

Hello Class of 2024,

Welcome to UVA! We're so glad that you're joining us! The Student Council wants me to use this first paragraph to offer condolences about starting college during a pandemic, but if I know anything about first year orientation, I'm sure you've heard it a million times before. It sucks, but hey, college during a pandemic is a lot better than high school during a pandemic.

Let's focus on the positives; you're an incoming student at the University of Virginia, the greatest school on Earth. First year is an exciting time. The whole wide world is opening before you. New friends, new opportunities, new life. It's a lot like the beginning of *Pitch Perfect*.

Here's some wisdom that I gained over my four years here. Runk dining hall has the best breakfasts – their omelets are to die for. Attend as many opportunities to get sabre points as you can, because once basketball season rolls around it's worth it. Befriend someone older with a car so they can drive you to grocery stores, job interviews, and so on. Tina Fey is never coming back to UVA to visit, so stop waiting. The Fine Arts Library is a hidden gem (closed this semester, unfortunately, but check it out in the spring). The taco food truck is low-key way better than the dumpling truck. And explore Charlottesville! There's a lot more fun stuff out there than what's in our little UVA bubble.

Most important – and this is some advice I still struggle with – take time to smell the roses. It's easy to get caught up in the grind of classes into club activities into homework into a daily cycle of grinding. Take some breaks! Have fun! Make friends! When I consider what I've gained at UVA, I think about the friendships I've gained, my growth as a person, and my changes in thinking and perspective as my greatest gains rather than any one concrete thing I've learned in class.

In many ways I envy you, because you get to do this whole process from the start. I want to talk you through every little thing that I love about UVA and Charlottesville – and there is so much to write about – but that won't do any good. You'll make your own way here, explore your own interests, and find your own favorite omelet places. I wish you all the best.

Go Hoos!

Sincerely,
Ryan Torbic
Class of '21