

Speech for the Commencement Ceremony of IPU, 2018

3/5/2018

President and Deputy Chairperson of IPU, Dr. Setsuko Ohashi,
Mayor Grant Smith,
Deputy Mayor Tangi Utikere,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Kia Ora, and thank you for having me here today on this most auspicious occasion, the 2018 Commencement Ceremony of IPU. I am honoured to be a part of your ceremony.

I imagine the new students are feeling a lot of excitement, and perhaps a little apprehension, as they begin their new journey here at IPU. You have all come here, to Palmerston North, New Zealand, to become students of IPU, a singular environment which will surely help facilitate your ability to develop your sense of self, and focus your studies throughout your years in residence. To tell you the truth, I am a bit envious! Please, be sure to make the most of this incredible opportunity you have been granted.

Each of you has your own reasons for choosing IPU, and the goals you hope to accomplish during your studies are no doubt greatly varied. I hope each and every one of you will put forward your best efforts in order to accomplish them.

With that in mind, there are three things I would like to ask of you:

First of all, one of IPU's strongest points is the interdisciplinary nature of its education. In today's society, no matter what specialisation you pursue, every facet and discipline is uniquely interwoven with another, sometimes many others, in ways you may never have imagined. I think it is very important to receive an interdisciplinary education, both in order to broaden your mind, and to think carefully about each and every subject you come across. Whether you continue into the jobs market, or find yourself focused on a specific field of study in higher education, I hope you continue to use the skill set that you will gain from studying here at IPU, in their unique, open, and interdisciplinary landscape.

For the Japanese students here today, I have a special message for you. In the future, once you have graduated from IPU, I hope to see some of you joining our very own Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs with this valuable open-minded outlook. I expect great things from all of you.

On to my second request. Every year, IPU welcomes students from more than 20 different countries; just like New Zealand is a multi-ethnic, multicultural society. Indeed, one could almost say that, in a way, IPU is a reflection, a miniature version of today's New Zealand. To that end, I sincerely hope that all of you here, living together in this special multicultural environment will make friendships that will continue past your graduation, and last a lifetime.

My third and final request involves the fact that all of you are, regardless of origin, living and studying here in Palmerston North, New Zealand! Students from overseas may find themselves making comparisons between New Zealand and their home country, while New Zealand students may compare Palmerston North to their own hometown. You may even find yourselves thinking, "my country is better!", or "my town is better!" In fact, I'm sure you will. But, speaking as someone who is also far from his own hometown, I can tell you that there are plenty of wonderful things to be found here in New Zealand, and, yes, in Palmerston North as well. Please take the time to go out and discover for yourself what is good about where you are in life now, what Palmerston North and New Zealand excel in and offer you. Then, once you have graduated, take that knowledge and those valuable experiences back home with you, wherever that may be, and share them. I truly believe that this opportunity is the best part of being able to study abroad, or away from your hometown.

Once again, thank you for having me here with you today, and I wish that, for all of you, your years at IPU are rewarding, fruitful, and enlightening.

Thank you.