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Major: Electrical Engineering

**1. Tell us a few things about yourself (family, job, things that bring you joy)**

I grew up in Boston, I'm here right now. I'm very close with my family, I'm the second of four kids. We are all super close to each other, like a 2 mile proximity. After I left UVA I moved to Dubai as a management consultant for 3 years. What do I do for work? Manage customer success, work with existing customers, make sure they get value out of it. I really like this niche of being people focused but with technology. I studied Electrical Engineering. I'm very single these days, especially in a pandemic. I enjoy going for long runs. I'm really into quilting, I usually give them as gifts, wedding presents, and baby presents. I like to cook a lot, and I also spent the last 2 months in Colorado learning to ski.

**2. What is your UVA story?**

**a. How did you decide to come to UVA?**

Like you, I'm not from VA. I wanted to study engineering, which limits where you can apply. It was visiting... I just had so much fun compared to other schools. I was lucky enough to visit the other schools I had gotten into. I didn't know anyone at UVA when I came which is tough because I didn't realize everyone else WOULD know each other. I was on the first year council and I was the class president third year. I lived on the lawn my fourth year which was so much fun, student gov and engineering were the biggest parts of my experience.

**b. What did you do when you were a student at UVA?**

**i. Were women encouraged or discouraged to join extracurriculars?**

In my program in Electrical Engineering.... I realized that a lot of people don't do Electrical Engineering. Out of the 75 people, there were 3 women. I was often the only woman in the room.

That is somewhat distinct. I remember taking history classes as electives and thinking ohhh this is where all the girls are. That was a pretty big part of my academic experience. I'm sure you know this- but it's tough being the only in the room, but it prepared me for work cause like I said, I worked in Dubai. I was often the only woman and only white woman which was interesting - it's not something I liked and still don't, but it prepared me for success because it's still present. I can't think of my gender playing a role outside of class but probably because it was such a strong part of being IN class, being class president came with a lot of power - people knew me on Grounds.

**ii. Were some more welcoming than others?**

I'm trying to think of an example when I didn't feel welcome - I wasn't in a sorority - I lived in a house with 10 girls - and they were in a sorority - it was so strange when they had events in my house. In student gov, there was a dynamic... I was campaigning against all men and they had the power of having pledges running their campaign - personally I didn't uh - well first year I played field hockey, I was in the society of women engineers, but in my experience , I felt generally quite comfortable even when I was the odd man out. As president I went to bsa meetings and still felt pretty welcome.

**iii. Greek life experience?**

I think most of my friends were in Greek life in some capacity - my first year I went to a lot of frat parties. I was very aware of it.

My sister also went to UVA. She was 2 years below me. She rushed - she was asked back to the second round at all of these houses. There was no way she was gonna join. They asked her back cause they knew me.

Some of those fraternities have a lot of real life power - they are legally not a part of the university.

### **3. What is your favorite UVA memory?**

Hmmm so 2 of my .. the 2 things that stand out the most didn't directly happen at UVA. With engineering students without borders we went to South Africa. Very far from Charlottesville, but that was a really really cool experience. First time I'd done something truly independent, really formative experience, but yea I coordinated through UVA but the 4 of us went to this rural random town. Then the following summer I got an internship at the US embassy in Paris - so unbelievably fun, I never really thought I would have an opportunity like that. It opened up a new world - working abroad - which led me to working in Dubai which has become a big part of my life - and that happened through UVA.

### **4. What was a transformative moment for you at UVA?**

When I was a 1st year student, I had serious health problems and I was really sick. I had surgeries - was in the hospital. I spent a lot of time at UVA hospital, that had transformed me the most. You really don't know what other people are going through - cause I was class president and had all these other things going on but had physical challenges - learning to ask for help and relying on a community...I had to reschedule exams w professors it made me realize that they are real people too.

### **5. What was the most challenging thing about UVA?**

Well that too - my coursework was really hard - Electrical engineering was way harder than I thought it would be - academically hard , I didn't really learn till after that that's true for everyone. There's a real culture in engineering and tech like "oh you don't know you must be dumb"- and I really felt that - that especially hits women. That feeling of okay I'm the only person of my type in this room and felt that. It's really hard for everyone, but the culture is to pretend it's not. We shouldn't back away from something just because you aren't good at it. I was originally planning to go to grad school for engineering - the goal was Stanford - I remember

walking into a communications systems class. It was all grad students and I was the only woman. They all got there early...that's not what I was doing. I had all these things going on - it's not my life. I had this conclusion that this isn't for me. I don't fit into this community. That's how I ended up going into consulting. I read Emily Chang Brotopia. It really resonated with me because there's this false persona that you have to be a dweeb tech bro to be there, but had I been in Silicon Valley in 2008. At Stanford. imagine the path I would have been on. It was this real advent of major tech players taking off.

**6. Tell us about a woman/women at UVA who inspires you – now, or during your time on Grounds.**

The first one that comes to mine is my kindergarten teacher. She was in the first class of women who graduated from uva. She's someone who we talk a lot now about how we both graduated from uva. She's just like a really wonderful person. She represents a lot of values I admire. The student body does attract people who share an interest in doing interesting things and pursuing academics and being welcoming and challenging each other.

Someone else... one of my friends from 1st year hall named Janie. She became a sailing instructor after school which is a pretty unique career path. I admire her for that.

