

Hi Class of 2024,

I extend my warmest welcome and hope that the past four weeks of classes and transitions have been kind to you. We have entered a school year unlike anything we have ever seen before, and all of us have endured an emotional and tumultuous past few months. We face a multi-dimensional crisis, one that affects each of us in ways that are not always visible. Our fears and pressures are intensified, and it may seem as if there is little if anything that this year has left to offer. However, as one Hoo to another, we are all in this together and we will practice resilience and seek support from each other and the communities that we hold dear. You, specifically, are coming to UVA under some of the most difficult circumstances, and that in and of itself requires unprecedented courage and resilience. First year is hard under the best circumstances, and these certainly are not the best circumstances. Despite the obstacles in front of you, I know you will thrive in your ability to persevere beyond measure. You have already experienced extraordinary loss, and in that, I admire you. There is still a lot left to overcome, but I have no doubt in my mind that you all can do this.

UVA is not always the most supportive as an institution, nor is it easy to find the people that you trust and can be vulnerable around. I found my people in the Organization of Young Filipino Americans (OYFA), because this organization has a support system like I have never seen or experienced before. OYFA gave me all of my moments my first year, and have continued to bless me with meaningful friendships and memories. As a fourth year, we have experienced loss like we did not see coming, so much stress and so much grief on top of the normal amount bestowed upon us in this last year. However, much like your class, we will hold each other up and think out of the box in terms of how to create the kind of fourth year we will remember for the rest of our lives.

I implore you to explore beyond what you may have enjoyed during your years in high school, especially in our virtual environment. I know without a doubt that you will find your place here at UVA, but lean on the people around you and not this school as an institution, as it will not consistently have your best interests at heart. Good luck with the rest of the semester and best wishes for the year. We are lucky to have you here.

Sincerely yours,

A member of the Class of 2021