

Dear Class of 2024,

I would like to welcome you to the University of Virginia! I know these times must be quite challenging for you adjusting to a new environment, people surrounding you, the social injustices the United States faces, and the circumstances of COVID-19. Just like you, I truly hope that the state of this disease will not be a large threat for us much longer and that you can truly enjoy your time here at UVA. During my time here I have found that we in the University Community are very supportive of one another and have made significant progress to the issues we combat. I hope that in your four years here you will be able to continue this legacy and address further issues that arise. We as a student body reflect and grow together, and you are definitely an important part of it bringing in new, individualistic, and fresher ideas to help strengthen our community.

Aside from the many issues we still face, there is still a lot of potential for you in the coming years. I write this letter to you in hopes that it will inspire you in your career at UVA for what you can do! Some of my fondest memories here have been the activities and clubs I take part in, eating Bodo's on the lawn, and connecting with many new friends. These relationships and experiences have definitely made UVA my home and a safe haven for me. So do not be afraid to apply to clubs you're interested in or reaching out to new people. To be more specific, I am an art history major and the organization I have committed myself deeply to is the Fralin Student Docents where I get to teach and learn about art. We love to get together, discuss art, cognition through art, and having a charcuterie on the lawn. I also do work on the arts committee of the student council where we weekly address issues seen within the arts or help fund clubs that are arts oriented. Through all this work comes many new relationships with friends and

experiences that have helped further my education. So my advice is to branch out and meet new people to share your time with here. It is so valuable!

First year is tough, and I know it is. But the thing to remember is that it will help you mature and grow into a responsible adult who is well educated and thriving! You may not feel that now because of the pandemic and state of our world, but look to the bright future that is ahead of you. Have a wonderful and prosperous first semester, and I'll leave you with an anonymous quote I find helpful in hard times: "An arrow can only be shot by pulling it backward. When life is dragging you back with difficulties, it means it's going to launch you into something great. So just focus, and keep aiming."

Sincerely,

Benjamin Jessee

Class of 2021