

Undergraduate Commencement speech: Timmy Malkoun

Graduation speeches are often laced with metaphors. As such, graduation becomes a marker of a mountain that we've climbed, a chapter that we've closed, or even a tree that we've planted. And while I have nothing against the use of metaphors per se, I find these particular comparisons to be inherently flawed, especially in light of what AUB has been to us. For our college experience is not something that we've done, climbed, transcended or gotten through. Rather, it is one that has shaped and will continue to shape the people we have become and the manner in which we carry out our lives.

Though our experience at AUB may not be a metaphoric mountain, this is not to say that our university is free from a daily and literal mountainous feat...the commute from lower to upper campus. The distance of the trip is by no means vast, but the diversity and nuances in collegiate experiences that it encompasses most certainly are.

I vividly remember walking up to Main Gate on one of the last days of classes. It was nighttime, and I had been working on a group project at the business school. Passing by the Greenfield, I noticed the Rugby team hard at play. As I walked near Bechtel, I heard a group of engineering students adamantly discussing their FYP. I took a longer route than usual; my senior year was almost over, and I decided to revel in the beauty of the campus. I walked up the stairs, and past the delightfully labyrinthine Nicely Hall. I saw students working diligently on designing stands for AUB Outdoors. Next, I passed by West Hall, which was, as usual, teeming with students working on different projects, be it the Red Cross club putting together a blood drive or the Yearbook Committee working on a photo shoot. I walked past Jafet, where students seemed to be embroiled in various different subjects from calculus to Shakespeare to computer science. I even witnessed Graphic Design and Architecture students putting the final touches on their projects.

The activities each student was engaged in were most certainly different, but, they were all underscored by one commonality... passion. The drive with which AUBites seem to tackle whatever challenge they face, be it academic or otherwise, is most definitely a marker of this university. We are gathered today to celebrate

achievement. While academic accolades may fade and people may not even remember who the class speaker was, the biggest achievement we've made is this passion and becoming the citizens we have allowed this institution to shape us into. We could not have done this without our esteemed educators, who have passionately devoted themselves to our intellectual and personal growth, the AUB staff who have guided and advised us through our journey, and last but not least, our families who have consoled us through the tough, and smiled with us in celebration. Without them, it would have been far more difficult to make it to this day.

Yet, here we are. Graduation day could not come any quicker a few weeks ago, but now I cannot help but regret it. We leave the familiarity of a bubble that we've fashioned and enter a new paradigm. While the thought initially fazed me, the fact of the matter is that graduation is not an end in itself but rather a celebration of acquiring a means to many other ends. AUB is not a chapter that we've closed, but rather the skills we've learned to read, analyze and even skim chapters that we will encounter in the future. AUB is not a mountain that we've climbed, but rather the tools that we've acquired to climb the many mountains that will invariably face us.