

## *Speech 1*

Bismillah Al Rahman Al Rahim...In the name of Allah, the most gracious, the most merciful.

As-salamu alaykum, Your Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Mohammed Al Qassimi, Member of the Supreme Council of the United Arab Emirates, Ruler of Sharjah, and President of our university; honorable members of the Board of Trustees; AUS Acting Chancellor Dr. Thomas Hochstettler ; members of faculty and staff; proud parents and relatives; distinguished guests; and, of course, my dear fellow graduates. I would like to speak on behalf of the Fall 2013 Graduates in welcoming you all to the graduation of the American University of Sharjah's class of 2013.

So many emotions and thoughts are present today in this beautiful hall, and I believe nothing can truly describe how we all feel. I'm overwhelmed with joy, yet I can never articulate how proud, happy, and thankful I am to be here. My fellow graduates, I believe you all feel the same, knowing that after all the effort you have put into your education, and after all the times you've imagined yourselves present here today, you finally made it. Dear parents, brothers and sisters, thank you all for your support without which we would have only dreamt of this day. Finally, our beloved professors and faculty members, thank you all for helping us to find ourselves, develop our intellectual acuity, discover our gifts and talents, and nurture our potential not only to become leaders in our fields of endeavor, but to find a place of usefulness and honor in the world.

Albert Einstein once said: "Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand." With that said, I invite you all to join me in imagining a beautiful painting decorated with my words; a masterpiece that is AUS. I acknowledge that AUS has a unique significance to every individual in this room. However, I would like to convey to you all the shared elements in our myriad of perspectives in the form of a beautiful painting that derives its radiance from every day, every experience, and every encounter my fellow graduates and I have had during our AUS journey. A beautiful painting which attempts to capture the sheer diversity of my fellow graduates' views in a unified and symbolic manner. A beautiful painting that constitutes of a variety of people with multiple differences including nationality, gender, and religion, 3 blue birds of peace floating above a boundless lake, 4 books of infinite wisdom and knowledge, and a path of gorgeous green.

When I first joined AUS, I remember being astonished by the number of people that were chasing their dreams around our spectacular campus. I was surrounded by thousands who had different notions of what was possible; yet they all seemed to share a common value; the intent to build a brighter future. In a way, we are all one. In another way, we were all unique. However, our progressive common value kept us all together and made AUS feel like home. Our differences dissolved, and our mutual goals grouped us. We made plenty of friends in classrooms, dormitories,

sports, and in extra-curricular activities. Some of us were even lucky enough to develop close relationships with our professors; all of which have our dearest regards and deepest respect. Along the years, I realized that everybody that belonged to AUS was special in one way or another. I looked up to some, yet I realized that we all completed each other in a seamless manner. We all contributed to each other's development and we all lived in a simple matchless harmony. Now that I am here today, I'm ready to take on the next chapter of my life, yet I'm definitely going to miss this unique culture and unforgettable experience. If I had one wish, it would be that world with all of its troubles and unresolved conflicts could learn something from this great institution; that we can all coexist in simple harmony and build a brighter future together. Hence, the people with all their differences in my beautiful painting are all really the same; they're all unified; they're all of us.

The American University of Sharjah is well recognized for its superior education in the region. While that sounds charming to all of us, it's actually very demanding from its students. Therefore, we often felt exhausted, pressured, and overcome by obstacles. However, as I'm sure this applies to many of you, whenever I felt down I turned to family and friends because I needed an extra push; I needed someone to lift me up so I could go another mile. Whether I needed some motivation, or even some leisure; family and friends were always there to help me regain my balance and push through every obstacle in my path to success. Therefore, all of our families and friends represent the 3 blue birds of peace. – With you I was nourished. With you I was strong. And with you I was complete. It is because of your efforts to support us in what at times seemed to be a goal just out of reach, that we drew our strength to carry on, and we shall be forever grateful.

My fellow graduates, as I reflect today over my time here in AUS, I believe it's going to be tough to determine what I'm going to miss the most. However, it's mostly the little and simple things in life that truly do matter. Therefore, I believe it's the little memories encompassed in our pursuit of success that we will miss the most. These little memories include waking up and grabbing a bite from the student center right before our classes, working late nights in the library, visiting the sports complex, or even taking a walk around campus to refresh in the winter time breeze. Nevertheless, AUS derived its prestige by offering its students more of these memories in order to cooperate together and create synergies. As students, we were given the chance to participate in various extra-curricular activities and events which offered us a chance to share our cultures and to develop intellectually. Career fairs, club fairs, global days, and various other events and competitions brought us all together, and will continue to bring students together in the years to come. This pool of memories collectively shared by us represents a boundless lake that has nurtured us, and will continue to nurture the future generations of students.

