

Hello, Class of 2024!

First off, congratulations on making one of the best decisions of your life. UVA truly is a special place, and inclusion is a cornerstone of the social atmosphere—we are all united as Hoos. While ongoing work is still needed, diversity is very much valued and appreciated, and we are all beyond excited to welcome you and every one of your classmates to the community. Although you're not quite experiencing a typical first year at UVA because of COVID-19 & the various social injustices occurring across the country, I can assure you that you will make many positive memories that will last a lifetime. Every fourth year, myself included, graciously reminisces about the friendships and experiences of first year life at the University of Virginia. While there are many wonderful aspects of your next three years that should be looked forward to, your first year is definitely one to cherish and make the most of.

As a fourth year, there are, inevitably, things I regret about first year, but this is normal with retrospection and comes from the natural difficulty of appreciating novel situations before they are gone. Don't be afraid, however, as there are many ways to go about your first year and all of them are right in their own ways. If I had to offer my best advice, I would tell you to fully embrace yourself as an individual and try everything you have an interest in. Your college experience is the best way to learn who you are, and you will benefit the most by exploring your passions through all of the opportunities UVA provides you. One good way to do this, although not the only way, is to join clubs. Some of my strongest friendships at UVA began first year, and wouldn't have been possible without meeting fellow Hoos with similar interests through clubs and within my dorms. Don't get me wrong, upperclassmen living has its appeals but you will never again live so close to your entire class, and this is not something to take for granted. Accept yourself as an individual and don't be afraid to put yourself out there, as there are only things to gain from doing so.

Everyone at UVA has to be a first year at some point, and it's completely natural to be anxious or uncertain. While not pleasant, these emotions will heighten the positive experience of getting into the groove of things and realizing that there was really nothing to be worried about from the start. Make sure to take care of yourself throughout the year, and try your best academically because you'll never know where your interests may take you down the road. I wish you the best of luck during these uncertain times and your first year at UVA, and remember we all admire your passion and drive to power through these circumstances. Don't be afraid to reach out for any help you need, and enjoy your time as much as you can. Welcome to the family.

Sincerely,
Justin
UVA 2021