

Valedictory Speech

Bipin:

“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn’t do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.” – **Mark Twain**

Esteemed members of the faculty, distinguished guests, proud parents, and devoted friends- congratulations to all of you, but especially, congratulations to the magnificent inaugural class of the Master of Science in Sustainability Management 2016.

I am Bipin ShyamSundar Tiwari and with me is co-valedictorian Arielle Navarra. We are extremely honoured and delighted to have the privilege of addressing this accomplished group on this day of celebration and reflection. Thank you for everything you’ve all done as these past two years have been a whirlwind of emotions and experiences.

These past two years, we’ve gotten to know each other better. But I want to share something with you that you may not know. My mother is uneducated, my father wanted to study further but had no money do so; I am the first one from my small community to pursue education abroad. Most of us sitting here share similar stories of the sacrifices our parents have made to witness this day of celebration. Indeed, we are privileged.

Friends, we all come from very different situations and places of the world, but we all shared in our nervousness and anticipation of this new adventure of our lives. When you sit in a classroom with 27 chosen change makers from across the world, worries of competitiveness and nervousness become prominent. Wondering: will I be good enough? Will I flunk out the first semester? Will it be very competitive? But when Arielle and I came together to write this speech,

we discovered we had such similar fears and self-doubts despite coming from opposite ends of the world. Maybe most of us shared these worries, but once the program got started, the MScSM community, or as Prof. Shashi calls it, family, these fears virtually vanished.

It's hard to explain the unmatched morale and sense of community among this spectacular group of individuals. This group's willingness to help each other and true desire to see each other succeed was far beyond any of us could imagine. From late night Skype meetings, all-nighters, case room study sessions, SWOT analyses, presentations, group projects, countless pages of papers, knocking on Claire and Rose Mary's doors without informing them, and of course bonding over Max's love for food, especially apples, our bond only grew stronger.

A huge thank you to the brilliant and forward-thinking minds that came together to envision this new program, and a big thank you the three pillars of MScSM, Professor Shashi, Rose Mary and Claire for creating this atmosphere, instilling within us with confidence in our abilities, constant support and for being so concerned for our success and well-being, as if we were their own children. From the bottom of our hearts, thank you. All this would not have been possible without you three. Thank you to our brilliant professors for enriching us with your knowledge. Thank you to our executive council, for your hard work and contributions. Great job! But overall, inaugural class, we've witnessed your insightful comments in class, compelling arguments, impactful presentations, we cannot thank you enough for your constant dedication to this program, the desire for us to succeed all together, and most importantly your drive to make a positive impact in this world.

Arielle:

Our past twenty-two months have been a time of constant learning. Whether it has been learning from our distinguished professors, our guest industry speakers, our colleagues from our summer internships; but for me, it has been the constant learning from each other that I have found to be the most influential. Something that makes our program particularly unique is how our academic and cultural diversity has shaped our perspective in tackling sustainability issues.

We've all shared with each other, in some capacity, knowledge about our respective previous academic fields - from chemistry to politics, sociology to engineering, life sciences to business. What's more is that we've shared with each other knowledge about how we think, where we come from, our cultures, and our true characters.

Some of the most important people in my life are or have been educators including my grandma who is here today, and my boyfriend of 10 years who couldn't get the day off from teaching. In my opinion, the field of education is one of the most challenging and essential professions that exist. And it's safe to say, that in many cases, we've been each others' most important teachers over the past two years.

Though as sustainability professionals on the cusp of making our mark in this world, this notion of us being educators will continue in everything that we do and will influence our workplaces, our current and future networks, our future families.

In many cases, it may be as simple as educating others on what the heck sustainability management even means, as I'm sure we've had to do with our friends and families on several occasions.

But we will also be educating our colleagues who may reluctantly and passively listen to our crazy hippie ideas of how to green our organization; or maybe, we'll be constantly educating other organizations to become more sustainable through the power of consulting. Perhaps, we'll be sharing forward thinking ideas to fight for truly meaningful causes in the nonprofit sector. Maybe we'll be writing the innovative legislation pushing for a sustainable world. Some of us may venture off and pursue our own entrepreneurial ideas to facilitate the transition towards a sustainable society. The list of opportunities truly goes on for each of us.

What's important here is that we'll continuously be educators sharing the most important and timely message of our century: That another world is possible – one where everyone can have fulfilling lives and enjoy a rich level of well-being within the limits of what nature can provide.

An important lesson that I've learned through MScSM is that the earth is what we all have in common, and what we need for our planet and humanity to thrive is the continuous respect for our diversity, as this breeds innovation which we need to solve the world's most pressing problems. All of our perspectives are needed for us to evolve and grow collectively.

Environmental activist and author, Joanna Macy, once wrote something that has resonated with me since high school. She wrote: "We have the technical knowledge, the communication tools and the material resources to grow enough food, ensure clean air and water, and meet rational energy needs. Future generations, if there is a livable world for them, will look back at the epochal transition we are making to a life-sustaining society. And they may well call this the time of Great Turning."

The conversation about sustainable development is slowly becoming normalized and it is presenting itself in several interesting ways; both culturally and in our consciousness. We've

noticed the progress, and it's amazing and massive. Take a second to think about how slowly it took for these ideas to come to fruition in 1987 when the term Sustainable Development was first coined. People are realizing that our needs can be met without destroying our world.

Today in comparison, there is much less resistance, but there is still a giant uphill battle to tackle. Our job from this point on is to be in the frontline of this uphill battle.

Friends, please remember the passion you had when starting this program, and never relinquish the drive to make the change you want to see in this world. Some days will be more challenging than others, but we will persevere for this cause we have dedicated our lives to.

No matter where we end up in the world, we must remember that we belong to a terrific life-long network that is the MScSM family whom I know will always support each other in our hardships and our accomplishments, just as we have these past two years. We have been equipped with the best sustainability management educational foundation that exists in this world, and therefore we must never cease to explore, dream, and discover so that we can be the pioneers for the time of Great Turning.

Thank you and once again, congratulations inaugural class of MScSM!