My fellow graduates, almost four to five years ago we were all high-school graduates that did not have the slightest idea about what life really is. Today, I look around and I see a group of professionals ready to leave their unique prints indelibly stamped in the world. Promising Architects, scientists, artists, mathematicians, journalists, mass communication professionals, engineers,

entrepreneurs, historians, politicians, business professionals, among others... I see the leaders of a new day who will take their rightful place of leadership in the modern world. AUS offered us the chance to learn and develop the skills needed in order to become what we simply aspired to be not so long ago. Not only that, we also learned more about other areas of interest; such as film, music, arts, dance, sciences, and various other subjects that intrigued us and helped us to become more well-rounded, which is the essence of the American liberal arts educational objective. Furthermore, we have developed the skills to complete a ton of tasks and still have room to do more. This seemed almost impossible when we first joined AUS; today we have accomplished it all. Consequently, the four different colleges at the American University of Sharjah symbolize the four books of infinite wisdom and knowledge in my beautiful painting.

Finally and most importantly, I come to the center of my beautiful painting that is a path of gorgeous green. I can't determine precisely, nor can many of you, where our individual paths will lead. We know not what tomorrow brings, but I can tell you that all of us are ready to face the best and the worst of days. We have made it this far, and we will reach the furthest extent of our dreams. My fellow graduates, some of us will face success and some of us will experience intermittent failures and setbacks. However, I only ask for your patience and resilience because god has a greater plan for all of us. Every obstacle in our paths has been put there for a greater purpose that we will not realize right away. When you face your best days, make the most of them; when you face your worst days, believe that it's nothing more but a test for your patience and strength which will eventually pass. Your acceptance is key when you desire progress, and your failures will then ultimately become part of your success. My fellow graduates, I ask you all to imagine your success, imagine your dreams, and imagine the most and the best of all that you can achieve. If you do, I promise you that your imagination will someday come to life; I promise you that success will be right around the corner; and I promise you that you will all fulfill everything you ever sought to achieve. Your paths in my beautiful painting are nothing but your own creations; you can decide where it will lead. I only ask that you put your heart into everything and believe in yourselves; everything else will flow with ease.

I would like to conclude my speech with a saying by Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him: "Conduct yourself in this world, as if you are here to stay forever; prepare for eternity as if you have to die tomorrow".

Thank you all once again. Thank you AUS. Thank you for being the source of our transformation. Thank you for creating men and women of great value aimed towards success. Thank you for being that ever evolving masterpiece that will forever remain cherished in our hearts and minds.

My fellow graduates, I would like to congratulate you for all that you have earned today, and wish you well in all that you will achieve in the future. Congratulations to the Fall 2013 graduates!

## *Speech 2*

### Giving Meaning to Little Things

Bism Allah Al Rahman Al Rahim..in the name of Allah the most gracious and merciful. As-salamu alaykum, Your highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Mohammad Al Qassimi; chairman of the Board and President of AUS, Members of the board of Trustees, Chancellor Hochstetler, AUS faculty and staff, dear parents and relatives and distinguished guests. It is with honor that I stand here today, speaking on behalf of my fellow graduates, Class of 2014.

Allow me to begin by taking you back, back to the times when we were asked what we wanted to be when we grew up. Our answers were superheroes, movie stars, cowboys or wanting to be just like mummy and daddy. When we grew a little older our answers changed, maybe to something like doctors, astronauts, teachers, presidents or in my case a rock star. However, now that we've grown up everyone expects a more serious answer.

Today, my fellow graduates, I believe we all have the necessary expertise and confidence to answer them. We can tell them that the world we live in is unpredictable and that the most valuable skill AUS has taught us is to be flexible and willing to take risks and accept changes. We can show them how we were educated to stand out, be punctual, push ourselves to the limit and drive to accomplish and succeed. Moreover, we can assure them that through these past four years we were allowed to make mistakes and then make more mistakes trying to correct them. That way we would not have to guess... we would know.

