

Hey Class of 2024!

First off, welcome to the University of Virginia community! Whether you are on Grounds or in your hometown this semester, you have just entered a time of personal growth, of education, and of building relationships. I remember as a low-income and out-of-state student myself, I was so nervous on my first day at UVA. I had never been to Virginia, knew no one at UVA, and had no idea how to manage college level courses. However, here I am today a Lawn resident, published research author, and passionate student. First year, certainly can be difficult, trying to adjust, make new friends, and maintain good grades. I certainly acknowledge the added hardships of entering college during this difficult time, due to the pandemic and the social injustice occurring in this country. However, I want to ensure you know that you are not alone. You have a vital role to play at UVA and we are so excited you are here. I have the utmost confidence that your class will prove to be the most resilient, hardworking, and equity-advocating group yet at UVA. And I, for one, am so excited to see the amazing things you will go on to accomplish.

Reflecting upon my own UVA experience, I would love to give you some brief words of advice. **One:** embrace this experience. This is your time to learn, grow, make mistakes, find passions, and become the person you were meant to be. Truly, there is so much to be said about your time outside the classroom. I can confidently say I have learned the most from deep conversations with peers and from my extracurricular involvements, like Hoos First look and Class Council. UVA is simply a flawed institution but the way you carve space for yourself here and make this experience your own is what makes it so powerful. **Two:** You are only as good as your failures. Throughout my time at UVA, it was so easy to get caught up in the competitive culture around me, searching for internships, applying for exclusive clubs, and striving for the highest achievements. While all these are admirable goals, it is SO important to remember that for every success someone boasts about there are dozens of failures. We have a tendency as a community to not talk about that club we didn't get into or that job we didn't get, but truly failure is so normal. I'm confident that my list of missteps at UVA is longer than my list of accomplishments, and I am thankful for it. I learned from each and every one of those experiences and you will certainly learn from your own. **Three:** find what you love. This last advice isn't an easy one. Truly it has taken me till my last year in college to really know what I am passionate about and where I see my career path heading. But by keeping it in the back your mind, you can guide yourself through your time at UVA toward a passionate, fulfilling life. I am so excited for you on this journey!

Even though this year will undoubtedly look different from previous ones, there is still a lot to look forward to at UVA! I am wishing you the most luck, safety, and reassurance as you continue on with your first-year. Feel free to reach out to me at bld2cm@virginia.edu. I am always here to offer any guidance I can or even serve as another friendly face around Grounds. Here's to an amazing year!

Sincerely,

Brielle Dotson, Class of 2021