

## **Conference Report: IPBA Annual Meeting and Conference, Chicago 2025**

Attending the 2025 IPBA Annual Meeting and Conference in Chicago as an IPBA Scholar was a distinct honor and a privilege. This report briefly outlines the highlights of this exceptionally rewarding experience and shares some personal reflections on the key takeaways.

The program commenced with a specially designed IPBA Scholars' Day. Our day began with a visit to Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law, where we attended an informative presentation on their LLM programs and enjoyed a tour of the campus facilities. Subsequently, we had the unique opportunity to engage with the judiciary, meeting the Honorable Sunil Harjani at the US District Court for the Northern District of Illinois and the Honorable William Yu at the Circuit Court of Cook County. These interactions offered not only a fascinating glimpse into the complexities of the U.S. judicial system but also valuable insights into the careers of two accomplished Asian American judges. The Scholars' Day concluded with a site visit and an enjoyable lunch at the Chicago office of McDermott Will & Emery.

That evening, we had the pleasure of attending an MLB baseball game between the Chicago Cubs and the LA Dodgers at the historic Wrigley Field. The highlight of this game was witnessing Japanese star player Shohei Ohtani in action. As someone who has been living in Tokyo for the past couple of months, the opportunity to see Ohtani play in person was especially significant and will undoubtedly be an excellent conversation topic with Japanese colleagues and friends. For me, this was my first time attending a baseball game, and it provided a wonderful opportunity for bonding among the Scholars and other conference attendees before the main sessions began.

The conference officially commenced the following day with an opening ceremony, featuring a keynote speech by the IPBA President and vibrant dragon dances – a nod to the venue's location just blocks from Chicago's historic Chinatown. The ceremony led into the opening plenary session, which focused on the Rule of Law, International Trade, and Tariffs. This subject quickly emerged as the central and most discussed theme throughout the entire conference. From my perspective, coming from an M&A and corporate law background, it was particularly refreshing to see our international trade colleagues take center stage, dominating discussions not only within formal panel sessions but also during informal conversations among practitioners. The opportunity to assess, in real-time, the impact of recently enacted U.S. tariffs across various jurisdictions in the Asia-Pacific region was extremely valuable, and it made very clear how the uncertainty surrounding trade issues affects virtually every other area of law.

Throughout the conference, I attended a diverse mix of panel sessions, focusing on areas including international trade, mergers & acquisitions, natural resources, and foreign direct investment regulations. The breadth and quality of these sessions were impressive, making it genuinely challenging to choose which sessions to attend, as numerous interesting panels often ran concurrently. This variety, however, allowed for valuable exposure to pressing issues across different practice areas.

Beyond the formal sessions, I had numerous valuable opportunities to engage in informal conversations with accomplished legal practitioners from around the globe. Particularly

remarkable was the well-established community of Latin and Ibero-American lawyers, many of whom have attended the IPBA annual conference for years. They have successfully cultivated a strong network of Spanish and Portuguese-speaking practitioners who share a deep interest in and knowledge of the Asia-Pacific region. Similarly, I had the valuable opportunity to connect with numerous lawyers active in the Japan legal community, including both Japanese and foreign practitioners based in or closely connected to Japan. As a Latin American lawyer who is preparing to continue my legal career in Tokyo following my LL.M. program, engaging with both of these communities was particularly insightful.

The conference drew to a memorable close with a final evening reception and live music performance at the Epiphany Center for the Arts. This event served as the perfect closure, offering attendees a relaxed atmosphere to experience firsthand Chicago's vibrant music and cultural scene.

Reflecting on this incredible opportunity, I wish to express my profound gratitude. Firstly, to IPBA President Ms. Miyuki Ishiguro and Incoming President Mr. Michael Chu for their leadership and commitment to the IPBA Scholar program. My sincere thanks extend to the entire IPBA Scholarship Committee for their dedication and for ensuring we felt consistently supported throughout our stay. Special appreciation goes to Randa and Yukiko from the IPBA Secretariat for their meticulous planning and flawless execution of the Scholars' program logistics. I am also grateful to the McDermott associates and volunteers in Chicago who generously gave their time to guide us. Lastly, thank you to my fellow 2025 IPBA Scholars – it was a pleasure sharing this journey with such a talented group, and I am confident we will remain connected in the future.

The IPBA Chicago 2025 conference was an invaluable experience both professionally and personally. Being named an IPBA Scholar has also instilled in me a strong motivation to help connect more young lawyers from Latin America with the IPBA, ensuring its impact continues to spread among the newer generations of legal professionals in the region. For this reason, I am already eagerly anticipating the opportunity to reconnect with the IPBA community in New Delhi in 2026.

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