

Angela Radulescu
Romanian Club Vice-President

Ladies and gentlemen, first of all, I would like to thank you all for joining us and making this conference a success today. My name is Angela Radulescu, and following our elections this week I will be stepping in as president of the Romanian Club. I would like to first take a moment to acknowledge Andrei's work. Without his relentless dedication this year, the Romanian Club would not have grown to what it is today. I truly look up to him for managing his presidency in a way that kept us moving and is now allowing me to think of enlarging our purpose and extending our role as a mediator between the Romanian community of students abroad, our home country and the vibrant intellectual elite we became part of as students at top American colleges and universities.

Before I go on, let us summarize what the Conference today has shown us about the road back Romania is taking at the moment.

1) The first few presentations have focused on potential outlets for Romanian culture, as it tries to reconcile our past with the chaos of transition and rebuild a national identity that should also resonate in the country's image abroad.

2) We have then turned our attention to the new opportunities Romania is presenting to investors, and the need of new forms of management, training and consulting in order to better coordinate Romania's resources and respond to the "brain-drain" currently going on by offering alternatives to the best and brightest young Romanian professionals.

3) We also discussed ways to start bridging the wealth gap by focusing on the sustainable development of smaller communities and helping them keep up with the rapidly growing economy.

4) And last but not least, we touched on some political tools imported from the United States and on how they could shape legislation and regulations in the yet ambiguous and, sadly, still corrupt Romanian political system.

The conference aimed to better educate those present in what Romanian reality means at the moment. Even as a less informed spectator, when I went back there during the summers and after spending a year in a top Romanian high-school, I couldn't help noticing with excitement the opportunities finally arising in Romania. In one of those typical idealism surges, I pondered feats ranging from new research centers to a ski system that would unify all resorts on Valea Prahovei in a giant circuit *wink*. Such ideas may be yet far-fetched, but the amount of potential I saw enabled

me to think about how I could use my experience and cross-cultural education to take part in the changes going on. As Andrei stated in the beginning, Romania is on its way back on the map, and is finally getting an opportunity to grow into a fully-fledged successful nation that has many reasons to shine on the world stage. Look at us, look where we have gathered; look at the people you have met today.

I will end this with a little anecdote from one of the many digressions I had with my friends early in the morning at 2AM, while getting distracted from university writing homework. I asked Alex, one of my Romanian classmates and friends here at Columbia, what he thinks is the most historically significant period for Romania, what is our "moment of glory" so to speak. I was expecting an answer along my thinking that recalls the monarchy and the continuous growth period that began with Cuza in 1859 and ended with the elections in 1946. Alex however responded saying that he feels the answer to my question is "Now ." He said that the never-ending pool of Romanian students gaining access to the best possible education and doing as well as they do makes this Romania's finest hour. Referring to what some call the "brain-drain" as a time of progress seemed kind of strange in the beginning, but the more I think about it, the more I realize how right Alex is. It's up to us to carry through and make our mark in the history of our country.

I do hope you all share at least a bit of this vision. If you do, then today's conference has served its purpose.

Thank you all for participating, and I look forward to seeing you next year.