

Hello and welcome to UVa Class of 2024!

First of all, you should be SUPER proud of yourself that you are here! Your hard work has paid off. My name is Jordan Benderoth and I am a fourth year here and I am writing to let you know a little bit about my experience at UVa and give you some tips for your time here. I am Neuroscience and Psychology major, but throughout my time I have gotten to be involved diversely across the school in many different clubs and activities that I absolutely love. There are so many different areas to get involved in at UVa and I hope you use your time here as a chance to get involved as broadly across your interests as possible. This is one of the only times in your life you will have this chance!

My main advice is not to get sucked in too early to one path. I am a Neuroscience major now, but when I first got into UVa I was taking classes for Batten, English, Spanish, and Neuroscience and was very open to going down any of those paths. Too many times have I seen my friends in first year get sucked down being involved in one area and only doing things at UVa that they feel are geared towards that major or career path. These same people are the ones I am seeing now, in fourth year, having a lot of doubt about if their major and career choice is really the one for them. It is completely okay and normal to not know what you want to do early in college! These are the years you find out so much about yourself that you may not have known before. Listen to that and let yourself explore all your interests before you let yourself become hyper focused on one of them. So, if that class sounds cool or if that club piques your interest go and try it out! If you try it and find out that it's not for you that is okay too! It is all part of the process.

Just know that you have time! I feel like first year we meet so many people that seem like they know everything about themselves and know exactly where they are going. This can be overwhelming to hear when you yourself are confused on your path. You might feel like you are running out of time. But I promise, you are not! Now is the time to try things out, make mistakes, and learn from them! Learn who you are and take the time to do this.

Also, lastly, about the overwhelming feeling you get when talking to your peers here, do not let this break down your own self confidence. The amazing thing about UVa is that there are so many intelligent people with bright futures just like you that go here. However, sometimes this sparks feelings of "imposter syndrome". Imposter syndrome is not something I just made up, look it up! Some of the most amazing names in history like Albert Einstein and Maya Angelou were reported to feel this way as well! Imposter syndrome is the feeling that you earned your success and got to where you are strictly due to luck and that you really do not deserve these successes. However, the funny thing about this is, EVERYONE here feels that way. It can be very self-defeating to think this way, but know you are not alone and that you deserve all the success coming for you in the future.

I really wish you the best at UVa. You are going to have an amazing four years here.

Best,
Jordan Benderoth
Class of 2021