

## Barcelona Graduate School of Economics Student Speakers – Graduation 2012

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### **Part 1 – Tom Schmid – when we arrived**

Good afternoon dear colleagues, dear professors, directors and guests.

It is a great honor for us to be here and having the opportunity to hold the speech in the name of us students.

When we started writing this speech, we were thinking back to the wonderful and intense time we had here together in Barcelona. So let's think back how things started and make a little travel through the last year:

10 Month ago we all gathered here in Barcelona with one goal: To achieve an excellent education in economics. Really, only one goal? I might doubt that, but let's keep this as an assumption for reasons of simplicity in our model. People came from all around the world, with different cultures, different languages and different customs.

When we all arrived here in the beginning of September of the last year all was very new and exciting. I remember very well the first days in Barcelona, the big gatherings at the beach where I met most of you the first time. The Mexican Independence Day, the meetings at jaume I, the beach and La Mercé celebration were the first opportunities of getting to know each other.

New names every day and the excitement of Barcelona in the summer. It was sometimes not easy: When you met a new person for example you had to find out within seconds if you give now only one kiss on one cheek like in Mexico, or a kiss on both cheeks like here in Spain, or perhaps just shaking your hand like in Germany. A lot of times I got confused and this might have created an awkward moment. But I learned it fast and I guess that's what they call, intercultural competence.

Then, after a week full of sunburns and sleepless nights, the brush-up curses started. The breaks, the library, the coffee machine and the lunch at the cafeteria became the space to get to know each other.

I need to say that the experience of us Macro People might have been slightly different then to the other students as we were sent far away, behind the seven mountains, to the Bellatierra campus. That sometimes made it difficult for us to connect with other students and I even heard people doubting: "Do the Macro People really exist?". To answer your

questions: yes, here we are! And: Yes there is electricity and water at the Bellaterra Campus. After the first long train rides to the University we realized that this time can also be useful and we can learn a lot during this travels. I for example now memorized the name of all train stops from Barcelona to University and can even pronounce the name of the train station “Baixador de Valvidreira”.

When the Brush-up curses started we got thrown into the cold water and I remember how I got scarred by Lagrangean function. Well, I was young and inexperienced.

The first day, everyone tried to make very sophisticated comments, like: “Very interesting this thing with the slope of this curve!”. But this changed very soon and our conversations were more like: “hey I found this bar in Raval where Beer is just one euro!”.

So in resume, the first weeks here in Barcelona were wonderful, we felt free, we enjoyed Barcelona and the Beach and the best, we all met each other.

What happened after the first weeks? How was the year? Lore will tell us more about this.

## **Part 2 – Lorena Castellanos – the rest of the year**

What we were used to call free time and party fun was suddenly replaced by mathematical fun: starting with the “surprise-surprise” that really surprised us, the micro “conjectures”, problem sets in situ, problem sets in dreams, a lot of coffee and, of course, our relaxing song: the Mercadona song.

Definitely, now it’s not the same as yesterday, WE are not the same as yesterday: before we took around 15 minutes in the supermarket, now as we maximize our utility, we can take more than an hour exploring the best combination of Hacendado products...

What about the library days? being kicked out of the library at 1am was quite an experience...not everybody lives that!

Our lemma is clearly represented by the old song of the 80’s “under pressure” by Queen.

And as the Master approached to july...we became asymptotically lulu. For instance, our vocabulary became more sophisticated.... Three unforgettable phrases before and after the treatment, I mean the master, come to my mind:

- before we used to say “can you keep me a place” we now say “can you keep me a place in your epsilon area?”

-we now invoke the median voter theorem in order to decide what to drink.

-furthermore, before we said the well-known “I love you”, now this has become in the ALSO WELL-KNOWN: “you are the alpha of my Cobb-Douglas”; or “with you, life is like a balanced growth path” or even better “you put the stars in my walrasian demand”.

So now, I understand why it’s so common to see economists going out with economists.

It has been a very hard year, a year of being at the limit of tiredness and effort, but also a year full of mathematical fun, full of new friends and new experiences that will definitely last forever.

After nine months, we can finally enjoy the massage and the “cerveza, bierre”...

But we won’t forget the lunches at the cafeteria in the ordinary days, and the lunch at the Palacio Pekin or the Chicken place during the weekends. We will definitely remember the long hours of meditation in the quiet “harry potter library”, in “the fish-tank” or in “the TA rooms”.

