

## **BGSE Graduation Speech 2019**

What an honor to be invited and what an absolutely delightful sight. It is truly great to see all of you here today. We represent more than 50 nationalities from near and far; and some of you have even come all the way from the Bellaterra campus.

Also, to the friends and family present here today: You have come to congratulate and welcome back this bunch of graduates from an incredible journey and it is great to see your proud smiles.

But exactly how proud the smiles ought to be, you might not fully realize. Therefore, I will take you all on a journey; our journey on the magnificent ship called the Barcelona Graduate School of Economics.

In early September last year, we – the sailors – all embarked on this expedition. Full of expectations, hope, and anticipation. Slightly nervous but, nevertheless, ready for a challenging year of learning and great experiences.

We were greeted by the crew and the invaluable staff of the engine room. They were prepared to do whatever it would take to make this journey one to remember.

Embarking would later turn out to be the easiest part.

The seas were calm and smooth as we set sail, and the forecast for the year to come was looking promising.

Unknowing and innocent, we left the comfortable shore for the seemingly friendly open ocean.

Further ashore and increasingly disconnected from the world around us, we began our quest for the golden treasure in this new floating home of ours.

We quickly turned this ship into our home. We consumed our breakfast, our lunch, our dinner, and everything in between below deck. We managed our individual chores and duties while pouring down liters of coffee. We met our deadlines and prepared ourselves to stand up to the tests that we were given.

Unpredictable as the weather can be, it did not stay calm and cozy for long.

Dark and serious clouds surrounded us.

Days went by with a dense fog making navigation impossible: We were left fumbling in the dark.

Then came thunder. First in the distance. But soon enough, the sudden bursts of light travelled towards us with hasty steps.

The seas were building to not only uncomfortable but also dangerous conditions. Waves rolled over the railings and the ship started tilting from side to side.

The watery fists kept knocking on the hull with rhythmic persistence.

The most experienced sailors struggled to get the sails down, while the rest of us found it difficult to hang on. There was no staying still and no going back.

All but a few considered abandoning the ship in a passing moment of weakness but we stuck together. And, eventually, we got used to the ship tilting.

We learned how to turn it in to our advantage and to use the momentum of the waves to carry us ahead.

But one day, a chilling scream from below deck broke the newfound optimism: The ship had begun taking on water. Slowly filling from a crack in the hull, the time constraint had suddenly become binding.

As a timely culmination of agony and joy, we finally saw land.

It appeared unexpectedly; as a glimpse of hope on the horizon. But it felt like a healing injection of energy to go the last mile.

Gradually emerging was a shore full of friends and family waving at us; cheering for our return.

Never had the feeling of firm soil under our feet felt so good.

Still dizzy from the tilting, we are in the process of finding our footing and setting the direction for our future.

Now as capable captains of our own ships, we are preparing to set sail for yet another adventure. So... Ship ahoy and anchors aweigh!

Thank you all for sharing this challenging but wonderful journey with me; I wish you all the best for your adventures ahead; enjoy the tailwinds and let the headwinds make you stronger; and remember: There are small ships, there are large ships, but there is nothing like friendships.

Thank you.