



Personal Reflections

2/25/2016

Dear IMSA Community,

As we begin a new year, 2016, I want to provide a succinct update on our financial situation in addition to sharing with you some news about IMSA's future. While our status hasn't changed significantly, I believe it is important to reiterate our position. Thank you for your continued interest and support of IMSA.

Fiscal Status

Our fiscal status continues to be precarious. This week I informed our IMSA staff and our Board of Trustees that we're tracking a new metric these days: "vendor payments 90-days overdue." Our vendors continue to be patient with us and understand that this crisis is not of our making. Under the current conditions, our staff have been good financial stewards while focusing on equity and maintaining excellence. I appreciate our vendors and our staff. Because IMSA is dependent on the State of Illinois for 80% of our budget and our revenue streams are limited, for example, we cannot charge tuition, or room and board, or issue bonds, we are grateful to the Comptroller of the State of Illinois for continuing to pay our State employees their salaries. Senate Bill (SB) 2039 passed by the General Assembly and signed by Governor Rauner allowed IMSA to access funds that we generate through limited student fees and professional development services. However, IMSA needs resources to meet our obligations, either through an IMSA only appropriation, a State budget or through other means. Despite these difficult times, I have full confidence in our elected officials to get us through this situation.

I am sometimes asked, "What happens if you don't receive a budget soon? Will IMSA close its doors?" The answer that I continue to give is "no, I don't believe that IMSA is going to close." As the "jewel of Illinois," IMSA has a lot of support from parents, elected officials, future employers, etc. We continue to communicate regularly with the General Assembly and the Governor's Office. Moreover, I take comfort with the realization that most businesses close within their first five years of opening their doors. IMSA is about to celebrate its 30th anniversary and it's likely that we'll thrive for another 30 years and beyond!

When I'm asked, "How can you remain open after March when your funds will likely be fully committed?" I respond, "We continue to monitor our cash flow closely, talk to our vendors frequently and are in communication with our IMSA Board of Trustees."

You might wonder, "What can I do to support IMSA?" I encourage you to inform everyone that you know of our fiscal situation, your support for an IMSA and State budget, and our appreciation to our elected officials for their support of IMSA as evidenced by their passage of SB 2039. For more information on our fiscal situation, read my [**Report of the President**](#).

Future Focus

While managing the present budget crisis, we are also planning and are excited about our



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future. At this week's Board of Trustees meeting, our Trustees adopted **IMSA Impact and Priority Outcomes**, 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're planning for 2022 and beyond! In fact this Sunday, January 24, we're holding a **Preview Day** and expect over 1,230 attendees-a record-breaking number-as we're in the process of recruiting the Class of 2019. We're also looking forward to hosting our annual multi-county **IMSA Professional Development Day** on March 4, 2016, which is a professional learning conference for approximately 250 educators. Registration is also open for Friday night Funshops, the next one is "**Leap Year Engineering!**" on February 26, 2016 featuring our IMSA students who will be teaching and mentoring students in grades 3-4 and 5-6.

As I wrote in my last Personal Reflection, we have a new policy to confer the IMSA **emeriti and ambassador designations**. Upon my recommendation, the Board of Trustees voted this week to confer this designation to five past staff members. Please join me in congratulating these individuals who've given 105 years of combined professional service to ensuring that IMSA's teaching and learning programs are robust and future-forward. This special designation is a fitting tribute to their long and devoted work at IMSA:

Emeritus designation conferred to three past faculty members:

- Dr. Richard Dods, Faculty, Chemistry/Science Department (who retired in 2008 after 17 years)
- Dr. Christian Nøkkentved, Faculty, History and Social Sciences Department (who retired in 2013 after 24 years)
- Mr. John Stark, Faculty, German/World Languages Department (who retired in 2014 after 26 years)

Ambassador designation conferred to two past staff members:

- Ms. Marti Guarin, Charter Librarian and Archivist, Information Resources Center/Library (who retired in 2006 after 20 years)
- Dr. LuAnn Smith, Director, Research and Enrollment Management (who retired in 2004 after 18 years)

I look forward to keeping them informed about IMSA and benefiting from their experience and wisdom. Join me in congratulating them on this recognition for their honorable service to IMSA and for having a longstanding impact on the Academy's capacity, growth and success. Their past contributions and continuing efforts to support IMSA in the future are deeply appreciated. Please feel free to refer other outstanding retired IMSA faculty and staff for this designation using this **form**.



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As I close, I wanted to tell you about an encounter that I had with one of our students yesterday. I spoke to Jean (not her real name), who plans to graduate in 2017, in the hallway right before lunch. She told me how much she enjoyed her winter break and Intersession – a week spent at Rush Hospital learning about healthcare professions. I was re-energized by our conversation and I'm recommitted to our mission of "igniting and nurturing creative, ethical, scientific minds that advance the human condition" – we're making a difference in Jean's life today and through her in the future of those she will serve through her profession.

Respectfully,
José M. Torres, Ph.D.