

Katelyn Mendoza, UVA class of 2009

Ellie: Okay, So, like my first interview question is, um, I guess it's like the generic interview question which is like tell us a few things about yourself.

Katelyn: Absolutely. So hi, I'm Katelyn Mendoza. I am a first-gen college student. I was born in the Philippines and my family immigrated to America when I was five years old. And that's a really important part of my story, especially as I'm coming into my own and reflecting on my own identity and what brought me here, and my parents' contribution to my education was a really big deal. So, after living in New York for a little bit we moved to Charlottesville, Virginia where my mom was a nurse at the UVA Hospital. So that was actually a reason why we moved there, and I, as a first-gen college student had no clue about like, oh, finding the 'best fit,' or even visiting other institutions, my college entrance process was more like, 'Oh hey,' that my parents were like, 'Hey, there's this really good school down the street, like you should just, you should see if you could just get in and it'll be good!' And so I didn't even know just how much of a prestigious institution UVA was, as a townie that grew up in Charlottesville, but was like, Sure, why not, and applied early action—err, early decision. Yeah, early decision. So I knew, like very early on when I was a senior that I was going to go to UVA, I was obsessed with it, and it was one of those things that it was just a really good fit and I feel so blessed that I had the experience that I did at UVA, UVA was very big deal, like, here's my water cooler [a UVA water cooler], I drink out of it every day, like I have memorabilia around this house all the time, everywhere. Oh, also I'm in Seattle, right now, which makes it even more like oh anything that I get from UVA and getting to talk to you is just such a treat. An important part of my story is, while I was at UVA I was really involved. As a student, but really who wasn't as a wahoo, and that actually led to my path going into Student Affairs, so all of my advisors from UPC, from being involved with class council, really led me to realize like oh there's definitely a career in here. So, the working in higher education was something I was interested in early on. So I worked with the Alumni Association for two years right after I graduated and did a lot of stuff with reunions and the class councils, and then I went on to go to graduate school at the University of Denver, to get my masters in higher education student affairs, and since then I've worked at Stanford, at the University of Denver, at Notre Dame, and most recently at Seattle University. All in different student-facing and alumni-facing roles. So for me, building relationships and building a sense of community are really important, and most recently, I just made the jump out of higher ed into the tech world and I currently work at Amazon as a senior program manager working on diversity, equity and inclusion efforts in the worldwide organization. So, that's my path from then to now.

Ellie: That's awesome. Um, and then what year did you graduate from UVA?

Katelyn: 2009, 'so fine, '09!'

Ellie: Um, I guess a lot of the other questions you sort of already answered, but digging further to the next question on here is, like, how did you come to UVA? which I feel like you kind of went through that a little bit just like having lived there but like were there any other schools ever like on your radar, or was it kind of always just like UVA?

Katelyn: I mean the Asian parents are always like, 'How about Harvard? How about Yale?' like, you know, the Ivy League. So that was one of those like, these are the top schools that you think that you want to get into but actually those college, the college mailers really helped because

there were a lot of schools that I hadn't heard of but was interested in like Elon University, and a couple of schools, up and down the East Coast but for me, my path to UVA really was just out of luck, or really more like thinking that that was the only option and I just never looked back. I don't think I even went to like Days on the Lawn or anything, it was just more like, 'Oh, it's here, I'll figure it out when I get here,' I still remember like being a first-year and everyone being like, 'You're a townie, let's go to the corner, where are all the parties?' I'm like, 'What's the Corner?' I didn't even know what the Corner was! But yeah, I'm so happy for the path that I ended on, and coming to UVA.

Ellie: Um, and then like, you said you were super involved, so like what were, what were you involved in at UVA?

