

AUD GRADUATION CLASS OF 2020

Held on October 16, 2021

Dr. David A. Schmidt | AUD President

Speech

Welcome (commencement speaker), distinguished guests, AUD Governing Board, faculty, staff, and of course, students and parents.

To those of you joining us virtually and to those of you here with us this evening, welcome to the beautiful campus of The American University in Dubai.

To the AUD Class of 2020, Welcome Back Home.

For many of you, this is indeed a homecoming. During spring break of March 2020, the first full impact of the Pandemic struck and most of you were unable to return to campus to finish up your remaining weeks. So, once again, welcome back for this special Homecoming.

I will begin formally with a continuation of tradition.

My predecessor, Dr. Lance Di Masi, who presided over this auspicious event for 19 years once said,

“Commencement, the **end** and the **beginning** fills this bittersweet moment.”

Poignant and insightful.

Today, marks the **end** of one phase and the **beginning** of another. Bittersweet indeed, challenging and also exciting.

You, collectively and individually, know much about challenge. What you have passed through and endured has left an indelible mark on your AUD journey. Your grit, your tenacity, your

endurance and your courage in weathering the Pandemic, and continuing to do so, has demonstrated that you are indeed,...amazing.

And, what I have observed, is that you are discerning. Much like why you selected AUD for its tradition of academic excellence, you did not settle for a virtual graduation. You waited, you provided counsel and support to us as AUD navigated the Pandemic and you never lost sight of what you wanted. This is admirable and sets you apart.

I am assured you will all have the same determination and wisdom moving forward. Life is full of unexpected surprises and challenges. We are proud to have been a part of your journey.

Today's ceremony, whereby we mark the **end** of your AUD journey and the **beginning** of a new journey, allows us to realize that, like all stages of life, we are never alone. In the reflection of these moments, and in particular, the reflection of **our** accomplishments, we realize that we are supported by those who love us and who believe in us.

From the moment that your parents first held you and felt that overwhelming and all-consuming unconditional love to the moment they now find themselves, in the audience, filled with that sentimental pride of suddenly realizing that you are adults, adults who have accomplished so much.

Nothing grand or truly meaningful is accomplished alone. We as individuals are the sum total of our experiences. These experiences are with those we are blessed enough to encounter in life, to learn from, to love and be loved by. And in times of crisis, it is more than ever apparent that we are stronger together than we are alone.

To pillars of support in your lives, continue to make them proud and continue to pay it forward. Continue to appreciate and acknowledge the love and support they have given you.

I would be remiss if I did not recognize the essential support of your time, your accomplishment, here at AUD. The heart, that is the embodiment, of the AUD mission, the AUD faculty.

Please, an appreciative hand for the faculty of The American University in Dubai.

Hopefully what I say now will resonant and be reminiscent of words you heard when you first joined AUD, remain creative, remain engaged, remain humble and reflective, remain true to yourself and who you have developed into during your time with us, remain appreciative, pay it forward and continue to be amazing.

Congratulations AUD class of 2020.