Knowledge is more than the sum of its parts, and AUS taught us how to use each and every part along with passion and persistence, to build our goals and do whatever it takes to achieve them. When I first entered this university my goal was simple: to graduate from the school of Architecture and Design, and Goodness me I didn't know what I was getting myself into. "The building that never sleeps", as we students like to call it. Well some also liked to call it the cave, but we "design students" don't like that one so much. Nevertheless, the all-nighters, the endless hours studying in the library and the group projects, which we all hated so much, are what truly developed our personalities and social skills. We came to realize that AUS is our second home and we are all part of a vast multicultural family.

All of us graduating today are privileged. Not only did we acquire a profound educational experience but also the opportunity to explore and understand over 80 different cultures and learn from one another. Look around you: how many different nationalities and backgrounds do you see on this very stage?

Being part of this multicultural family broadens our understanding of a globalized world with all its diversities and challenges. AUS prepared us to adapt and learn to

coexist, while agreeing to disagree. By doing this, we can implement change and build stronger societies. After all, we make the choice of either

having a passive voice in our lives, or being active heroes with our own happy endings.

I learned in design school that any intended outcome or change requires a strong innovative foundation followed by a systematic process. I think these key factors, along with the ability to manage time, can help us get through any challenges we may face. While studying at AUS I understood the true value of time. Whether it was before a final submission, exam or deadline I have learnt that one minute can truly make a difference. Today, my fellow graduates, we have become more capable of managing time, which is an asset in this fast moving age.

So now we wonder once more, what do we really want to be in the future? I may not know that but I do know who I am today; a strong and dedicated AUS graduate. Being part of the AUS community has taught me to give importance to the value of things around me, and as our dear late Professor Shoaib used to say, "Give meaning to the little things because they can affect the way you interpret reality".

This is a day of joy, yet I stand here with a bit of a heartache knowing that this beautiful experience has come to its natural end; and that we are to move on to another major phase in life. AUS has truly become part of us. Simply not driving through its gates every morning is something that in itself will be missed. It has without a doubt become our second home, as over the past few years we have spent more time in it than in any other place I can recall. Nevertheless, while we should treasure our past we have to now move on to the next phase. Congratulations my fellow graduates, as today is the day we are proudly announced as graduates of the American University of Sharjah.

### Speech 3

Bismillah Al Rahman Al Rahim...In the name of Allah, most gracious, most merciful. As-salamu alaykum, Your Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Mohammed Al-Qassimi, Member of the Supreme Council of the United Arab Emirates, Ruler of Sharjah, and President of our university; honorable members of the Board of Trustees; Acting Chancellor Dr. Thomas Hochstettler; members of faculty and staff; proud parents and relatives; distinguished guests; and, of course, my dear fellow graduates. Welcome to the graduation of the American University of Sharjah's class of fall 2014.

The first thing I'd like to say is "thank you". Thank you to the people that supported us to be at this awe-inspiring venue today. First, I'd like to thank his Highness for providing us with numerous opportunities in this university, and his never-ending effort to enhance the quality and the experience of education at AUS. And a personal thank you from me your Highness because if it weren't for your scholarship, I would not be here today. Thank you! I must also thank our professors who were not only educators, but also role models. I'm leaving this university not only with the knowledge and skills I gained in my program, but also with the advice and encouragement from my dear professors. I thank them all. God bless you.

#### **-Belief-**

Today I'm delivering what is likely to be one of the most important speeches of my life. Throughout my academic journey from my formative years at high school, to my more recent experiences at this university, I have always had that one dream that I wanted to accomplish. I have wanted to become a public speaker. I wanted to be at this place, at this time giving my graduation speech. I believe that a key factor that helped me fulfill this dream was believing in myself.

Forty two years ago, His Highness Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the late president of the United Arab Emirates (may god have mercy upon him), believed that he and his fellow Sheikhs could found a country that would be peaceful and generous\_towards its citizens. He believed in what he could do, and he succeeded.

Fellow students, when we believe in ourselves, we are already one step closer to reaching our goals. A few years ago, when you and I filled up the AUS application form, we believed that we could get the acceptance letter and we could make it through graduation, and here we are today as graduates. But to get here, we had to make complicated decisions about courses every semester, wait in queues at the cashier to pay tuition fees, deal with quizzes, midterms, finals, projects, not to forget, stress and peer pressure. We went through it all with a belief that we were on our way to success. We are still learning, we are almost there.

