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## An Educational Experience IWU Hosts Annual Research Conference

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*An Educational Experience*  
**IWU Hosts Annual Research Conference**

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--Want to listen to Mozart, study the synthesis of an anti-cancer compound, discover the French wine industry, or introduce yourself to the occupation of female truck driving?

Thanks to the John Wesley Powell Research Conference, this eclectic combination of educational experiences will be available at Illinois Wesleyan University April 11 and 12.

Showcasing over 50 undergraduate research projects in academic areas including psychology, economics, political science, biology, English, and history, the conference offers students a chance to expose their ideas to the community and also observe others' ideas, says conference coordinator and IWU Assistant Professor of Chemistry Jeff Frick.

"Any student who's done research can participate, whether it's a senior honors research project or a project completed in the context of a class," Frick said. "The conference offers these students a chance to present their ideas in a professional atmosphere."

Conference participation also allows students to decide if they are interested in future research, something IWU senior Melissa Sprowl needed to experience.

"Preparing for the conference made me realize how extensive and time-consuming research really is," said Sprowl, who hopes her project on subtyping domestic violence offenders will encourage the development of different treatments for various types of batterers. "The conference has prepared me for doing research in graduate school."

Conference activities begin Friday, April 11, when keynote speaker and renowned economist Mancur Olson addresses the issues of "power and prosperity" in the Main Lounge of IWU's Memorial Student Center, 104 E. University St., Bloomington. There is no admission fee for Olson's speech, which is open to the public.

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Olson--a former Johnson administration health, education, and welfare official--is the founder and principal investigator for the Center for Institutional Reform and the Informal Sector (IRIS). IRIS conducts research and provides technical assistance and policy advice to former communist and Third World nations. IRIS's 50-member staff operates on a \$7 million annual budget.

The conference will continue on Saturday, April 12, with its first poster session, accompanied by continental breakfast, at 9:00 a.m. in the Commons of the Center for Natural Science Learning and Research (CNS), 201 E. Beecher St.

At 10:30 a.m., oral presentations of select student projects will begin and run concurrently in the Beckman Auditorium and Anderson Auditorium of the CNS.

Lunch will be served at noon in the Memorial Student Center, Main Lounge, followed by a second poster session in the Science Commons at 1:30 p.m.

Immediately following the second session an awards ceremony, including an alumni presentation, will conclude the conference in the CNS' Anderson Auditorium at 2:30 p.m. At this time, the IWU chapter of Phi Kappa Phi will recognize its initiates, as well as announce winners of their new award program. The program offers \$100 research awards in recognition of conference participants' "scholarly excellence."

The conference is named for explorer-geologist John Wesley Powell, a one-armed Civil War veteran and a founder of the National Geographic Society. Powell joined IWU's faculty in 1865 and was the first U.S. professor to use field work to teach science.

In 1867, Powell took IWU students to Colorado's mountains--the first expedition of its kind in the history of U.S. higher education. Later, Powell was the first director of the Smithsonian Institution's Bureau of Ethnology.

Past research conferences have produced projects which have gained exposure beyond the IWU campus. For example, two physics projects featured in the past were supported, in part, by an \$80,000, three-year grant from the federal space agency under the NASA/JOVE (University Joint

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Venture) program. Another project produced a musical play, performed on campus, which was named a regional finalist in the American College Theatre Festival competition.

The conference also attracts contemporary scientists, including last year's keynote speaker, famed Harvard University evolutionary biologist and best-selling author Stephen Jay Gould, who has proposed a key modification to Charles Darwin's theory of evolution and is an advocate for the theory of "punctuated equilibria," in which evolutionary change may take place in spurts, followed by long, stable periods of equilibrium.

IWU, founded in 1850, enrolls about 1,900 students in a College of Liberal Arts, College of Fine Arts, and a four-year professional School of Nursing. A \$15 million athletics and recreation center opened in the fall of 1994; and a \$25 million science building opened in the fall of 1995. The \$4.6 million Center for Liberal Arts--a facility housing 60 faculty offices, six classrooms, and other facilities for social science, humanities business and economics, and interdisciplinary studies' faculty--is slated to open next August, as well as a new \$6.8 million residence hall. The Carnegie Commission for the Advancement of Teaching promoted Illinois Wesleyan to a "Baccalaureate I" institution in 1994, a classification that places it among 161 highly selective National Liberal Arts Colleges in the annual *U.S. News & World Report* rankings. *Barron's Profiles of American Colleges*, another respected college guide, rated IWU "highly competitive (+)" in its latest edition.