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Convocation Committee Proposal

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To: Stephanie Marshall

From: Bernie Hollister Patrick McWilliams
LuAnn Smith Mark Running
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Re: Convocation Committee Proposal

Date: February 14, 1994

Purpose Statement

The purpose statement was designed to drive the nature and format of the Convocation ceremony. The statement can also serve to inform and teach the community about the meaning and purpose of the Convocation ceremony. We anticipate that the purpose statement will be sent to parents, students and staff prior to the Convocation.

The Convocation ceremony, an IMSA tradition, marks the beginning of the school year and serves to welcome students and staff to a community of scholars. This ceremony is both an announcement and affirmation of the Academy's identity and purpose. The ceremony also provides the members of the Academy the opportunity to establish and renew relationships with one another. This tradition expresses the spirit of a dynamic, learning community by establishing a formal celebration which sets the tone for the upcoming year.

How can we restore value and meaning to our Convocation?

We believe that value and meaning can be restored to Convocation by addressing the following issues.

- * The speaker must be inspirational and relevant to the life and work of the institution.
- * The purpose of Convocation and the expectations of students and staff must be communicated to the community.
- * The focus must be on content and not be burdened by process and logistics.
- * The timing of the convocation must meet the needs of students and staff.

What specific activities will meet our objectives for Convocation?

We would like to begin the program with a talk by the Executive Director, followed with introductory remarks by the Student Council President. The keynote speaker should address issues relevant to the life and work of the institution. The committee strongly believes that an alumni of IMSA would be best suited to deliver a powerful, relevant speech. In addition, we would like to solicit Alumni to provide the musical selections for the ceremony.

The ceremony will be followed with a reception. We see the reception as a dignified decompression to the Convocation ceremony. The Graduation reception is the model we would like to follow for the Convocation reception.

The ceremony and reception will be held at IMSA. We believe that having convocation at the Academy will remove a logistical barrier from the significance of the ceremony; transporting 650 students by bus to a formal event was counter-productive. Further, while our connection to Fermilab is relevant, that connection has not been clear to our audience. The gym will need to be transformed to reflect the formal nature of the ceremony, as it was for the Maya Angelou lecture. The reception will be held in the old cafeteria.

We are recommending that Convocation continue to be held on the Monday of the opening week of school; although we believe that the ceremony should begin at approximately 2:00 in the afternoon and be followed immediately by the reception.

We have established the following parameters for formality for the Convocation. All Academy staff are expected to attend. This reinforces our belief that each member of the community is a part of the community of scholars and that "all adults share responsibility for the well being of all children". Each member of the community will receive a copy of the purpose statement and expectations for behavior. Finally, given the formal nature of the event, all students and staff are to be dressed semi-formally; suit and tie, or blazer with slacks for men; daytime dress, or skirt and blouse for women (Post, 1986).

The committee was unable to reach consensus concerning the importance of caps and gowns at Convocation. The majority of the

group felt that caps and gowns were not necessary. Several committee members felt strongly that the formal regalia contributed to the purpose of Convocation. The concerns identified were that: the robes created a "pecking order" among the adults in the community, the robes separated the non-degreed staff from the degreed staff, and the robes separated the adults from the students. Conversely, the robes send a message about the formality of the event. The students felt that the significance of the procession would be diminished without the robes, but not the significance of the ceremony.

The committee felt that the staff should sit with the students, much as they did at the Maya Angelou lecture. The committee also felt that the Seniors should be allowed to sit as a class. The seating would also be driven by the decision on whether or not the staff wore caps and gowns.

What other activities will compliment the Convocation ceremony?

The Student Council Mixer is an important piece to the opening of the school year. It serves as an informal event to follow-up the formality of the Convocation ceremony. It allows staff to interact with students in a different setting and continue to make connections with students. Even though this event is titled "Student Council Mixer" we believe that the institution should fund the event. This event is optional for students and staff.

* * * * *

We feel that we adequately explored all the issues presented to us and are satisfied with our recommendations. We thank you for the opportunity address the Convocation.