October 24, 2020

Dear Iovine and Young Academy Students, Parents, and Friends,

Eight years ago, Jimmy Iovine and Andre “Dr. Dre” Young brought a vision to USC to change the very nature of a college education, and to provide something unique, timely and powerful for the coming generations of tech-wielding, entrepreneurial, and socially and culturally aware students. It has been the greatest honor of my life to have been part of building that vision at USC, and to have been privileged with a close-up view into the remarkable hearts, capabilities, courage and resilience of the students who by coming to IYA chose to do more, to go farther, and to make a difference.

I’ll be taking up a new title at the end of this academic year, but it isn’t really a new job. Students everywhere, and the promise of the individual, are what I will always believe in. Because of the strength of what we have built together at IYA, I have been offered the opportunity to continue building new and effective ways to support students as they, each in their own way, design a world that is better than the one they were handed. I’m gratified by the faith that has been placed in me, especially in these unprecedented times when each of us has such an important role to play.

Some of you have very kindly expressed concern for IYA’s future leadership, but the truth is IYA is so much more than any one person. IYA is a promise that will be honored by not just everyone at our school, but everyone across every school, unit and division at USC, and even beyond. What was begun here has been embraced across campus, across the U.S. and across the world, and is now fueled by the many supporters, partners and collaborators that have joined us, one after another, in defining the experiences that allow our students to excel by tackling problems that are worth solving, and developing solutions that bring lasting positive impact. That promise began with the generosity and vision of our founders, and it is renewed and refreshed daily by the entire IYA community, and most especially by the dedication of our exceptional faculty and staff.

IYA is an idea that encompasses and embraces many people, and many things. Most importantly, students, never forget that IYA is all of you.

When I meet with each new freshman and graduate cohort, I always offer one very important truth about IYA: with all the tech and cutting-edge spaces, the classes and labs, and the industry and faculty experts, the real secret of what we offer, the genuine gift we give all of you is each other. Your IYA student colleagues are, simply, amazing. They will be there for you online, on the ground, here or anywhere, now and in the future. As students and alumni of IYA, you are and will always be part of a large and continually growing network of talent, support, connections, and genuine understanding for who you are
and what you hope to achieve. You are part of an enduring family whose DNA is defined by the vision of a better future, and the determination to make that a reality despite any odds.

If for some reason that’s still not enough, rest assured that I could be literally halfway across the globe and would never be too far away to respond if you reach out. You are so important to me, and my ability to care for and support each and every one of you will never be diminished, no matter where I live or how many more students are added to my ‘family’.

We all have much to accomplish this year, and I look forward to spending every minute of it working with all of you on making, creating, inventing, innovating, overcoming, and doing good.

Stay well, and Fight On!

Erica