

Jwan Sarbast Kittani
Commencement Speech
The American University of Iraq, Sulaimani
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Dear honoured guests,

Good evening, I would like to start by firstly thanking all the people who have collectively helped in making this university come into being. If it were not for you, we would not all be here today.

Five years ago, the class of 2013 started with our journey at AUIS. We started this journey with feelings of confusions and wonders about whether we made the right choice to come to this university and study in little portable cabins! Every morning started with a humble happy greeting from Mam Osman, the farmer whom we all have come to consider as a precious asset of AUI-S. We would always be met with the beautiful smell of roses and grass that he used to water every day.

This university taught us what was outside our comfort zone and made them become our comfort zone. We learned how to support and help others while helping ourselves; we learned how to work in teams; how to never give up and most importantly to believe in ourselves. We are very lucky and proud that we had the chance to start when the university was small as it gave us the opportunity to witness and experience the success and growth of this university. We are also so proud of all the students who started with average English and who are now the ones running newspapers, organising events, participating in exchange programs, and who are working while studying just to improve their knowledge and get experience.

The feeling I get when I walk into a place and see an AUIS student working there is so great. It brings back all the amazing memories and refreshes my energy to work harder and harder.

After this wonderful event, we will all walk away carrying with us not only the knowledge and experience we gained at AUIS, but also the bittersweet memories. I hold so many memories of many complaints about homework, memories of sadness when we said goodbye to other graduates, memories of happiness when we received high grades or heard that tomorrow is a day off and memories of joy and support that we all backed each other up when AUIS students played basketball and soccer against other teams. However, these memories will leave in each one of us the will to move on to the next step because AUIS empowered us to go out there, face the world and take our chances.

We can't believe that this day has finally arrived. We prayed that it would come quickly, counted down the days but now that it is here, I am left with a little sadness. Sad to leaving my friends and teammates who inspire me, teachers who have been my mentors and friends who have helped shaped my life.

I am equally excited, however, to start the next chapter in our lives. Nothing is out of reach if we work hard for it as we learned how to think outside the box and become more self-confident about making our dreams come true. Pursue your dreams about being big and become big. Let us not call ourselves future leaders over and over, instead, let us begin being leaders now so we grow to become even better leaders in the future.

To conclude, I would like to mention that I wouldn't have made it without the support of my instructors, family, friends and my basketball team and to all of you I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Thank You all, enjoy the rest of the evening, and I wish every one of you the best of luck to a future full of success!