

# Assurance Argument

# Illinois Wesleyan University

Review date: 11-16-2026

## **1 - Mission**

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The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

### **1.A. Mission Alignment**

The institution's educational programs, enrollment profile and scope of operations align with its publicly articulated mission.

#### **Argument**

##### **Publicly Articulated**

Illinois Wesleyan University's mission is encompassed in three areas: The Mission Statement, Vision Statement, and the University's strategic planning materials. (1) The Mission Statement communicates the values the IWU community embraces. The Vision Statement elaborates on those core values to create an enhanced understanding of the University's purpose and expectations of and for its constituents. Strategic planning materials are multi-year initiatives that operate as the link between words and action. Mission-driven documents (2) are prominently displayed on the University website, on academic and administrative department sub-pages and printed materials, as well as in the Faculty and Staff Handbooks.

##### **Alignment with Educational Programs**

Taken together, the mission documents reflect deep and enduring commitments to the pursuit of liberal inquiry and critical thinking, lifelong learning, social justice, diversity, global citizenship, and environmental sustainability. These commitments, as well as other mission-driven goals, are in alignment with the goals of the University's Shared Curriculum program, which provides the foundation of an IWU education. Students fulfill the goals of the Shared Curriculum by meeting the requirements within 14 broad categories that address problem-solving, oral and written communication, value systems, and formal reasoning, among others. In addition, these attributes are found throughout the University's academic units and are communicated through the course catalog, program-based mission statements and guidelines, and in the student learning goals within each respective academic unit's Strategic Assessment Plan (StrAP). (3) Recent evidence concerning the alignment of mission-driven commitments and educational programs may be found in the University's recent enrollment and revenue plan (Craig's document), which includes the establishment of the Petrick IDEA Center (a center for interdisciplinary inquiry, collaboration, and creativity), strategic curricular planning (e.g., new academic certificates and programs), and new athletic programs. (4) All of these educational initiatives complement the University's mission and values.

## **Alignment with Enrollment Profile**

The University's mission is in alignment with its enrollment profile. As noted in the mission documents, the University seeks to recruit and retain a highly talented and diverse student body that will engage in close interactions and collaborations with faculty and staff. These attributes are evident in the demographics of IWU students. For example, over the past 10 years, the domestic diversity (5) of IWU's overall enrollment has significantly increased. Additionally, the average standardized test scores have maintained their high levels. (6) Over this same period, despite reductions in student headcount, the student-faculty ratio has remained between 11 and 12:1. The University's retention and graduation rates (7) remain high as well, reflecting a strong level of student engagement and satisfaction with the commitments made within the mission documents.

The University is a residential institution and prides itself in being a tightly-knit, supportive community. To retain a larger percentage of juniors and seniors on campus, which enhances the on-campus experience for all students, a three-year residency requirement is expected for most students, except under special circumstances. Approximately 80% of IWU students are housed on campus. (8) The University expects this percentage to maintain or increase over time.

## **Alignment with the Scope of Operations (range of activities)**

As noted earlier in this section, the University's enrollment and revenue plan (Craig's document), outlines revenue and enrollment projections based on recent mission-driven strategic planning regarding academic and athletic enhancements. This planning document is the result of contributions from faculty, staff, the administration, and the Board of Trustees in efforts toward future budget development and enrollment management.

Similar to educational programs, the planning and implementation of student support services are strongly guided by the mission documents. As evident in the University's actions in recent years, great attention has been paid to student support services, especially concerning the overall quality of student life (i.e., physical places, acclimation, wellness, and programmatic opportunities). In December of 2022, the Office of Residential Life was moved to the Memorial Center. This office relocation provided greater visibility and accessibility to the students, thereby enhancing services. (9b) In the summers of 2023 and 2024, Munsell and Ferguson Residence Halls were renovated, which included new restrooms, updated bedrooms, and a complete makeover of the first floor. (9) The management and day-to-day operations of the Illinois Wesleyan University Arnold Health Services were assumed by the Carle BroMenn Medical Center in Normal over the spring of 2023. This partnership with the University is to enhance preventive care and health education, including an increase in referrals to specialists in women's health, behavioral health, and orthopedics. (10) Another recent enhancement to student services includes Rising Titan Summer Orientation, which is a one-day experience designed to facilitate fall registration for classes, engage in reflective conversations about the college experience, and meet Titan Orientation Leaders. (11)

Attention has also been directed towards student satisfaction and the campus climate to help ensure the IWU student experience is in alignment with its mission documents. Several assessments of students, faculty, and staff have taken place over the past few years.

