

To the Class of 2024,

welcome to UVA!! From a fourth year who still feels like a first year at heart, it is so exciting to see your faces around grounds. I know this past year has been difficult in so many ways, and you likely didn't get the end-of-high school, going-to-college experience you always imagined, and I'm so sorry for that. It's okay to acknowledge the loss of these things, even if you feel like there isn't room to do so because of the important conversations that are happening around covid-19, race, and politics in our country. It's good to have perspective—both about what is important now and what truly matters in the long-run—but it's okay to wrestle with disappointment and struggle during this challenging season. Know that you aren't alone, and if you look for healthy spaces to talk honestly about how you're doing, you might just find friends who are in a similar place and are willing to struggle, laugh, and walk alongside you.

I lived in Dillard my first year (HUGE dill fan <3), and Runk is still one of my favorite places on grounds because of the friendships I formed just eating there everyday. Dillard is where I met my roommate and the other four girls I have lived with the past three years, in a little house that has a slight mold problem but a whole lotta love. Each semester has been so different, but as I reflect on the past 3 years, I remember things like running for the bus every morning because my roommate and I were always late, spontaneous trips to Cookout, being rolled into my a cappella group, going to Jumpville and Fall Retreat with my Christian fellowship, dancing at date functions and semi-formals with friends I'd barely known a month, connecting with a patient during clinical, swaying to the Good Ole' Song at basketball games, putting off my homework to go to football games, basking in Cville in the fall because it's the most beautiful place on earth, and doing homework at coffee shops on rainy days.

When you leave UVA, these are the things you'll remember. The nights you and your friends "studied" but really just ordered Insomnia cookies and laughed about nothing, the morning you forced yourself to get up at 5 a.m. and hike Humpback, and the many upperclassmen from clubs you signed up for who drove you to Carter's Mountain. To be sure, UVA provides some of the richest opportunities to find what you're passionate about, learn from incredible professors, and grow in perspective, knowledge, and direction. It is such a privilege to have an education and we should steward that well, leaning into our studies and caring about classes. However, I know how easy it is to place your identity in work, GPA, and resumes, and while those things are important, they will not ultimately fill your heart. Work hard, respect your professors, and learn as much as you can! But also ask the big questions, seek out people and places that will grow your heart in kindness, humility, and wisdom, and build relationships that will last a lifetime. There will be many ups and downs, but my faith, family, and friends have carried me through it all, so ask what those foundations are for you and seek them out. I am so excited for you all to make UVA your home, and for the people you will become as you live out these incredible years.

All the best,  
Christy  
SON Class of 2021