

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

José M. Torres, PhD

May 20, 2020

Leadership Matters

This report provides the Board of Trustees with information regarding Academy activities and the progress that we are making toward achieving our IMSA Impact and Outcomes Statement and Priority Outcomes. I organize the Report of the President, where appropriate, around the IMSA Impact and Outcomes document:

Three pillars:

1. STEM Teaching and Learning
2. Operational Capacity
3. Stakeholder Engagement

One Strategy—Strengthen Employee Engagement

Two continuing priorities for Academic Year 2019-2020

1. Advance Equity and Excellence-- Supports IMSA Impact and Outcomes Statement
2. Implement our Global Strategy (formerly “International Strategy and includes Innovation Campus, Phase 1) --Supports IMSA Impact and Outcomes Statement

I provide information, updates and general observations with IMSA stakeholders, including IMSA employees, students, and parents via my [Personal Reflections](#) throughout the year.

SPECIAL NOTICE: Due to the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic and Governor Pritzker’s Executive Orders, IMSA staff and students left the IMSA Campus on March 13, 2020 and continue to work, teach, and learn remotely. All employees whether or not they are able to work remotely, have continued to receive their salary and benefits.

STEM Teaching and Learning

IMSA Class of 2023 Admitted

On May 1, 2020, IMSA sent acceptance letters to 255 students and informed 86 students that they would be place in the Wait Pool. We informed these entering sophomores and their families that due to COVID-19 we were not certain when we would return to face-to-face instruction in our residential learning environment and referred them to our COVID-19 website for information as the situation continues to change rapidly. By May 8, 2020, 234 students and families replied with their deposit to hold their seat for the class of 2023.

IMSA Student Survey of Remote Learning

After hearing numerous concerns regarding the workload students were experiencing due to remote learning, I requested the Office of Institutional Research create a series of surveys related

to remote teaching and learning. We asked students to provide information regarding their experiences in the remote learning environment for each of their classes. The survey was conducted April 20-21, 2020 and had a 94% response rate (see attached). Two key findings were:

- Students overwhelmingly indicated that they have received a high quality of instruction in the remote learning environment.
- Similarly, a large majority of students indicated that the course structure, curriculum, and instructional materials have facilitated their learning in the remote learning environment.

Kudos to our faculty and everyone else who supported our move to remote teaching and learning. We have also conducted Faculty surveys of their experiences during remote teaching and held several town hall meetings. We are still reviewing and analyzing these data. While students' initial experiences have been positive, we believe IMSA can be "best in class" by continuing to improve our capacity to offer online instruction.

Virtual Commencement Ceremony 2020

IMSA's Commencement Ceremony is scheduled to air live on our YouTube channel on May 30, 2020, at 3:30 p.m. and can be seen [here](#). We are recording student speakers, a keynote address by Dr. Walter Massey, presentation and acceptance of students, and presentation of each student in graduation regalia if students choose to wear it.

Additionally, during move-out day, seniors wishing to take pictures on campus are invited to do so in a "Memory Lane" area that features a large congratulatory sign, cardboard cutouts of Dr. Hernandez and me, and other fun photo stations. We are saddened for our IMSA seniors' last few months at IMSA, including our inability to have an in-person commencement. When and if it is safe to do so, we plan to have an in-person celebration with all of our seniors and their families.

IMSAloquium-Virtual Student Inquiry Research (SIR)

On April 22, 2020, IMSA held its 32nd year of the IMSA SIR Program, showcasing students' projects over the past year. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we held IMSAloquium through Zoom. Our SIR Management Team, William McGrail, Kevin Broy and many others made this feat, which seemed impossible, appear normal. The IMSAloquium [booklet](#), session descriptions and research abstracts are available on digital commons. I'm so proud of our staff and students for rising to this challenge.

Digital Commons April 2020 Stats

Under the able leadership of Jean Bigger, IMSA continues to share our research and innovation with the world. Downloads of IMSA work on Digital Commons in April 2020, included: 14,004 full-text downloads by 404 institutions in 143 countries. Below is a world map of depicting downloads.



[2020 Student Leadership Exchange \(SLX\)](#)

IMSA held our 7th Annual Student Leadership Exchange event on April 29, 2020, through Zoom. LEAD (Leadership Education and Development) is a sophomore leadership program that culminates in a conference where projects aligned with the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals are presented to IMSA staff and external evaluators. Sophomores choose one of three electives: Social Entrepreneurship (SocEnt), Enabling Activism (EnACT), and Information Motivating Public Activism (IMPACT). Kudos to Andrea Stuber, Assistant Director of Residence Life, for working with student leaders, typically juniors and seniors, to coordinate these virtual presentations available through our [Digital Commons](#).

Dr. Comfort Akwaji-Anderson is IMSA’s New Principal and Chief Academic Officer

After three months of soliciting applications for the Principal and Chief Academic Officer role, we had a total of forty-eight applicants, forty-three of whom actually completed the application process. Prior to our closure due to COVID-19, we received several applications per week, although the quality of applicants was not high caliber. By late March, continuing into April, the applicant pool slowed to on average, one applicant per week. A review of applicants showed that the quality continued to be low to medium quality.

