

Dear young, Class of 2024, incoming Hoo,

Welcome to UVa! I can't imagine how hard it must be to start your first year of college during a crazy time like this, with the COVID pandemic and all of the social injustice occurring in the country. Regardless of what is going on in the world today, I want you to know how incredibly welcome you are in the UVa community. The Hooville community is unlike any other that I've been a part of. Walking down the corner is like walking the halls of my own home.

Everywhere I look, I'm reminded of the incredible memories I've made over the past four years. From streaking the lawn on multiple occasions; to sneaking cereal and ice cream out of the dining hall in to-go cups; to dancing on balconies and tables; to having a musical picnic on the lawn – every memory is just as valuable as the rest.

Some things have stayed the same. My first year hallmates are still my best friends, my sleep schedule is still all over the place, my dance moves are still fire, and my school ID is still in pristine shape. Other things have evolved and changed completely. I'm always finding new places to study, meeting new people, trying new restaurants, joining new clubs, and walking new routes. While we often find comfort in routine, it is so important to learn to live with the uncomfortable, for the things that make us uncomfortable are those that allow us to grow the most.

These next 4+ years will be the best and the hardest of your life. You will learn more about yourself, outside of the classroom, than you will in any lecture hall or 4000 level class. You'll laugh so hard you'll cry, and maybe cry so hard you'll laugh. You'll meet your friend soul mates. You'll fall in love, whether that be with something or someone. You'll try new things, some of which you'll hate and some of which you'll adore. You may experience disappointment and failure, but you'll achieve just as much success. You'll learn to call Charlottesville home; and in four years, you'll be amazed at how quickly the time has flown by. You'll probably wish you did some things differently—personally, I wish I had been less responsible and spent more time socializing—but will simultaneously believe you did everything exactly as you should've, because all of your experiences have shaped you into who you'll become.

There are so many things you'll do over the next four years, but college is not about what you do or don't do – it's about the lessons you learn and the person you become. I entered first year with long, curly hair, a career path I was set on, and no idea what I'd face in the near future. Today, my hair is short and platinum silver, I've changed my career path three times, and I have experienced the highest of highs and the lowest of lows. I hate to sound corny, but the past four years have truly been a metamorphosis--UVa has been a safe cocoon that's allowed me to completely transform and grow into the woman I am today.

I cannot express how thankful I am for my college years in Charlottesville; and I hope, from the bottom of my heart, that you will feel the same. Ultimately, my best advice is to try anything/everything and to be as social and irresponsible as your conscience will let you be. Schoolwork is incredibly important, but the friendships you have the opportunity to form and

the experiences you have the opportunity to live are so much more valuable than any grade will ever be.

Some final words of advice...

- Find a great study spot (I love New Cabell window seats and the picnic table near the Ruffner courts)
- Allow yourself at least one mental health day a week
- Make to-do lists
- Find an organizational method(s) that works for you (I love the Notes app and Microsoft Notebook)
- Streak the lawn and own it
- Eat with friends
- Take advantage of meal exchanges
- Learn to meal prep
- Hike humpback frequently
- Be a green dot

These last four years have been the best years of my life; and I hope these next four years are the best of yours! Good luck with everything :)

Sincerely,  
Olivia F  
Class of 2021