

Hello, Class of 2024!

Welcome to the University of Virginia. Your experience here will likely be different than you imagined. Your experience will be different than the experience of your peers, and your experience will be different than that of the classes that came before you. Embrace these differences. Personally, I have had multiple professors mention how good their classes are in person. Don't allow yourself to fall into this trap. Move beyond how things were in the past. Instead, leverage the current differences to your advantage. Use your facemask to express yourself, enjoy the new outdoor spaces, or join a class from your location of choice.

Whether you are in Charlottesville or not, put forth the effort to make connections and be involved. Whether it is a Runk lunch or a Zoom lunch with people from a class, a club, or dorm the small steps add up. UVA offers a lot of different opportunities. As you are starting your journey, explore them. When I say opportunities, I truly mean in the broadest sense. The opportunity to join a club, to take a specific class, to study in the Rotunda, to watch a basketball game, to meet a company at a career fair, to see a world class musician perform, to take a summer class, to perform cutting edge research, to study in the amphitheater, or to just talk with a professor. Think about which opportunities you might want to take advantage of and set goals to do so. Expect the plan to change, but start thinking about it now. Many of these opportunities are unique to where you are and can't be replicated elsewhere. There are so many things to look forward to during the next few years. Don't let them just pass you by.

During my time at UVA, some of my greatest memories are because of the student organizations I am a part of. Such as a weekend racing with Cycling at the University of Virginia, or staying up far to late watching a debate with the Washington Literary Society and Debating Union. Join as many clubs as you are interested in, but don't be afraid of saying no and stepping back from most. Time is limited and being able to get very involved with a few clubs is better than being slightly involved in a lot of clubs.

An extra word of advice: Search out passionate professors. Some of the best classes I have taken were taught by professors who were not academics by trade, but instead had a passion that brought them to teaching as a second career.

This semester will not be easy, but they rarely are. Remain confident in your ability to persevere and make it past the difficulties. Don't be afraid to reach out to the resources available to you and ask for the help you need. If there is anything I, a random 4th year, can do to help, feel free to get in touch.

Good luck with the year!

Tilden Winston

tw8rt@virginia.edu