

Abla Sibai
FHS Interim Dean's Commencement Address
June 5, 2021

President Khuri, members of faculty and staff, proud parents and family members watching us remotely, and to the graduates of the Faculty of Health Sciences class 2021, Congratulations!

Graduation day is and will always be one of the most significant days in your lives, but this one is so special, in fact it is epic, it is presenting a unique experience to an extraordinary graduating cohort:

Why it is epic?

Who would have imagined, when you joined AUB only few years back, that new coronavirus would sweep the world, and that the country would be bleeding with challenging, painful, earth shattering multilayered crisis, pushing more people into poverty, loss of jobs, and shrinking economies?

Who would have imagined that your learning would be mostly online, with or without lockdown, and that we would be juggling with one zoom meeting after the other, while struggling with internet connectivity, and for some grappling with home schooling and caregiving responsibilities as well?

Who would have imagined that you would be receiving your certificates while wearing masks, exercising physical distancing, not able to hug each other after the ceremony, or to huddle for photos with family and friends by your side?

You are unique not only because of all the above but because DESPITE the above, you received a great education from an outstanding dedicated faculty (who were also struggling with similar challenges as yours) and yet YOU were able to carry on and adapt with prowess and perseverance and achieve brilliance!

These are certainly overwhelming rapidly changing times; a lot has been disrupted but also so much has been created and advanced to the forefront. You are graduating at a time in history when Lebanon and the world desperately need the workforce skilled in public health and health sciences, the world today needs more than ever the health communicators to fight the infodemics, the environmental health specialists, the scientists in the medical Lab, in the audiology and imaging fields, we need the researcher, the epidemiologist to formulate evidence based responses, the statistician and data analyst, the administrator, system expert, program evaluator, the Influencer influencing behaviour and policy, the field workers, the front liners, and most of all the activist striving for sustainable solutions and a more just world..

I recall here Ghandi's principles: Wealth without work, Knowledge without morality, and Science without humanity, these are some of the deadly blunders that would destroy us and grow inequity and social injustice around. And this is a charge we take seriously at the Faculty of Health Sciences .

We've watched you grow , jumping the wave and using your skills to aid in the COVID-19 response, working with migrant communities and vulnerable refugees, volunteering to support in the aftermath of the Beirut blast, and cleaning up the debris well into midnight, you all accomplished extraordinary things!

Now go out, you are needed today like no other time in history, make the right choice, multiply what you do by working in teams and for a purpose greater than yourselves, , build a better future, change the world, and enjoy the journey all along.

FHS class 2021, on behalf of AUB, we are very proud of your achievements and accomplishments. Congratulations.

Thank you