

Being a Graduate of the College of Health & Human Services at George Mason University

It is indeed a great honor to be a graduate of our college on this special day. This commencement ceremony celebrates the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our university. I look around here today on this beautiful sight with lots of color and trees in full bloom; on this joyful occasion for all of us because it marks the culmination of many years of hard work and study.

I come from Lebanon, the land of the Cedars and the Phoenicians who invented the first alphabet. I did my undergraduate in Biology at the American University of Beirut, a highly reputable university in the Middle-East where I enjoyed American style education while living and growing in my own culture and tradition.

Living in Lebanon during the war, and struggling to study in Beirut under severe conditions, made me focus primarily on the health field. I became aware that the health and safety problems had many different causes: ethical, social, public, educational, and economic. My dream was to continue my graduate studies in the field of health sciences at an American school that would provide me with an understanding of the larger sociopolitical and economic environment of which the health system is a major part. I wanted a program that would help develop my leadership skills so I prepare myself to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of health.

Coming to the States, I looked at many universities to see where I could pursue my graduate studies in a program that would really satisfy my needs. When I walked around George Mason's campus, I noticed a large diversity in the student body. I was especially impressed when I saw the statue of George Mason with the wonderful logo: "Declaration of rights: Freedom and Learning." These words were so powerful and touched my heart deeply!

I felt very welcomed at the university because everyone was caring and supportive whether at the admission office, the student affairs, or the academic team. They were all very supportive and eager to help students and stimulate them. This warm ambiance made me feel at home away from home. I realized that this is the place where my dreams will be fulfilled.

GMU has been a real turning point in my life. I have met people from all over the world with different cultures, perceptions, religions, and languages yet they all seek one goal: make changes for a better world. GMU is the intellectual and cultural nexus between the USA and the whole world. The geographic location of GMU makes it so special. As it is located close to the metropolitan area, GMU attracts students from different regions and cultures seeking knowledge, education, and expertise.

Nowadays, education is a resource which can be used globally, especially with all the changes in the world such as wars, labor markets, technical advancements and many others. I believe that education is like an instrument. That instrument, when used properly and constructively, combined with a person with a sense of commitment and responsibility, leads to constructive actions for a better world. GMU reinforces my belief.

Studying at George Mason makes learning exciting and joyful. Education in the College of Health and Human Services stimulates us to implement, serve, and help humanity live a better life! Teachers bring real facts and life experiences into our classroom by sharing personal experiences, by inviting special guest speakers from around the world, and by allowing peer communication so we can also learn from each other's knowledge.

Grace Breidy  
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After completing the courses, we are now completely aware that our world, rich & poor, developed & underdeveloped, is connected by all means: trade, economics, health, diseases. We live in a world where health issues can become global crises. There is an urgent need to work together to solve these problems and to make a better future. Therefore, empowerment of people through education has the potential to create a more equitable, sustainable, and stable future.

GMU promotes our intellectual growth, not only academically, but also on a personal level, by stimulating our talents and intelligence in different fields and areas: emotional, social, cultural and artistic.

Our advisor and teachers relate to us on a personal basis: Dr Lisa Pawloski supported me with advice and guidance throughout my studies, even while she was far away in Thailand. She came with all her family to watch me represent my country, Lebanon, at the World Bank during the Celebrations of Cultures. She videotaped my performance and subsequently showed it to the class: I was so touched!!!

Professor Lorraine Rudowski also came to attend this event. She visited me several times during my internship at the World Bank. Due to the knowledge I acquired from her course, I got my job at the World Bank in Health, Nutrition, and Population in the Middle-East and North Africa Region. Our college opens many doors for us: Many of my colleagues are working in PAHO, WHO and other International Organizations.

We are extremely grateful to all our teachers and professors for all their continuous assistance and support.

We are honored to be graduate students of GMU because it is a center of inquiry, knowledge, and professional expertise in fields with vital implications for the future. George Mason University helped us to accomplish our goals due to its highly international academic reputation for providing superior education that develops critical, analytical, and imaginative thinking. The future beckons with all its hidden surprises and we must take it up with an ambitious heart and adventurous soul. Now we are on our own! Independent, truthful, risk-taking, and confident- we must be true "individuals" in our own rights. Our life is out in the open, ready to meet the unknown. Treasuring friends and befriending foes, we will climb up the ladder of life and embark on new adventures each day! We will embrace life with all its surprises, keeping hope and always looking forward!

Finally, I want to express my deep appreciation and my congratulations to all the parents gathered here today. Without you we could not make it! I want to especially thank my mom, who came from Lebanon to attend my graduation ceremony.

I want to thank our dean Dr. Shirley S. Travis, all our advisors, professors, teachers and administrative staff.

Thank you all

Thank you George Mason University

God bless you all

God bless America