**a. What relationships did you form with other women and did you find it easy to make those connections?**

To this day a lot of my close friends are women - and men I met at UVA. 3rd year I lived with these women, and they are setting up a zoom party for me next week for my birthday.

**b. What was the presence of women's groups and movements on campus like?**

I was involved with the Society of Women Engineers. There was a fairly .. like sororities are all women's groups .. there were organizations around sexual violence. I wasn't involved in any of

those and I wish I was. I was fortunate to have never had an experience, but still wanted to participate, I was a secondary leader in take back the night.

**c. How many courses did you take at UVA that were taught by female professors? Could you talk a little about the courses they taught and the kind of diversity that the courses and the prof(s) represented?**

I think 2... 2 out of... 18? I took at least 5 classes a semester. My Calc professor in my 1st year 1st semester was a woman. I did well in high school. Like I showed up and was like ohhh in college you actually have to study. My first test got a D. I went to her to turn it around and she was like "I totally get it. I was at her office hours every week. She wrote a rec for me. You aren't dumb because you get a D. We weren't talking about gender in calc class, but it was nice to connect with someone who is like you. I felt comfortable going to her. The other professor taught an advanced Electrical Engineering class. We did not have a good relationship. For that class, you could do problem sets with other people. It was very group based. Basically she thought we cheated. She was like there's no way the 3 of you put your heads together and did this ... but we did. I just didn't understand her logic, but she gave us the score.

**7. What were your experiences with sexism or misogyny on Grounds?**

So I guess the 2 elements that come to mind are frat culture - inherently pretty sexist - that just has an overarching presence. There wasn't a specific incident, just an overall culture. Men host parties and expect girls to show up. In my role in student gov and in E school, I was invited to a lot of events w alum. I would speak at a dinner but the "old Virginia boy network" was really interesting. All of the alum were men because of when the university admitted women. It was very weird vibes and was inherently sexist. A male school, male dominated environment. I was welcomed but yea. My brother came with me to one and was like "this is so strange." I felt a

sexist culture in the E school of like you're not smart enough. Whether other people felt that I can't say. But I felt the culture of like oh .. the girl.

**8. Was there an open LGBTQ+ presence when you went to UVA?**

Uh.. kind of. I grew up in this super liberal area. You weren't allowed to have like ipods at school. We went by freshpeople instead of freshmen. I felt like it wasn't open to gay people at all - people would say things that were not okay like "oh that's gay" like "excuse me?" I was surprised at how prevalent that was. I had friends who were closed because they didn't feel comfortable sharing. He thought that we were gonna reject him - but that was the environment. There was a guy in my class who was a world class asshole - turns out he was a closeted gay man. I saw him recently and he was LOVELY.

**9. Did you feel pressured to go into a certain field or avoid a certain field during your time in college?**

No, I kind of went in wanting to study engineering and I stuck with that and I ended up doing the field I wanted.

**b. Do you know of any efforts your institution has made since you graduated to make their classes more inclusive?**

I appreciate that they have efforts to bring people of different identities to the table because there is a lot of sexism in being caught up in the old ways of doing things.

**10. What was relationship/hookup culture during your time at UVA?**

So generally it was very hookuppy and not committed relationships. I never introduced anyone as my boyfriend. Me personally, I wasn't interested in being in a committed relationship. Like I wanted to spend the summer in South Africa, I have friends now who were in a serious relationship in school and we were like "what are they doing?" But they got married. They were

ahead of the game. It wasn't like hooking up with a different guy every week, it just wasn't committed. I dated someone, but there was no official breakup. It was casual.

**11. Was there any talk about consent and respect on campus? If so, do you think it was thorough/helpful?**

No. I knew from high school and my parents before going to school. Like don't get drunk at a frat party and go upstairs with a guy you don't know, but no. There was no concept of "Are you okay?" "Is this okay?" It was more like... the message was more like: no more "no", "yes" is the only way to move forward.

**12. Is there something you learned at UVA that you apply to your life now?**

Yes lots of things. Just exposure to different cultures. The world's your oyster. I liked that UVA is a bigger school. You have to figure things out. I felt like there were a lot of ways I failed at UVA which helped.

**13. What does the UVA alumnae community mean to you? How have fellow alumnae affected your life/career/journey?**

For me it was like friends. I felt like I found my people. My best friend grew up on the same street, but other than family and my friend i Didn't connect in a real way to people. When I got to UVA I met people who have become an important community to me today. I'm in a text chain with them. I have 15 missed messages since we started talking.

**14. In your opinion, what is the legacy of women at UVA?**

I think it's really early days. I feel like I used the word power a lot but we are years and decades out from having women in power in a meaningful way. The old boys network is gonna dominate, but it's gonna be very different in 20 years.

**15. If you could impart a piece of advice to a female student on Grounds today, what would you tell her?**

Put yourself in those uncomfortable situations and don't shy away from them because that's life. I'm the only woman of my position at my company, and that happened really quickly. I don't have a lot of male friends with the job making as much money - and I connect more with women for this reason. It's worth it.

**16. Is there anything related to women's history at the University that you would like to learn more about?**

I don't know much so yeah. It's pretty short lived, but I don't know much so broadly speaking yes.

**17. What do you think the biggest difference was in terms of your experience at UVA and what is going on now in 2021?**

Pandemic aside, I think a lot of things are different. I know some is the same. I think if I had to pick from the academic perspective: what I studied was this weird niche thing that no one really studied. My major was so uncool and now it's pretty popular. Now it's the forefront of jobs and what people want to do it!