At the same time, as I began to work more closely with Dr. Akwaji-Anderson in light of Dr. Hernandez’ pending retirement, I had an opportunity to discover how strategic and forward thinking she is with a strong background in curriculum and instruction, desirable leadership qualities, impeccable credentials and experience, and a deep understanding of educational equity. Throughout my interactions with her, I continued to assess her as a potential candidate for the principal position. After Comfort submitted her application for the position, Dr. Akwaji-Anderson became my candidate of choice, and it became an easy decision to appoint her as IMSA’s next Principal and Chief Academic Officer beginning June 1, 2020.

Dr. Akwaji-Anderson has served as Dean of Faculty at IMSA since July 1, 2019. Her Ph.D. in Education is from Iowa State University, her M.S. in Family and Consumer Sciences from is

Iowa State University, and her B.S. in Psychology is from Minnesota State University. She also holds another B.A in Elementary Education from Government Teacher and Training College Bamenda in Cameroon. Comfort has written and presented extensively on social justice and equity in education, particularly in mathematics, and is well-known nationally for her expertise in these areas. She has devoted her 40-year career to K-12 and higher education at Iowa public schools, including King Math and Science Academy, Iowa State University, and the University of Northern Iowa. I'm excited to have Dr. Akwaji-Anderson join my leadership team as we serve IMSA's communities.

IMSA Local 604-IFT-AFT

We continue to correspond with the IMSA Council through its President, Dr. Michael Hancock, English Faculty, and the rest of their Executive Board: Brooke Schmidt (Vice-President), Science Faculty Leah Kind (Secretary), English Faculty, Christine Zhang (Treasurer), World Language Faculty, and Tracy Townsend (Senator), English Faculty. We expect to begin bargaining sometime this summer.

Student Engagement and Support

During the stay at home orders, IMSA continues to support our students through our Residence Counselors. Alma Latina recently held "Casa de Alma," IMSA's first virtual cultural show, which about 150 of us joined in to watch. See it [here](#). Our students taught us Spanish and Portuguese phrases, dances, and shared some powerful spoken poetry. Even I got into the fun by dancing for our students from home.

Operational Capacity

IMSA Journal of Activities in Response to the Pandemic

I am privileged to join weekly calls, hosted by Deputy Governor Jesse Ruiz in the Governor's office. I join State Superintendent, Dr. Carmen Ayala, Executive Director of the Board of Higher Education, Ginger Ostro, Executive Director of Community Colleges, Brian Durham, and other agency heads of the Governor's Office of Early Childhood, Illinois Student Assistance Center, Abraham Lincoln Museum, and other officials from the Governor's Office. We worked collaboratively to recommend the allocation of the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEER), coordinate potential PPE suppliers for the state, brainstormed reopening plans, etc. Additionally, Mr. Ruiz requested that we keep a journal of our activities in response to the pandemic. Attached are IMSA's journal entries from early March through April 21, 2020, list of supplies needed in August for possible in-person instruction, and our high-level move-out plans for our residential students, which were shared with the Governor's Office.

2020 Retirees

Each year IMSA staff who have dedicated part or all of their professional lives decide that the time is right to retire. This year is no exception. Yet, having to retire from IMSA during our remote working conditions cannot be easy. I have attached a "Tributes from Supervisors" as a way to say farewell to our seven IMSA colleagues: Dr. Robert Hernandez, Barb Rowe, Janice Held, Don Dosch, Paavo Husen, Diane Hinterlong, and Colleen Geihm.

Stakeholder Engagement

Engagement via Virtual Town Halls, Videos, and Special Website

During this period of working remotely, we have engaged with IMSA staff via virtual town hall meetings. We held town halls for staff on March 25, April 8 and May 6, for parents on April 25, and students on May 5. Additionally, the Office of Public Affairs, under the leadership of Tami Armstrong, has created many opportunities for staff engagement including work-from-home selfies, IMSA [QuaranTeam](#) website and a facemask mailing to each colleague. I recorded a special video whenever there was a major announcement, such as ending the academic year remotely, announcing the decision to create a virtual commencement, etc. Early in March, we also decided to create a [special page](#) on our Web site to serve as a repository of important emails we sent to the community. Communication in a crisis is vital and we finalized our Crisis Communication Plan during this present crisis (attached).

Student Emergency Relief Fund

To support our families, we established the Student Emergency Relief Fund with a goal of raising \$110,000. Thanks to a generous donation from alumni couple Sam and Jessica Droste Yagan '95, we reached our goal in record time. We have disbursed approximately \$30,000 to 32 IMSA families in need. We continue to solicit [donations](#) and to [distribute funds](#) to students and families.

Advancing Equity and Excellence

See Ms. Ellis's report.

Implement Our Global Strategies

See Ms. Thomas's report.

Leadership Update from Select Cabinet Members

Updates from Lawrence "Bud" Bergie, Katie Berger, Traci Ellis, Dr. Robert Hernandez, Dr. Norman "Storm" Robinson III, and Ms. Alexis Thomas, are attached.