

UNDERGRAD Commencement Speech
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When Edwin Lewis, a young American teacher at the American University of Beirut, gave a lecture explaining the evolutionary principles of Charles Darwin in 1882, he ignited a furor within the American missionary community in Lebanon. Lewis was pressured to resign and students' request for his reinstatement was rejected. Professor Cornelius Van Dyck refused the decision and threatened to teach evolution in his own house. Indeed, he carried through with his promise after resigning along with other professors. By doing so, Professor Van Dyck, whose name is held by one of the oldest buildings here at AUB, exemplified many values praised by this university. Freedom of expression, the importance of exposure to all fields of study, even controversial ones, and the passion for knowledge are what students learn at AUB.

Looking back and examining every value that AUB taught me would take me a long time. Nevertheless, if I were to take into account all the costs involved in my education here, I find myself thankful for having been able to attend AUB. Even if I consider every other choice I could have made, I would not have done it any differently. This is what economists call opportunity cost, a term I prefer not to hear anymore after three years of courses in Economics.

At the beginning, I enrolled as a Civil Engineering student pursuing a minor degree in Economics but over time, I felt a stronger inclination towards the latter discipline. At AUB, I found the support that I didn't easily find around me to pursue my true passion. And here I am graduating, as an Economics student, having in mind that individuals should not forgo their true passion to conform to societal standards that are not fit for them, a lesson learned at AUB.

My university taught me that I could honor a fellow student. Sadly, four months ago, the Economics department lost a valuable student, Remy Georges Rebeiz. He was supposed to be

here sitting with us, waiting for his name to be called in order to receive his bachelor degree with honors. One week after this sudden and very sad event, Remy's friends organized a memorial ceremony where they celebrated their love and respect for their peer. This ceremony could not have taken place without the help of the AUB administration that makes sure that every student is respected.

I am proud today to finally be an AUB alumnus and belong to the AUB alumni alongside presidents of countries, prime ministers, members of parliament, ambassadors, governors of central banks, presidents and deans of colleges and universities, and also business people, engineers, doctors, teachers, and others. All these people are engaged to AUB. In fact, the American University of Beirut teaches its student, faculty and staff how to be committed to an institution and how to teach its values to the people who haven't had the chance to attend it. One of those are a young couple who in the 1970s used to come here wishing they could attend this university. These are my parents who are present among us today. I sincerely believe, like every student graduating today, that I am making them very proud and making their dream come true by graduating from AUB.