



## Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy®

*igniting and nurturing creative, ethical, scientific minds that advance the human condition*

### REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

**José M. Torres, PhD**

**March 20, 2019**

#### LEADERSHIP MATTERS

This report provides the Board of Trustees with information regarding Academy activities and the progress that we are making toward achieving our IMSA Impact and Outcomes Statement and Priority Outcomes. I organize the Report of the President, where appropriate, around the IMSA Impact and Outcomes document:

#### Three pillars:

1. STEM Teaching and Learning
2. Operational Capacity
3. Stakeholder Engagement

#### One Strategy—Strengthen Employee Engagement

and IMSA's **four priorities for Academic Year 2018-2019:**

- ❖ Guide the integration of UN 17 Sustainable Development Goals
- ❖ Advance equity and excellence
- ❖ Develop our international strategy
- ❖ Work on phase 1 of the innovation campus

I provide information, updates and general observations with IMSA stakeholders, including IMSA employees, students, and parents via my [Personal Reflections](#) throughout the year.

#### STEM Teaching and Learning

*IMSA Commencement Speaker is Professor Sylvester James Gates, Jr.*

I am pleased to announce that Professor Gates accepted my invitation to speak at IMSA's Commencement scheduled for Saturday, June 1, 2019 beginning at 3:30 p.m. at Northern Illinois University's Convocation Center in DeKalb. Professor Gates is a theoretical physicist specializing in supersymmetry, supergravity, and superstring theory. In supergravity and supersymmetric representation theory, he also studies Adinkra symbols, which are graphical representations of supersymmetric algebras. He is a Ford Foundation Professor of Physics at Brown University and is a 2011 National Medal of Science Recipient.

#### *Summer Programming and Facilities*

I held a number of internal meetings with Facilities, Student Affairs, The Center for Teaching and Learning (formerly PFS), and the Steve and Jamie Center for Innovation and Inquiry to ensure that our construction plans for this summer minimally impact our plans for summer programming, which support our second legislative charge. We held a town hall meeting on February 13, 2019 to share with the IMSA community how construction would affect summer outreach programs and how temporary office moves were necessary to allow for meeting our objectives over the summer.

### *Zoe Weill, Human Education at IMSA*

Zoe Weil, a popular TEDx Talk speaker, joined IMSA on February 25. After observing several classes, she led a workshop for our Center for Teaching and Learning and Center for Innovation and Inquiry staff, presented at an Academy-wide assembly, facilitated a workshop for faculty, and presented a public lecture for our community, "The World Becomes What You Teach," also the title of her recent book. Zoe's message of humane education is consistent with IMSA's focus on the UN 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

### *Scholarship and Innovation Committee*

Dr. Kelly Page and I held several meetings of the IMSA Scholarship and Innovation Committee. We set three objectives for the rest of the academic year: conduct secondary research to compile best practices regarding promoting a culture of scholarship and innovation at IMSA, conduct primary research with focus groups to level set current understanding of what our community understands as "scholarship and innovation" at IMSA, and, finally, engage in public conversations through "lunch and learn" and other public brainstorming opportunities for scholarship and innovation at IMSA.

## **Operational Capacity**

### *National Science Foundation Grants Submitted*

The Center for Teaching and Learning, under the leadership of Dr. Norman "Storm" Robinson III, worked on two highly competitive National Science Foundation (NSF) grants over the past several months. The two grants along with the writing teams are below:

#### Spark: K-5 Computational Thinking (Amount Requested: \$295,148 over 2 years)

This project seeks to create and develop a K-5 Learning Progression for Computational Thinking with appropriate curriculum for grades 1, 3 and 5, including an assessment model. Spark creates a professional development model through a research-practice partnership with South and West Chicago Schools with over 80% culturally, linguistically and economically diverse students. The project research and evaluation is planned in partnership with Transformative Research and Evaluation Consulting. The grant writing team included PI - Dr. Norman "Storm" Robinson III, Co-PI - Dr. Taneisha Lee (Transformative Research and Evaluation Consulting), Patrick Young, and Linda Hefferin.

#### Beyond the Basics: Expanding Educator Excellence and Equity in Computer Science (Amount Requested: \$1,408,717 over 3 years)

This project seeks to provide Summer Institutes for teachers who are in their second or third year of teaching computer science. The institutes will be an in-depth training on teaching computer science based on IMSA's four competencies. The grant writing team included PI - Dr. Amber Stitzel Pareja, Co-PI Dr. Norman "Storm" Robinson III, Hannah Anderson, Angela Rowley, Linda Hefferin, and Cynthia Hamilton.

