Good evening everyone,

It is an honour to be here and to get an opportunity to share my experience with everyone this evening.

Tonight I would like to share my story as an ISGS student with everyone, especially with the new comers who will be beginning their journey in the following month.

In Pakistan, whenever you meet someone who has ever been to a European country for study or for work, they will always tell you about all the wonderful places they got to visit, all the interesting people they met, and how learning about other cultures shaped their personality.

However, what no one tells you is how hard you have to work in the first place to be able to enjoy those vacations around Europe. As the mathematician Gottfried Leibniz once said “He who hasn’t tasted bitter things hasn’t earned sweet things”.

I remember the night before my flight to Germany I was unable to sleep because I was experiencing a mix of emotions. Mostly excited since I was about to start a journey in the exhilarating world of Mathematics, in a country that has given the world some of the best Mathematicians. With this thought came the fear and anxiety of not being able to do well. The fear of being a failure.

It took me almost a year to understand and adjust to the system. It sounds ironic for a math major to say that I was not accustomed to thinking about mathematics in depth. I was not used to finding connections between two different fields of mathematics which at the first glance appear to be as far apart as the two poles and yet at a deeper inspection would be intertwined together in a fascinating manner.

I was unable to ask questions. Firstly because I know I can sometimes get annoying like a 5 year old asking too many questions. And secondly because I was afraid of being considered incompetent. And to be honest I even thought of quitting a few times not
because I was unable to learn but it seemed like too much effort.

It was during these times of doubt that ISGS and everyone who is a part of our ISGS family came to my rescue. Throughout my studies, whenever I’ve felt discouraged with my progress or depressed because I was having difficulty adjusting to the new system, all I had to do was to drop by at the ISGS office and talk for a few minutes with whoever was available. Everyone at ISGS has always encouraged and guided me.

I have especially bothered Arthur a lot with my problems ranging from roommate issues to career advice.

After two years I know that I am not the person who came here. Personally and intellectually, I have grown to be a better person. Who is not afraid of making mistakes or of failing if need be in order to learn something new.

And it has only been possible because of all the love and support I’ve received from my family and friends and from my ISGS family.

I also got to visit many beautiful and historical places here in Germany and around Europe. Most of it thanks to the trips organised by ISGS.

Even though the past two years have been very hectic for me trying to balance my life between socialising with friends and meeting assignment deadlines and dreading over exams.

Yet given the opportunity I wouldn't mind going through all of it all over again.

I would like to thank my professors, teachers, my tutor and everyone at the ISGS who has constantly worked to help me during my studies here. I’d like to leave you with a saying from Michael Josephson that I have on a post-it card on my table, it says:

“Take pride in how far you've come. Have faith in how far you can go. But don’t forget to enjoy the journey”

Thank you.