Examples are as follows: (12)

- 2022, 2023 New Student Survey
- 2022, 2023 Returning Student Survey
- 2023, 2024 First-Year Student Satisfaction Survey
- 2023 Graduating Student Survey
- 2024 Sexual Assault Survey (Illinois Board of Higher Education)
- 2024 Diversity and Equity Survey
- 2025, 2026 First-Year Student Experience Survey

Results of these surveys were disseminated via several venues, including meetings and communications with the Retention Committee, Staff Council, faculty members, Cabinet, Student Senate, and the Board of Trustees. Conclusions and recommendations concerning the general campus environment, the campus programmatic environment, and the affirmation of institutional support were disseminated throughout the campus community and posted online. Summaries for many of these reports were also included in the Office of Institutional Effectiveness' Institutional Reports (i.e., email communications to faculty and staff), which are produced twice or more each year. (13)

## **Sources**

- PRES\_OIE\_mission\_statement

## 1.B. Mission and Public Good

The institution's operation of the academic enterprise demonstrates its commitment to serving the public good.

### Argument

The University's commitment to the public good is formalized in the Mission Statement and more directly asserted in two specific paragraphs within the Vision Statement: (1)

*The University will strive to graduate individuals who are intellectually curious, socially aware, environmentally informed, ethical, and engaged citizens, who make significant contributions to their local, national, and world communities.*

*The University will aspire to create an extended University community—including not only those on campus, but alumni, trustees, parents, donors, and friends in the local community and from around the world—that is welcoming to all and committed to Illinois Wesleyan's core beliefs, which emphasize the spirit of inquiry, intellectual integrity, breadth of knowledge and understanding, tolerance of dissent, respect for cultural diversity, and strength of character.*

Evidence concerning the University's recent history regarding its commitment to the public good may be found throughout several University actions and activities, many of which are included as follows:

The Action Research Center (ARC) (2) facilitates the alignment of University resources with community engagement opportunities. ARC creates partnerships where students, faculty, and staff collaborate with not-for-profits, for-profits, and educational institutions to address social justice issues in the communities we share. The ARC model of community impact uses asset-based community development strategies and project-based learning. ARC oversees a long-standing partnership with the West Bloomington Revitalization Project where students have started programs such as the Tool Library and the Veggie Oasis, authored numerous grants (including being part of a team that received a \$1.4 million grant from the Illinois Department of Housing), and staffed the Bike Co-op through the Illinois Cooperative Work Study program. ARC also manages the Weir Fellowship in Action Research. The 2025 Weir Fellow student recipient created a partnership with the local school district to provide translation services to non-English speaking families at registration, open houses, and parent-teacher conferences. Each spring, ARC offers a community-based research course, which is cross-listed in Sociology and Political Science, as well as a grant writing course in the fall. ARC is responsible for civic education outreach, including voter engagement efforts, and registered over 300 students to vote in the 2024 General Election. ARC staff have presented on community engagement innovation at national and local conferences.

The Illinois Small Business Development Center (SBDC) (3) of McLean County at Illinois Wesleyan University provides free consultative assistance and professional advice to small businesses and aspiring entrepreneurs in McLean County and surrounding communities.

Services include: one-on-one management consultations, training workshops, market research, loan packaging help, assistance with financial projections, and information needed to make informed business decisions. Workshops and training are co-hosted throughout McLean County. Monthly sessions of “How to Start a Business in Illinois” are featured. Topics range from financing, marketing, personnel management, employee recognition, customer service, cybersecurity, and insurance.