In life, it is normal to experience hardships and failure. The American philosopher Amos Alcott once said, "Success is sweet and sweeter if long delayed and gotten through many struggles and defeats". Sometimes we need to fail in order to succeed. J.K. Rowling, the author of Harry Potter series, was rejected by 12 publishers, it was the 13<sup>th</sup> who accepted to publish her first book, saying, however,

that writing for children didn't often lead to success. Rowling believed in herself and the enormous effort she had put into her work, and as we all know she succeeded. Oprah Winfrey received negative criticism, after she had ended her famous show and set up her own network. The criticism upset her for a while, however, she just worked harder because she believed in herself and what she could do. Steve Jobs at some point in his life was fired from the company he himself created, but this did not stop him from pursuing his passion in electronics because he believed in himself and his goals. These knock-backs did not stop Rowling, Winfrey and Jobs from believing in themselves.

After this ceremony, we will all have the anxiety of leaving the familiarity of university. Questions like, "What should I do with my life? Am I going to land a job? Do I want to pursue a graduate degree?" will be running through our heads. This experience can be exhilarating, or sometimes scary. Yet, never stop thinking, working, and most importantly believing in yourselves. We don't live in an idealistic world where we won't experience discouragement. But we can refuse to be discouraged. If we believe in ourselves, no matter what, we will and can strive to overcome any problem after graduation, even in times of economic crisis, or political instability.

We have made it this far, YES we can believe in ourselves.

### **-Responsibility-**

We have also learned the importance of responsibility. The education we received in this university and the capacity for hard work we have developed, gives us a status and a responsibility in society.

Maya Angelou said "When you learn, teach, when you get, give". Today shouldn't be the finishing line, but the beginning of more accomplishments not only for you dear graduates but also for the people around you.

We need to nourish our ambition to serve a purpose in society. We need to contribute in some way, to aim high. This contribution can be through volunteering, raising awareness, working for charities, debating ideas, fighting for equality, inventing a machine, writing a book, making a film. All of this will enrich our lives, and hopefully the lives of others.

With these contributions, some want to make their families proud, some want to make their country proud, and some want millions of people to appreciate their work forever. We, with the knowledge we have and the tools this university has provided us with, are responsible to try and touch other people's lives, and, as clichéd as it sounds, make a difference. It is our time to make a change.

Once again I'd like to thank the network of support all of us were surrounded by, our families and friends. I'm happy that I made friendships I know will last beyond this day here at AUS. Finally, I'm so glad my parents were convinced enough to allow me to study at this university, and had the patience to bear with me, especially my father. "Dad, I did well".

We did it! Class of 2014, proceed to the next step of your journey with belief and responsibility. Good luck and Congratulations!

## Speech 4

يوم التخرج بالعلياء يفتخر ... فيه المآثر والآمال تزدهر

يوم تبسم عنه الدهر وانطلقت ... فيه التباشير والأحلام والفكر

يوم تفتح فيه الزهر مبهجاً ... وأشرق في ربه الشمس والقمر

نهدي التهاني من الأعماق خالصة ... لمن سعوا ونالوا بعزم منها مقتدر

Bismillah Al Rahman Al Rahim.. In the name of Allah, the most Gracious, the most Merciful

Assalamu Alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh,

Your Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Mohammed Al-Qassimi, Member of the Supreme Council of the United Arab Emirates, Ruler of Sharjah, and President of our university; honorable members of the Board of Trustees; Acting Chancellor Dr Thomas Hochstettler; members of faculty and staff; dear parents; distinguished guests; and, not to forget the future ambassadors, my dear friends and graduates.

It's indeed a great honour and privilege to have such a special opportunity to speak on the behalf of all my friends and graduates at this prestigious ceremony. I would like to welcome you all to the graduation ceremony of the American University of Sharjah's class of Fall-2013.

We have arrived at this time of the year, when graduating students don their caps and gowns and arm themselves with a big smile as they march across the stage to receive their degrees. Whether students are finishing up undergraduate or graduate degrees, graduation is an important milestone in every one's learning journey.

16 years ago, a very wise leader said, "Perhaps the first thing we shall start with as we are entering the 21st century is preparing today's youth for tomorrow's challenges. And this can't be achieved unless we arm them with science and knowledge, increase their cultural awareness and enrich their life experiences. By doing so, we are going to have a competent generation that will be able to continue its contributions to build a more developed society and brighter future and to move forward in the way to advance human civilization while extending its friendship ties to the rest of the world." Today, we are not only here to celebrate another graduation of (number) students. We are also here today to salute the new leaders of the future, to praise those who passionately educated them, and to thank the parents and families who supported their aspirations. We stand here today to show the world that we, AUS Graduates, after 15 years of the great leader's vision, have made it a reality as we are holding the torch of knowledge to light our paths

forward to a prosperous future. We are all here today to gratefully celebrate his fulfilled dreams.

