

**Principal Dr. Akwaji-Anderson**  
**2022 Convocation Speech**  
**8/22/2022**

**Opening Remarks -**

Thank you Dr. Glazer. I am Dr. Comfort Akwaji-Anderson, Principal and Chief Academic Officer, for IMSA.

First, “Welcome!” I hope you have enjoyed a wonderful summer. I hope you are relaxed and ready to start a new year.

We are here today, to revisit the IMSA tradition of “Convocation.” Convocation is when we celebrate the official start of the new school year. It is a time to begin new relationships and new opportunities with a new attitude.

To our incoming sophomores, thank you for joining us. You have worked hard to get here. This is one of three IMSA Convocations you will experience as part of your IMSA journey. Our commitment is to support you to the finish line in 2025. To our returning juniors, we missed your positive energy and are glad to have you back on campus. And to our Seniors who are celebrating their final Convocation as IMSA students, we are anticipating your innovative contributions and leadership as you prepare for the future.

Please join me in giving a round of applause to our students from all classes. To our new faculty and staff, and to our returning colleagues, welcome to the 2022-2023 Academic School year. All signs point to a good year!.

Students and Colleagues, as you proceed to this academic year at IMSA; I offer the following ingredients for success.

1. There are moments when you may not feel 100% confident. I encourage you to “show up” and always give your best.
2. There are times when you may think you have to solve problems on your own. You may feel stuck. But, I encourage you to ask for help, from peers, your teachers, Navigation Leaders, or from a staff member you feel comfortable with, because we are here to support each other.
3. Let’s face it, this is a new year, and for many of you a new place, with unfamiliar people and experiences. What can you do? IMSA is a place where you can try new things, make new friends, share your thoughts, and be open to new ideas from others.

So, take a deep breath, pause, and look around. I hope you will encode this moment in your memory. Now we have a musical selection, which should help us all relax and enjoy this moment together.

With that said, I will now invite Irene Park, Class of 2023, and Robert Sacks to provide our featured musical selection.

## **Closing Remarks**

As Principal, I would like to conclude today's convocation with a few words to our students and colleagues.

One of the IMSA belief statements that you will see posted around the campus, is that "meaning is constructed by the learner." It implies that we are all learners. And that we need to try new things, and sometimes get our hands dirty. It also means that some of our attempts will not work as we expect!

In order for each of us to "construct meaning" – we have to put together the building blocks in new configurations, then see what stands up, and what configuration falls down.

So, as we start our courses of study, remember to "show up". Never be afraid to ask for help" – "take a chance" – Some of you may not know this but I am originally from Cameroon, a country located in Central Africa. A long time ago, I took a chance to come to the United States to go to school by myself. I was scared. But, I did not let that stop me. I take a chance  
Also, look after yourself – especially your health, both physical and mental.

Finally, I would like to thank the colleagues who worked tirelessly to make this convocation a reality today: Mirta, Shari, Lourdes, Paul and Anita from the Principal's Office, Dottie, Bill, Ralph, our Facilities team, the OPA team, the Student Affairs team (including RCs), Cabinet members, the faculty and staff.

Thank you to our Alumni Keynote speaker Joe Beda and our musical performers Irene Park, and Robert Sacks.

At this point, I will ask Joe to join me and ring the ceremonial bell to start the new school year!