

Hello to the newest class at UVA!

While I remember my first year fondly, there were no doubt struggles in finding my fit. So many things to try, so many people to meet, how could I possibly find the time? It was decently intimidating to socialize with strangers who were older than me, people who seem to already have it all figured out. Especially since many social organizations have rush-type processes where I was worried if I was outgoing or fun enough to make it to the next level. And classes, despite working my tail off, often left me feeling overwhelmed and like I was underperforming. It was a lot to handle coming straight out of high school, separated from my best friends. Now, if you were to go back in time and tell me that I not only had to work through all of that, but do it via video chats amidst a global pandemic? I'd turn and run the other way. But you guys are not running away. You are taking it head on, and it is admirable. You are doing what's right, tempting as it may be to jump straight into the social experiences that exemplify the classic college lifestyle. It reassures me that UVA will be better than I leave it, endured by a class defined by their tenacity and sense of communal respect. Simply by being here, you are proving you belong here.

When UVA finds itself back to normal, I assure you it will hold in store amazing memories and relationships you will take with you forever. I can already tell that the friends I made by joining Trigon Engineering Society will be my friends for life. I remember how incredible it was to witness UVA break their losing streak to VT from inside the stadium and how mesmerizing it was to celebrate on the corner after winning the basketball championship. While things like these might not be possible this year, I recommend trying not to look at this year as one to simply get out of the way. Zoom calls with new groups will evolve from awkward chats you dread to fun times you anticipate; you just need to give them a chance. It helps to remind yourself that everyone is getting used to interacting this way with new people, even the upperclassmen. And if you find yourself struggling in the virtual class environment, reach out to your professors to schedule some one on one time. They have just as little going on as we do, after all.

I sincerely believe you guys have it in you to not only get through this year, but to make it as good as it can be.

Good luck,

Elias

SEAS '21