

Dear Students, Guests, Colleagues, Welcome to the **Opening ceremony** of the 2008/09 academic year of the International Education Center of the Budapest University of Technology and Economics (or in abbreviated form BME). This event is especially important to **our freshmen**, so I mainly address my short speech to them.

Today you officially enter a university with **great tradition**. Last year we celebrated the **225th** anniversary of our foundation by the Austrian Emperor Joseph the 2nd. The main building where we are was built more than **100** years ago.

During its existence many important scientific and engineering results were achieved, many famous persons studied and / or taught in our institution. I mention only 3 **Nobel prize winner scientists** from the 2nd half of the previous, 20th century. Denis **GABOR**, Eugene **WIGNER** were decorated in Physics, George **OLAH** in Chemistry. Some of their results e.g. the **hologram** - has become a part of our **everyday life**. When you look at for example a **EURO** or a FORINT banknote, remember that the hologram on it was invented by a former student of your university. (*Show 2 banknotes.*)

Another former student – Ernő **RUBIK** invented a mechanical puzzle the **RUBIK's CUBE**, a game probably known by everybody, some 30 years ago.

Finally I cite a more recent result, the **Gömböc**, which is a convex three-dimensional homogeneous body with just one stable and one unstable point of equilibrium. It was invented 3 years ago by 2 professors of BME (Domokos Gábor, Várkonyi Péter). The preparation of the Gömböc is very expensive, here I can only show you a picture of it.

So **be proud to be a student of BME**, and I hope that some of you will have later similar world famous scientific achievements.

The life is not only science and work, but leisure and **sport** as well. A month ago was the end of the **BEIJING OLYMPIC Games**. Our recent and former students had nice results. 2 members of the gold medal winning Hungarian water polo team were students of this university. I am sure that everybody heard about

Michael Phelps, the hero of the Beijing Olympics, and if you followed the swimming events you might also know that **László Cseh**, the Hungarian hero of this year's Olympic Games won **3 silver medals** behind the unbeatable American swimmer. You can meet him walking in the corridors of the Informatics Building, because he is a student of this university, **like you are**.

Exactly 40 years ago I was a freshman at a university in a **foreign country**, listening to the speaker during a ceremony similar to today's. I have to admit that I **do not remember** the words of the speaker, but **I can understand** what it is like to start a new life, **the university years**, in a foreign country. You find yourself in a different culture, *people on the streets speak a different language*, they celebrate different events, *they do not know your culture, your holidays* and your family is not around you. **My experiences** taught me that you should learn as much as possible about the country you live in, *learn the language too* and *be open to new people* and at the same time be proud of your heritage and **be yourself above all**.

Now that you will study at a university you will have to learn a **new way of working**. There will be great challenges and you will have to study probably a lot more than you did before. When you entered this hall you made a decision to fulfill your dreams and I wish you the best to reach your goals and your potentials.

Finally allow me to tell you a few data about the **teaching activities** of Budapest University of Technology and Economics. We have about **25.000 learners**, and more than **1000 academic staff**. BME teaches in **4 languages**: obviously in Hungarian and English, but we have a French and German division as well. This year there is **4000 freshmen** in the Hungarian education. About **200 exchange students** arrived from all **continents**.

Related to your training, your number is above **400**, among them more than **100** students from Cyprus and Iran. We have big communities from Greece, Nigeria, and Turkey as well.

All our new and old students are welcome and on behalf of Professor Gábor PÉCELI, the rector of BME I wish you good health, successful studies, nice days.