

## Commencement Speech by Alexis Arsenault

### **“Someday is Today”**

My fellow graduates of the class of 2014:

I would like to start by expressing my sincerest congratulations to each of you. I’m not sure everyone fully appreciates the fact that not only are you receiving a prestigious diploma today, but also that you are awake, alive, and not at all hung over at 9 a.m. on a Saturday. Today is full of first-time accomplishments.

Naturally, I’ve been thinking a lot about my time at AU recently, and all of the things that I will remember about my time here. We’ve each had unique experiences, but in our time here, we may also share some memories. We may remember the Rally to Restore Sanity on the National Mall in 2010, waking up at 4 a.m. to watch the Royal Wedding, standing outside the White House the night Osama Bin Laden was killed, the east-coast earthquake of 2011, election day in 2012, and the government shutdown in 2013, to name a few.

Or we may simply remember more personal aspects of AU: late night runs to the Eagle’s Nest during finals, getting lost the first time you went inside the Berks, standing in line for rides to parties on the LA Quad as freshmen, or maybe just the accomplishment of the first time you discovered where the chemistry building is. And need I even mention that we were the first class to have four full years of the WONK Campaign?

Through my senior year, I’ve tried to pin down what exactly makes an AU student... an AU student. We may not have much school spirit in the traditional sense at AU, but there is one distinct characteristic that makes up an AU Eagle. And it’s no secret; it’s passion. You can see it everywhere. It’s actually a little intimidating, honestly, at least to someone like me. Because

everyone here – or almost everyone here – seems to know exactly what they’re passionate about.

I feel privileged to have been a part of a community that fosters that passion, but if you’re like me, maybe you’re not sure you’ve found that one thing that defines you. Well, I think that’s okay. Because searching for that passion leads us to experiences we never expected. So, let’s never stop searching for new passions, and always be open to new ideas. Don’t be discouraged by the big, scary world. Be the one who changes it. Because that is what makes an AU student.

Sometimes, I think we’re waiting for our lives to begin. We see everything in phases. Elementary school, middle school, high school, college... We think of our lives as chapters in a book. We’re always looking forward to someday—the next step—the next chapter. We say, “one day,” I’ll do this, and “someday” I’ll do that. When I was younger, I looked forward to my “Sweet Sixteen,” to driving a car, to graduating high school. As I got older, I looked forward to the first day of college, starting an internship, and... well, you can’t tell me we didn’t all mark off our calendars to count down to our 21st birthdays. And I think eventually, we’ll probably all be looking forward to retirement. But, my point is, sometimes we’re looking so far into the future to see what the next step is, we forget the importance of the one we’re on. We don’t realize that the significant moments of our lives are happening right now.

I’m not really a Shakespeare person, but there is a quote from Julius Caesar that resonated with me: “There is a tide in the affairs of men, which taken at the flood, leads on to fortune; omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and miseries. On such a full sea are we now afloat, and we must take the current as it serves, or lose our ventures.” I was never very good at understanding Shakespeare, but I think that quote is relevant to us today.

We will not be the communicators, the leaders, the innovators, the change-makers... someday. We can be those people today. Our dreams can't come true... someday. Our dreams can come true today. Our lives won't change... someday. Our lives are changing today.

I know it's horribly cliché, but life is short. And we must take the current as it serves; we must embrace our opportunities of all kinds and embrace change—or we will fail by default. So, start being the person you've always wanted to be... today. After all, you are an AU graduate... today.

Being an AU graduate does not just mean we will take with us wonderful memories, but also that we will take with us skills we have learned from our distinguished professors and rigorous classes that will help us for years into our futures. We will take with us an academic experience that will help us pursue the goals we set long ago, and the goals we are just now realizing we'd like to accomplish. We will take with us impressive resumes filled with internships, student activities, and leadership roles, and topped with a Bachelor's degree from the School of Communication. It is now our responsibility and our privilege to take with us everything we have learned at American University, and go forth into the world. The last four years may only be one chapter in our lives, but it is a chapter that I will cherish, and I hope you will too. And I think our AU chapter will influence the entire rest of the book.

When I left for college freshman year, I had a friend say to me, "Just remember—this is what you've been dreaming of." Well, here I am, four years later, telling you: this is what I've been dreaming of. Our lives are happening. Right here. Right now.

I know a lot of us are worried about the future. It's a scary world out there. But I think most of the time, the greatest experiences, the greatest achievements, the greatest rewards—probably come from doing the things that scare us. At least, that's what they keep telling me.

So here is my only advice to you... Find your passion, work hard, embrace change, be kind, and live a life you're proud of. And I think the rest will fall into place. Remember to take the current as it serves, that someday can be today, and that “this is what you've been dreaming of.”

My fellow graduates, I wish you the best this world has to offer, and a lifetime filled with happiness. Congratulations, class of 2014.