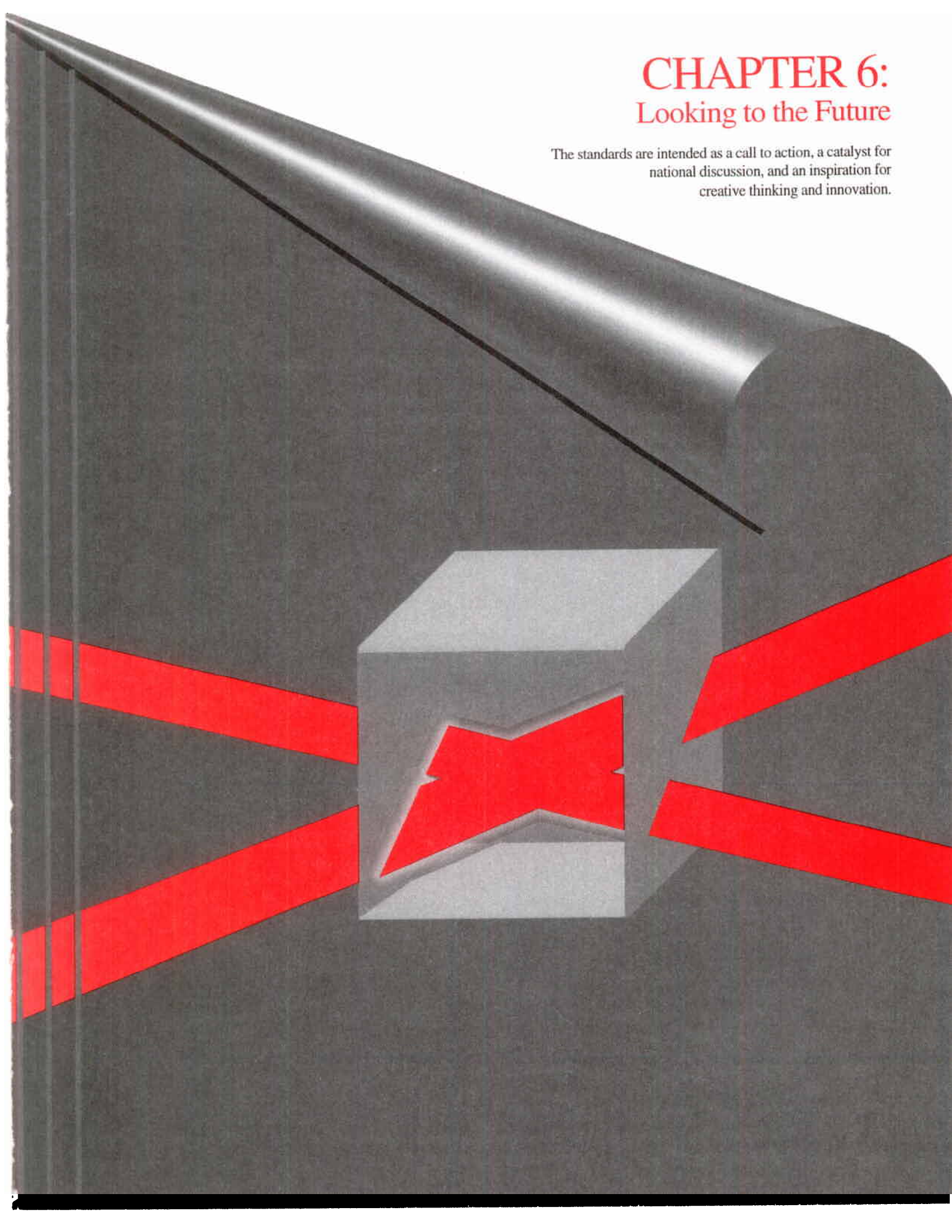


CHAPTER 6: Looking to the Future

The standards are intended as a call to action, a catalyst for national discussion, and an inspiration for creative thinking and innovation.



Think back to the opening vignette, which described the uncertainties of a two-year college faculty member teaching an experimental section of algebra: Although excited by the material and encouraged by the students' responses, she worried that the course did not include the skill development that conventional courses offer. Having read this report, would you respond to her concerns differently now? How would your response differ?

We hope that the standards presented in this document inspire new ways of looking at introductory college mathematics. Too often a domain of low expectations and unfulfilled potential, introductory college mathematics courses hold the promise of opening new paths to future learning and fulfilling careers to an often neglected segment of the student population. The standards are intended as a call to action, a catalyst for national discussion, and an inspiration for creative thinking and innovation. We hope that this document convinces you to devote some time to thinking about how to provide better instruction and an improved curriculum to benefit those for whom we all desire the best—our students.

Today, introductory college mathematics plays a critical role in so many professions that improving instruction at this level is essential for our nation's vitality. The *NCTM Standards* (NCTM, 1989) set forth an agenda for change in mathematics education at the K-12 levels; numerous calculus reform projects are pioneering new ideas at the calculus level. These reforms make it imperative that higher education take a fresh look at introductory college mathematics and how it connects to other levels of study.

Educational reform is an evolving process, and this document offers guidelines for an initial phase. As the recommendations presented here are tested and evaluated, new recommendations and new ideas will emerge. While the implementation period will likely be chaotic and uncertain, it will certainly be exciting, challenging, and professionally fulfilling. We believe this standards-based reform effort will provide all students with a more engaging and valuable learning experience. Our students deserve no less; our nation requires no less; and we must demand no less of ourselves.

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