Theatrical, musical, and artistic performances held on campus or supplemental venues (e.g., Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts, Holy Trinity, Wesley United Methodist Church, and streaming services) are attended by Bloomington-Normal residents and are reviewed in the local media. Exhibitions held by local and national artists, IWU faculty, and students are housed in the University’s art galleries and regularly open to the public. The Lunch and Learn Series, co-sponsored by Illinois Wesleyan, McLean County Museum of History, Bloomington Public Library, and Collaborative Solutions Institute, regularly offers sessions featuring IWU faculty and staff sharing their interests and research with the local community. The University is pleased to welcome the public to hear the numerous speakers and performers from around the country and the world who visit the IWU campus. Many of these performances are offered free of charge. (4)

For over 10 years, Illinois Wesleyan faculty have sponsored an annual intellectual theme to synthesize learning around a central concept and create a vibrant intellectual environment on campus for students, faculty, and staff. The theme guides the summer reading program for new students, lectures (e.g., Founder’s Day speaker, MLK Teach-In speaker, and John Wesley Powell keynote), co-curricular activities, and clustered courses. The annual theme works best when faculty, staff, and students are inspired by how their current interests can be framed with the theme in mind. Many of these events were open to the public. (5 & 6)

The use of the Shirk Athletic Center exemplifies one of the many ways in which the University encourages local community attendance and support. As a recreational facility for students, faculty, staff, alumni, and the community at large, the Shirk Center also serves as a host facility for use by external groups such as the Illinois High School Association, the National Collegiate Athletic Association, the Special Olympics, group activities sponsored by McLean County and Bloomington-Normal tourism board, and many other summer programs. One significant event held at the Shirk Center on an annual basis is the State Farm Holiday Classic high school basketball tournament. The University has **27** varsity teams for men and women, serving approximately 600 student-athletes. Thus, the Shirk Center is a key campus facility, making its accessibility to the surrounding community that much more impressive. As of 2025, there were approximately **800** Special User Passes to the Shirk Center, with 400 to 500 still active. Sixty-five different external groups utilized the facility for 120 actual dates. **Seventy-five percent** of the faculty, staff, and students make use of the facility regularly. (7)

The School of Nursing offers examples where the relationships cultivated with the external community greatly enhance the learning offered within the professional programs. The School of Nursing prides itself not only on the multiple clinical experiences in which our students engage but also on the diverse types of clinical experiences our program offers. Some examples include placements at local hospitals, large regional medical centers, elderly residential units, community health and home health agencies, juvenile detention centers, clinics, local and regional schools, and early childhood centers. These experiences offered in multiple sites enable nursing students to compare various healthcare delivery systems and to study care in diverse populations. Some of the communities within the state

where nursing clinical experiences are situated include Bloomington-Normal, Champaign, Clinton, East Peoria, Peoria, Hopedale, Mahomet, and Urbana. Additionally, more than 50% of nursing students complete an internship during their final semester. (8) In response to the increased need for Spanish-speaking and culturally competent nurses in the United States, students in the IWU Barcelona Program take language and Shared Curriculum courses at the Barcelona School for International Studies while having the opportunity to observe clinical settings within the Spanish healthcare system.

Students in the University's School of Educational Studies program engage in several clinical experiences external to IWU. Students often have a yearlong relationship with their cooperating teacher, working in public school settings for the semester before their student teaching with the same cooperating teacher (9). Student teachers are asked to take full responsibility for analyzing their strengths and challenges in direct cooperation with the cooperating teacher and the University supervisor. As a result, student teachers are fully supported and encouraged to develop their teaching competencies to the highest degree of proficiency possible for novice teachers. Cooperating teachers and public school officials know that students who progress through our program will receive an uncommon amount of attention and support from the University. IWU students are considered to be well-prepared and ready to assume classroom responsibilities when they pursue their clinical work. The large number of IWU graduates employed as teachers in our local school system is testimony to the strength of the program. In committing resources to a quality Teacher Education program, the University is reiterating to the wider world the importance of teaching as a core value within its mission.

