

Friday, 15th October 2021
Inauguration Speech Academic Year 2021/2022
Hannah McClelland and Maddalena Castellani –
Head Student Representatives

Good morning everyone! Buongiorno a tutti! My name is Maddalena and she's my better half - I'm Hannah, è un piacere essere qui.

For those who don't us we have been representing the student body for the past year, and we are now starting our second year of the Graduate Degree.

As we were told 3 days ago we had to do this speech, I looked up to what previous students in our position said, and they all sounded... better than me.

So I thought: I better be sincere with you.

I don't like formalities, I don't like speeches, I don't like monologues - I prefer dialogues.

I don't like many thing, I kind of sound like a dictator, but we kind of are Hannah! Why?

Because we were the only one candidating for this position last year.

Jokes aside, the important message here is that it is crucial you are **critically engaged**, not for others, but for yourself first.

Ladies... empower yourself and take the lead in society.

For you all, the quality of your experience here will be directly correlated with the amount of engagement you put in.

I dare you, VI SFIDO, to go outside your comfort zone, mettetevi in gioco.

Going back to the speech, it was important for us to be here to make you feel welcomed by fellow students to Pollenzo, and we thought to share with you a few things we've learned along the way.

I will start from a true story, that took place in a remote and forgotten village in Tuscany, called Barbiana, in the 1950s. There, a young priest called **Lorenzo Milani** (I encourage you to look him up) started teaching to 6 farmer's children, that for geographical and economic reasons, had been left out of the educational system.

This school of Barbiana featured 2 frames in the classroom:

the **1st** said: **I CARE**. It means: "**mi importa, mi sta a cuore**", which is the exact contrary of the "**me ne frego**" of fascists.

The **2nd** frame held a small message taken after the Cuban Revolution, same frame and message I saw every day for 5 years hanged in my own high school.

It said:

"children who don't study don't make good revolutionaries"

"I bambini e bambine che non studiano non saranno buoni rivoluzionari"

What does this message mean to you? What does being a revolutionary even mean to you? Nowadays?

I would love to know! later at lunch if you want to come and chat with me.

To me, it means that to **bring about change**,

I need to be **curious**, I need to be **knowledgeable**, and I must be **passionate**. Creativity without knowledge is empty, as knowledge without creativity is sterile. **Education** is what gives you the opportunity to develop your curiosity, knowledge and passions, but we should never forget that **access** to education is a **great privilege**.

It is a privilege that brings me purpose and I am aware it is my responsibility to use this privilege to **raise others** and pass along what I have been so fortunate enough to receive. I hope that's how you want to use your privilege too.

Knowledge is fundamental, but it is simply not enough if it's not shared and translated into **real, concrete action**, reason why I encourage you to **practice what you preach**.

Not many people get to be here so don't let this time pass you by, you would regret it, it is up to you to seize the day and make the most of this experience, whatever that means to you, leave your mark.

Leave the past behind, start challenging yourself today, because today is the first day of the rest of your life.

My own little revolution is **being a gastronome**, that's why I came here to Pollenzo: to learn how to address the challenges of our generation, so strictly linked to how we are in Nature, we eat, we live.

The best thing about being a gastronome is that we see the world through **holistic lenses**: while others see it just in black and white, we can see it in all its shades.

We gastronomes, are the connecting bridges between apparent separate islands, disciplines, people, we make discuss happen!

Hannah, what do you think?

[Hannah's part]

Speaking of connection and our community I'd like to share a little piece of advice that our class received from an inspiring professor the other day - it's very simple - he told us, that when you play tennis **always choose an opponent who is better than you**.

This is to say that in the community we have here in Pollenzo don't waste time trying to be the best

Instead, **seek out those who have something to teach you**, seek out those who you can learn from, who you can collaborate with and eventually, maybe, if you're lucky, you get to teach them something too.

We have incredible challenges ahead of us and it is essential to recognize that we are in the **same fight** even if the way we approach the challenge is very different. I encourage you to **support the people** on your left and on your right, those who are comfy in the back of the classroom and those sitting in the front row, get to know your professors or professors who aren't even your professor, **engage** with those who are in different masters, in triennale in magistrale they are learning things that you are not learning and they may bring **new light** that makes your unique path even stronger.

We just came from a very stimulating discussion with Professor Volpato, someone you should hopefully all get to know, and we reminded one another that we are not consumers at this University, or in this world, **we are citizens**.

So let's inspire one another by being strong enough to support one another and be **humble** enough to **question yourself** and realize you cannot do it alone. Go find the people exploring their passions: those building the garden, the entrepreneurs creating businesses that support small producers, the artists throwing olive oil around your living room - we are among some fascinating individuals here - **find those who do things differently, who shift the paradigm. Be the one exploring your passions.**

This time will be over before you know it, so lean into this community with your whole heart

If you do, it will be here for you not only during your studies but also well after.

Raga let's change the world.

In bocca al lupo! **Make this university yours.**