

IBEI Graduation Talk (Barcelona June 29, 2018)

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Bon dia a tothom i benvinguts. Estimats administradors, professors, personal, i els meus companys estudiants: finalment, aquí estem. Felicitacions!

Me llamo Ben, y es un honor hablar con vosotros como vuestro orador. Hoy, no estoy aquí simplemente como un estudiante del programa Mundus MAPP, pero como un estudiante de IBEI: la institución que se encuentra entre los mejores programas de posgrado, el producto del consorcio excelente de cinco universidades y la fundación CIDOB, y para nosotros, nuestro hogar.

Estoy muy agradecido y honrado que ustedes me seleccionaron. Espero que puedo marcar con este discurso - al menos, más que Lionel Messi en esta copa mundial. Si puedo marcar una mitad de Harry Kane, de Cristiano Ronaldo, o pues, de Inés Arrimadas en las últimas elecciones, quizás se puede decir que mi discurso hoy tendrá un impacto.

Para aquellos aquí que solamente hablan castellano, volveré con ustedes un poquito más tarde. Por el momento, si no os importa, me gustaría dirigirme a mis compañeros graduados en inglés.

It honestly feels like yesterday when many of us first met at IBEI Welcome Day. Professor Kissack had us tell one 'unique' thing about ourselves, no one could figure out the WiFi, and I, meanwhile, picked up dragon breath after spreading all the garlic paste across my plate of fideuá for lunch. Fast forward nine months, and here we are: exams barely finished, theses still to be written, and many of us still praying each time we hit 'send' on a job application.

Today, supposedly, we get a master's degree.

In spite of everything, I'm convinced we're ready.

In my view, for us this past year has been a story of exposure. In photographic terms - as Nadine and Martin will tell you - exposure is the amount of light you allow into your camera.

Our story of exposure is not that different. It's the kind where we put ourselves out there: risking what we know and who we are in front of people, places, and experiences the likes of which we've never encountered. We came here to earn a Master's degree, but in the process exposed ourselves to so much more. And in doing so together, we've become better people along the way.

Catalunya

Our eyes and ears, for example, have laid witness to the trials and tribulations between Catalunya and Spain in what has been a heated period. Understatement of the year, I know. By show of hands, how many of us here attended a manifestación - a demonstration of some kind - in the past year? *People raise hands*

This image speaks for itself.

If you're on the IBEI Hangout WhatsApp group, I encourage you to open up the photos folder, scroll up to the very top, and tap the 8th photo from the beginning. You'll see what I think is José's best work this year: a photo of a clearly disgruntled Conor navigating a packed pro-independence demonstration.

Perhaps more importantly (although it's hard to be more important than Conor the President), look at the photos immediately before and after. You see groups of IBEI students, taking in the moment and getting to know one another. These were early days, but already we were exposing ourselves to everything Barcelona had to offer.

Student Room

Hitting a little closer to home, we exposed ourselves this year to the Student Room - which, as we all know, was more than just a room. It came complete with lions roaring, countless battles to open and close the windows, and students switching between blank pages and Facebook.

The Student Room really had it all: if you wanted in on the next big conversation, find Guillermo. If you wanted a copy of the newest edition of Argus, find Marc, Hanna, James, or anyone else on the team. If you ordered that slick IBEI shirt or sweater, approach Alma or the other student reps. If you were late to a Brainstage interview, come in anyway - grab some food, take a seat, and Marta will make sure you're on the next Instagram story.

Even the unexpected became something we looked forward to. One day, for example, I happened to turn around and find a lovely lady from Italy named Anna. I asked her out to coffee, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Love, laughter, and lions - the Student Room was full of exposures we weren't always aware of, and yet it's helped shape our IBEI experience.

Our work as students

And a big chunk of that experience, of course, happened in the classroom. International relations, international development, international security, and public policy: our growth across these four programs are at the core of IBEI's *raison d'être*. For me, it is a source of privilege and pride to have learned alongside you. I witnessed first-hand the brilliance of David, who is basically the next John Mearsheimer; Felipe, who is the post-structuralist we all need, and Anna and Michele, who will advocate practice-based approaches like there is no tomorrow. The ways in which we've exposed ourselves within IBEI's walls on a daily basis are near immeasurable.

Even if you forgot what the core tenets of poststructuralism were and you Googled it to ask a smart question for participation points, that's exposure too.

In terms of the way in which we now see the world though, we're no longer the same people as we were nine months ago. And if that's not exposure at its simplest, then I'm at a loss for what is.

The list is long. I haven't even mentioned:

- Nights that start at Lupara and end at La Fira
- Weekly football (which has happened at least 20 times and is still counting)
- Five editions of Argus
- Eight Brainstage interviews, and
- Rooftop celebrations with non-stop reggaeton.

When we walk out of these doors as newly-minted IBEI alumni, we will continue adding to our own lists, fed by distinct paths of our own choosing. But no matter the places you go and the wonders you see, I urge us all to keep hold of the gift that our time at IBEI has given us: a reminder that in a world full of exposure, there is immeasurable fulfilment in taking on that next step together.

Presentaciones, papeles, y exámenes son solamente la punta del iceberg. La magia de nuestra historia empieza con todo que hemos hecho aquí, continúa con el camino que vamos a realizar, y nunca termina si recordamos que independientemente de lo que hagamos en el futuro, es mejor hacerlo juntos.

So, before you disembark at your próxima estación or propera parada, look both ways: first for the exposure, and second for the company.

Muchas gracias, y que Dios os bendiga.