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**The American University in Dubai  
Eleventh Commencement Exercises**

**Speech by Ali Said Jamaledine  
Valedictorian, Class of 2008  
May 19, 2008**

*Bismillah Al Rahman Al Raheem. Al Salam alaykum wa rahmat Allah w barakatuh.*

Your Highness, Secretary Spellings, AUD administration, faculty, and staff, Ladies and gentlemen. Good Evening...

Class of 2008: Congratulations for making it all the way.

I am not searching for something to say. Rather, I am wondering how I can compress all this year's rich experiences and latest milestones into a few brief sentences. In the short period since its founding in 1995, the university, like the Emirate of Dubai, has experienced near constant change.

For over a week, I have been running around screaming excitedly, "I am finally done!! It is finally over." However, for the past hour, I could not help but question myself repeatedly: Is it really over? Are we really done?

Four years ago, we came to AUD ready to live the much acclaimed "best years of our lives". Our backgrounds differed. Our reasons varied. We began to share... Like the moments when we jumped high after acing an exam, or finishing a project, or the moments when we doubted we would make it. University life has planted memories in us that will never fade.

Most important have been the people. They were the most influential factor in our overall experience. First and foremost, Your Highness, Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum. Your vision pushed us further and higher. You offered us help through your scholarships - an opportunity and a reason to excel. I know because I have received one. Thank you, your Highness, for your generosity and trust.

Our beloved faculty and staff... Our relatives and friends... Thank you for putting up with us all these years and thank you for believing in us.

This leaves me with you Mom and Dad. Every single parent who may still see us as children. Guess what? We are children no more. Today, we are men and women; and we truly have evolved. No words can ever express our gratitude. But on behalf of the Class of 2008, I say this: the number one reason for us reaching here, after God's blessings, is you Mom. It is you Dad.

To every one who shared these moments with us, thank you for all your love and support. You have impacted us greatly and will continue to do so for years to come.

Today, our time at AUD comes to an end. This brings me back to my question: Is it really over? No, it is not because we have a new responsibility. The journey is just beginning...

This responsibility starts today and lasts for the rest of our lives. As we charge forward towards the real world that awaits us, all we are obligated to carry a message. Independent of the choices we make today or the paths we choose tomorrow, this message must be heard. As of tomorrow, we are ambassadors. We represent his

Highness's vision. We represent this university's mission. We represent our dreams for a better tomorrow. And most importantly, we represent the hope of all of you.

We must live up to the lessons of our past and the expectations of our future. The so-called "best years" have prepared us for this very moment. We have made mistakes. We have stumbled. We have struggled. But are we ready? Of course, standing here is proof. We are ready to take on this huge responsibility: to live up to your expectations and our own expectations of ourselves.

Ladies and gentlemen, 400 graduates will walk away today but make no mistake, our success stories will come knocking on your doors soon enough. Be forever proud of us like you are proud of us now. On behalf of the Class of 2008, I promise you excellence. I promise you achievements. I promise you success.

Once again, congratulations to the Class of 2008. Let our success stories begin now and let them honor all that AUD and our families have given us.

Thank you.