

Hard work pays off for proud SCIS graduates

Dear parents, teachers, guests, and fellow graduates. After four lengthy years of complaining about homework, overdosing on coffee, making our parents deal with our moodiness, and procrastinating, the day has finally come for us to graduate.

I remember two years ago, entering our first advisory meeting about IB (International Baccalaureate), when we were told about all the assignments, assessments, and mostly torments we would have to endure before graduation. At this point, Myra turned to me and convinced me that all those deadlines and acronyms could not be real, they were definitely made up to put pressure on us, obviously. But no, they were very real, trust me, although I can assure you we all wished they weren't at some point. And despite the fact that, at the time, we dreaded all these IAs, EEs and PEAs, I think we can all agree that, at the end of the day, it was worth it.

IB was tough, and there were some days where we felt like it had drained the last bit of energy out of us. Some nights, after staring at a past chemistry paper for two hours, all I wanted was to set it on fire and run away to the Bahamas to escape IB forever. But instead of doing that, I called Mathieu and forced him to explain redox for the

15th time before binge-eating cheese with my cats. And you know what? I'm glad I did that. I am so immensely proud of all of us for our perseverance. Some might deny it, but I think that we have improved so much academically through IB ... We all had very different methods of studying, but I can guarantee you we all perfected our studying techniques during the past two years. About 15 minutes before the "econ mock," for example, I remember seeing Hani and Sam watching a youtube video about macroeconomics at twice the normal speed. The person's voice sounded like a chipmunk to me, but they seemed to be learning pretty well from that chipmunk, so I guess it works. Another time, I looked outside my window and saw Sandra walking her dogs in the street, while reviewing psychology notes for the final exam. Now that's what I call multi-tasking. What I'm trying to say is that although we all hated IB at one point or another, I think it gave us the tools we need for our college courses.

I also wanted to take the time to congratulate all of you who have been accepted into college. At this school, and at a lot of international schools, it seems that we view college acceptances as a necessity. A lot of us have forgotten to recognize how fortunate we are not only to have been accepted into



Melanie Venet makes a speech as an SCIS Pudong campus valedictorian.

university, but also to live in a world where we have these opportunities. Our teachers and parents have worked hard to make this possible, and I think we owe them all a little thank you card at least.

Another thing that I've noticed in the past year is the number of people that are worried about their future plans at university. A lot of us haven't really set our minds on any major yet, and haven't quite figured out what field they want to go into. To me, that's the great thing about college! We don't have to have our whole life figured out yet, because dreams change. If they didn't, a lot of us would be crushed about not being a princess or an astronaut right now. It's

okay that not all of us have decided on what we want out of our college experience, or where we want to end up, or who we are as individuals. That's the interesting thing about growing up, and I encourage you to be excited about your futures, because I know you all have bright things ahead of you.

Finally, and most importantly, I think it is crucial that we do not lose sight of what academic excellence means in our student lives. Of course I realize it is important for us to embrace achievements such as a high GPA, or a good SAT score, and celebrate them together. But I believe that academic excellence means a lot more than a number on Powerschool. While I was writing this speech, I did some research ... and I found one quote that really stuck with me, and which I wanted to share with you today. That quote was by David McCullough, who compared life to climbing a mountain in his speech. He told the students: "Climb it so you can see the world, not so the world can see you." Work hard and be the best you can be, not to impress, but to accomplish ... and I can promise you that, with the education we have received at SCIS, all of us are capable of accomplishing more than we give ourselves credit for. Thank you.

(This is the graduation speech made by SCIS 2016 graduate Melanie Venet.)