

Member(s) of the Class of 2024,

I hope your first year has gotten off to a good start! I know all of this is challenging, but college is hard right?!?!? (Kidding. This is ridiculous, trust me I'm right there with ya.)

Even without COVID, first year isn't always the easiest. You're in a new place, trying to make new friends, with (most of the time) no f***ing idea what you want to study/join/experience/do with your life. It's kind of overwhelming. I'm not writing all of this to make you *more* worried, or stress you out even more, I am writing this to let you know that all of that stress you're probably feeling (or not, maybe you're doing really well and that's great too!) is completely warranted and experienced by everyone - I've been there! Hopefully I can give some wisdom from my point of old age to help guide you through this sh*tshow and look towards the future.

Some tips:

1. It's perfectly fine to have no clue what you want to study. I came to UVA thinking I was going to study Aerospace Engineering and become a pilot, and now I'm a Systems major about to work in Consulting. Not a full 180, but my point is that things change, and it *will* be up to you to a degree to figure it out. And that's on to my second (and arguably most important) point
2. **Do what you want.** Learn what *you* want. Take classes *you* want to take. Join orgs *you* want to join. I emphasize *you* because nothing you do at this University should be driven by anybody but yourself - not your parents, not your professors, not social pressures, not even your closest friends: *you*. *You* are special, and *you* have fantastic potential - you wouldn't be at UVA otherwise. Don't let anyone say anything to the contrary.
3. Do well in school, but *please* take time for yourself. First year at UVA is a time of transition. The academic transition can be quite daunting, but take this time to try and find a balance between schoolwork and anything else (I know you'll be limited this year but maybe playing spikeball outside/going to get food with hallmates/just hanging out) to take your mind off of school. Your GPA is important, but not important as your mental and physical health.
4. Take your time at UVA to learn about yourself just as much as academics. Take chances. Branch out. I was in a shell in high school, and I tried my best to get out of it at UVA: I joined a fraternity (Greek life is 100% worth it if you're at all interested) and class council, which are great UVA-related activities, but also realized how much I truly loved music and became a DJ for a couple bars on the corner (not now bc of COVID) and am now learning to produce music and want to release an album. My point is, use the community to your benefit. I would never have the degree of life satisfaction I do right now if I didn't do that.

I know this is a lot! All of this comes from my experience and I know it may not help because everyone is different but please know that this place is incredible and can 100% allow you to

fulfill whatever dreams you may have - COVID sucks (It's killing my fourth year too!) but it's really up to us (virtually or on-grounds) to make the most of it, whatever that may be. Good times lie ahead!

Sincerely,

Chris, Class of 2021