

IBEI Graduation Talk (Barcelona June, 22 2015)

Charles Crossley

Good evening, buenas tardes

First of all I would like to thank all of the speakers tonight, thank you for being such a hard act to follow but I'll do my best.

When I found out that I had been elected to give the graduation speech at the ceremony this evening my initial thought was...who on earth voted for me? Looking around I see a room full of talented, well-travelled, intelligent people and yet here I stand...I guess that's democracy for you. But after a short time I realised what an honor it is to represent all of these amazing students who have made this year a pleasure. So, I'll talk to you guys now for a few minutes.

The first thing I want to say to everyone graduating today is that this is an evening of celebration; it is an evening to reflect on our achievements over the last year. For many of us, this year has involved moving to a completely new city, adapting to a new culture and way of life, obtaining a NIE, which to this day was one of the greatest challenges I have overcome and one of my proudest achievements...Many others here tonight have studied at masters level in a non-native language, a truly impressive achievement, especially for us English-speakers. We can also celebrate the fact that IBEI is that unique kind of forward-thinking institution, one that has a graduation ceremony *before* we hand in our dissertation...what a great idea. And I trust, based on personal experience, that I will not be disappointed by the celebrations that follow the ceremony tonight. But let's leave that for later eh.

As we leave IBEI and enter, or re-enter, the world of work, we must remember that this is just the beginning. This experience has laid the platform for success in life, however one defines it. A successful life is often judged through one's career. For example, finding an influential and fulfilling job, maybe even one with a big salary, or in our case getting a paid internship would be a good start...In all seriousness, I have every faith that the students here will go on to great things in this regard. Throughout this year I have been struck by what a range of abilities we have and how much we can contribute to our chosen fields. Practically speaking, in the corridors of our university I have seen everything from computer geniuses, through savvy businessmen and women, to political activists. One thing that unites us is our open-minds and our ability to question orthodox thinking, something that we should never lose in our future careers.

And, as we know, there is plenty of work for us to do. Studying topics related to international politics in Barcelona presents you with a strange contrast. At the same time as living in a fantastic city and enjoying a lively social life, sometimes too lively, intellectually you are forced to face up to the reality of a complex and often challenging global political system. If we wanted easy answers, we picked the wrong subject. Our professors have done a great job of broadening our horizons to these issues in an honest and sincere way. So thank you very much for that. Importantly, these

challenges that exist should not deter us as we move in to the working world. Instead they should motivate us.

But a career is not the only way to judge success in life; in fact it's probably not even the most important. Another way is the opportunities you have to meet and build relationships with amazing people. People that make you laugh, introduce you to new things and new ideas, and change the way you think about the world. If you're on LinkedIn, I guess this would be called expanding your network, but for tonight let's just call them old-fashioned friends. In this sense, our year at IBEI has given us the greatest opportunity to lead successful lives. When I was writing this speech I debated whether it would be appropriate to bring up my birthday party to really emphasize this point. I decided yes. So let me take you back to December in a small bar in El Born. By 11pm the bar was packed full of my friends from IBEI, everyone was having a great time, at least I think they were, everyone apart from the bar staff who actually kicked us out in the end. Anyway, I remember the feeling I had that night like it was yesterday. I felt humbled to have had the opportunity to meet and get to know so many wonderful people. I think all of us have had that feeling at some point this year. That would never have happened without IBEI. Because of our time here, we have built friendships that will last a lifetime, we have sofas to sleep on all over the world and, you never know, our friends might even help us to get a job one day, I'm definitely counting on you guys for that one. For all of this, I will be eternally grateful that I packed my bags and came to Barcelona in September.

Now, all that remains is for me to say is thank you. First and foremost, we should thank our friends and families, our biggest supporters. To the families in the room tonight, and those that could not make it for whatever reason, I want to say, as a student, we really do value your emotional support, your guidance and your love, just as much your financial support, honestly.

He pensado en decir también unas palabras en castellano porque en los últimos días muchos de mis amigos me han dicho que sus padres no hablan inglés. Por lo tanto, gracias a todas las familias por haber venido, por estar celebrando con nosotros esta noche, y sobre todo muchas gracias por su apoyo durante tantos años. Un (gran) aplauso para las familias! A round of applause for the families.

I would also like to thank our professors once again, and all of the staff at IBEI for your hard work throughout the year. And, before I forget, thank you to my girlfriend Grace for helping me so much with this speech. Now I'm almost finished I promise I just want to say one more thing to the students: best of luck for the future, let's stay in touch and let's have a great party tonight!

Thank you very much.

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