Sanjida Afrin
Bachelor of Arts in Economics, 2017

Sanjida Afrin was selected by her fellow graduates to speak on their behalf at the Commencement Ceremony. An avid scholar and volunteer in many areas of student engagement at AUW, Sanjida embodies the intent and mission of AUW to nurture talent and high motivation in young women who go on to become leaders, effective professionals, and service-oriented citizens. As President of the AUW Photography Club, Sanjida has organized events and exhibitions to promote women’s artistic contributions. As a photography enthusiast, she has also supported off-campus photography exhibitions and competitions. Sanjida gained first-hand experience of the professional world through her placements at AIA Life Insurance in Hong Kong as a group channel marketing intern and at Li&Fung Bangladesh Limited as a corporate services and administration intern. She was also involved with Teach for Bangladesh as an intern and campus ambassador with the aim of engaging young people in her community for the cause of providing quality education to underprivileged children.

Distinguished guests, family, faculty and fellow students, a very good afternoon to all of you. On behalf of the class of 2017, batch Invictus, I would like to welcome you all to the 5th Commencement ceremony of the Asian University for Women. Congratulations my dear friends, and thank you for nominating me to speak on behalf of the class of 2017.

Today is an exciting day because today we can finally call ourselves graduates. Think about how far we have come, individually and as a class. Looking back, it feels like just yesterday that we attended our first class, joined our first club meeting and wrote our first research paper. It is very surprising how 5 years went by so fast and have bestowed us with the honor of becoming university graduates. We made it!

I remember the very first day when I came into AUW: I had doubts about having to share a dorm with people from so many different backgrounds. To my pleasant surprise, in only a few days, my doubt was displaced by pride - pride about this institution, about this community that taught us that it is not socio-cultural class that defines a person. It is the choice that she makes for her community and her society that defines her.

During the last 5 years, I have celebrated Lunar New Year, Nowruz, Songkran, Halloween, and innumerable occasions that I have never known before. I fell in love with the cultural dresses and cuisines from different countries right here at AUW. I have friends who prefer noodles over rice, friends who speak such fluent Bangla that people barely recognize that they are not from Bangladesh, friends who debate whether gender is socially constructed or embedded, friends who tend to be provocative during debates on world politics and religion. Living within AUW has
made me realize that we may not have similar food habits, language, religion, beliefs and ideologies, but we have developed tolerance and respect towards each other's cultures and communities which is common to us all!

At AUW, you will never run out of inspiration from the people around you, may it be your senior sisters, classmates or your juniors, to the latest addition to the AUW family, our pathways to promise sisters whose thirst for education inspires many. My favorite street philosopher and rapper, Beyoncé, once said “who runs the world? Girls!” and we the class of 2017 have proved her statement right both academically and in our extracurricular activities. AUW has inspired us to question and break gender barriers not restricting our lives as women.

This would not have been possible without you, our wonderful faculty, who have constantly challenged us with new ideas and theories and inspired us to use our knowledge to emerge as empowered and ethical leaders who will contribute to their communities and societies. Thank you!

I would like to thank the Vice Chancellor and Dean for supporting us and putting their best efforts to provide us an outstanding academic experience. Thank you also to all the AUW staff for your unfailing dedication to us, the students. We are proud to be graduating in the presence of so many notable individuals who have come from all over the world, distinguished women leaders and friends of AUW. Thank you for being here with us today. Last but not least, I would like to thank the founding members of AUW and the AUW Support foundation for this unique educational experience and opportunity created for women across Asia.

Many challenges await us out in the world beyond AUW but i am sure that as ethical leaders we will strive to be the very best: passionate and uncompromising in our commitment to break stereotypes, cultural barriers and build lifelong friendships. Congratulation my fellow graduates and friends and may each of us become the role model to inspire, aspire and educate!