### *2019 Worldwide Best Practices for Giftedness Conference, Dubai, UAE*

I was asked to provide a keynote by the Hamdan Foundation at the Worldwide Best Practices for Giftedness Conference in Dubai, UAE from March 11 to 13, 2019. The title of my speech was "Designing Conditions for Talented Students to be Creative, Ethical, and Scientifically Minded." I will

provide an update to the Trustees at our board meeting on March 20, 2019.

## **Stakeholder Engagement**

### *Aurora Education Commission*

I continue to participate in the Mayor's Education Commission. Angela Rowley has represented me on a couple of occasions. We are meeting on a monthly basis to move forward on the Commission's objectives.

### *President's Student Advisory Council*

I met several times with this Council to explore how to invest dollars allocated to this group from the IMSA Fund. We discussed their experiences in the 2019 Intersession. We also discussed the conditions that we create at IMSA to help them, as students, to become creative, ethical, and scientifically minded. This inquiry informed my preparation for my speech in Dubai.

### *President's Faculty Advisory Council*

I met several times with this Council to explore how to invest the funds allocated to this group from the IMSA Fund. We discussed the proposed Sabbatical policy and other benefits that IMSA should consider establishing for our employees. We also brainstormed what significant results IMSA should pursue over the next 6, 12, or 18 months as we seek to accomplish our IMSA Impact and Outcomes statement.

## **Strengthen Employee Engagement**

### *Employee Engagement with Senior Leadership Team*

Using the results of the November administration of the fall Gallup Employee Engagement poll, I led Senior Leadership Team members through an in-depth review of our IMSA Gallup scores on January 18, including our organizational strengths and weaknesses. In turn, I guided them through a collaborative workshop in search of answers to the question of "What would a '5' look like?" The Senior Leadership Team members, consequently, held similar conversations with their direct reports. Cabinet will review the results of this activity to identify next steps in Academy-wide efforts likely to improve employee engagement.

## **IMSA Safety and Security**

I added this section to my Report of the President this month to highlight safety and security at IMSA, provide an update on how IMSA responded to the recent Aurora shooting and to provide information on our changes to active shooter response, which was planned ahead of the recent event in Aurora.

### *Active Shooter Response*

At approximately 2:00 p.m. on Friday February 15, 2019, we began getting third party reports of an active shooter in the vicinity of Highland and Prairie in Aurora. At the same time, we heard that schools in our vicinity were going into lockdown as a result. Fortunately, most of our students had left campus for extended weekend on Thursday; however, we knew that there were students in the robotics lab and that additional students were on an IMSA bus attending a sporting event. Mr. Lawrence "Bud" Bergie went to our security office and spoke with Jim Bondi and Quintin Backstrom and indicated that we would go into a soft lockdown. As we initiated the soft lockdown, the following actions were taken:

1. Jim Bondi made an announcement on the PA system announcing the lockdown and the reason for it.
2. A group text from IMSA Security was sent to Cabinet regarding the lockdown.
3. Bud went to the robotics lab and informed the adults and students present of the lockdown and that they were not to leave the vicinity of E120/E121 until security informed them that the lockdown was over.
4. Bud stationed a security officer in the hallway by the gymnasiums to ensure that the students would be seen and stopped if they attempted to leave through that corridor.
5. Bud went to the Academic Pit to inform Bob Hernandez and faculty of the lockdown.
6. Security attempted to contact those staff members who were off site with students to inform them of the lockdown and to ask them to not return to campus until it was over.
7. All staff entering the building from the outside during lockdown were informed of the lockdown and advised to not leave the building until it was over.

At approximately 3:10 p.m., it was announced that the shooter was in custody, so the soft lockdown was ended. The end of the lockdown was announced over the PA system and other affected parties were informed of the end of the lockdown.

#### *IMSA Drills and ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate)*

Unrelated to the event in Aurora, several months ago we assembled a team at IMSA to evaluate our current security model, particularly as it relates to Code Red Situations. Several committee members also attended training held locally related to Security and ALICE in schools in light of the number of school shooter incidents that have been taking place. I agreed that IMSA would move forward to implement elements of ALICE. Some of the agreed action items are as follows:

1. Create a video based training program for use across the Academy. The video is designed as a training guide for use in classrooms, residence halls, and other areas in order to develop plans of action if needed.
2. We are planning for the delivery of specific Run/Hide/Fight training for all staff, faculty and students that will be delivered at least annually. This training will include simulations where everyone can practice what they may do during a real event.
3. We are exploring ways to get all Academy occupants to utilize LiveSafe and how we may better use that app in support of the program.
4. We are exploring alternate locking systems for interior rooms in the Academy, so that we may better control the security of occupants during an emergency.
5. We are looking at non-school times and days, so we can ensure that students can be kept safe during an incident when most staff and faculty are not in the building.
6. We will update our emergency manual and publish it to all Academy members once these changes have been made.

