

Acte acadèmic de graduació de màsters i doctorats 2011

Parlament de la graduada Macarena Ares, en representació de la promoció 2011

Good evening to everyone: professors, fellow students, family, friends...

This evening we are here to celebrate the graduation of doctorates and master students. Congratulations to all of you!

Only a few months ago I was participating in another graduation ceremony, I was finishing my undergraduate studies in Political Sciences, here at UPF as well. And I remember that at that time I had the feeling that there were still so many things I did not know and now, as I graduate again, I still experience the same sensation. It just seems increasingly difficult to be a knowledgeable person today. There are simply too many facts, too many theories, too many subjects, too much information to know something about everything. How should we deal with all this information, with all this knowledge?

Of course it is difficult to know something about everything, even if we are only focusing on our field of specialization. But during this year, this university has provided us with a well-rounded education, and it has given us the tools to manage this explosion in information. What I find more valuable about instruction at UPF is that besides specific knowledge it has emphasized critical faculties and thinking skills. And I feel that we should keep working on these skills, because educated people are those who can analyze facts, rather than those who just know many facts.

For this instruction, for this knowledge, for these skills, I have to thank all professors, guest lecturers, but also all of my fellow students, because I have learned a lot from all of you, from this multicultural student population at UPF.

I would like to conclude these brief reflections with a short story. Two famous historic characters appear in this story; however, who the characters are is not really important for the point I want to make.

So the story says...

There was once a poor Scottish peasant, who was working in his fields, when he heard a shout for help coming from a near swamp. The peasant left his work and ran towards the swamp, and there, he found a young man sinking in the marsh and mud. The peasant released the young man, and saved him from what would have been a slow agony.

The next day, an aristocrat in a luxurious carriage appeared at the peasant's farm, and the aristocrat offered to pay the peasant a reward for having saved his son. But the peasant refused, claiming that he had just done what he was supposed to. At that time, the son of the peasant approached the carriage, and having seen him the noble spoke, and these were his words:

-You may not want to accept my money as a reward. But I want to make you a proposition you can't refuse. Let me offer to pay your son the same education and instruction that my own son will receive. If that young man resembles his father at all, then I am sure that after he is properly instructed, we can expect great things of him-.

The peasant accepted, and during the next years, his son attended the best schools, and later graduated as a doctor at the St Mary's Hospital Medical School, in London. He later became a noted scientific, well-known all around the world for making a great contribution in the field of medicine. In fact, one of the contributions he made helped save the life of the son of the aristocrat when he was ill with pneumonia.

You might have guessed that the son of the peasant is in fact Alexander Fleming, and his contribution, of course, the penicillin. And what about the son of the aristocrat? Well, the story says it was Winston Churchill. But as I told you, who the characters are is not important in this case, and what I really mean to say with this story is that great individuals can achieve great things, but most of the times, it is only after they have received a proper instruction, a good education, and the tools to work on what they feel passionate about. What I really want to say is that talent may be universal, but opportunity is certainly not. So if there is something that I am grateful for on this special evening, is that I have had the opportunities. We've all had. For a year, we've had the opportunity to keep studying, learning, building on our previous knowledge on those fields that we are most interested in. We've had the chance to keep investing in ourselves, in our future; and hopefully with our talent and our opportunities we'll achieve something great as well, we will make our own contribution.

So I guess that all I can say is that now that we have the tools, we must keep working on them, and I wish you have all the best opportunities, and that you always invest all your talent in them.