

Hello,

My name is Juliana Mosby and I'm a fourth-year in the nursing school. When I heard about this opportunity to write a letter to a first-year, I knew I had to take it. When I was a first-year, I lived in Kellogg. I remember one day, I came home to find a note written on the whiteboard that was hung on the outside of my door. Someone wrote "I'm a fourth-year, and I lived in this very room my first year. Treat her well and make all the memories you can." That advice, simple yet poignant, is something that I haven't forgotten to this day.

First of all, I'm so sorry you're going through the beginning of your college years during a pandemic. Most fourth-years are grieving the sense of loss we're experiencing during our last year, but I can't imagine what it's like in your shoes. For that, I want to say that I'm really, truly sorry. Don't be afraid to grieve, whether that is over something like missing prom, not experiencing convocation and the UPC Welcome Back Concert, or a much deeper or serious loss. We're in the middle of a public health crisis – for goodness sake. Every emotion you're feeling - from anger, sadness, and anticipation – is valid. If you're struggling, please reach out. The sense of community is strong here. One time, I cried in the middle of the Pav because I found out that my family dog passed away. Two girls came up to me, put their arms around me, and held me without saying anything. Although COVID has made hugging strangers a thing of the past, that sentiment is still there. I hope you don't feel lonely. Please tell someone if you do. It's normal and I can guarantee you aren't the only one.

I know that we are essentially the same age and I don't have some sage, ultra-transcendent life advice to give you, but I would like to share some advice I've learned over my years here. Firstly, your work will get done. School is obviously important and you wouldn't be here if you don't excel academically (by the way, congratulations!), but the one thing I would emphasize is that homework and studying always get done. Take that opportunity to go on a walk with friends, or to join them for a Cookout milkshake run. Your work always. Gets. Done. You won't remember that homework assignment that you stayed up until 2:00 am perfecting, but you will remember the time you impulsively said yes to streaking the lawn with your friends and you accidentally slipped and fell, while naked, into the mud (yes, this actually happened. You can laugh if you want. I still laugh about it). Soak up every experience you can. Positive experiences are great and fun, but I'd also argue that the negative experiences can shape you even more than the positive ones. Find something to embrace in these times, and hold tightly to them.

Another piece of advice I have for you is to think critically about UVA. I love UVA, and I will always say good things about it. But for a long time, I think I was blinded by the shining idea of UVA rather than what it is. It's an institution that has its work cut out for it. We need people to challenge administration. We need to change for the better and make it an inclusive space for everyone. We live in such a crucial time in history right now where we're beginning to take accountability for our past in hopes of changing the present and future. This place is *yours* – I mean it. Help shape it into a vision of your own. Amplify voices of those whose aren't as loud as yours, and shout yours as loudly as you can too. I hate the notion that people are "just first-years." You aren't "just" anything. You were chosen to come here for a reason, and you are just as capable as a fourth-year or graduate student to make lasting change here. Get involved in something you are passionate about. I have no doubt you can do it.

Finally, I want to tell you that someone is rooting for you. It is a large university, so you can sometimes feel lost in the shuffle. Find things that make UVA home for you, like a person, club, class, professor, etc. I've never met you and you've never met me, but I'm rooting for you. COVID has taken away so many things from so many people, and I'm truly sorry for every loss you have experienced. However, it can't take away your spirit. You're a college student now! Do those things that college students do, like hammocking on the lawn or getting Bodo's. Don't be too hard on yourself. Remember: work always gets _____ (you fill in the blank – you already know what I'm going to say!) Find a professor that you're comfortable going to. I used to always be scared to go to professors, but I now have found incredible mentors that I look to for strength and wisdom, both inside and outside of the classroom. I hope you enjoy your time here. I did, and I'm sad it's coming to an end. Enjoy this next season in life and I wish you nothing but the absolute best! ☺