The University's mission documents include service with external local, regional, national, and international constituencies. There is considerable evidence that supports the effectiveness of these engagements with each of these communities. The University's GREENetwork maintains a comprehensive list of accomplishments in its annual reports. (11)

Evidence concerning incentives for students to develop and implement projects that make a meaningful impact on the community, both domestic and global, include the following:

- **Weir Fellowship:** This fellowship involves initiatives that exemplify mission-driven attributes of creativity, character, and social awareness. (12)
- **The IWU Peace Garden (PG):** Founded in 2012, the PG serves the curricular and culinary needs of IWU students, providing a tool of civic engagement with the surrounding community and beyond. Expanding its reach and impact on an annual basis, recent highlights from students engaged in PG activities include a Sustainability Education Program for local elementary students, the development of the Lloyd M. Berthof Apiary and IWU Beekeepers, and multiple community-based activities. (13)
- **IWU Language School for Kids (LSK):** Established in 2014, the LSK was made possible by an IWU Donnocker Program Innovation Grant. The School offers quality second language programs in French and Spanish that serve children PreK to 5th grade from the Bloomington-Normal community and surrounding areas. The LSK is IWU mission-driven by providing unique opportunities for students. It also creates on-campus teaching opportunities for IWU teacher pre-candidates and academic internships in the languages; promotes community engagement, and, provides teaching experience to enhance competitiveness for post-graduate fellowships. (14)
- **Technos International Prize:** A prize awarded to a senior IWU student who has excelled in both study and practice relating to international and global affairs as

determined by the International Studies faculty at IWU.

- **Freeman Foundation Asia Internship at Technos International College:** Interns work with the English language teacher, and their duties can include assisting in the classroom, preparing for classes and exams, helping students with their homework, helping students practice their oral skills, and they may eventually teach a class. Interns spend early to mid-May to mid to late June in Japan, living in a nearby sharehouse. (14A)
- **STEAM Olympics:** In 2025, IWU hosted a multi-day science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics event of hands-on learning for local students in first grade through high school. (14B)
- **Voting:** Finally, the use of the Hansen Student Center as a polling place for local elections is another example of how the University serves the community. (15)

## Sources

*There are no sources.*

## 1.C. Mission and Diversity of Society

The institution provides opportunities for civic engagement in a diverse, multicultural society and globally connected world, as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

### Argument

The University's commitment to recognizing its role in a multicultural society is evident in its mission documents. The Mission Statement articulates a commitment to diversity and social justice and acknowledges that "Our curriculum deepens the specialized knowledge of a discipline with a comprehensive world view." The Vision Statement provides a stronger stance concerning diversity. (1)

*The curriculum and cocurriculum will promote a strong sense of Illinois Wesleyan's place in the local and in an interconnected global community, and the University will demonstrate a meaningful commitment to social justice and environmental sustainability. The University is open to students, faculty, staff, and trustees from a wide range of experiences, viewpoints, cultures, and backgrounds. In this setting, all members of the University community—students, faculty, staff, parents, alumni, Trustees, and friends—will be valued contributor to campus life.*

Over the fall of 2025, the University established a new Office of Campus Culture. This office focuses on cultivating a sense of community through meaningful engagement, shared learning, and open dialogue. Programs explore cultural traditions and a variety of viewpoints. The Office of Campus Culture is aligned with Student Affairs, with the charge to transform programs that support retention and growth opportunities for every Illinois Wesleyan student. Important activities fall under four broad categories:

- Educational (e.g., cultural conversations, traditions, Dr. MLK Jr. Teach In)
- Building Bridges (e.g., Bridging the Gap/Deliberative Dialogue, pre-orientation)
- Belonging (e.g., peer mentors, cultural and spiritual support, incident reporting)
- Celebrating Campus Cultures (e.g., Unity Gala, cultural celebrations)

As noted in the 09.18.25 email messages to the IWU community, the University re-allocated resources in response to the guidance on federal expectations facing higher education, specifically associated with diversity, equity, and inclusion. (1A) The information following this passage reflects a historical perspective of IWU before the noted structural changes.

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The organizational structure charged with supporting and guiding the University in achieving our goals concerning diversity and inclusion is led by the University's first Vice President of Inclusive Excellence (VPIE), a Cabinet-level position established over the 2022-2023 academic year. The VPIE supervises the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI). The ODI is

dedicated to the promotion of a campus community that appreciates, encourages, and celebrates diversity. The ODI advocates for students, creates spaces for cultural celebrations, promotes leadership development, and provides opportunities for education and reflection about multicultural, privilege, and gender issues. Emphasis is placed on the experiences and needs of underrepresented and marginalized students. (2)

