

September 10, 2020

Hello, Class of 2024!

I understand that this is not how you envisioned your 1<sup>st</sup> year at UVA to shape up, and I can tell you it certainly is not how I envisioned my 4<sup>th</sup> year turning out either. However, as someone who has been here much longer than you, I can tell you that UVA is truly a special place, and somewhere that will be more than overjoyed to have you as a new member. Whether you are joining us this semester from Charlottesville, or somewhere far away, you are a member of this family now. Although it may not feel like home to you yet, especially with the way things are at the moment, it will in some time, and that much I can guarantee you. Instead of focusing on all the bits of the world that are coming between us and starting/ending our college careers in the way we want, I advise you to focus on all that still makes this place special, and you a special part of it. You may not feel like you belong here, and I understand that. At one point or another, we all regret the big decisions we make. Anyone who goes through life without even an inkling of doubt in themselves and their decisions never really cared much about the outcome. If you're upset, it's because you're invested, and you know just how good this could potentially turn out. It may take time, but this place is worth the wait.

One particularly happy memory I have from my time at UVa has to do with our winning the Men's Basketball National Championship during my 2<sup>nd</sup> year (and don't you worry, we'll do it again while you're here too). Even if you are not a basketball fan, or a fan of sports at all, this was an incredible night to be a Hoo. With everyone joining together either at JPJ stadium, watching on the jumbotron, on The Corner after the game had been won, or in the student section where the game was being played in Minneapolis, we lived and breathed as one school, and as one team. Relatively no one went to classes the next day, including the professors. Winning something that large and as nationally important as that is not something that was lost on any of us, and not a feeling we'll soon forget.

An organization on Grounds that has made me feel more at home is Phi Sigma Pi, a gender-inclusive national honor fraternity. Through it may be marked as an honor fraternity, it operates far outside those constrained boundaries. The feeling of community being accepted into a Family, being part of your own pledge class, and having a home so graciously offered to you is irreplaceable and something I could not even begin to describe. Although we are not having rush

this semester (because it would not be fair to that pledge class, since they would not be getting the full experience), when we ultimately do return back to a more normal existence, we would be happy to have anyone as wonderful as you.

Go out, find your niche, make mistakes, make friends, study hard, and live freely. This may not have been the experience you wanted, but it's the one you have been dealt. Make the most of it, and I look forward to seeing you around Grounds in the future.

Wahoowa,

A Fourth Year Friend

SEAS '21