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Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy, Class of 2013

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Thank you for kind and generous introduction Dean Bosworth. I think I will just use that introduction for my elevator pitch.

Thank you Dean Bosworth, distinguished faculty and staff. Most importantly, without the sacrifice and devotion of our families, attending The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy would not have been possible. On behalf of the class of 2013, I’d like to say, “We really love you and thank you for all the things that you’ve given us.”

It is my privilege and honor to stand here today as one of the class speakers for the class of 2013. Today, I’d like to talk about why the Fletcher education is uniquely unique. That’s it.

My story goes back to the first semester at Fletcher. As you know, English is not my first language and this was the first experience with American education. So, everything was quite challenging. In the first semester, I took Role of Force and as you know it was tough, just like the title of the course. It started at 7:45 am. Yes, 7:45. I found it later entire school actually starts from 8:15, but only RoF started 7:45. That was an ugly surprise. But Professor Shultz, we still love you.

Besides that, taking notes while listening and understanding lecture and hundreds of pages of reading per week were overwhelming. Even much of the vocabulary from the class was not actually plain English but more like poetry-style phrases such as war amongst people, the war after war, fog of war, and so on. Sometimes, it was more challenging to understand the students’ questions than Professor’s lecture. From the first semester, language was something I needed to overcome and I strived hard to meet that challenge.

Fortunately, I survived thanks to my study group. Our group showed exactly what Fletcher is all about. We had civilians, military, war MALD, diplomacy MALD, and even development MALD like me. We had American, Pakistani, Russian, Korean, Japanese and Iranian-American. After three-hour final, all our classmates hugged each other and went out to Mexican food in Teele Square celebrating our collective achievement. That was a real Fletcher moment.

Recalling that experience, the Fletcher education is not about competition. Rather, it is all about collaboration. Working with others and coping with different cultural principles within a group was a priceless life lesson for us. The shared spirit of collaboration facilitates learning and makes a huge difference in our academic journey.

My second story is about leadership. When I lived in Korea, I used to assume a leadership role, because my Korean is very fluent. (joking) However, being a leader in the U.S. and at
Fletcher seemed totally different. Not only language and but cultural understanding blocked my path. A common challenge faced by international students, I didn’t know what resources to utilize, what was available, and how to obtain them. More importantly, the cultural nuances and diversity within Fletcher community take some time to absorb. So, initially I hesitated about taking a leadership role.

However, Fletcher provided endless opportunities for us to be a leader and encouraged us to bravely take the leadership role. It was like an open market. Anyone who has an idea, passion, and a bit of courage, could initiate and organize an academic or social event at Fletcher and student supporters would always come out for the event. Some of us were on the diplomats’ life panel or internship panel to share their experiences with others. Someone organized an energy conference, and another moderated a US-China conference about analyzing the present and predicting the future. Some people organized a gender town hall meeting to raise gender awareness within Fletcher community. Someone could even be an N Sync or Jpop star or Bangla dancer for culture nights to make Fletcher culturally richer.

Like this, Fletcher has been such an inclusive community where people support each other and respect the roles of both leaders and followers. Based on our community values, we practiced leadership and empowered each other to become a true leader in the global arena. I would say this supportive spirit is the secret that makes a Fletcher education so distinctive. I do not think any community can dare match this amazing spirit. It started from 1933 and it's been going for 80 years.

Fletcher is not just a good institution. It is a great institution full of openness, encouragement, and inspiration. The world outside of Fletcher is shifting from competition to inclusive collaboration paradigm. Most of the global challenges such as global warming, poverty, arms proliferation, and financial crises desperately need more cooperation. The Fletcher education paves the road to the new paradigm and teaches future leaders how to work together and build a more inclusive society around the world. This must be the reason why the Fletcher mafia is “uniquely unique.”

However, great institutions became great only when they have great people because after all, it’s all about the people. Undoubtedly, Fletcher has great people like you and those people have built a fabulous community. I’m so proud to be in this community with you all.

Before closing, I’d like to emphasize that the class of 2013 will remain as the strongest, most influential, and profound class ever in the history of Fletcher. We have four legendary individuals- Dean Bosworth, Professor Uvin, Professor Moomaw, and International student advisor Carol Murphy. They have tirelessly dedicated their love for Fletcher and about to leave Fletcher with us. But allegedly saying that they were set to graduate earlier, but none of them could have finished their capstone until few weeks ago. All joking aside, please don’t forget you’re also part of the class of 2013. It was such an honor to have you a part of our class. The class of 2013 will continuously shine like a star because of each of you.
Last but not least, the remarkable class of 2013! I’d like to send you my sincere congratulations. We finally did it! Ah- and don’t forget the fact that joining the Fletcher mafia might be of our choosing but there’s no option to withdraw from it. The Fletcher mafia will follow you wherever you go. Just be ready to meet other members in this small world. All of us will miss the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy.

Thank you very much. Thank you.