

PROJECT BRIEF

presented by imsa's student council

PILLARS OF INNOVATION



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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT:

In our Quarter I report, Student Council mentioned a new brand: Pillars of Innovation. These serve as a set of crucial projects spanning various academic, residential, internal, and institutional reforms. By coordinating our prioritized projects in a packaged format, Student Council has been able to more clearly define our current and future focus. As long-term endeavors, many Pillars require additional time for development and thus extend to coming administrations. In order to maintain an engaged yet accountable Cabinet, each Pillar of Innovation features a different project leader and an assisting team of at least two Cabinet members. Thus far, collaboration with administration, faculty, and staff has proved essential to the Pillars. The Principal's Office, faculty departments, the President's Office, Student Life, and the Office of Institutional Research have brought key resources for project development.

Student Council has compiled this document to convey a general idea of the long-term work we are engaged in as well as receive feedback. Each Pillar of Innovation is explained by at least a blurb, but many offer additional resources for more details. To access the additional information on a particular Pillar, follow the links provided at the end of each section. Doing so will direct you to a dedicated page on our website. We are excited to share this revolutionary direction for Student Council, but while you review our work, remember: *Don't simply expect improvement; demand greatness.*

Devotedly,

Anthony Marquez

Student Council President 2013-2014

ONLINE FEEDBACK:

You can send questions, comments, or critiques about any of the Pillars of Innovation to Student Council online at: SITES.IMSA.EDU/STUDCO/PILLARSFEEDBACK



THEMED OPEN FORUMS & ROUNDTABLES:

Towards the end of the first semester, Student Council hosted the first installment of the new series: Themed Open Forums, featuring a discussion on pertinent issues between administration, faculty, and the student body. At the Course Forum, Student Council guided discussion with a few proposed ideas and notable issues, allowing for open participation from the student body as well. In preparation, we gathered comments, complaints, and ideas regarding Courses at IMSA using an anonymous survey and a wall of sticky notes during midday. This collection of feedback proved immensely useful in directing our projects! Our second Forum will be regarding Mental Health at IMSA, currently scheduled for January 28th.

You can get a preview of the upcoming forum and submit your ideas through our anonymous form online at: SITES.IMSA.EDU/STUDCO/MENTALHEALTHFORUM

EXPLORATION SESSIONS

The Exploration Sessions model provides a twist on class content that asks the teacher to present a few topics related to a theme in the course syllabus and allow the students to select one of them to focus on for two specified class days during the semester. Though many teachers already practice similar formats, Student Council is experimenting with pilot programs of this concept through the World in the Twentieth Century course to examine how student input in class content relates to their engagement in it. This project is particularly notable because it is the first Student Council pilot program to ever directly affect classroom dynamics. The Exploration Sessions serve as a microcosmic model for future years in which students could play a large role in choosing class content and even designing courses.

You can view program specifics and analytical design in our faculty proposal online with slide notes at: SITES.IMSA.EDU/STUDCO/EXPLORATIONSESSIONS

MODIFYING STUDENT SURVEYS:

Over the past quarter, Student Council has been partnering with the Principal's Office to suggest reforms to the Student Surveys used by faculty and administration to improve future courses and departments. Thus far, our focus has been on devising more clearly understandable, actionable general questions. To refine the department and course-



specific questions, Student Council invites students to participate in [Survey Evaluation Committees](#), a unique opportunity to have input on the future of academics at IMSA.

To join these committees, go to: SITES.IMSA.EDU/STUDCO/SURVEYEVALUATION

LEADERSHIP FOCUS GROUPS:

At IMSA, we are fortunate enough to be surrounded by peers with various different talents and areas of expertise. Thus, in order to maximize the quality of our projects, Student Council has been working with administrators, notably President Cathy Veal, to organize the Leadership Focus Groups. They are designed to handle some of the most groundbreaking student-led reforms within IMSA. Students who have demonstrated expertise in relevant areas will be identified and invited to these sessions and it will be Student Council's responsibility to introduce and facilitate discussions about the projects. More details about the topics and dates will be released soon.

STUDENT QUALITY OF LIFE SURVEYS:

Student Council has been working with Student Life to construct a comprehensive survey assessing the quality of life at IMSA. The questions have been crafted with an emphasis on making results actionable and directive of future endeavors. We hope to have the survey administered over this next semester.

LATE START TRANSITIONING:

In conjunction with the Principal's Office, Student Council has been examining the possibilities of a schedule that features a later start time for students in accordance with studies detailing patterns of student functionality. In the future, a more detailed description of the proposed schedule and an interactive question-answer platform will be featured on the Student Council Website. This web platform will allow students to ask questions and send feedback directly to the Principal's office. Responses will be posted on the same page as soon as they are available.

RE-DEFINING THE AT-LARGE POSITION:

In the past, the position of at-Large has been very ambiguous. Essentially, at-Large members have been the liaisons between Class Club and Student Council while serving as the representative of a respective class. However, this year the connection between



Class Club and Student Council has been dissolved as it was deemed unnecessary and inconvenient. Given that change, Student Council has been re-defining the responsibilities and expectations of the at-Large position. Additional information regarding the specific changes to the at-Large position will be available in the future.

For examples of potential items, visit: SITES.IMSA.EDU/STUDCO/ATLARGEDEFINITION

INNOVATING ATTENDANCE POINT SYSTEM:

Student Council has been brainstorming and evaluating various different approaches to improving the attendance point system, with a main focus on accounting for differences between a tardy and an absence while working to keep students engaged in the classroom. More details on specific systems may be available in the future.

PERCENTAGE-BASED GRADING:

In an effort to increase the precision of grading, Student Council has been assessing the possibility of straying from the traditional letter grade system in favor of transcripts showing exact percentage grades. By following this, the minor differences between an A- and B+ (say, 89.9 and a 90.1) would be appropriately shown rather than being arbitrarily emphasized. Student Council is still in communication with the Principal's Office and will be discussing the idea with faculty as we move forward.

A summary of key benefits, research, and misconceptions, can be found online in our faculty proposal at: SITES.IMSA.EDU/STUDCO/PERCENTAGEBASED

SYLLABUS AND COURSE REVIEW COMMITTEES:

Headed by Student Council members, review committees as proposed would be chosen through an application demonstrating a student's experience, interest, and expertise in a particular academic department. After selection, these students would work to formulate suggestions for course and department improvement while serving as the main channel of communication between the student body and a particular department. The current stage of the project is identifying and discussing potential pilot courses with interested faculty. After evaluating the success of the pilot program(s), future renditions will be modified and pursued accordingly.



UNIVERSAL ASSIGNMENT CALENDAR:

As highlighted at the Course Forum, Student Council is striving to bolster the Universal Assignment Calendar as a method to more evenly distribute work so that students are not overwhelmed with major assignments on a particular timeframe. Since the Course Forum, the idea has been discussed with the Operational Coordinators of each academic department. Moving forward, details regarding the idea's execution will be more properly developed.

More details are available in the online Course Forum presentation and slide notes for this project at: SITES.IMSA.EDU/STUDCO/UNIVERSALACADEMICCALENDAR

STUDENT INQUIRY SPECIALIZATION:

Student Inquiry Specialization's goal is to expand I-Day inquiry beyond traditional research projects while bolstering other outlets of application such as Independent Study, TALENT, Kids Institute, and service. We are working to legitimize all opportunities of inquiry and develop the scope of what students are expected to do on I-days. This project is very long-term, with preliminary research continuing to be conducted.

To view a graphic that details Student Council's preliminary model with definitions and examples visit: SITES.IMSA.EDU/STUDCO/INQUIRYSPECIALIZATION