



## Personal Reflections

10/11/2016

Dear IMSA Community,

It's a pleasure to welcome you to IMSA's 30th anniversary year!

Back on September 7, 1986, 211 Illinois students left their home schools to join an unknown and unproven, but promising venture: the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy. IMSA had no record of success and no guarantee of funding beyond that first year—but it had risk-takers, pioneers and visionaries who wisely navigated through those early challenges. Today we stand upon the shoulders of that founding community and continue to broaden and deepen IMSA's impact on education across Illinois, the nation and the globe.

IMSA's mission statement has evolved, too. Today we are the world's leading teaching and learning laboratory for imagination and inquiry whose mission is to ignite and nurture creative, ethical, scientific minds that advance the human condition, through a system distinguished by profound questions, collaborative relationships, personalized experiential learning, global networking, generative use of technology and pioneering outreach. And as we look ahead, IMSA's future is bright—taking bold strides at becoming a recognized global leader and catalyst in equity and excellence in STEM teaching and learning, innovation and entrepreneurship.

Yet how do we foster IMSA's mission? At this year's Convocation ceremony, alumna Yuanxia Ding ('00), shared her perspective on the difference between achievements and accomplishments—achievements as those gold stars that can be given and taken away, while accomplishments are known to make indelible, longstanding impacts. The accomplishment of IMSA is seen in its alumni who are making a difference in the world. We've launched nearly 6,000 alumni—6,000 who “Think Different” and “Act Bold.” Today they're working on global challenges in STEM and all other fields, but it all started here, at IMSA, where they explored questions that mattered, connected diverse perspectives and shared collective discoveries.

As an institution, IMSA has its own legacy of accomplishments and has most notably impacted the lives of Illinois students and teachers both on the residential campus and across Illinois. Throughout our history we've developed services, partnerships and collaborations based on innovative curriculum and exemplary educational programs, such as Mathematical Investigations, Student Inquiry and Research, Problem Based Learning, Summer@IMSA, IMSA Allies, TALENT and IMSA Fusion, our award-winning teacher professional development and STEM enrichment program for Illinois students.

Today the IMSA community and our corporate partners are investing their time, talent and resources to support our next generation of learners and the accomplishments that will be needed to support a sustainable world. Examples of this vision are the renovated, state-of-the-



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art science labs and IN2: The Steve and Jamie Chen Center for Innovation & Inquiry, which is a space dedicated to innovation, entrepreneurship and social impact. These facilities create opportunities for creativity and collaboration across IMSA and with Illinois' research, technology and business communities. These innovative spaces enable learners to turn their ideas into realities.

As we look ahead to the next 30 years, what new accomplishments will IMSA celebrate as we realize our mission of advancing the human condition? I look forward to building this future with each of you and launching ideas that we can barely imagine today.

As you know, I'm deeply honored to serve as President of the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy. It's a tremendous privilege to build upon IMSA's foundation. Please join me and the entire IMSA community in celebrating our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year—30 years of significantly contributing to educational innovation and excellence in Illinois and beyond!

Respectfully,

José M. Torres, Ph.D., President

P.S. Dr. Torres's [Convocation Address](#)