



# President Office

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## President of American University of Europe

Prof. Dr. Raymond Akiki



### Prof. Dr. Raymond Akiki's Speech on the graduation ceremony for the class 2022-2023, held at AUE.

Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed faculty members, proud parents, and most importantly, the brilliant graduates of the American University of Europe,

It is with great honor and privilege that I stand before you today as the President of this prestigious institution, celebrating this momentous occasion – your commencement. This marks a pivotal point in your lives, a culmination of years of hard work, dedication, and relentless pursuit of knowledge. Today, we come together not only to honor your achievements, but to celebrate the limitless potential that lies ahead.

As you embark on this new chapter, remember that you are the embodiment of the ideals and values that define the American University of Europe. You have been nurtured in an environment that values diversity, fosters innovation, and encourages critical thinking. You have engaged in rigorous academic pursuits that have not only equipped you with knowledge, but have also honed your analytical abilities and instilled in you a passion for lifelong learning.

The world into which you are stepping is one of both unprecedented challenges and boundless opportunities. We are living in a time of rapid technological advancement, global interconnectivity, and complex societal issues. It is a world that demands adaptable thinkers, empathetic leaders, and ethical decision-makers. It is a world that needs you.

As you venture forth, remember the power that education holds – the power to shape minds, transform lives, and create positive change. Carry the lessons you have learned here, not just from textbooks, but from the diverse perspectives of your fellow classmates, the engaging discussions in classrooms, and the moments of self-discovery that have shaped your personal growth.

Embrace failure as a stepping stone to success. Every setback is an opportunity to learn, to refine your approach, and to demonstrate resilience. Your journey will be marked by trials and tribulations, but remember that greatness is often born from adversity.

Never underestimate the impact of your actions, no matter how small they may seem. In a world that can sometimes feel overwhelming, the smallest acts of kindness, compassion, and understanding can create ripples of positive change that extend far beyond your immediate sphere.

Take the time to listen and understand those whose perspectives differ from your own. The ability to engage in civil discourse, to bridge divides, and to find common ground is a skill that can shape the trajectory of nations.

And, as you chase your dreams, do not forget to give back. Use your talents, your knowledge, and your influence to uplift those less fortunate. Remember that a life well-lived is not solely measured by personal success, but by the positive impact you have on the lives of others.

As you leave the halls of the American University of Europe and step out into the world, remember that you are not alone. You are now part of a vast network of alumni who have come before you, and who are ready to support and guide you on your journey.

So, graduates, go forth and be the leaders, the innovators, the advocates, and the change-makers that our world so desperately needs. Be bold in your pursuits, compassionate in your actions, and unwavering in your commitment to creating a better future for all.

Congratulations, Class of 2022-2023! The American University of Europe is immensely proud of you, and we cannot wait to see the incredible mark you will make on this world.

Thank you.

### Welcome to the start of our new Academic Year (2020-2021) and the Fall Semester together

A lot of thinking during the current year reshaped our university's history. In a time when The American University of Europe, and all the Macedonian higher education, face unprecedented challenges and the need to adapt and change, I find it important to look to the future rather than the history of this remarkable university.

Some of the things we need to address and do this year are very difficult...

I am still here not because I haven't had opportunities to leave and not because there aren't places without the challenges we face. I am here because I believe in you despite the abhorring resistance I faced. I believe in AUE, and I believe in our mission. I am here because I know that we can and will come together to do whatever is needed to transform peoples' lives. And make this lovely country progress in Global educational standards and grant sufficient international opportunities to our students and attendees...

So, let's get to it. I think you know that I'm an optimist by nature and that I like to emphasize the positive, but today I must be candid and direct about where we are and what we need to do.

I think you know the basics.

AUE's enrollment is improving and on the rise.... Students in our key service areas, in N. Macedonia, and across the region, have declined, leading to fewer new high school graduates and fewer mid-career professionals that need our undergraduate and graduate programs. The competition for these students is intense and some colleges and universities are mortgaging their futures to get enough students to keep their doors open today.

