

Undergraduate Commencement Exercises Student Speech

Joseph Matar

June 9, 2018

President Khuri, members of the Board of trustees, esteemed Deans, Faculty, Distinguished Guests, Families, and most importantly, Class of 2018. It is a privilege to welcome you all to this special commencement ceremony.

I remember the first couple of weeks at the American University of Beirut, and I am pretty sure that every one of you, my fellow colleagues, recalls what it feels to be welcomed to AUB. I will never forget the enthusiasm and the optimism I had when I first entered this campus. Little did I know, that I was about to experience what I would like to call the “Shock effect”. Starting from failing my first exam to initially getting rejected by the basketball team, I took a series of unexpected blows that made me put my future into perspective. I was devastated, and I soon realized that my journey will be harder than initially predicted. Years later, I am leaving, my second home, as a mechanical engineer with marking milestones that made me the person I am today. I am proud to say that every one of us, took numerous blows in the face but most importantly proved to be resilient along the way, and collected countless memories during the journey.

I always conceived AUB as being just a checkpoint in my life where I had to do my job, study, graduate and move on with my career. However, my time here proved to be an awakening journey on a personal level. Thanks to the diverse background that AUB offers, I was lucky enough to meet remarkable individuals who spiced up this experience, from friends and classmates, to professors and advisors not to mention the cats who shared my morning coffees.

Besides providing us with an abundance of knowledge, AUB has created an environment for students’ activities and self-expression. It has been a trailblazer in facing social stereotypes and has always encouraged us to overcome barriers and fight for our own ideas. Moreover, it has been a pioneer in democratic representation and a leading example for our nation. Last month, the national elections took place under a new and long awaited proportional system to guarantee fair representation of all sides. Well, AUB, unsurprisingly, has been adopting it for the past two years, in a competitive yet noble process where students demonstrated remarkable ethics and values.

Dear beloved faculty members, we appreciate your profound wisdom throughout the years. Thank you for always believing in us and pushing us to thrive and pursue excellence in everything we do. Thank you Dr. Talal Nizammedine for your unwavering support of student activities and for being a remarkable role model for every one of us. Dr. Fadlo Khuri, we value and respect your diligent efforts in steering our esteemed university to greater heights.

Dear parents, like Gebran Khalil Gebran once said:

"...أنتم الأفواس وأولادكم سهام حية قد رمت بها الحياة عن أقواسكم "

"You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth". Truly, you have bended and you have sacrificed a lot of your personal interests to see us reach this far. Tonight, is also your night, and for all your efforts and for all your love, we are deeply grateful. To my father Georges, my mother Kako and my sister Karele, the courage and significance you give me every day is unparalleled. You are the 3 persons in my life that I want to make the proudest of me. Thank you for everything.

To my colleagues, let's take a moment and reflect on the magnitude of our marking accomplishment, kindly allow me to use the F-word: WE FINALLY MADE IT! Starting tonight, we embark into the real world, yet we are about to face a harder challenge and test our resilience once again. It is sad to witness that some of the brightest minds are planning their future abroad and leaving their homeland behind. Let's have a sense of Hope in our Lebanon. Hope is contagious and let us be its carriers. Let's equip ourselves with the values that AUB taught us and fight the political and economic challenges that our country is suffering from. Working together, and most importantly having hope will be the catalyst of change towards a better tomorrow. Let's not give up on our nation, let's not take Lebanon for granted.

Good luck Class of 2018,

Thank you