Over the summers of 2022, 2023, and 2025 (after a one-year hiatus), ODI sponsored the Summer Enrichment Program (SEP), which focused on three major areas involving the professional, academic, and personal growth of the participants. As a part of the program, students received formal professional training utilizing a variety of activities to address proper dining etiquette, appropriate dress attire in business settings, interview skills, and to hone public speaking abilities; learn from diversity workshops, complete an internship, and participate in volunteer activities that culminate in a final social service project. Once the students complete the program, they receive a merit scholarship to use for any academic purpose. (3)

The VPIE also established the Diversity Advisory Council (DAC), which is responsible for supporting the University's commitment to diversity and social justice. Since its inception in February 2024, the Council has been gathering data to inform current initiatives and future strategic planning efforts. There are also DAC subcommittees working on a Chosen Name process for IWU and a Land Acknowledgement Statement, as well as a resource list for IWU and community resources for several different identity markers. (3C)

Before the establishment of the VPIE, IWU had a long-standing committee (since 2009), the University Council for Diversity (UCD). (4) The UCD included staff, student, and faculty representatives and was inspired by the American Association of Colleges and Universities' (AAC&U) initiative, *Making Excellence Inclusive*, and adopted "inclusive excellence" as a supplemental mandate for its work. Both the Provost Office and the Human Resources Office have agreed to use such language in their recruiting materials. "Inclusive excellence," in its full text, is as follows:

*The integration of diversity and educational quality efforts into the core of the academic mission and institutional functioning. Diversity and inclusion are conceptualized as a multi-layered process through which we achieve excellence in learning; research and teaching; student development; institutional functioning; local and global community engagement; workforce development; and more.*

UCD outcomes still utilized today include the 2013 adoption of the Bias Incident Reporting Protocol, which is included in the faculty, exempt, and non-exempt staff handbooks, and is also made available to students. This University-wide policy to collect data elements concerning bias incidents allows for the identification of patterns and recommends programmatic responses to improve conditions that contribute to bias incidents. In 2024, the established the Bias Educational Support Team (BEST), which receives bias incident reports, and follows up with documentation and investigation, allowing the University to monitor and evaluate the campus climate on an ongoing basis. (5)

Another significant UCD outcome was the establishment of Search Advocates (SA) for all personnel recruitment. Trained through the Oregon State University Search Advocate Program, IWU faculty and staff serve on personnel searches to ensure inclusivity and to introduce the possibility of unconscious bias. Working with a SA is a requirement, whether

there is a search committee or not. The SA must participate in all aspects of the hiring process but is not expected to have voting rights. The SAs are there to provide oversight to the search process to ensure that the University is doing everything possible to use search opportunities to diversify our faculty and staff. In addition, a candidate statement addressing their preparation concerning the University's commitment towards diversity, equity, and inclusion is required. (6)

The Admissions Office has sponsored several programs to reach out to prospective students from diverse backgrounds. Since 2010, the office has held the ¡Tu Universidad! (Your University) program for prospective students and their parents. Sessions regarding the admission and financial aid process were offered both in English and Spanish. The Admissions Office has also conducted "Multicultural Weekends" for prospective students, and, over the past decade, has created new summer programs to educate prospective high school students and to engage them in considering the educational opportunities available at IWU. (7)

Evidence concerning the University's support for LGBTQIA students includes the LGBTQIA Student Life webpage, which contains numerous resources, including a faculty and staff "out" list, an LGBTQ+101: Terminology page, and information concerning all-gender restrooms, and support for transgender students. IWU also has a Rainbow Floor, which is gender inclusive living-learning community committed to counterspace, education, and activism around social justice for LGBQA and TGNC people. The Rainbow Floor is the entire first floor of Pfeiffer Hall. (8)

The University annually offers SafeZone training to empower faculty, staff and students to serve as resources for individuals who are interested in becoming more knowledgeable about sexual orientation and gender identity. SafeZone also provides LBGTQIA students and employees easily identifiable, supportive spaces to feel comfortable and safe in a confidential environment. (9)

Special events sponsored by ODI includes the annual charitable Drag Show (hosted by the Pride Alliance), and the Lavender Graduation ceremony, which recognizes graduating students' contributions to IWU and the LGBTQIA community. In addition, The IWU Pride Alliance, a student-run organization dedicated to equality for all students regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, provides social and political support to help ensure the safety and equality for all in the community. (10)

