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Remarks and Messages

Richard F. Wilson

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# School of Nursing Convocation Remarks

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## School of Nursing Convocation

September 27, 2007

I am delighted to have the opportunity again this year to participate in the School of Nursing Convocation. I not only have the privilege of welcoming the entering nursing class of 2011, I also get to extend a special greeting to the senior nursing students who started their first year with me in 2004 and will be the first class to spend four years on campus during my presidency. This is a special year for me in lots of ways.

The nursing program at Illinois Wesleyan is one of our distinctive characteristics and sets us apart from many other liberal arts universities around the country. The opportunity to combine your interest in a particular profession with a solid grounding in the liberal arts makes for a wonderful educational experience. Your success following graduation will certainly be tied to the quality of nursing instruction that you receive while you are here, but I will venture to say that your academic and extracurricular experiences outside of nursing will be equally important. I find such experiences to be both critically important and complimentary.

In recent years, much attention has been given to the importance of preparing students to live in a global society. I almost hate to use that phrase because it has become a bit of a cliché. At the same time, I think the phrase also sends an intuitive message, one that is vitally important to all of us but particularly important to those of you in a health field.

This campus has devoted considerable attention to globalization over the last three years, reflected directly in Ambassador Stephen Lewis's remarks at last year's President's Convocation about AIDS in Africa and in Tracey Kidder's book, *Mountains Beyond Mountains*, that was the Summer Reading selection for new students and that details the impact of tuberculosis in Haiti, Peru, and Russia. The experiences described by both people emphasize that health crises are inevitably complex, ones that require strong analytical and empirical skills, well-developed critical thinking and writing skills, and effective interpersonal skills. All of these skills are at the core of the nursing curriculum at Illinois Wesleyan.

About six months ago, noted author David Halberstam was killed in a tragic automobile accident in California. He was on this campus in 2004 and impressed us all with his keen insights into important issues facing society. I would like to close my remarks with a story I have used before. During a question and answer session a student asked him the following question: Given the complex and seemingly intractable problems and issues that exist in this country and around the world, what advice do you have for students? He paused for a moment and said: "make a difference of one," I hope you will keep this message in mind as you engage this community as a student and as your career unfolds following graduation.