That great leader who has always inspired us by his insightful visions is His Highness Sheikh Dr Sultan bin Mohammed Al-Qassimi.

We all had dreams and we all worked very hard to get to this stage today; and now it is the time for us to enjoy the achievements of our hard work and dedication while armed with the belief that we are ready and capable of standing out, of changing, and of leading generations forward. All of this can be achieved because, as the late great leader Nelson Mandela said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." It is today that we can make every sleepless night, every hour spent in the library, every hungry day, and every overwhelming research paper count.

Graduation is not only a celebration; it is actually a milestone in a lifelong pursuit of learning and giving back. One can never over-learn and one can never over-know. As many of us came to AUS from across the globe to seek a better education, we should not stop here as if it is the final station. This is just the beginning of a lifetime journey filled with all the joy, risks, failures, and successes. However, I will not bestow upon us more advices about life, careers, and finding success. This is because life and success can be defined in myriad ways that we will find through this journey.

Fellow Future Ambassadors, from whatever discipline you are in, whether engineering, architecture, business, international studies, or something else, remember that what makes every single one of us unique is the set of experiences we have been through in life. We choose what we want to experience in life and that's how we define ourselves. We all had our special experiences in this outstanding university, beautiful campus and Capital of Islamic Culture, yet we all shared a common experience; the AUS experience. AUS didn't just teach us academic subjects but also taught us determination, hard work, patience, kindness and most importantly the spirit of being involved with the world around us. As part of the AUS experience, this campus has also brought us all under one roof as a multicultural society where we have met new people, made lifetime friendships, and shared our experiences, such as being addicted to Red-Bull and Starbucks.

The opportunities that AUS offers us on and off campus are enriching such as in the Spring- of 2013, I was among six other students who represented the AUS delegation to the National Model United Nations (NMUN) in New York. In this life-changing event, we were awarded an honourable mention though we were the smallest delegation there. Looking back at that experience, I would like to say THANK YOU AUS for enriching our college life with exceptional experiences which have improved our leadership and multicultural skills and have brought out the best in us.

Our life experiences are masterpieces of art. Each one of us draws and colours his/her own masterpiece with all their artistic spirits. Every unique story we have

ever connected with, every inspiring figure we have ever admired, and every puny little thing that we have ever accomplished is what is going to shape our artful lives and destinies. This reminds me of what my sister once said, "People enter and leave our lives but the memories they create are what remain, and they are what we celebrate and embrace." Having said so, graduation does not end here today. It is a process that will go on until the last day of our lives as we will continue to be part of new stories, meet new people, and simply, inspire and be inspired.

At this point, I would like to quote our beloved father and great leader the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan when he said "The education of our people is a great wealth. We are proud of our educated nation because through knowledge and science we will open the horizons of a glorious future." Therefore, we graduates of Fall-2013, are here today to promise that we will carry on his vision and continue our educational journey so that we will be the change that will make our world more prosperous, developed, and peaceful. This graduation is our first step on this thrilling journey. And YES! The FUTURE belongs to US as we have got many more beautiful aspirations to add to our masterpieces.

Lastly, I am sure that you are expecting me to say goodbye to all of you, but, unfortunately, I won't as I really believe that I am going to see you all someday, somewhere, as leading and inspiring figures in our world. I hope your dreams take you to the corners of your smiles, to the highest of your hopes, to the windows of your opportunities, and to the most special places your hearts have ever desired. Do not forget to dream big... And to DO bigger!

"ألف مبروك" = Alf Mabrook"..... "a million congratulations" to the graduating class of Fall-2013 .. you deserve it !

## Speech 5

Good morning,

On behalf of my colleagues, I welcome His Highness, Sheikh Doctor Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qassimi, member of the Supreme Council of the United Arab Emirates, Ruler of Sharjah, Founder and President of the American University of Sharjah. I also welcome the Acting Chancellor, Doctor Thomas Hochstettler, honored members of the Board of Trustees, deans of the colleges, our professors, the administration of this university, and last but not least, parents, students and distinguished guests.

