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## Class of 2017 Urged to 'Explore Broadly, Dig Deeply'

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## Class of 2017 Urged to 'Explore Broadly, Dig Deeply'

Aug. 21, 2013

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Illinois Wesleyan University welcomed 571 new students to campus Aug. 20 at the New Student Convocation in Westbrook Auditorium. Preliminary numbers indicate this total is about 40 students more than fall 2012 and Wesleyan's largest entering class since 2010.

The new students traveled to Bloomington from 27 states and 17 different countries. The Class of 2017 is also the most diverse entering class to enroll at Illinois Wesleyan, with nearly 28 percent of the class students of color or international students.



The Class of 2017 learned the Alma Wesleyana at the New Student Convocation.

Tony Bankston, dean of admissions, told the students their classmates included: a state speech champion; a Barack Obama impersonator; a flamenco dancer; a published author on Kindle; a state discus champion and shot put contender who also plays cello; a student whose great-great-grandfather graduated from Illinois Wesleyan in 1895; someone who decided to become a physician after being bitten by a brown recluse spider and rushed to the hospital on a small island; and 34 lacrosse players to help the University field its first team in spring 2015.

Keynote speaker Rebecca Roesner, chair and associate professor of chemistry, admonished the students to open their minds to the “buried treasures” of a liberal arts education.



Rebecca Roesner

Most of us know what it is to be broadly educated, but we're not fond of subjects that make us feel uneasy or inept, said Roesner, who addressed the students as the winner of the 2014 Kemp Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence —the University's highest teaching honor. It's easy to dodge those disciplines in order to glide through, she said, but we should embrace that which challenges us.

“The best ideas in science, business and medicine are rarely the fruits of isolated determination,” said Roesner. “They arise from a broad and reasoned understanding....that is nurtured by a liberal education.”

Roesner told the new Illinois Wesleyan students of one who had gone before them, Dr. Diana Alame '01, who was one of Roesner's top general chemistry students in 2000-2001. A top general chemistry student who goes on to medical school is a story nearly as old as the profession, but Alame's tale is unique in that she was a music major.

“Not-the-music-and-biology-double- major-who-always-always-wanted-to-be-a-doctor kind of music major, but rather a really talented, music-loving, kind of music student,” said Roesner. “Until she took “Human Biology” as a junior because it was the only Life Science lab course that fit in her schedule. Even though that wasn’t part of Diana’s master plan, she dug in wholeheartedly and with an open mind. She fell in love with science, and it changed her whole life plan.”

Roesner urged the new Titans to also dig in now and not wait for certainty or experience.

“The deepest levels of intellectual engagement, the boldest expressions of creativity and the most engaging opportunities for leadership are available to you right now,” said Roesner. “Leave your comfort zone and accept the challenge of the liberal arts. Don’t postpone finding joy and fulfillment in what you’re learning.”

President Richard F. Wilson told the students the president is responsible for two traditions at New Student Convocation. One is formally matriculating the new Titans as members of the Illinois Wesleyan student body, but the other is more light-hearted. Wilson led students through their first recitation of the University’s motto, “Scientia et Sapientia” (which roughly translates to “knowledge and wisdom”).

“We hope you will accumulate the former and convey the latter,” said Wilson. “You should do more with your time here than simply acquire facts and information. Learn how to use that new knowledge wisely for the benefit of others. If you are successful, you will find that your life will be transformed, and your time here will be more meaningful than you have ever imagined.”

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