



**All-School Meeting Opening Remarks from
Student Council President Phevos Paschalidis
September 2, 2020**

Hello all,

As Mr. Kolovos just mentioned, my name is Phevos Paschalidis, President of BUA's Student Council. I hope all of you are safe and well, and that you were able to enjoy your summers in some capacity.

To the returning sophomores, juniors, and seniors, I am truly thankful that in just 24 hours many of us will be back in the BUA building, seeing the top half of each other's faces again. I want to start by welcoming the new freshman class to our school. We are all so excited you decided to join us, and I am sure that in the coming days and weeks you will witness first hand all the things we love about BUA, from the amazing faculty, to the resource-filled BU campus, to our warm and caring community.

As a brief introduction for those who do not know me, I am an avid soccer fan, though of a team I am sure none of you have heard of. I am also a musician, I play violin and some of my fondest memories are of Dr. A's chamber orchestra. Among many other things, I am also a BUA tour guide.

As I am sure you remember, at the end of BUA tours, we stop in the lobby and share, briefly, why we chose BUA. It is a part of the tour that I have recited dozens of times, memorizing each word, each pause, and each inflection. After I would finish talking about the expertise of our faculty and the freedom granted by the BU connection, my partner, Nishita, would then give her own reason for coming, sharing stories of our close-knit community.

Though I have always believed in community, its true power was only revealed in its absence. The spring was a hard time for us all. As the days of quarantine wore on, my motivation and my focus faltered. These attributes, which I had always believed to be personal, defined by who I am and, perhaps, my experiences as a young kid, faded as Zoom calls replaced class discussions and group chats replaced relaxing in the QSR. I have always loved the BUA community, but never understood how far it reached into defining us and changing us even as 16 and 17-year olds.

In a school in which many of our paths diverge as upperclassmen, it is still our community, our teachers and our peers, that continue to propel us forward in more ways than we had realized.

I am grateful that we, unlike many of our peer schools, will reopen this semester. Our in-person and hybrid interactions will strengthen this community, and thus strengthen each of us in turn. We therefore owe it to the others who have given us so much to remain diligent in following the guidelines BUA and BU have put forth so that we can protect each other and remain open.

Just as important, we owe it to this community to support each other mentally and emotionally as all of us return to the demanding academics of our BU and BUA schedules. As we try to keep our school open, forsaking the large gatherings and sports games that once offered balance to our lives, many of us may find ourselves struggling to remain motivated, or, much more importantly, happy. When that time comes, know that your classmates, your peers, and yes, even your student representatives are ready to listen. When that time comes I expect us to lift each other up in the way only friends can. I am certain that together we can make this a great semester and a great year.