

Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy®

igniting and nurturing creative, ethical, scientific minds that advance the human condition

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

José M. Torres, PhD

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LEADERSHIP MATTERS

The following provides an update on my leadership of the Academy.

IMSA Leadership Profile

To provide Trustees with a report of activities and efforts of note, I organize the Report of the President, where appropriate, around the **Priorities for 2016-2017** (a) Finalize and publish an “IMSA Operational Excellence Dashboard;” (b) Strengthen identity as a learning laboratory as expressed through grand challenges; (c) Develop and nurture my direct reports’ leadership orientation, equity commitment, and systems level management; and (d) Prepare original material suitable for publication as evidence of IMSA thought leadership and the **Leadership Profile Components** used by the Trustees to evaluate the President’s performance: (1) Institutional Planning (and Executing); (2) Financial/Business Model; (3) Innovations in Teaching and Learning and in STEM Talent Development; (4) Institutional Research and Scholarship on Program Effectiveness and RoI; (5) Thought Leadership in STEM Education Policy; and (6) Stakeholder’s Positive Action(s) on Behalf of IMSA. For additional information and updates on IMSA, please see my [Personal Reflections](#) that provide general observations shared with IMSA stakeholders throughout the year.

Strengthen Identity as a Learning Laboratory as Expressed through Grand Challenges

During today’s Trustee meeting, Cabinet members will provide an update on progress made in strengthening IMSA’s identity as a learning laboratory through a focus on grand challenges. We have sought to follow the Trustee’s recommendations to create pathways and options for students to select how they might “opt in” to solve the grand challenges.

Develop and Nurture my Direct Reports’ Leadership Orientation, Equity Commitment, and Systems Level Management

I surveyed my direct reports’ perception of the three above mentioned areas, leadership orientation, equity commitment, and system level management, to determine their competencies and/or willingness to teach or lead their colleagues in these areas. We are using this survey tool and their assessment as a foundation for their professional development.

Institutional Planning (and Executing)

Thanks to the hard work of Mr. Christopher Kornsey, Executive Director of Facilities and Capital Planning; Ms. Vicki Burgholzer, Facilities Service Manager and their staff, the newly renovated science labs, second floor atrium, and Academic Pit were re-opened to the Academy’s students and staff. The new spaces are gorgeous, will enhance our science faculty’s teaching and learning efficacy, and offer prime opportunities for collaboration. Kuddos to Chris and Vicki’s team!

The stopgap budget expired on December 31, 2016. We are hoping that the budget issue will soon be resolved. Fortunately our employees are still being paid and we hope that will continue into the foreseeable future. Recently, Ms. Kimberly Corrao, Executive Director of Business and Financial Operations and I held a conference call with Mr. Andrew Munemoto, Governor's Office of Management and Budget, to determine how we can increase communication with the Governor's Office regarding our budget requests. We followed up with a document that he requested that included a narrative of some of our budgetary needs.

Thanks to my Executive Assistant, Ms. Mary Collins, who organized all logistics, I conducted a Cabinet retreat on December 15 and 16, 2017 at Starved Rock. While only an hour drive from here, it enabled us to get away from Academy issues and focus on the future of IMSA. The morning of the first day was comprised of a team building exercise. All of the participants had taken a DiSC assessment. The results from the management style profile assessments were shared and we were able to spend some time exploring each other's work style and how best to leverage the talents among the Cabinet members.

Through an intensive SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) activity, we identified how we can decrease weaknesses and threats through taking advantage of our strengths and opportunities. Cabinet members identified a half a dozen potential initiatives for consideration for the 2017-2018 school year.

The retreat also provided me with the opportunity to kick-off Franklin Covey's *The 4 Disciplines of Execution* (4DX) principles. The 4DX is a proven set of practices that enable leaders and teams to break through to higher levels of performance by (1) focusing on the most important objectives (Wildly Important Goals); (2) defining actions that enable teams to establish a standard for performance (lead measures); (3) clarifying measurement for performance (scoreboards); and (4) creating a cadence of team and individual accountability. On January 19th we will be spending a full day to develop a better understanding of the 4 disciplines and how to apply them to the Academy.

Innovations in Teaching and Learning and in STEM Talent Development

On December 8, 2016 I participated in the Governor's Children Cabinet on Children and Youth. Secretary of Education Dr. Elizabeth Purvis co-chaired this meeting, which is chaired by Governor Bruce Rauner and attended by each state agency head. The purpose of the meeting was to receive updates on the projects chosen earlier in the year-- Early Childhood Education (ECE) Workforce Development, Illinois Apprenticeship Plus Initiative and Reducing Childhood Lead Burden.