Demographic projections show that the decline in new high school graduates will slow for a couple of years but will accelerate after 2025. However, the promise to globalize and increase the quality standards will bridge this gap and allow the American University of Europe to make its move towards its promise of ranking as promised to the enlightened leaders of this beloved country. AUE is the only institution in North Macedonia who has the chance to make it to the top universities' list. And on that, I am adamant and real.

The challenges are high and the work is enormous. No promises for easy professional work in either administrative or academic positions will be made this year. Our promise is only oriented towards quality standards and students' future and promises. Only the righteous will gain. And only the truth will prevail.

The current pandemic and the laws of this country will make our stride very hard... But our investors namely Titanium Capital, the founders, and a hoard of friends and supporters namely prominent statesmen are indeed sufficient and adequate to proceed the right way- only forward.

It's important to note that the price to attend AUE is still much less than the name-brand and the universities with which we compete—universities that provide an educational experience not better than AUE.

It would be nice if there were a single cause or a simple solution, but there just isn't. There are those externally and some among us who like to say otherwise. You know the sort of things out there. If only the state provided some funding for AUE. If only our society valued higher education like they once did.

Wouldn't it be nice if it were that simple? But the situation is complex. If there were easy answers, we wouldn't need to have this discussion.

Minutes ago, I said I would be candid and direct. I am sorry if the reality depressed you. But before you give up, remember what else I said. I am here because I know that we can come together to do whatever is needed to transcend the constraints and challenges. I know we can do the right thing for our students. We just can't do that without a clear understanding of what these constraints and challenges are. The determination requires placing our students at the center of our thinking, our decision making, and our actions.

The good news is that we are already doing many of the right things—taking action and making changes, both large and small...

Our bold commitment towards reorganization and reshaping is bringing extra, focused support to all of our students, particularly those who are most vulnerable. It also provides a customer-friendly model and an extraordinary experience designed for undecided students. It removed barriers and the stigma of being uncertain about the future. We now call those students explorers, not undecided.

Departments are finding innovative ways to help students — new programs are introduced like the Physiotherapy and the Food Industry; faculty using now validated course materials and open sources to keep both textbooks costs down and quality high... Our new focus on student retention, commitment to world sustainability, constant innovation, and market connected and evolving programs will protect both the students' career and market evolution. I could go on and on and on about the good work.

We have been gently and incrementally building the new AUE, working to reduce our expenses to bring them more in line with the size of our current student body. It is now imperative that we harness all this good thinking, creativity, energy, and action to focus and dramatically accelerate our progress forward.

System Redesign is moving to a place where AUE has, for the first time, a chance to determine its destiny, but we must be accountable for the results of our decisions and success.

We will relentlessly review the outcomes, cost, effectiveness, and mission centrality of all academic and nonacademic programs and locations. Not all programs can continue, at least in their current form. We will review the curriculum to look for ways to renew, share, and increase effectiveness. We will place those that aren't performing into the moratorium because we can afford to offer only programs that students both need and want. We will constantly devise ways to improve our curricular experience so that we can say with conviction that we consistently demonstrate student-friendliness.

Times change. Methods change. But we can do this today just as those who came before us have done it.

I want you to be proud of the work you do every day. Know that I am. Our work here centers around students growing into the best versions of themselves. Not allowing them to fall through the cracks. Not going easy on them academically, but not allowing them to flounder, either. I'm talking about tough love.

To Miami University, a big thanks and a bigger promise. Tomorrow is ours. Together we will help global sustainability, prosperity, diversity, and peace... Two institutions committed will prevail.

**I want to leave you with some parting inspiration as well as my best wishes for a strong start to this new academic year.**

**Your President,**

Prof. Dr. Raymond Akiki



**AUE offers admission information sessions and student-led tours to different locations**

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