

**Graduate Commencement speech: Souhad Abou Zaki**

At the pediment of the Temple of Apollo, the ancient Greek inscribed “Know Thyself”. For them, “knowing oneself” was a noble yet demanding pursuit; a means and an end. It required continuous learning, endurance and determination to discover what we are truly made of and made for.

At the pediment of AUB, there is nothing inscribed. But once you are in and you find your place in its dynamic and diversified environment, you realize that the material you learn about the most is not just economics or English or engineering. It’s actually YOU; what you are truly made of; made for and how much you can endure!

When I first entered AUB, I was only seeking a good education and a prestigious name to add to my resume. I had no clue of what else could be waiting for me in this beautiful campus. After six years in two different faculties, two consecutive experiences at the SRC elections and a continuous encounter with professors and students in class and in clubs, here is a very short list of what I learned besides economics and agricultural economics. I learned that change, no matter how unachievable it appears, will always unveil its ways to those who really want to see it and that the fine line between failure and success is not a grade. It’s a personal decision. I learned that the art of persuasion, unlike most people think, starts by listening not by talking and that our differences are an asset when we tolerate them, a liability only when we fear them.

I learned that what was waiting for me was simply that part of me I had not discovered before and wouldn’t have been able to discover in some other environment.

Now, I graduate with a profound feeling of gratitude and satisfaction and a priceless bequest of memories and experiences, hoping that you have all had a share of this bequest. And I’ll seize this precious moment of our life to borrow Socrates precious words: “be less concerned with what you have than with what you are; so that you may make yourselves as excellent as possible”. For every great achievement you do, in any place and at any time, will have to start and necessarily end by “knowing oneself”.