



Personal Reflections

8/23/2017

Dear IMSA Community,

Welcome to the 2017-2018 school year! It's a special Academic Year in that we begin the school year with a full budget! Over the past three years, our colleagues in public schools (K-12), who are under the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), began their school year with a full budget while IMSA and the rest of the universities, which are under the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), began and operated most of the past two years without a full budget. We begin the school year with great energy fresh from a summer of alumni engagement, youth camps in Aurora, Springfield and the Metro-East area, professional learning experiences for teachers all across Illinois and entrepreneurship programming in our new IN2@IMSA innovation center.

This year, Convocation coincided with the Solar Eclipse of 2017! And what a sight it was. Though it was cloudy at times, we experienced the solar eclipse as a community during a community picnic. You can see the convocation video [here](#).

We are fortunate that "Dr. Bob" is serving as Interim Principal. Dr. Robert Hernandez, who has served the IMSA community for over 22 years, agreed to serve as interim until we identify a permanent instructional leader. Dr. Bob's leadership and organizational skills are already evident on campus. Katie Berger stepped in as Acting Director for Student Affairs filling in for Dr. Bob.

Everything we do at IMSA is focused on exploring new ways of solving problems, teaching critical thinking skills and collaboration. From our dedication to teaching humanities, English and History, to teaching world languages, to teaching the visual and performing arts and wellness, to teaching mathematics, computer science, and science, to our focus on independent research and innovation and entrepreneurship through IN2, to teaching leadership skills through student life. When we refer to "STEM" in our [Impact and Outcomes Statement](#), which states that "By 2022, IMSA is a recognized global leader and catalyst in equity and excellence in *STEM* teaching and learning, innovation and entrepreneurship," we mean "problem solving, critical thinking and collaboration" among other things. By "STEM," we also mean scientific and design thinking as well as creative and ethical thinking." This IMSA Impact and Outcomes Statement serves as the cornerstone of IMSA's five-year strategic plan.

As we make continuous progress toward accomplishing our 2022 vision, we have established three priorities for the 2017-2018 school year. One **priority** is an approach to teaching problem solving skills guided by the [United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals](#). This year we want to make additional progress in embedding these goals into our curriculum where appropriate, in our research programs (SIR), in our innovation efforts (IN2), and throughout our leadership programs in student life. Another **priority** relates to our foundational philosophy of equity and excellence that guides all our efforts. While we continue to seek and support



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talented students throughout Illinois with a passion and interest in mathematics and science, we are making a concerted effort to recruit and support high ability, low income students. A final **priority** is preparing and hosting the International Student Science Fair (ISSF) in 2018. We have the honor, privilege and responsibility of hosting the 14th Annual ISSF for the first time in the US on June 27-July 1, 2018. The approximately 250 students and educators from 40 international schools from around the world will have opportunities to collaborate and exchange ideas, research, and build life-long friendships at ISSF 2018 in Aurora, IL.

As I begin my fourth year as President of the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy, I consider it not only a privilege to serve, but also a responsibility to lead. I'm so proud of being part of IMSA! Sustaining excellence and making inroads into equity has never been more challenging and complicated given our national landscape and budget limitations. Yet, I know that you share my commitment to this vision, which is essential to our future.

Respectfully,

José M. Torres, PhD
President