

Layla Jabre
Student Commencement Speech
September 4, 2021

Today marks a landmark in my life and the completion of an exceptional six years journey at my beloved university.

To me, AUB was never a coincidence, happenstance or luck but a personal choice based on deep admiration and attachment to the campus.

My fellow undergraduates, I was right in your place, five years ago, receiving my Bachelor Degree in Nutrition and Dietetics. I still recall the challenges I came across in trying to adapt to the university's system, its registration process as well as its learning platforms and exam structures. Yet, AUB marked a turning point in my personal growth and development, pushing me to my highest potential, helping me shape my professional career and become the person I am today.

On a similar note, my fellow graduates, AUB has also been an extension to my professional journey as it helped me acquire essential business skills throughout my Masters in Business Administration.

My fellow undergraduates and graduates, the past two years were extremely exhausting, as our path overlapped with several peaks and valleys and lots of uncertainties. Yet we were able to make it and we truly nailed it.

The Revolution of October 17th, 2019 manifested the beginning of the challenges we faced, as we were not only deprived from our right to education and ability to get safely to campus to attend our classes but also from our basic human needs of electricity, water, and sanitation. Yet we survived

The situation in Lebanon was aggravated with the surge of the financial crisis and devaluation of the Lebanese pound, making it a burden on us to be able to withstand our financial obligations and tuition fees. Yet we survived

Amidst this economic and political instability, the health care sector in Lebanon was collapsing with the spread of the COVID19 pandemic in early 2020. This necessitated our curriculum to shift from the traditional face-to-face format to a hybrid one before becoming fully online. Yet we survived

Above and beyond all these hardships, we were traumatized following the Beirut Port Explosion back in August 2020, resulting in lifelong physical and moral scars. Yet we survived

My fellow classmates, our journey taught us patience and perseverance. Aside from all the above-mentioned challenges and our various responsibilities as undergraduate and graduate students we were able to stay strong and pursue our education.

My fellow classmates, our journey taught us empathy

Despite the lack of physical contact, working together as one team on our projects and assignments, we became each other's support system and empowered each other not only with the learning material but also with personal matters.

My fellow classmates, our journey taught us emotional intelligence

We were able to maintain the highest level of professionalism all throughout the way, separating our internal struggles and moral frustrations from serious matters.

My fellow classmates, our journey taught us positivity and optimism

In the face of all unfortunate events that we came through, we were always hoping for better days and searching for that light at the end of the tunnel.

My fellow classmates, our journey taught us flexibility, adaptability and resilience

As we initially signed up for an on campus, face to face learning experience, we ended up completing a big part of it online and ended up enjoying it!

Our experience as undergraduate and graduate students at AUB would have never been the same without the constant help and support of the university's faculty and staff and we should all ascribe our success to them, be it in the face to face teaching experience or the online modality.

And to you COVID I say: you have turned our lives upside down, making the saying "I am positive" become one of our biggest fears given its association with the pandemic.

You made us constantly wear masks to prevent the transmission of the virus however you failed to let us hide our true selves and identities behind these covers.

You may have succeeded in creating a physical barrier between us, students, taking away the privilege to meet on our beloved campus to fulfill our studies.

Nevertheless, we succeeded in getting together through our minds and souls, unite all for one goal and meet again, on the Greenfield on this special day, to celebrate our achievements despite all odds.

As many of you, my fellow classmates might be leaving our beloved country and departing to build a future away from home, I can assure you that AUB WILL always be our center of gravity, tying us, undergraduates, graduates or alumni, be it physically on campus or virtually across distances.

As our Alma Mater dictates, I hope and wish that we would all have life, and have it more abundantly.

Thank you for every single person who supported me throughout this journey. I am beyond grateful for your encouragement. Without you, this wouldn't be possible.

Congratulations to all!