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Inauguration of Eric R. Jensen

Eric R. Jensen

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Calls to Leadership

Deon Hornsby, Class of 1997
Illinois Wesleyan University

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Calls to Leadership

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From the Board – Deon Hornsby '97, Board of Trustees

It's truly an honor to speak on behalf of the Board of Trustees, as we install Illinois Wesleyan's 19th President. As one of the newest members of the Board, I was asked by President Wilson to come down for an orientation, to discuss my new responsibilities as a member of the Board. The first responsibility, he said was "you will be selecting my successor." That's a heavy task for newcomer!

During that first meeting with the Board, there were a group of people in the Davidson Room - people that I've known of and admired from afar for many years - glowingly speaking on the merits of the person that the Search Committee would recommend to be the next President of Illinois Wesleyan.

Having been a student at Wesleyan under the visionary leadership of President Myers - who dared us to dream of a place that IWU could become - and working in concert with President Wilson over the past decade as an alum - as so many students, faculty, staff and alumni did to apply laser like focus to transform lives - in my mind, the bar was set very high. In meeting President Jensen shortly after his election, I knew that the Board had made the right decision.

President Jensen's background helps him bring a different and fresh perspective to our end goals, while continuing to allow us to promote our strengths and improve us where needed. As was the same at President Wilson's inauguration 11 years ago, we are in challenging times. Tough decisions are being made across all walks of life, both here on campus, in the state and across the nation. There is intense competition amongst institutions to attain the talented students that will sustain us. Many talented people here are being asked to do more with less while maintaining the focus on our core values that are outlined in our mission statement - attaining the ideal of a liberal education and providing unique opportunities through our curricula and programs, while maintaining our commitment to diversity, social justice and environmental sustainability. And our students are seeking an environment that is reflective of the ever-changing world they will be entering. We have a collective duty to ensure that we are doing right by those who seek a Wesleyan education and our Professors that are lighting the path!

General Colin Powell once said that "great leaders are almost always great simplifiers, who can cut through argument, debate and doubt to offer a solution everybody can understand." The challenges that we face will not easily solved and not all days will be bright. But we have a strong foundation already in place, at this point in our history, we have the leader in place that can continue to make Illinois Wesleyan the place that we all know that it can be and that we all

want it to be.

Eric and Elizabeth, on behalf of the Board of Trustees of Illinois Wesleyan, we're happy to formally welcome you to the Wesleyan Family as our 19th President and First Lady! We know that with your leadership, the future is bright and we have many more great days of being a Titan ahead!

From a Presidential Perspective – Richard F. Wilson, President Emeritus

It is my great pleasure to represent all former presidents at this special ceremony inaugurating Eric Jensen as the 19th President of Illinois Wesleyan University. As I review the history of people who have served in this key role, I find many examples of presidents who made a profound difference in the trajectory of the University, from the Reverend Oliver Spencer Munsell who rescued the University from financial collapse in 1856 and Theodore Kemp who worked with the distinguished local architect, Arthur Pillsbury, to develop a plan used to site Stevenson Hall, Memorial Gym, and Buck Library to Robert Eckley who used his considerable business skills to establish a firm financial foundation for the University and Minor Myers whose irrepressible enthusiasm and vision moved the University into the top tier liberal arts colleges in the country.

Based on the former presidents I have known and those for whom there is a written record of their work, I have concluded the Board of Trustees has an enviable record of selecting someone to serve as chief executive of this institution who is uniquely qualified to address the challenges of the day and make lasting contributions. I have had several opportunities over the last six months to interact with President Jensen and believe the Board of Trustees has hit another home run in terms of selecting someone to serve as president whose values, experience, instincts, and interpersonal skills match well with what is needed for the years ahead.

I need not tell this audience nor this president that these are challenging times for higher education, especially private colleges and universities. There are almost daily reports calling attention to the struggles of colleges and universities in the private sector. However, we all can take comfort in the fact that Illinois Wesleyan can draw on a considerable reservoir of strengths in facing its future.

From Alumni – Elly Jones '91, President of the Alumni Association

The Alumni Association of Illinois Wesleyan University is honored to welcome Eric R. Jensen as the 19th President of our great institution. Our proud tradition of excellence in education will continue as Dr. Jensen leads the university.

The Alumni Association is committed to partnering with University leadership, faculty and staff to further its mission and vision. The association is continuing its momentum through building relationships and developing programming. Our strategic priorities include:

- Enhancing alumni engagement with the University through regional chapters and auxiliary groups, such as:
 - The Council for Women, whose mission is to support female students and alumni.

- The Minority Alumni Network, which is dedicated to recruiting and supporting minority students and alumni.
- Succession planning for leadership of the Alumni Association;
- Partnering with the Career Center to link students with alumni for mentoring, as well as internships and job opportunities;
- Development of an alumni and student task force committee; and
- Increase the level of commitment to IWU through the Wesleyan Fund.

I am very proud to be a Titan and honored to represent the entire Alumni Association. We are delighted to welcome you, Eric to Illinois Wesleyan as you continue to lead the University into the future!

From Faculty – Michael B. Young, Robert W. Harrington Endowed Professor of History

Eric Jensen, on behalf of the faculty, it is a great pleasure to welcome you as our 19th president.

We are fortunate that you are willing to serve as our leader in these perilous times.

In preparation for this speech, I read the calls to leadership at the inauguration of Dick Wilson. On that occasion they must have been handing out rose-colored glasses at the entrance to Shirk Center. Or did we really have so little idea what lay ahead of us in 2004? In the years that followed, Dick must have felt a little bit like Job at times. But—like Job—Dick persevered in the face of each adversity, and we are grateful for his tenacity and his decency.

