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ILLINOIS WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

VISION TAKES FORM AT IWU



CLAY JACKSON, THE PANTAGRAPH

Illinois Wesleyan University President Sheahon Zenger, left, and board of trustees Chair Timothy J. Szerlong participate in a ribbon-cutting ceremony Wednesday at the new Petrick Idea Center on the IWU campus. The center will foster student innovation and entrepreneurship.

Petrick Idea Center new place to think, create, collaborate

OLIVIA JACOBS
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BLOOMINGTON — The Petrick Idea Center debuted Wednesday as Illinois Wesleyan University’s first new construction on campus in 13 years, and its director proclaimed it “amazing.”

Students, faculty, staff and community members came together Wednesday to celebrate the grand opening with a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the building, an expansion on the west side of the Ames School of Art and Design.

“(It feels) amazing. Now we can put our vision to work. So, the first vision was the physical space. The second vision is the programs, the activities, the engagement, the work that will actually happen here, and so we’re really excited to get started,” said Ben Hage, director of the center, in an interview with The Pantagraph.

The university broke ground on the 14,850 square-foot space on April 15, 2025, and there were no delays or construction issues throughout the project, officials said. In 2024, John Quarton, then the center’s

director, told The Pantagraph the project had a \$30 million budget, but they were able to find ways to save on cost.

The goal of the center is for students, faculty and staff to be able to collaborate and bring their ideas to life, share resources and equipment regardless of their discipline as well as support entrepreneurial endeavors.

Petrick features makerspaces and prototyping facilities, an amphitheater, collaborative meeting and teaching spaces, incubator space for the university’s top student-led startups, a test kitchen, 3D printers, laser cutters, sewing and embroidery machines, various power tools and audio/video recording and editing equipment.

“A very accessible and welcoming space to everyone on campus, and that people who select to come here, they’re selecting to come here because they have a burning idea that they can’t stop thinking about,” Hage explained of his hopes and goals for the space. “It’s not the discipline, it’s not the background, it’s not what they’re studying.

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“I invite you to come with nothing more than curiosity and a willingness to put yourself out there and learn from your mistakes. Your journey is certain, even if your destination is unknown. We will endeavor to support you with whatever resources we have.”

— Donor Marc Talluto, addressing Illinois Wesleyan University students

MIDDLE EAST

Israel defense tech ties slammed

Rights groups: Stop US
bill, ‘dangerous’ policy

HUMEYRA PAMUK
Reuters

WASHINGTON — Dozens of civil rights and advocacy groups urged Congress to scrap a defense bill provision that would deepen U.S.-Israeli military technology ties, according to a letter Thursday seen by Reuters, at a time of growing U.S. skepticism toward the longtime ally.

The provision would deepen cooperation between the U.S. and Israeli defense sectors by accelerating joint military technology development and other partnerships. The bill passed the House of Representatives in July and awaits Senate action.

The provision of the 2027 National Defense Authorization Act, known as Section 219, seeks to set up frameworks for joint ventures, licensing agreements and U.S.-based coproduction partnerships with the Israeli industry.

In Thursday’s letter addressed to leaders of the House and Senate Armed Services Committees, 56 groups said deeper integration with Israel’s defense sector would be “exceptionally dangerous” and urged lawmakers to remove the provision.

The groups include Amnesty International USA and the civil rights

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FROM THE EDITOR

Pantagraph access free for Labor Day

You may come for Friday night football. You may stay for the ghosts said to haunt Bloomington-Normal college campuses. Whatever brings you, readers can enjoy free access to pantagraph.com through Labor Day — and there’s plenty to explore.

Our newsroom works to help you understand what’s happening in our community, how it affects you and why it matters. This weekend and in the days ahead, that includes:

- Football season is here, and reporter Randy Reinhardt and photographer Clay Jackson will bring you previews, analysis, features, photos and video from Week 3 of the high school season. On Saturday, the focus also turns to Illinois State and Illinois Wesleyan football.



JUSTIN CONN

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