

Dean Alan White speech at IDEAS 1.0 Graduation

Good Morning everyone! Distinguished Minister Mari Pangestu, distinguished government representatives from China and Singapore, distinguished guests, UID trustees and staff and of course, distinguished graduates.

It is a great pleasure for me to be here this morning. Before I begin my remarks, I would like to say something. I have the pleasure to be in many graduations but never been to a graduation quite like this one. The enthusiasm of the participants that was display this morning was not seen at other graduation. Most graduations are fairly gloomy and serious and everyone is in a black robe. This is really exciting to see you and all of the colours that have been showing this morning.

I'm honor to represent MIT at this graduation. This is a very unique program. It is important to MIT because MIT is a learning institution. Our philosophy is if we can bring ideas that somehow, we can improve the world and to others at other parts of the world and engaged them in projects that are important for them. Through this engagement, we will learn, the students will learn. We do not enter into this project with the idea that we have all the answers. We enter into this project that this is a mutual learning activity. That is what we want to help you to see in others. To put yourself in others shoes, you fellow participants and also those that you have engage in these projects and that empathy is extremely important to you.

Obviously, an action program is not a classroom program where you just sit in lectures, but really get out and engage in important projects. It builds contact. In all our lives, we have problems losing our perspective. This program takes you outside your normal business, familiar situation and I believe helps you see things differently in a different context. And finally, it builds hope for yourself, your career and hopefully for the future of your country and beyond. That little empedemin comes out to be teach, T-E-A-C-H.

Another distinguishing market to this program is that this is the first program of its kind that MIT has engaged in. We have never done a program quite like this before. It's really a unique course. So, that of course has been a very important part of our learning experience as well. This program has already attracted the attention of others from other parts of the world. It is very nice that the Ambassador from China is here today because there is interest express in China for a similar program. The fact of the matter is, we need a similar program in the United States. We were talking this morning on perhaps we should offer something similar to the United States.

We have this problem in all our countries; the need for working across sectors and we all get wrap up in our own individual places. In my career, I have the wonderful experience of serving in the US Peace Corps many years ago. This was the finding experience for me. In fact, although I get my graduate work at MIT but I learn more in the Peace Corps than I did in my university work because the Peace Corps was a journey and that's what all of you have been on and when you go out, you learn. Hopefully, what you learn will stay with you now and be express in your career. Many of you are approaching your assignments by getting out of your offices and getting to the villages, understanding the problems from the perspective locally and that is so important because you will be the beneficiary of that activity.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge one person who got us into all these. Many others have contributed but Cherie Nursalim is really the person who engages us in this from the beginning. Cherie has been a wonderful leader. She is often behind the scene but believe me, she is there. She is also a person who attends to details. To the point that, I was actually in Hong Kong before I came here and I purchase a new suit for this graduation but Cherie wanted me to wear this shirt that she provided me. That detail for the ceremony! Thank you, Cherie. We thank all of you and the hardworking UID staff and trustees who made this possible. So to all of you, Terima Kasih!