

Dear First Year,

Your time here at UVA is so new! You haven't had the chance to make a name, develop your crowd, pick your favorite dining hall (hint, it will be Newcomb), and complete the traditional *streaking of the lawn*. You are in the middle of finding a balance between sleep, homework, school, and friendship (all of which will come with time, I promise). You are discovering places for study, leisure, and warmth. I want to be an encouragement to you, offering you this:

~you're doing great~

You are enough, in this moment, in that class, in how you are making friends. You can step into the aspects of yourself that you love the most and make them the staples of your college career. You can have a /very/ awkward moment with a cute member of interest and then never see them again on Grounds. You can try all the beverage places and pick your own, not based on the opinions of others (hinthinthint: Argo Tea is delicious. When it opens back up, please check it out). UVA wants to celebrate you and give you space to grow into the snazziest parts of yourself and out of the unhealthy.

I suppose I should offer you some advice from my time at UVA, some wise words of wisdom, some deep philosophical consideration. I don't know that my methods will work for you, so I instead offer some trial-and-error methods for making 4 years absolutely worth your time.

1. Slide into DMs, they aren't just for interested lovers, but also a space for new friends.
2. Be a teacher's pet. Go to office hours, become obsessed with some of the incredible staff here at UVA, and ask them questions about things they love. Seeing a professor light up in excitement is one of the most gratifying things about college. Remember, one day, you too will have something that makes you light up in excitement, too.
3. Set up your routine. Find places you love, make weekly plans with people you enjoy, and make Charlottesville home.
4. Switch up your routine. Walk a different way to coffee/class/the corner. Get lost somewhere on Grounds and explore it with open eyes.
5. Pick up something new. Every season. No exceptions. For me, this was: a musical instrument, a travel plan, a hands-on research project, a language (ASL alphabet is so easy to learn and so useful!), a pet (mice. I have mice. As pets...), friends, a physical activity (kickboxing and biking are super fun, as is backpacking), a club position (Sustainability Advocates! Do it! The environment is IMPORTANT!)
6. Do some classic, movie-level college things: Hammock and play frisbee. Live in cruddy housing and capture cockroaches in your free time. Try out for a greek life organization, even if you don't stay.

Stretch yourself. Love yourself. Fall in love with Charlottesville knowing it already has so much capacity to love you, too. Challenge your community when it fails to meet the moral high ground. Let your community challenge you. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, eat bagels often. There aren't many problems that bread cannot solve. Thanks for being here. Thanks for being a part of the community.

Savannah

If you ever decide you want to make a new friend, please feel free to text me: 7037252304