Today, we finally reach the beginning. A beginning we have been preparing for, for many, many years. Few words can describe the grandeur of what is to come. To some, this hour is intimidating, to others, it is an exciting challenge.

I stand before you not as a valedictorian, but as a friend of your daughters, sons and their friends. To represent them, and our time at the American University of Sharjah.

I consider myself to have been extremely fortunate. Always surrounded by the curious and the passionate. We were immersed in an environment that always demanded the best, at times frustrating, but mostly, liberating.

Liberating because we kept finding new frontiers for ourselves. We pushed, doing things we never thought we could do, contemplating thoughts we had never considered before, understanding ideals we never thought we could even fathom.

Almost halfway through my journey at AUS, I realized that is this is how one should carry on. Not staying intellectually comfortable in one place for too long, because I promise, comfort is painfully overrated.

Borrowing the timeless words of Gibran Khalil Gibran, "Verily the lust for comfort murders the passion of the soul, and then walks grinning in the funeral". We are not built to stay put in one place. If we do, we add to the misfortune of the human condition. We are built to adapt, our ultimate survival tool. Staying comfortable for too long will numb the quality on which human development depends.

During our time in AUS, our education went hand in hand with our development. First drafts were destroyed and rewritten, models were rebuilt, deadlines were missed and sleep was ignored. At times, we almost walked away because we thought we couldn't go on, but we surprised those around us and more importantly, we surprised ourselves. We overcame our darkest hours with the thought of standing in this hall one day. Wearing these long black robes, trying to balance these awkward caps.

We must continue to push ourselves, consider thoughts and options we would normally have never welcomed. Doing things we knew, or thought, were beyond our capabilities, only to find out that we could go further. And better. We are how we see ourselves. See yourself in a light that values your mind and, more importantly, your will.

This, is our commencement. The idea of graduation should not take center stage in our subconscious, but the fact that it is a new beginning. This ceremony today in no way signals the end, it is *only* the beginning. One never stops learning, one never stops growing. Our education was not shaped by the standardized test. Our

education was shaped by the mass of opportunities that were presented to us by this university. We have been *wonderfully* fortunate. *Our*, prestigious university has attracted scholars from all corners of the world keen to share their knowledge with us. So please remember those conversations, these people, *their* stories.

No amount of words can express the gratitude we graduates feel. To His Highness, Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qassimi, we thank you for your vision. We thank you for achieving this vision. To our professors, thank you for not only sharing your knowledge, but your stories. Thank you for showing us where the world needs us, and more importantly, for showing us how to serve it. You have been educators, and we will never forget the enlightening conversations we had inside and outside the classroom. Finally, to our mothers, fathers, siblings, and friends. To some, you were far away. Others were next door. But your voice on the end of a telephone often made things better. To you we ran with our joys and sorrows, thank you for accommodating the fluctuations of our journey.

Discovering new frontiers to our existence has always been the driving force behind our development. My friends, my peers, my colleagues, I ask you, look within, because you will find the passion and the will necessary to do whatever you want. You might fail. But you will rise again. My fellow graduates. Life is waiting for us. We might not be fully ready, but one rarely is. I am not. I am scared. But I am not intimidated. I am armed with the idealism that has been embedded within me at AUS.

Do not leave a single cell of your existence unused. You now have the tools to Create. To Imagine. To Work. To Love. To Thank. And most importantly, To Wonder. We are young. We are passionate; and when we leave this hall, we will claim our future.

Ladies and Gentlemen: the graduating class of Spring, 2014.

Thank you

## Speech 6

Bismillah Al Rahman Al Raheem  
Assalm Alaykoum Wa Rahmat Allah Wa Barakatouh

Your Highness Sheik Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qasimi, Member of the Supreme Council of the United Arab Emirates, Ruler of Sharjah, and the President of the American University of Sharjah; honorable members of the Board of Trustees; Acting Chancellor Dr. Thomas Hochstettler; Provost Dr. Malcolm Richards; the deans; department heads; our esteemed faculty members, our beloved parents; distinguished guests; and my fellow graduates sitting proudly here today. On behalf of the Fall 2013 Graduates I would like to welcome you all to the graduation of the American University of Sharjah class of Fall 2013.

