

Hello, Class of 2024!

Welcome to undoubtedly the best University there is, UVa! My name is Priyanka and I am now a fourth year here at UVa which is so crazy to think because I still remember my first year like it was yesterday! My name is Priyanka and I am a fourth year Cognitive Science major with a double concentration in Neuroscience and Linguistics on the Pre-Dental track from Roanoke, Virginia! I first want to take the time and space to let you know that I completely understand and want to acknowledge what you all may be feeling right now. It is completely normal to be feeling nervous, intrigued, excited--the list goes on & on. I also know that for many of you, COVID has stripped away a lot of your senior year milestones, and it might feel weird leaving home without those memories. Everything you're feeling is so valid. With that being said, UVa is an amazing place that is full of memories waiting to be made (while social distancing of course☺) whether you are on grounds or even if you are at home this semester. While this year is going to look very different for all of us, I am very confident and hopeful that you brilliant and resilient students will find a way to still make UVa your home for the next four years

I remember coming into my first year very excited to venture on this new journey, but also extremely nervous. I had never really been away from my family or my small/tight-knit community so I was nervous that I wouldn't find my place here at UVa. I can tell you, this feeling soon disappeared as I realized how open, kind, and welcoming the UVa student body is. No matter how busy people seemed to be, they were always so willing and excited to help one another. By connecting with my RA and my hallmates, I was able to find a group of friends to share my first-year experiences with. I also began volunteering with Madison House which allowed me to learn more about the community that I was living with. Learning more about Charlottesville, outside the "UVa bubble" really helped me realize that UVa was my home.

Again, just remember that is okay and totally normal to be feeling anxious or uncertain, especially given the circumstances we are all dealing with this year, but just know that this year can still be wonderful and memorable if we truly want it to be!! If you are on grounds, I highly encourage you to introduce yourself to your hallmates join some student organizations that align with your hobbies. If you are at home, I encourage you to look into ways that you can get involved at UVa so you are ready to get the ball rolling if you arrive in the Spring. Your first year of college is one of the most momentous and exciting periods in a person's life. For many, it is a time of new friends, new responsibilities, and new experiences. And making these memories, while different, is not impossible to accomplish even in a pandemic. You can still connect with peers virtually or even in person while socially distanced and masked up. You can go on hikes and explore the beautiful outdoors that Charlottesville has to offer, and you can take a tour of grounds and make note of all the things you hope to do as soon as it is safe to do so. Words cannot express how much I love this University and all the students, faculty, and staff here and I cannot wait for you to come to this realization as well! If you ever have any questions, concerns, or just want to chat (I am a first year RA so I have lots of recourses should you need them), don't hesitate to text or email me!

Sincerely,
Priyanka Pugazhenth
University of Virginia | Class of '21
Cognitive Science conc. Neuroscience and Linguistics
Resident Advisor | Watson-Webb
Program Director | Madison House Medical Services
E: pp2ee@virginia.edu | T: 540-793-3369