

ICIAM 2015 OPENING CEREMONY

opening remarks by Barbara Keyfitz

Vice-President Li, Congress Director Guo,
honored guests and delegates all,

It is my great honor and pleasure, as
President of the International Council for
Industrial and Applied Mathematics, to
begin the process of welcoming you to
ICIAM 2015, the Eighth International
Congress on Industrial and Applied
Mathematics.

This is the moment, this is the week, when
we tell each other what we do, when we tell
the world what we, “industrial and applied
mathematicians”, do. We are here to
describe our research, our teaching, our
service to the profession or to the
commerce and the economies of our
countries. We are here to show off our
achievements, individually and collectively,
to collaborate and to compete, to boast and
also to feel humbled by learning of the

achievements of those whom we admire unreservedly.

The ambitious name of our organization tends to conceal the fact that we are, by and large, an academic crowd: university professors and researchers and students. But we are distinguished by our certainty that the mathematics we do is capable of impacting a world outside of mathematics, to its benefit. We recognize that as professors and students we have a unique advantage in being able to travel – for some of us, halfway around the world – to a summer congress.

So, let me begin by thanking our Chinese hosts, on behalf of those who have travelled here, for giving us the opportunity to visit your beautiful country. Most of the attendees will never know how hard you have worked to make this a successful congress. Please accept our gratitude as a small compensation for the research you have foregone, the papers you have not written, the students you have not been able to advise during the past five years,

and especially during the past six months, when I have watched you put many things in place.

That is the most important thing I have to say: Thank you.

But this welcome is also an occasion to talk about our profession. As our distinguished government representative was once a math major, he may be interested to hear more about what we “industrial and applied mathematicians” do. And it’s critically important to emphasize the inclusiveness of our organization. There was a time when “applied mathematics” might have meant something narrow enough to fit into a single undergraduate course. Those days are gone. Among the people who are at this meeting because they belong to our community are computational scientists, statisticians, data analysts, mathematical biologists, and computer scientists. Our member societies include optimization, operations research and mechanics in their names. And of course, mathematics. Some of us still try to prove theorems.

Finally, a message to all the delegates, those of you paging through the program to decide what events to attend out of this vast menu of choices. Do not omit the invited lectures or the special lectures, which will take us from 8:30 in the morning until 8 o'clock at night. It may seem like a lengthy schedule, until you realize that to compress the highlights of our discipline into five days has required substantial overlapping of talks. The world of applied and industrial mathematics is at your feet. Learn and enjoy.

Thank you for your participation in this grand event.