said Timothy. “I continue to value my IWU education every day.”

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