Now the job is yours, Eric, and this time there can be no illusions. These are hard times, and they're likely to get harder. Two weeks ago, faculty and staff learned that, contrary to expectations, next year—again—we will get no pay raises, no further restoration of the reduced contributions to our retirement accounts, and no benefit from the fact that we took on a greater share of the cost of our medical insurance, saving the university about one million dollars.

So I polled the faculty and I asked them, just how angry do you want me to be in this call to leadership? And the answer, *to my surprise*, was not angry at all. How can that be? Maybe the people who responded are not a representative sample. Or maybe the faculty are too demoralized and discouraged to even be angry. Or maybe they realize that we're nearly all in the same boat, that 84 percent of Americans have had no increase in income since 2007, and universities all across this nation are struggling to survive.

Or maybe it's because this faculty has a long history of dedication and sacrifice; and we are willing to continue that tradition, for the sake of the university, especially if we are shown a little *appreciation*.

Most of all, I think today we offer *encouragement* instead of complaining because we *want* you to lead. We *need* you to lead. We have already seen in your first five months on the job that you have the know-how, the vision, and the drive to revive our fortunes. So do lead. Continue the work you have already begun. Make the case to supporters of this university and to the public at large that a liberal arts education is not out-dated. Persuade them that liberally educated students

are not just better equipped to lead productive lives but worthwhile lives. On campus, encourage curricular innovation, so that while we preserve what is valuable from the past, we do not fail to adapt to the future. Reallocate our resources in a more rational way, not just by the numbers, mind you, but in proportion as well to what is most critical for our mission. Involve *us* in making the hard decisions that will be necessary. And make those decisions strategically, not merely opportunistically, as we have done up to this point. Meanwhile, remember *your* origins as a faculty member and do not lose sight of the *human* cost as you scrutinize spread sheets. Finally, allow me to end on a personal and historical note. Five hundred years ago, Machiavelli wrote *The Prince*, a book which is still considered a classic on leadership. Machiavelli famously declared that it is better for a leader to be feared than to be loved. I have worked here under 4 presidents and 2 acting presidents, and from that experience I have learned that Machiavelli was dead wrong. It is far better for a leader to be loved than feared. Bear that in mind, too, as you go about doing all these other important things.

Well, that's a tall order. But you're a tall man. And we are rooting for you to succeed.

From Staff – Eric Gordon, 2015 Max Starkey Service Award recipient

I am very pleased and quite proud to be here today on behalf of the men and women who serve on the Illinois Wesleyan University staff. President Jensen and Mrs. Jensen, we welcome you to our University community. The staff is composed of multi-talented individuals, each of us proud of Illinois Wesleyan University and each of us committed to our own specific roles in the support of the University, and especially, our students.

As my personal role in the “blue collar” field of the University, I was thrilled to hear of the backyard barbeque and bluegrass celebration being held at the Shirk Center. Both sides of my family originate from the hills of Kentucky. Our grass is blue. President Jensen, I hope you don't mind that I have taken the liberty of inviting many of my family members from Kentucky to join us in the events taking place this weekend.

They were very excited at first, but then disappointed to find out that the guest speaker was not Larry the Cable Guy. Also troubling to them was the fact that the nearest Wal-Mart is nearly four miles away. But, when I informed them that the Shirk Center does have indoor plumbing and shower facilities their spirits were greatly lifted.

I have been in contact with the IWU Security Office and asked them not to tow away the many broken down rv's that will be parked around our campus. They are not abandoned and they will be gone by Monday. I have also informed them that if they see folks drinking from Mason jars during the day, there is a good chance that a Hatfield and McCoy style feud may be going on in the quad later that evening. I have requested additional security near Aspiration, the water feature behind State Farm Hall, as the temptation will be great for my family to jump the “cement pond” ala Dukes of Hazard style during their visit. So be on the lookout for any suped up 1969 Dodge Chargers around the campus.

In conclusion, we are excited about the future of Illinois Wesleyan University. We are all proud Titans. President Jensen, there are many great challenges ahead. You have the opportunity to advance equity among all Illinois Wesleyan employees and to lead us with vision and courage to even great accomplishments.

My personal wish for you is that you are able to complete each work day with a feeling of satisfaction and that you begin each new day with enthusiasm.

The members of the staff wish you every success in your presidency.

From Students – Lane Bennett '18, President of Student Senate

Leadership is something that we presume to be one of the natural qualities of our University's president, but what do we assume leadership to be? I kept trying to put the right words together to describe what leadership means to us students, but I kept coming back to the same thing every time. I could find no better call to leadership than what one of this University's greatest leaders had used so many times to inspire students to do great things and that is, "Search for what is true. Stand for what is just. Strive to make a difference." Former President Richard Wilson truly left a mark on this campus of what students expect to see out of our campus leaders.

In the search for truth leaders must always seek out the thoughts and ideas of those that follow them. To stand for what is just leaders will use their best judgement to ensure not only the betterment of the group but also that the group will see fair treatment from its leaders. The strive to make a difference is something that needs to touch everyone on a personal level.

In the time that I've had the privilege to work with President Jensen, I know he is committed in the search for what is true, in the stand for what is just, and is striving to make a difference in the life of every single student on this campus. President Jensen is working to bring the liberal arts education into the 21st century through collaborative engagement. To bring together students, faculty, staff, and administration to lead this University towards a brighter future.

The bar has been set on what we expect to see from our leaders, our challenge is to see that bar raised even higher under our new leader. President Jensen, the students of this campus are behind you on this journey towards greatness, and we know that with you striving to make a difference that we will find what is true, that we will stand together for what is just, and that our future can be only more promising. President Jensen, on behalf of all students I wish you the best of luck and I look forward to continuing to work with you on our University's path towards greatness.