

Chicago

IPBA Annual Meeting 2025 Scholar Report

With the theme of “Transformation Everywhere All At Once: Business and Law in a Changing World” in mind, I, along with seven other scholars, truly felt our perceptions of the law as well as the legal community transform positively with every interaction during the grand event. It is without a doubt that our involvement as Scholars wouldn't have been possible without former Chair of the IPBA Scholarship Committee Mahesh Rai and the IPBA Secretariat, in particular, Yukiko Okazaki, Randa Morioka, Varya Simpson, the former IPBA President, Miyuki Ishiguro, the current IPBA President, Michael Chu. Thank you for ensuring our meaningful participation. I personally also extend my gratitude to former IPBA Scholar Agya Shrestha for encouraging me to apply for the Scholarship.



This wasn't my first time travelling to the US but Chicago welcomed me with open arms. The amalgamation of architecture, culture and rich legal history sparked fascination towards the legal culture of rule of law that stands today in the United States. In keeping up with the theme, the President of the American Bar Association stated in his welcome speech that “change is like heaven everybody wants to go but not now”. Yet, owing to the poignant history of democracy in the States, it was enlightening to see that every lawyer, regardless of background, stood together at the face of a greater challenge, following the foundations of democracy and unity in diversity.

Following, the first panel discussion on International Trade and Tariffs, the speakers delved sincerely on the rampant tariffs and how it was affecting global economy. As speaker Michelle Gon put it, supply chains are hard to build but it is not easy to replace them. Thus, it is fundamental to work together to build a more predictable legal arena in the larger framework of international trade.

Scholar's Day



The Scholar's Day was undeniably the most inspiring part of IPBA 2025 for me. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Lauren Salas Mationg, Ashley Justice, Keval Amin and Connor Larson from McDermott Will & Emery, for the preparation and smooth co-ordination for this day. It was an honour conversing with US District Judge Sunil R. Harjani and Justice William Yu, for sharing insights on the judiciary and how crucial it is for this arm of the government to remain fair and independent against any arising context. It was also incredible to see the functioning of a full-fledged law school, Northwestern University of Law, providing diverse set of courses that aren't available elsewhere. The Scholar Reception also led us to meeting previous Scholars, some of whom have already established themselves into the committees of IPBA at such early years of their career. As the youngest Scholar this year, every and any conversation I had led me with inspiration to follow suit. Coming from a place that doesn't really play baseball, it was interesting to watch stars like Ohtani cheered even by the Chicago Cub fan base. A truly fascinating experience to watch a athletic stars under the perfect weather with the butter-iest popcorn!

I would have never expected to bond with the other Scholars, owing to the massive differences in our culture. But we felt like a family! We met before the conference started on the 22nd and bonded over the stunning Bean architecture in Millennium Park and shared our stories. As a young Scholar, they guided me in strategic networking with the experiences they had accumulated over the years. Ratana taught me to never underestimate myself while Mei taught me the importance being present in experiences. Mandukhai (Mandu) always cheered us with her jokes and Joshleen always took note of our wellbeing with her empathetic nature. Abhimanyu made sure we pay our due respect to artistic legends while Felipe showed how to balance work and fun. All of the Scholars had something great to offer and it really resonated how the legal profession shouldn't be mechanical but instead, humane.

Summary of Sessions

Overview of Sessions Attended

- ESG Series No. 1: Turning the Tables; How to Defend Corporates in the Era of Climate Litigation.
- AI Meets Climate Change: Legal Challenges and Opportunities in Fighting for Sustainability with Smart Solutions.
- FIDIC but not as you know it.
- NDAs and Business Confidentiality: IP Protection Issues regarding Employment and IP Laws.
- Beyond the Brief: Real Talk with Women Lawyers Conquering Challenges.
- IP Protection in International Investment.
- The Social Side of ESG in Employment & Diversity.
- Challenges of the Legal Industry in the Era of AI.



With my growing interest in the field of technology and IP as well as a background in ESG, I focused on attending sessions centering these topics to garner newer perspectives. For example, I shared my experience in the ESG session, stating the disparities between developed and developing nations and the responsibility in environmental protection. Nepal has rich and diverse landscape for resources yet the rampant and haphazard constructions do not follow due processes, ending up in corrupted practices over the years. It was further amplified in the session of AI and Climate Change, which showcased that innovation often comes at the expense of the environment (data centers requiring massive energy to run and a singular AI prompt taking so much energy). The world is heading towards a transformative era with massive technological leaps and yet, the law seems to be limited, with the idea of its restriction rather than accommodating the growing space.

On the other hand, the social aspect of ESG is seen in labor and employment spaces. In the realization of IP protection, I learnt about the implications of NDA. The culture of formal employment agreements is slowly steeping into the Nepali labor market but a full-fledged NDA is rarely heard of. Thus, the requirement of non-disclosure even after termination was a new and diverse perspective I learnt in the field of IP protection. Even in areas of international investment, which has been a key driver of economic growth in Nepal, I realized the importance of IP protection to encourage investors and build trust. This also connected to the trade wars across the world, and highlighted the restriction on black markets or boot-leg sellers.

One of the sessions that really made a difference for me was the session with Women Lawyers Conquering Challenges. As a woman lawyer myself, I alongside all the participants in the room felt a sense of solidarity when the speakers spoke of balancing their work and home life, a double standard often not expected of men lawyers. The guilt of wanting to grow in your career instead of wanting a family felt like betraying traditional beliefs but sitting there with all others, I knew I did not want to be ashamed of my achievements but to celebrate it. I truly felt seen and heard.

I have no doubt that the IPBA Annual Meeting in Chicago is going to be a shaping factor in my upcoming legal career. I am finding my footing and this experience has helped me stay grounded to my values so that I can take a stand fearlessly and move with dignity. The IPBA imprinted in me, nothing but warm memories of people, places and parties that we got to dance in. I cannot wait to contribute to the growth of this wonderful organization.