

Twentieth Message from the President  
February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2022

Colleagues,

On a day like today, you have to wonder what had to be going through the mind of the groundhog as it was being pulled from the ground. Well, it's safe to say there aren't many shadows on the ground in the midst of a snowstorm, but somehow the groundhog actually saw his shadow. I hope the building closure has given you some flexibility to carry out your day with one or two less worries. In the meantime, enjoy a good snow angel, snowman or snowball fight.

The Lunar New Year has arrived and it's time to celebrate the Year of the Tiger. Lunar New Year is the beginning of a calendar year whose months are Moon cycles, based on the lunar calendar or lunisolar calendar. It is particularly celebrated in countries within East and Southeast Asia, being influenced by the historical Chinese lunisolar calendar. My children have learned some Mandarin, so in my household we say Xīnnián kuàilè (新年快乐), which means Happy New Year. At IMSA, I hope you are able to enjoy the student performance this Friday evening, and the event will be recorded in the event you cannot attend. I really enjoy watching our students prepare for this production, making use of every common space to practice because they want to create a memorable experience for everyone. I also appreciate how students share their culture and teach dance routines to their friends as a sense of solidarity with their peers.

February is Black History month, and I hope faculty dedicate time in your classrooms to discuss black role models that have influenced your subject area, or lift up the voices of those who have been historically marginalized, such as in [this article](#) from the January edition of *English Journal*. Arguably, we shouldn't have to reserve February as the sole time for this engagement, however the influence of black people in history has often been overlooked. That was true in my childhood education, for sure. In my opinion, we should be intentional about creating this space and recognizing often untold stories and people until we are able to overcome historic bias.

It's natural to have bias, and it has been with most of us for our entire lives. For example, I didn't know much about people who grew up outside of Chicago, except for my one friend down the block from Mexico named Javier. I very well likely had racial bias growing up in a neighborhood that was predominantly white. However, we formed a bond over liking Star Wars, and I'll never forget that birthday costume party where he dressed up as Han Solo and I was Chewbacca. My mother actually made me a Chewbacca costume out of carpet. If it weren't for that shared interest, I don't think I would have gotten to know him. And that's a shame. The good news is that I lucked out because I had a chance to learn about different foods, language, rituals and family life.

Fast forward a timespan of ten Star Wars movies later, and now my life is much more blessed, being in a culturally diverse community at IMSA filled with many international heritages. What a remarkable time and place to notice and learn about differences that shape the lives of our students and colleagues. I have to admit the biases I formed growing up are sometimes still engrained. I routinely assume that all Northsiders like the Cubs and great friendships must be built through a Star Wars adventure. Kidding aside, it has also taken me years to realize the privileges I have had in my life, whether that is being white, being able bodied, male, or heterosexual have introduced many unconscious biases that can inhibit a better community if gone by unchecked.

Fortunately, I have been surrounded by caring peers that have given me thoughtful feedback to understand people do not like to be treated the same as I would like to be treated. Sometimes that feedback really stung, and I had to sit with it and learn from it. It's not really the golden rule we're after, but maybe a platinum rule where we see others' needs and respond in ways they would like to be supported. I believe we are all on a journey at getting better at our cultural proficiency, filled with mistakes, and invited into conversations to learn and grow. We have such a rich opportunity to embrace and learn from students and our colleagues due to a wide variety of differences in their identities.

I very much look forward to our time together on Community Day on February 18 with a focus on our cultural proficiency. Community Day will be virtual and begins at 8:30 a.m., and the agenda will be forthcoming. Please be sure to complete the first two modules in the Cultural Competency course on Canvas in preparation of

our time together. I appreciate your thoughtfulness as we engage in our learning experience and commitment to our growth.

Titans Together,

Evan

**Dr. Evan M. Glazer**

*President*

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