

Hello, Class of 2024!

I just want to start off this letter congratulating you on graduating high school and getting accepted to UVA! You have worked so incredibly hard to get here, especially with the impacts of COVID-19 on all aspects of your senior year. Be proud of yourself! You are amazing, strong, smart, and a true survivor. This is not how I would want anyone's first, second, third, or fourth year of college to be like, but I know that we all will make the most of it. You can make the most of it. When one door closes, another one opens. You are an official wahoo! Wa-Hoo-Wa! Good times, go Hoos my friend! You've got this.

As an out of state student, I came to UVA knowing practically no one. I was six hours away from home in a completely new place. The Cavalier Marching Band gave me a home here, and I hope that you will find your home here as well. I found my people in the marching band. People who I could laugh for hours with and that I would make 12 AM trips to Crossroads (aka Croads) with. People I could confide in when I felt like a total failure academically. People who loved me for me and accepted me completely. These are lifetime friends. Even with the current pandemic, I have the utmost confidence in you and your ability to find your home and people. Even if you can't find them, they'll find you. This current situation has made me realize the importance of personal connectivity, so I know first years especially will all be searching for that this year. You never know how or when amazing people will fall into your life, but I guarantee you, they will. There is so much that I am grateful for in reflection on my time here at UVA. I could go on forever about it all. I am happy and excited for you to get to be a first year at UVA (even if it is a virtual experience at first). The time flies in college, so savor every moment even if it's an awkward boring Zoom class where everyone's cameras are off. In the blink of an eye, you'll be a fourth year like me reminiscing on all the heartwarming memories from your time at UVA.

I urge you to look into the history of this university and familiarize yourself with the past of this new environment you're existing in. This is so important as an incoming first year. I regrettably didn't learn enough about UVA's history and the enslaved laborers who's stolen knowledge and skills made this university what it is today until my fourth year here. I highly recommend taking the virtual UVA tour titled "Enslaved African Americans at the University of Virginia" in order to educate yourself on this place where you will spend the next four years of your life. I also encourage you to take a variety of classes and explore all your educational interests. One of my favorite classes here was a class that had absolutely nothing to do with my Computer Science major. Don't be afraid to fail or put yourself out there. No matter how esteemed or accomplished other students seem, they've all failed. It's a part of life. You are going to have an awesome time at UVA, and I wish you the best of luck this first semester! All of the fourth years are rooting for you guys! We understand what it feels like to have such an important year of college unexpectedly changed. You're going to do great things and have an amazing time!

Best,  
Mariah Tighe  
Class of 2021

