



Ambassador
Nurturing the life of the Institute

Ambassador Update

August 2025: Impact

Ambassadors nurture the life of the Institute for Discipleship through their prayers, advocacy, and financial support, advancing the Kingdom of God worldwide.



How do you make an impact in the world? Clearly there is no shortage of needs and challenges to try and address. Here at the Institute, we are in a long stream of influence helping to shape understanding of need and providing efforts to make an impact.

We begin with the earliest

WHERE DISCIPLES GROW

Christians who held a desire to grow in their discipleship as followers of Jesus Christ. In Acts 2:42 we read that the earliest disciples meet in small groups to pray, study, discern, learn and encourage each other in Christian maturity. This

concept of growing in a relationship with Jesus is the foundational area of impact the Institute works to address.

This work is further shaped by being imbedded in a United Methodist college. Here is seen the influence of John Wesley with his support for education and faith as represented by his quote: Let us “Unite the two so long disjoined, knowledge and vital piety.” From the Wesley encouragement of learning and the college's desire to provide educational opportunities to lay and clergy came the final focus of Richard and Julia Wilke.

This foundation of thought and practice formed the impact of the Institute: to be a continuation of the faith and service lived out by the earliest Christians, the Methodists, Southwestern College, and Richard and Julia Wilke. Every day, the Institute strives to make an impact by providing a place “Where Disciples Grow!”



Institute for Discipleship Sets New Three-Year Plan

The Richard and Julia Wilke Institute for Discipleship at Southwestern College has developed an ambitious three-year strategic plan that will guide the Institute for the upcoming three years. The new plan was put into place July 1 and will be well into its first year when the Institute celebrates the 25th anniversary of its founding next April.

Developed with input from a wide range of stakeholders, the plan covers the activities of the Institute's three main areas of emphasis—BeADisciple.com, which has provided quality online educational experiences with roots in Wesleyan theology since 2006; the

BeADisciple Study App, which makes possible the small-group Bible study experience through smartphone, tablet, or computer; and on-ground activities at Southwestern College that include camps and academies as well as visiting scholars and scholarships for international students.

The new strategic plan focuses on enhancing program quality, increasing and diversifying revenues, and expanding programs. These will include a three-year capital campaign to undergird the development of the study app as well as strengthening the financial viability of all the Institute's programs. New and enhanced marketing for BeADisciple.com courses also will be an emphasis.

“While the work of the Institute is fluid, having a plan with clear goals and objectives helps focus the work and measure our progress,” says Steve Wilke, executive director of the Institute. “This is an exciting time in the life of the Institute. We see the needs for disciples to grow spiritually and enhance their ministry effectiveness. We are well positioned to respond.”

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