

**Commencement Exercises 2015**  
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George Debs  
Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences

I stand before you all in utter disbelief that the person I was four years ago could have made it this far. Perhaps, a bit of a backstory is needed to clarify the significance of my presence here on this stage.

The person I was before my university experience might surprise some of you. Back in school, I was never a top student. I lacked social etiquette and public speaking was always a struggle. And my grades reflected the demeaned self-worth I had set-up for my-self. Back then, my achievements were few but my dreams were big and certainly plentiful.

Today, standing here before this splendid community, my achievements are plentiful and my dreams are even bigger.

When I applied to join our honorable institution, as my three brothers did before me, I had set my intentions, “I’m going to study, be happy with what I study, then graduate and live happily ever after.” – little did I know that, what seemed to be the next logical step in achieving my educational ambitions, was actually a lot less of an academic strategy and a lot more of a personal journey of awakening. Along this quest I have discovered who I really am and that my potential for growth transcends anyone else’s opinion of my abilities.

The community at AUB and more specifically at my own faculty, the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences, is a testimony, in itself, that regardless of the conditions, with a steady vision we can create an environment for learning and prosperity. Throughout my four years, here, I have had the privilege of studying the successful habits of my professors and have also worked alongside a community of students whom I proudly call my newfound family.

Apart from the wealth of professional knowledge I have amassed during my time at the university, there are some valuable realizations I have come to. Through my struggles and my triumphs I’ve realized that there are three components successful people need to internalize to manifest their visions.

One, a vast library of inspiration – be it through empowering books, wise mentors, or friends and companions who energize you into inspired action and recognize your inner-genius. A mastermind of like-minded individuals is one of the keys to achieving your goals and helping them achieve theirs.

Two, a deep connection to your intrinsic guidance system. This is your gauge, your internal compass. Really, there’s no doing without this. It is the inner voice that has your best intentions at heart. Only by aligning with this unique expression, can you experience the epiphany of true happiness and fulfillment.

And three, the secret ingredient, a healthy dose of negativity. This is the contrast, or for the economists among us, this is the counterfactual – the clarifying tool we can use to refine exactly what we don’t want to happen, and thus be able to clearly illustrate what we do want to happen. Most people try to block out negativity; they consider it a threat to their visions of abundance. I’ve found that the most successful people use these negative thoughts and experiences to rekindle their original life’s purpose – why they chose this path to begin with.

To every naysayer, to every oppressor, to every disbeliever and dream-crusher, I thank you. You’ve fueled the fire in hopes of leaving me with scars. But the only scars you see are the tracks I’ve left as I’ve blazed my way to where I stand.

A dear mentor of mine once shared with me a quote by Napoleon Hill which said, “Whatever the mind of man can conceive and bring itself to believe, it can achieve.”

So, let me correct my introductory statement.

I stand before you all in utter belief of the sheer power and ability we each have as individuals to make our dreams and aspirations come true.

I hope, through the spirit this university has instilled within each of you, that you challenge your fears and gather the courage to stand up and claim your own voice and use it to better our country, our region and the entire world. It's been done before, by people who have sat in these very seats before you. So, why not you?

Ladies and gentlemen, my friends, Champions, let's make it happen.