

Comments for the Madrid 50th Anniversary Luncheon
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Madrid Resident Director 2016-17

Opening Remarks

As this year's WIP Resident Director, and on behalf of our wonderful on-site team, Carmen Castaño, Amy Olson and Carlota Visier, I want to extend a warm welcome to all of you who have travelled from near and far to be with us today to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of our WIP program. This anniversary is special not only because the Program has managed to exist for 50 years, but also because it has done so in fine form, and it continues to grow in the way it transforms and shapes students' lives in the classroom and beyond.

As you'll have seen in your luncheon program, we're fortunate to have such a rich array of people here today who care about WIP and our connection to the Complutense, some of whom will speak during the luncheon. I want to extend a very special thanks to IU's President Michael McRobbie and First Lady, Laurie McRobbie for making the point of coming here and taking the time to get to know WIP and the Complutense more in depth. I also want to thank the President's delegation for all their work leading up to and including this week. I'd like to express our gratitude as well to our Complutense Delegate Dean, Eugenio Luján Martínez and our Delegate Coordinator, Rodrigo Castro Orellana, for their hard work in putting together the Reunidas evening events and for joining us at this WIP luncheon. Finally, a special thank you to the WIP administrators, resident directors, and students, both alumni and current, who are and have been the heart and soul of the program. I hope everyone has a wonderful time today.

As I conclude, I need to just make two house-keeping comments. The first is that we'll be using English primarily, because of our many guests. The second is that you won't need your WIP luncheon nametags at this evening's graduation ceremony, so after lunch, you can just consider these fashionable reunion memorabilia!

It is now my pleasure to introduce to you Kathleen Sideli, Associate Vice President for Overseas Study and managing director of the WIP Program.

Recognizing Current Students

Our current WIP cohort is an outstanding group of students intellectually and as individuals. I want to give you a brief sense of their academic programs so you can see the diversity of their interests, and the fields in which their WIP experience may have an impact. Of our current 55 students this term alone near 30 are double majors, at least 5 are triple majors and almost all who are single majors have additional minors and certificates. Their majors run the entire gamut of our what great universities offer: Political Science, Psychology, Criminal Justice, Communication Arts, International Studies, History, English, Biochemistry, Geography, Education, Latin American and Caribbean Studies, Neurobiology, Microbiology, Journalism, Economics, German,

Spanish, Linguistics, Political Economy, Movement and Sport Sciences, Zoology, Conservation Biology, Mathematics, Sociology, and Computer Sciences. Minors include Russian, Spanish, Gender & Women's Studies, Global Health, Chicano and Latino Studies, Business, and Digital Studies for example.

At our Complutense ceremony at the start of the semester, I emphasized that this was a unique opportunity to radically transform the way they thought about themselves and the world, stating that they had actually already taken the first jump into the abyss just by being here, outside of their academic comfort zones – indeed many have taken courses far outside of their majors, which, in today's day and age of specialization and high-stake GPAs, is absolutely laudable. They'd also taken that jump into the abyss just by being outside of their familial and cultural comfort zones. I insisted back then that the discomfort of this experience is actually its most crucial and fantastic quality, since when we're uncomfortable and confronting new horizons, we have the chance to grow in a more profound and enduring way. Our office encouraged them to take advantage of this unique opportunity for growth, and from all I have seen, our 2016-17 cohort is doing just that.

From managing the intellectual and academic day-to-day difficulties of Complutense courses, to overcoming the pain of not recognizing oneself in another language, to reaching out for help when one's used to being able to handle everything, to learning how to present oneself with dignity even when one's feeling tiny and perhaps not a little stupid, these are some examples of the ways in which our students have grown this year. They have also parachuted from planes, run marathons, learned to cook new cuisine, fallen in love, fallen out of love, starred in student theatre productions, and learned that if you show up to a court with a basketball, you can make friends anywhere. Though they still have finals to take, this group's time here will soon end, but I have a feeling that what they've learned will stick. Congratulations to our current Wippers; it's been an amazing experience to be part of your time abroad.

Introducing Max Elsenheimer

Max Elsenheimer is a Spring semester WIP student, who is currently a Junior at Wisconsin with a Double Major in Spanish and Biology. He is the second Wipper in his family, following in his sister's footsteps. Max is a great example of how our students take advantage of the opportunity of living and studying abroad. He's just about finishing his Spanish major, taking classes here in Spanish and Latin American Literatures, Hispanic Linguistics, Contemporary Cultural Studies, and Modern Spanish History. While we held our breath back at the office, he walked part of the Camino de Santiago alone and more recently ran the Madrid Marathon. I was applauding the marathoners that Sunday morning with my 9-year old daughter, and all of a sudden, in the mass of people, Max ran by me trying to get my attention. I was so shocked I could only shout his name and cheer him on. I felt both admiration and inspiration, watching him blend into the mass of his fellow runners. Our students are a terrific group, and I'm happy to introduce Max to say a few words on their behalf.