#### **Advance Equity and Excellence**

On February 15, 2019, IMSA's Community Day was focused in its entirety on equity and excellence training led by our partner the Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center (MAP Center), which is one of four equity assistance centers in the country. The training, Critical Reflections to Critical

Action: Leadership Practices for Advancing Educational Equity, was facilitated by Tiffany Kyser, PhD, Associate Director Engagement & Partnerships, and Tammera Moore, Graduate Research Assistant.

## **Develop our International Strategy**

### *Establishment of IMSA International*

One of the challenges that we identified in recruiting international students to IMSA is that public schools can issue F1 Visas for only one year to international students. After ensuring approval from our general counsel, we have determined that creating an IMSA private 50c3 corporation, an IMSA private school, would allow us to issue F1 visas for more than one year. Scott Kreiter is taking the lead with me to complete the Articles of Corporation and By-laws that will be formally reviewed and submitted by our General Counsel to the Secretary of State after Board of Trustee review.

### *International Strategy Kick-off Meeting*

I have asked Rich Busby to take the lead in coordinating IMA's efforts to develop and deploy our International Strategy. Our kick-off meeting was March 6, 2019. In addition to Cabinet, participants included the following faculty and staff: Andrea Stuibler, Gwen Seeley-Joose, Joseph Marshall, Joseph Mastrocola, James Read, Kelly Lofgren, Ralph Flickinger, Sarah O'Leary-Driscoll, Susan Fricano, David McGovern, and Christine Zhang.

## **Innovation Campus, Phase 1**

### *Changes to IMSA Law*

I worked closely with our general counsel and our government relations and elected officials to draft amendments to our law that would allow IMSA to engage in public private partnerships (P3) agreements. HB 2606 amends IMSA law by allowing the Board of Trustees to enter into public-private partnerships (P3) agreements with private entities for purposes relating to, or affecting education in the school. IMSA's priorities include replacing all current failing residential halls. P3 projects give IMSA tangible infrastructure choices to enact improvements now, not decades in the future. We are also seeking corresponding changes to the State's Procurement Code.

### *Capital Bill Request*

Recognizing that there may be a capital bill this year, we worked with our government relations and local representatives on a capital bill for replacement of our residence halls. This capital request will enable IMSA to replace the halls with a new hall to accommodate 800 students, and 50 educators for short term stays at the Academy while they receive training at IMSA.

### *Design Charrette*

On February 4, IMSA stakeholders, including representatives from the Board of Trustees (Roche and Mayer), alumni, current IMSA faculty, IMSA staff members from student life, security, and technology, and current students met for the day to envision how a new residence hall can support IMSA's mission, beliefs, and daily living at IMSA. At today's Board meeting, we will conduct an abbreviated design charrette.

## **Leadership Update from Cabinet Members**

Updates from my Cabinet are attached

## **Advancement and Public Affairs Updated**

### Advancement

The total funds raised year to date of \$1.3 million has exceeded FY18 actual of \$933,383 with four months remaining in the fiscal year. The Save a Seat Campaign will close on March 31, 2019 having generated \$375,000 in private, philanthropic support since the soft launch in September. Because of the generosity of our friends and donors, a complete renovation of the auditorium is being planned for this summer amidst several other construction efforts. A spring annual fund appeal will commence April 1 to encourage gifts to the unrestricted fund. The FY2019 Annual Report is now available and will be distributed to donors.

### Public Affairs

After 12 months of research, design, input from faculty, students, staff, Trustees and the rebranding of more than two hundred creative assets, the Office of Public Affairs was delighted to officially launch IMSA's new logo and brand identity on March 5. The new mark is a fresh and modern visual element that reflects IMSA's two legislative charters, mission and vision, treasured Alumni, and history of success connecting students of all ages with real-world challenges equipping them with the knowledge, tools and motivation to be change makers and problem solvers. OPA has also organized a Communications Leadership Team which includes representation from a cross-section of the Academy. The effort has three purposes: To develop a culture of open, collaborative communication focused on sharing IMSA with the world; to provide other areas of the Academy opportunities to feed into IMSA communications activities; and to ensure representation of the IMSA experience. Members include Kevin Lim, Jean Bigger, Amy Woods, Rick Palmer, Dr. Kelly Page and Alexandria Johnson. Tami Armstrong and Katelyn Lancaster are co-leading. From an Alumni engagement perspective, OPA collaborated with OIR to conduct an internal survey of faculty, staff and students to gather input as to how Alumni could best be engaged with the IMSA Community. Top scores included career exploration, networking, internships and speakers/lectures. The data is being used to develop a survey for IMSA Alumni with the goal of improved engagement.