

NISSA WISUTTISMARN'S COMMENCEMENT SPEECH

In August of 2005, 138 of us left the comfort and familiarity of our homes, friends, and family to endure two intensive years with people we never met. For some, it was even the first time living abroad. We came from different education, different careers, different goals, and most notably, different countries—47 countries to be exact.

Yet, despite all these differences, we arrived at the same place by the power of one commonality—the power of our passports. And if it weren't for this passport, traveling to Brandeis International Business School would have never even been a reality.

You see...these passports are far more than just books of global stamps and visas to gain access to this country for higher education. These are books of life lessons that have provided us with the tools vital for success at an American school with an international focus. As I speak to you today about these lessons, I encourage you to look around at all of our classmates, and realize how our two year experience took us from arriving at IBS as strangers to now leaving together as family.

So let's start with....

Life Lesson #1: Learn the local language and culture.

As we are quite well-traveled, by now we have learned to accept the colloquialisms and customs of the different cities we have visited. Now, we can include in that list of cities, Boston, Massachusetts. Yet, for many of us, the adjustment wasn't easy.

Even as an American, I can tell you I've learned some new Boston English. For instance, who knew that "bubbler" meant water fountain and that the word "grinder" actually referred to a sandwich? And since when is 5:45PM expressed as "15 of 6"?

Sometimes, confusion even arises from non-language related activities. Soccer, otherwise more internationally known as football, is the one universal sport that the majority of IBS could relate to prior to arriving here. Yet, in this town, baseball takes precedence. All I can say is that I commend those of you who have made a valiant effort in trying to understand this often-confusing sport by either attending or playing at the IBS softball games, even if you were the one that ran to first base with bat still in hand.

But, regardless of the challenges we encountered, the important thing is that we learned to embrace the change and eventually adapted to an environment so different from our own. Although we might not realize it today, it is this adaptability factor that has placed us ahead of the game. In our future endeavors, we will already be prepared with the tools necessary to adjust to a new way of life and hit the ground running faster than those who never encountered these cross-cultural experiences like we have. And it is these experiences which actually leads me to our next lesson...

Life Lesson #2: Embrace diversity

The cross-cultural experiences we had prior to IBS are what actually helped us get here in the first place. Essay number one on our admissions application asks “What international experiences will you bring to Brandeis International Business School and how will this contribute to the classroom?” Let’s just say our school definitely does not have a shortage of these experiences to offer. In fact, we so often like to share our global insights by introducing our thoughts with the most common three-worded phrase heard around our school, “In my country...”

We laugh today, but we’ve got to admit that these experiences we discuss from each other’s home lands put the “I” in IBS. And the internationalism just doesn’t stop there inside the classroom, but it also emanates in social conversation--Family and friends, you’d be proud to know that we’ve learned to say bad words in 50 different languages just under two years!

But in all seriousness, in a region full of the world’s top universities, there is no other program here that offers internationalism at its finest like that of Brandeis International Business School, and for that, I am proud of our education and student body. Our graduate school experience has become that much more enriching by learning how people from all walks of life approach business problems differently, even IF you don’t always agree with them. I couldn’t think of a better educational practice ground to exercise these cross-cultural experiences so fundamental to doing business in the global economy.

But please...when you do finally hit that start date to begin working in this international marketplace, make sure to follow...

Life Lesson #3: Use a guide and a map

So we’re already equipped with our passports, but just so you don’t get lost, don’t forget that you always will have your Brandeis family as your guide and your Masters diploma to direct you to the right coordinates. We have used our faculty, staff, and each other as advisors to our career itineraries. We have assisted one another in making the best decisions so our future plans run as smoothly as possible. But just because we will be leaving IBS physically does not mean that your guides will forget you, for families are there for you through thick and thin.

And make sure to use your new diploma as a map to put you in the right direction. Our respective degree programs have taught us our likes and dislikes and what we’re good at and not so good at. So whether you decide to tackle fixed income securities or marketing strategies, use what you’ve learned to always be true to yourself in order to get to your goals.

I could continue for the next three hours telling you more, but I won’t. Instead, I hope that my reminiscence of our past two years has inspired you to realize your *own* personal life lessons that you’ve both applied and learned while earning your degree.

Before I leave you today, I wouldn't feel complete without giving thanks to each and everyone of you for everything you've given to me and to each other.

Thank you friends and family for traveling from far off places to see your loved one receive their diploma. Thank you faculty and staff for all your knowledge and support in helping us develop into who we want to be. Thank you, Kate Goldfield, for being our Brandeis Mom. And lastly...

Classmates, thank you for teaching me the location of countries like Georgia, Armenia, Zambia, and Kyrgyzstan. Thank you for all the coins you let me borrow for the vending machine. Thank you for sharing your sandwiches with me from Dominic's. Thank you for your homework help. Thank you for all the hard work you put into every painstaking group project. But most importantly....thank you for your guidance and your friendship. Because without it, my experience here at IBS just wouldn't have been as memorable.

I understand that after this month, all 138 of us will be dispersed throughout the world as we begin embarking on our global careers. Despite our distance, years from now all I ask of you is to remember that one commonality that got us here in the first place—your passport. But this time, use that passport to reunite with each other, wherever in the world you may be. I look forward to seeing you in our reunions for years to come.

Class of 2007...CONGRATULATIONS!

Thank You.