In keeping with the Illinois Wesleyan mission, the International Office, through its services and programs, seeks to develop students' ability to understand and analyze contemporary societies outside the U.S.; enable students to understand their own identity and culture and be sensitive to commonalities and differences among and within cultures; help students deepen and broaden their disciplinary knowledge through study abroad; and prepare students for responsible citizenship in a global community. In this role, the Office has two primary functions: (1) assisting international students and scholars and (2) administering the University's semester-long, full-year, and short-term study-abroad programs. (11)

In order to recognize IWU colleagues whom have made outstanding contributions that champion diversity, inclusion, and sustained commitment, the University instituted the Inclusive Excellence Leadership Award. Established in 2018, the award identifies faculty and staff who have made exceptional efforts in celebrating diversity and demonstrating a

commitment to advancing inclusion to create a safe and supportive community. The award recipients were nominated and selected by students, faculty, and staff. (12)

A number of mission-driven initiatives concerning diversity, engaged citizenship, social justice, and personal development extend beyond the classroom. Evidence includes the following:

- **STEP Peer Mentoring Program:** Sponsored by ODI, the Succeeding Through Empowerment and Proactiveness (STEP) Peer Mentoring program pairs incoming students from underrepresented backgrounds with an older student to provide them with support and guidance to enhance students' social and personal adjustment to Illinois Wesleyan University. (13)
- **The Center for Human Rights and Social Justice:** The Center brings together numerous human rights programs and initiatives from across campus. The Center annually sponsors five student summer internships, four internationally prominent human rights speakers, two Undergraduate Research Workshops, two campus-wide human rights workshops, and the Peace Fellows program, where selected students pursue integrated coursework, internships, and independent studies that relate to social justice, peace, and conflict resolution themes. (14)
- **Asian Pacific American Coalition (APAC):** APAC holds events to celebrate and promote appreciation and awareness of Asian culture on campus, which serve as spaces to promote community and camaraderie between Asian students and the student population as a whole. In past years, events celebrating Asian heritage and culture included Friendsgiving, Red Envelope & Wishes, Lantern-Painting, and Origami Valentines. In 2024, APAC won the Collaborative Program of the Year award. (15)
- **Black Student Union (BSU):** BSU holds meetings and an outing to ensure members have a sense of community on and off campus. The BSU ensures black and marginalized communities voices are represented in decision making through collaborations with other cultural RSOs. We also offer opportunities for people of different backgrounds, celebrate excellence, and organize against injustice. In 2023, BSU won the Social Justice Program of the Year award. (16)
- **Women in Finance:** Members are provided a safe space to address their needs to become successful in the finance industry, facilitating confidence to go out in the real world and accomplish extraordinary things. Support and guidance is provided to achieve the Bloomberg Market Concepts certification, which is a unique and valuable career asset. (17)
- **IWU Global Storytelling Project:** The Illinois Wesleyan University Global Storytelling Project is an audio collection with stories, poems, and proverbs in languages from around the world. It is a free resource, open to the public. Visitors to this site are free to listen to these recordings for their enjoyment and to use them for educational purposes. The Project is supported in part by a grant from the Illinois Prairie Community Foundation (IPCF) and The Byron S. Tucci Endowment Fund. (18)

As noted in Criterion 1.A., the University engages in several campus-wide assessments to help ensure that all students, faculty, and staff from a range of diverse backgrounds, ideas and perspectives are having the IWU experience that is consistent with its mission documents.

## Sources

*There are no sources.*

## **Criterion 1 Summary**

The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

### **Argument**

Illinois Wesleyan University's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations. The University developed its Mission Statement, Vision Statement, and strategic planning materials in a transparent campus-wide manner that communicates and elaborates the core values embraced by the University community. As a highly mission-driven institution, the asserted commitments permeate the planning, decision-making, and budgetary processes in direct and indirect manners, and are consistently expressed in electronic and print media, as well as in multiple public forums. These processes and activities reflect the University's obligations to its internal and external constituencies and demonstrate that its educational roles and responsibilities serve the public good.

### **Sources**

*There are no sources.*