



Personal Reflections

11/4/2015

Dear IMSA Community,

Welcome to another Academic Year at IMSA! As I begin my second year as IMSA's President, I consider it not only a privilege to serve, but also a responsibility to lead well. I wrote my last Personal Reflection prior to Commencement in May 2015. Today, I want to provide you some highlights that exemplify IMSA's role in developing leaders in STEM thinking and developing STEM talent for Illinois. I end this longer than usual Personal Reflection with a status report on IMSA's budget given the current discussions in Springfield.

During my first **summer at IMSA**, I was impressed with how busy this place is over the summer months. To begin, summer at IMSA means celebrating and engaging our alumni. Thanks to all—alumni, friends, families and staff—who participated in Alumni Weekend 2015, July 17-19. I heard first-hand what alumni are doing and the integral role IMSA played in launching them in that direction. Celebrations on campus and across Chicago welcomed returning alumni including nearly 275 guests attending five class reunions.

I was pleased to see how over the summer IMSA staff provided educational programs for students and educators extending our reach beyond our 650 residential students. Over 1,200 students were engaged with the Academy during summer events at IMSA, Chicago, Springfield and the Metro East Region downstate.

I'm proud to share with you that summer also provides opportunity for our students to demonstrate their abilities through tech opportunities and national competitions. We had 24 interns working with tech startups, including at Chicago's 1871 tech incubator, rivaling if not exceeding Illinois' top universities. Junior Pranav Sivakumar became the first ever repeat Global Finalist in the Google Science Fair, a feat unrivaled by anyone in the history of this Fair! And Senior Tavis Reed won a Gold Medal in chemistry/biochemistry for his work on bioethanol production at the NAACP's Afro-Academic, Cultural, Technological and Scientific Olympics.

We began this Academic Year with great energy after an incredible summer of accomplishments. In mid-August, we welcomed our residential students back to campus (including the Class of 2018!). We begin the year with **new leadership** in the Academy as Dr. Marie Dillon Dahleh, our new principal, joins us from Harvard. I'm also excited that Dr. Jeffrey Margolis (Class of 2000), has returned to IMSA, this time not as a student, but as Vice President of External Engagement.

Friends and Colleagues, after a full year as the President of IMSA, I am even more convinced today than when I first began that our best years are yet to come. Sustaining excellence and making inroads into equity has never been more challenging and complicated given our State budget crisis. Yet, I know that you share my commitment to this vision, which is essential to our future. Together we will succeed in sustaining IMSA as "the jewel of Illinois."



Personal Reflections

11/4/2015

This year's budget

Today, I also want to share with you our current **budget challenges** so that if and when the time comes for you to advocate on our behalf, you are well prepared to speak. As you might be aware, the State of Illinois has not passed a full budget. While public schools serving K-12 students in the State did receive their budget allocations, higher education and some K-12 residential high schools (such as IMSA, along with the Illinois School for the Deaf and the Illinois School for the Visually Impaired that are funded through the Department of Juvenile Services), have not received State funding thus far this year.

Like other State Agencies, IMSA is largely dependent (~80%) on the State for its resources. The other 20% of our budget comes from program fees (14%), and from state grants and restricted and unrestricted gifts (6%).

What we know

Governor Rauner has supported the payroll for State employees, which for IMSA like all State educational institutions, is a significant percentage of the budget. This means that even though the State's budget is not yet approved, State employees (such as those working at IMSA) are receiving their full paychecks enabling us to operate.

We envision covering our other required operating expenses using our locally held funds, which come from program fees. We are in constant conversation with our vendors and monitor our cash flow closely. Presently, we estimate that we have sufficient funds to operate until at least the end of this calendar year, assuming that the State continues to pay salaries.

My team and I are in regular communication with our elected officials and the Governor's staff. Knowing that IMSA is part of a larger discussion, we are doing what we can to move towards a budget. We have worked closely with the Governor's Office over the past months, the Office of the Secretary of Education, the Government Office for Management and Budget, and the Board of Higher Education to communicate the status of IMSA during these challenging budgetary times.

What We Don't Know

As of the week of September 8, 2015 we do not know when this year's budget (FY16) will be approved.

What We Need You To Do



Personal Reflections

11/4/2015

You might ask, “How can I help?” I appreciate your concern and support. For now, **no direct actions** are needed, but donations are always welcome and demonstrate commitment to IMSA. That said, we are always interested in your stories about how IMSA matters to you—as students, alums, parents, educators, and the broader community. We want to tell your stories in Springfield and share them with many other partners about why IMSA matters. **Please take five minutes now to complete the linked questionnaire to share in your own words why IMSA matters.**

Thank you for reading this long Personal Reflection, for now, I wanted you to be informed about our current reality. I am looking forward to presenting our current IMSA budget and answering questions during the general session of the first Parent Association Council (PAC) meeting on September 26, which begins at 10:00 a.m. in the Academic Pit in the Main Building on campus. Teleconference and videoconference information is available here (<https://www.imsa.edu/pac>). In advance, I thank you for your continued support.

Looking Ahead

Despite the current budgetary realities we’re facing today—both as an institution and as a State—I’m confident that our exceptional faculty will continue to challenge our residential students, and thousands of additional educators and students will benefit from IMSA’s professional development and education programs. In anticipation of the ongoing budget issues, in July I announced my Presidential Committee on Fiscal Models to investigate additional opportunities for IMSA to build a sustainable path. I look forward to working with the IMSA community to make sure that we have a successful 2015-16 academic year and many, many more to come.

Respectfully,

Dr. José M. Torres