

Hi,

I'm not 100% sure if this letter is just going to one person or many but I suppose it doesn't matter too much. I'm writing to you (the person reading this right now). Forget about all those other people! First off, I want to welcome you to UVA! This is a really cool place. I remember feeling like a child when I first came here. Through my time here, though, I surprised myself. I found out how capable I was and that was very empowering. I hope you will have this same growth through your time here. So I remember my first year being really rough. What helped a lot was finding a group (people to hang out with, who I cared about and who cared about me). You may have gotten this advice already but, hey, it's good advice. For me, I tried joining a lot of groups and clubs but that didn't really seem to help. I never really clicked with any of them. In the end, I just started hanging out with the folks in my dorm's common area who were particularly loud.

I know it's different for you. These are hard times but you will get through it. We'll all will.

There's a thing I've learned about recently called the regression towards the mean. If you're feeling particularly bad right now then in 2 months' time you will just feel better. You'll regress towards your mean level of life. This also works in the opposite direction. If you're particularly happy then in a few months' time you will be less so. This is a very academic way of coming at it but there's a mantra that captures this idea. The mantra goes, "this too shall pass." I like this. It helps me treasure the goodness in the now because soon it will be gone, and it helps me get through the bad times because I know they will pass.

Okay, that's my brief bit of wisdom. I hope it helps! (I really do). One more point. The cool thing about UVA is there are so many resources here. There are so many people who want to help you. I've found Lisa Lampe, the director of undergraduate success, and Blake Calhoun, her assistant director, to be invaluable. They either know how to help or know who can. They are in the Engineering School but I'm sure there equivalent people in the other schools as well.

Alright! Good luck! This is a tough semester to start university, but, remember, there are loving, kind, people everywhere. We're all going to get through this. I believe in you.

All the best,

Rowan Dakota, 4th year.