What about the beautiful sunsets in the bench at the UPF...of course the sun sets behind the pink UPF buildings. The green parrots inspiring the mornings and the curious pigeons at the cafeteria will also stay in our memory.

Economics people always in the library, always problem setting, always tired, always with a coffee in hand and always in the limit. This year wasn’t always straightforward, but we did it.

Now where we are finished, what are the lessons we have learned? Alex, will tell us more about this.

### **Part 3 – Alex Hodbod – lessons**

So now this incredible year is at an end, what can we say about what we learned along the way? Perhaps it is too early to tell. Afterall, since we came to the end of what will be for many of us our last ever exam period we have rightly been taking a few days to celebrate. I really think one of the things we will miss the most is the feeling of complete freedom after the end of exams, refreshing ourselves over a few glasses of cava at La Champaneria.

However, lets try and see through some of this post-exam period haze and begin the process of reflection. I suppose it makes most sense to start from my perspective as an ITFD student.

In this regard, the first thing that my time in this group has taught me is about work life balance. We ITFD guys have worked like crazy throughout the year, often spending far more time inside the library than out of it. *However*, even during the most intensive periods we always managed to find at least some time to relax.

Many of us joined the GSE ski trip, where some of us hit the slopes for the very first time. This resulted in quite a few amusing crashes, with skis and legs from all corners of the globe sent in all the wrong directions. Perhaps understandably there were a disproportionate number of Costa Ricans, Dominican Republicans, and Southern Italians involved in these accidents. Given that in some cases they'd never seen snow before though, I think we can't blame them.

We also played football together, joining forces with the other Master students on an epic cup run through the rounds of the UPF championship. [econ]

Further more of us have enjoyed exploring the city together, seeking the best of Barcelona's cultural, culinary and nocturnal offerings – the Nou Camp, Kiosko burger bar, and Nasty Mondays.

In short, we were successful in maximizing life's potential subject to the constraints of the large workload we had to deal with.

It is from how we approached the work that i will draw the next major lesson. I think it has been a great learning experience for all of us to work through the challenges of the year as one big team. The diversity of professional backgrounds and geographical origin we have allowed us to teach one another as we went along.

By pooling all this knowledge we have made it so much easier, and more fun to get through all those dozens of problem sets and exams we have had to face. So we should take this opportunity to thank one another (perhaps over another few glasses of cava tonight) for all we have learnt from each other during the year.

Anyway – to wrap up this segment – I think the most important lesson I took from writing this speech is simply appreciating what an amazing time we've had here. It really put me in a bit of a bad mood to realise that it really is over now.

So - thinking back on all the good times we've shared together I really decided the best thing would be for us to go ahead and do another Master next year. Maybe we should swap though – ITFD can do Econ? Surely it can't be that difficult. Competition guys do Macro, Finance do Health? Maybe they'll even give us a discount? We can work this out later...

Before that – over to Veronica to conclude and look forwards.

#### **Part 4 – Veronika Gawel – closing**

We have been met with an undoubtedly challenging year, a ferocious sprint from beginning to end. A year packed with work and play and so much else. Before we came to Barcelona GSE, we were a diverse group of individuals – 229 students from 57 different countries. Our academic interests wide-ranging. Our futures uncertain. But the accomplished individuals,

who came here a year ago, now leave a truly exceptional class of people. This year for us has seen a gradual but profound coming together. A realization that what sets us apart need never divide us. We have come to together to celebrate each others' cultures, to debate, to support one another at times of difficulty. We have come to be great ambassadors to and for this institution. And we will continue to be.

We also learned from the many sacrifices we made in coming here. When we came to Barcelona, we left behind our homes, our jobs, our families, our friends. We decided to come because we believed Barcelona GSE would provide us exceptional preparation and a global perspective for a bright future. Along this long and difficult road, we have been blessed with the love and constant support of our families and friends. Without them, we simply could not have flourished here. And so today, it is in many ways actually your day and it should be we who are applauding you. On behalf of the graduating class, we thank you.

We would also like to thank the faculty for their enthusiasm in relaying their knowledge, and for their openness in hearing our new ideas.

We would like to thank the staff, in particular, Carlota Manchon, Esther Xifre, and Sira Mora, Andrea Lacambra, Bruno & Joan for all their help this year. Without you, this year would have been even more challenging.

Finally and most-importantly, I would like to congratulate the Barcelona Class of 2012! May you go forth with the lessons you learned here to pursue fruitful, bright and happy futures.