IMSA is part of the Reducing Childhood Lead Burden project team and hosted the Get the Lead Out "hackathon" on January 13 and 14, 2017. Governor Rauner issued a proclamation declaring January 13, 2017 as "*GET THE LEAD OUT*" HACKATHON DAY in honor of the strides taken by the students and mentors, and to encourage all citizens to recognize the prevalence of lead poisoning and to work towards eradicating the problem. Governor Rauner was unable to personally participate with us at IMSA, but did provide a video message that was shared with the participants. Ten student teams of four students each participated in the hackathon. The teams were from IMSA, Rosary, Marmion, Oswego, Batavia and Geneva high schools. In addition there were 14 subject matter experts from the Illinois Department of Public Health. I commend Ms. Britta McKenna, Chief Innovation Officer, and her staff for working closely with our partner schools and subject matter experts from the IL Department of Health to ensure a successful Hackathon.

IMSA has finalized a data sharing agreement with the Illinois State Board of Education that allows us access to the top achieving 10% of students identified as underrepresented populations (Black, Latino, low income, and rural) by school across the state. While we may not be able to mine these data in time to recruit the Class of 2020, we are pleased with the opportunity to have access to the data. Meanwhile, we continue to recruit the Class of 2020 and held a Preview Day on Sunday, December 4, 2016 when approximately 1,000 people (prospective students and family members) attended mock classes, toured the building and residential halls, and participated in large and small group presentations on topics, such as the admissions process, life at IMSA, and learning at IMSA. Attendees came from many parts of the state, some in attendance came from as far south as Metropolis, IL (south of Carbondale)!

Thought Leadership in STEM Education Policy

The spring semester started off with our week-long intersession from January 9-13, 2017. Students participated in sessions offered by faculty, staff, fellow students, alumni and outside guests. Courses ranged from special math and science topics to cultural studies to off-campus educational trips and everything in between. Intersession allows our students to explore areas of interest outside of their daily curriculum.

To ensure that I have a pulse on what is happening in classrooms at IMSA, I visited 28 classrooms and teachers during the first semester of school. Classes included: American Studies, BC Calculus II/III, French II, German I, Mandarin Chinese I, Mandarin Chinese III, Multi-Variable Calculus, Russian I, Spanish IV, Spanish V, Ancient World Religion and Philosophy, History of Philosophy, Literary Explorations I, Literary Explorations III, Political Theory, Art Design, Modern Physics, Physics: Calculus-based Mechanics, Scientific Inquiries-Biology, Methods of Scientific Inquiry, Scientific Inquiries-Chemistry, Scientific Inquiries-Physics. I also visited the Granger Center multiple times and spoke with Dr. Sanza Kazadi, Director of Student Research, and with students conducting their SIR on campus.

Stakeholder's Positive Action(s) on Behalf of IMSA

On December 14, 2016 Cabinet members and I met with the IMSA Fund for the Advancement of Education Leadership, including Ross Hemphill, Stephanie Pace Marshall, and Jacob Plumber to determine how to best align the Academy's strategies and initiatives with the Fund's interests and investment priorities.

Niche.com named the Academy as the second best high school in America. The Aurora City Council recognized this honor and presented the Academy a plaque at their December 13 City Council meeting. Joining me at the event was Dr. Marie Dahleh, Principal; Dr. Peter Dong, Physics Faculty; Dr. Jeffery Margolis, Vice President of External Affairs; and Ms. Catherine Steig, Public Relations & Digital Marketing Coordinator. Additionally, Juniors Diego Alanis and Katrina Kuhn, both Aurora residents, represented IMSA students at the City Council

On December 8, 2016 I met with Stuart Layne, the Executive Director of the state's Bicentennial Office. We will be working with him and his staff to position the International Student Science Fair (ISSF) as a key bicentennial event. The Office will also consider providing grant funding to further the development and implementation of STEM educational legacy programs. Incidentally, Governor Rauner announced his appointment of Emerita Dr. Stephanie Pace Marshall to the Illinois Bicentennial Commission.

Work is well underway to host the ISSF in June of 2018. Three internal committees have been created: Program Development, Logistics, and Sponsorship, Marketing & Communications.. The website announcing the event will go live in January. We held a student contest to design the logo. Junior Mishelle Mironov designed the winning submittal. The logo is in the Appendix.

Leadership Update from Cabinet Members

Dr. Dahleh and Dr. Margolis will provide brief updates during our January 18, 2016 Board meeting. These will appear as Attachments A and B to my report.