

Akash Tanna (Sky)  
IBS Commencement Speech  
May 23, 2010

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My name is Akash Tanna and I'm an MBA. Today I have the honor of speaking to all of you, on this special occasion, one that marks the end of a chapter beautifully written and the beginning of many more chapters to come.

Dean Magid, your vision and dedication bring Brandeis International Business School the recognition it deserves.

Professors, Thank you. Your confidence in our ability to juggle ten assignments at a time only made us realize that there is nothing we can't achieve.

Staff members, you made our lives easy, you made our lives simple. You made it possible for us to have a home away from home.

Parents, for us to study in a place thousands of miles away, some of you invested a fortune, not knowing your rates of return. I truly admire your risk appetite (...Talking like a true MBA already).

And especially, a big applause to my fellow graduates, Class of 2010. For better or for worse, we'll always be remembered as the best looking class in the history of IBS.

As the graduation date was approaching, I decided to clean out my room. How would I ever be able to pack two years of possessions into two suitcases? Then for a second I paused and debated whether or not I should keep all the printouts that I've collected over these two years... the cases, the graphs, the presentations, the charts, spreadsheets, cover sheets, cheat sheets and what not. I'm afraid that bringing nothing back to India might alarm my parents who have generously sponsored my studies here. I would love to present to them the evidence of my hard work. Would a graded assignment sheet reflect all the group discussions I've had? Would a bunch of PowerPoint slides show how much I've learnt in class? Not everything that matters can be printed. Not everything that counts can be counted. The diploma you and I are getting today after all is just a piece of paper. Such a tangible thing can be lost, stolen or torn into pieces. But if it's something stored within you, then it's not going anywhere, It's going everywhere with you.

Looking back on these two years, the most vivid images in my mind are the thought-provoking lectures, the charismatic speakers, the heated classroom debates, and the fruitful group discussions. I once read a quote, "Great people talk about ideas. Average people talk about things. Small people talk about other people." Suddenly the meaning of my journey here at IBS became so clear. Walking out that door, I am carrying with me something much more valuable than all these sheets of paper, something much more powerful in shaping our world the way it is: I'm carrying with me New IDEAS.

From one of the speakers here at Brandeis IBS, I learnt that Ideas are like babies, vulnerable yet full of promises. Just as you never abandon a baby, you should never discard new ideas. IBS has provided exactly the kind of environment needed for ideas to flourish. A nurturing home in which every idea is respected equally and responded with thought and caution. Not everybody has had that privilege. In the early 1980s, Valerie Yule, an Australian researcher designed an electronic 'pocket typewriter.' Electronics

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experts laughed at her because although the technology had already been invented, it was believed that *people could not handle the small buttons of a full keyboard*. Now we have 'electronic computing devices' with small buttons everywhere. I bet many of you here today, already own an iPhone, blackberry; palm pre or what have you.

All the great inventions in the world were once only ideas. Our very own school was just an idea that materialized in the 1994, under the name Graduate School of International Economics and Finance. With the addition of the Lemberg center in 2003, the name was changed to the International business school. We're blessed to still have the founding dean of IBS here today, Professor Peter Petri (A hand of applause everyone). It is because of this man's vision that I stand before you holding this MBA diploma.

Let us remember that Ideas don't come fully formed. They gradually take shape. At IBS, we have learned how to shape ideas by seeing, hearing, asking, playing and engaging with them. There is a constant flow of Ideas here at IBS, be it classrooms, clusters, cafes, or corridors. Interactions with students from around the globe with their stories and their differences are precious in triggering new ways of viewing the world. Thoughtful discussions with the professors further encouraged us to explore unfamiliar territories. That's the privilege we have enjoyed at IBS.

On this quest for ideas, sometimes we can't help but wonder if we will ever come up with anything new. We are told to think 'out of the box'. However, the box has become much bigger over the years and it keeps growing exponentially. Now it takes a tremendous amount of learning to get to the frontier of human knowledge. Will we ever be able to expand that frontier? This is a legitimate question we will ask ourselves at one point or another. When faced with such questions and uncertainty, we can either strive for new ideas or find comfort in the old ones. I once read in a fortune cookie "the key to getting ahead is to get started." Two years of training in an environment such as IBS has certainly given us a head start. All we need is the confidence in our ability, our intuition and our imagination. We also need the audacity to try out new ideas regardless of how others might view them.

After today each of us will embark on a new journey full of excitement and challenges. Sometimes we will face dead ends. They are there to let us know it is time to change course and to let new ideas emerge. My fellow graduates, my friends, on this journey, I wish you more than just luck. I wish all of us will have enough creativity and eagerness in ourselves for new ideas to be born, enough courage to let those ideas take shape and enough strength to let go when it's time to replace them with better ideas.

Finally, I would like all of us to pause for a moment to have a careful look at the people we have been blessed to call friends and the place that has witnessed us growing for last two years, Brandeis IBS - where ideas take shape.