

Hi Class of 2024!

Welcome to grounds!! How was moving in? Frantic? Sad? Exciting? I remember feeling so nervous as I unpacked all of my belongings into my half of a dorm room, waiting on my roommate to arrive. While I still have no idea how I ever fit all of my stuff into such a tiny spot, I have realized that I had nothing to worry about because UVA is a place where you can find friends anywhere, pursue your passions, and grow. I know you and I entered UVA under very different circumstances, and I'm so sincerely sorry for any of the stress and anxiety that starting college in a pandemic may have caused you. I also know that any nerves or worries you may have had about making connections, completing classwork and maintaining your health since arriving in Charlottesville are shared by so many people in our community, including myself. Most importantly, I know that you and I and the other 17,000 students that call UVA home are meant to be here, even if we are living in *unprecedented* times.

Last year I vividly remember thinking out loud among my friends that we were attending UVA at such a momentous time. I witnessed the community and artists rally against the hate brought to town on August 11, celebrated the university's bicentennial year, cried when we lost to UMBC in the first round of March Madness, drove 22 hours to Minneapolis the next year to watch us become National Champions – cried again, packed up my car for spring break and never came back, and now we're both attending school from our bedrooms. It looks like the momentous time I've experienced in the last few years is extending into your time at UVA and while starting school via zoom might not seem like a proper beginning to your 4 years here, I'm confident that you will have just as many causes for celebration and joy as I have had as a Hoo.

Every one of my years at UVA has been so different. I've joined clubs, tried different sports, and made friends as a fourth year that are just as important to me as my friends from first year. That would be my one piece of advice to someone starting college, always be open to new opportunities and people and never stop trying to find your fit. I'm so happy that you're here and can't wait for you to experience everything UVA has to offer and eventually become an old 4th with your own stories to reminisce over. Good Luck:)

Sincerely,
Vienna Donnelly
Class of 2021

PS. Sorry about all the run-on sentences, E-school doesn't have any English classes.