Graduation ceremonies have been going on every year all over the world since the 12<sup>th</sup> century. That means for the last thousand years, at the end of their studies, students just like us, put on these medieval flowing robes and these hats with tassels and suddenly realized that the diploma they were being handed was more like a torch or a baton, a kind of symbolic passing of duties from one generation to the next. In other words, the challenges of the world were now *theirs* to fix, not just the problems that grown-ups had to worry about, wrestle with, or work at to fix. Someone just like you, in the last thousand years graduating in Europe or wherever, had the same sort of issues to face as we do: we have violence and wars; they had them too: the 100 years and WW1 & 2 for example; we have outbreaks of disease—bird flu and swine flu; they had disease too: in fact, they faced a really big one--the bubonic plague which must have made students feel more like staying home rather than attending a lecture. We have issues with climate change; and they did too. Europe experienced something called the “little ice age.” We have technological revolutions and new discoveries; and they had them too. We have the computer; they had the printing press. We landed a spaceship on the Moon; the Spanish discovered and landed in the Caribbean. And for sure, we see financial markets rise and fall and speculation bubbles burst. But they did too. We all may remember learning about the tulip mania in Holland in the late 1630s when one tulip bulb—one tulip bulb—was sold for 4500 AED. Now that’s an economic bubble. What I’m driving at is that graduations are the same for everyone: there is excitement mixed with uncertainty; pride and confidence have strengthened the graduate, which is good, but all graduates know that the weight of the work which awaits them will be heavy.

There’s an old joke about an economics professor who says that the questions on his exam are always the same, but each semester the *answers are different*. This joke captures my point: the challenges we graduates face are always the same, but each year the answer to how we approach and deal with our challenges will be different.

So one question we might ask tomorrow is how should we deal with a tough

economy and job market; or how should we get ready for *more school* if we plan to continue in graduate school? The author Bob Gass says that the door of opportunity is always marked *PUSH*. This means if we plan to continue our education, we must continue to push the heavy load of school work; if we plan to pursue a career, it means we must use our energies to push the door of opportunity open rather than just sit back. As AUS graduates, we are lucky. We know how to do this pushing because we have been taught by the best. AUS professors have been *pushing us ahead* since orientation. Of course, pushing is just a way of saying they got us to be pro-active, they stimulated us and inspired us, each in their own way.

Our humanities teachers taught us about the push of poetry, how the beauty of language can push away the ugliness of cliches and bad grammar; how magnificent music can push away the repulsiveness of urban sound; and how the light of logic can push away the darkness of bigotry; our science and engineering professors taught us about the push of life, how the push of capillary action can defy the mighty pull of gravity and send water up toward the highest leaf on the tree. Our philosophy professors taught us to think that maybe push and pull are merely the same thing (in the way that the road up the mountain is the same as the road down), and our physics professors confirmed this idea, showing us that *for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction*. This idea connects to our engineering professors who taught us how the pull of gravity affects buildings; to our business professors who taught us about the push and pull of supply and demand, the rise and fall of markets, and how the desires of consumers push them towards products.

On graduation day, we realize we have so many individuals to thank who have helped us develop the mental strength to push forward in our lives and careers. But as we gather today, we thank them as a whole, for indeed the university is one body. So we thank all those professors who made us laugh, or simplified a difficult concept, or made the material so fascinating that we were surprised that class time was up; and we give even greater thanks to those professors who postponed quizzes and midterms when we asked them to.

I just mentioned that the university is a team, and there is one part of that team that deserves enormous thanks: the librarian staff. Our librarians were not only always there to help us but they were inspiring as well. They spend their entire day with books and academic journals and never look drowsy. They are just as excited about JSTOR and periodicals as students are about Twitter accounts and smart phones. But seriously, the great professors and librarians here really show how all the parts of AUS are united to enhance the learning process and make the university the best in the region.

But everything we have accomplished today, all of our preparation, and all of our memories of AUS, are the result of the hard work and vision of his Highness Sheikh Dr Sultan Al Qassimi. Sheikh Sultan deserves our gratitude for opening this university 17 years ago so that AUS students would be able to push open the doors of opportunity. I want to end by emphasizing that AUS has conditioned us to push forward and approach difficult tasks using the strength of our reason and a spirit of

confidence, not anxiety, not apprehension, just raw optimism, technical know-how, and the willingness to push.

So, despite the challenges that we will face, we, the graduating class of 2014, stand at the doors of opportunity, ready to push. We will have gratitude in our hearts for the people who have prepared us, and we will put our trust in Allah while we push open the doors of opportunity; and we will push those doors--not with drooping arms--but with our shoulder outthrust...like a battering ram.

Thank you

Congratulations to the Class of Fall 2013