Katelyn: yeah, so the university programs Council I was involved with all four years, starting from as a committee member to eventually the the chair of the CIO connections committee, if that's still that a group. I loved event-planning, I loved putting on programs for my peers and especially loved like being able to be in the in the weeds of finding different artists or different things that that could fill people's times, and springfest [was] a really big deal, I remember all the work that would go into planning for that. I was also involved with the class council so was on third-year class council, fourth year trustees. Once again, a lot of event-planning and programming and putting on different events for my peers. I was also involved with Alpha Phi Omega the service fraternity. That was something that people really encouraged me to try out for my first year and then to rush for. Volunteerism had always been really important for me so I love that for all four years I had that I had that plugin and that intentionality of doing it. I was also an orientation leader, but this was a fun story; if you can't tell, [I was] like super clueless what to expect from college. As a first gen student I thought that once you got into college, the whole point of it was the experience and that grades didn't matter. Experience is important and also grades turned out to be. But I still remember like coming for summer orientation, and I signed up for the first session because I was a geek like that was like, I'm excited for college, to see what this is all about. And I remember coming into where we were checking in, and everyone had like they're bright orange polos on and I distinctly remember turning to my mother and being like, I don't know who they are, but I want to be one of them. Like there was just something about the aura of an OL, and then come to find like they are like the face of the people that as people come in as people start making up a home. And so that was something that I tried out for after my first year and interview for and it's a highly selective process, but I was just, I just knew that that was something that I wanted to do and being an OL really just changed my life. The people that I met just having that summer together and experiencing UVA and in such a way, and welcoming so many people over the summer and feeling like you have that touch point and building that UVA community. So those are some of the groups that that were really big deal to me.

Ellie: Yeah, with orientation leaders, it's very interesting just- I'm a second-year now so going into my first year was like the last in-person orientation that happened because it was virtual last summer and it's going to be virtual this summer. And I'm an out-of-state student and so another kid from my area was touring UVA because he had just gotten in, and I was meeting with his parents and they were talking about how like they were so disappointed because like virtual orientation and that's where you meet so many people and I was like, none of my friends now I

met during orientation but I think in-person orientation and the OLs– that experience was so valuable.

Katelyn: And being there and doing the college thing on your own like right then and there, right?

Ellie: Yeah, it was also from for me like I was, I was going through like a very rough time the summer before I came to UVA and so getting to be here and see what like my future would be like was definitely such a big deal. And like the OLs do that and it's very sad that I mean hopefully...

Katelyn: Yeah, I think they're making the most of it, but you're right if you just can't duplicate that but hopefully, they'll be able to make up for it, you know.

Ellie: Yeah, I definitely hope so.

Katelyn: And I see [from your sweatshirt] that you are in the Cavalier Marching Band, so fun. In fact, since I grew up in Charlottesville. My gosh, what is it called again, my band leader from my high school was actually one of the first band leaders for the marching band.

Ellie: Yeah, I'm in the color guard but our marching band– it's not that old. It's very weird to think about how it is very much a new thing because a lot of my friends from high school band go to like Big 10 schools, and I'm from Illinois so everyone's Big 10. And they have like the huge Big 10 marching bands with like, 200-year legacies while we're from like, 2003 with the CMB.

Katelyn: And it's like yeah, we're young and we're cool but we're here.

Ellie: Um, and then in terms of other activities, something that we've been talking about in the classes like how kind of just how Greek life kind of affects everyone, even if you're not involved in it so I was wondering how you how that experience was for you? How you felt about it or anything.

Katelyn: Yeah, absolutely so I knew nothing about what Greek life was or what, or anything about it, just that it was a big deal like coming in and of course you're, you're driving around UVA or walking around Grounds, you see all of the houses, like you can't deny that that's such an such an integrated part of the experience. I remember when all the women were rushing in my hall my first year and it was something that I was never really interested in, simply because to me – and for anyone who's involved with Greek life, I'm so glad that you found the community but for me initially it was like, I kind of viewed it as, are you paying for your friends? what is it that you're going to get out of this? and honestly like the profile of the women on my– it was mostly a white hall, I think I was the only person of color in my hall – and it just did not, it was just not something that I was interested in. And especially, a lot of the women in my hall had also come from legacy families who were involved with a specific sorority, so there was already this pressure that they needed to get into the specific houses that their mothers were in. And I was just like, 'Good luck, y'all have fun with that,' Which is why I was much more interested in

Alpha Phi Omega because it wasn't like that, and it was all based on service, and so that was something that I was mostly interested in. But I of course, went to parties, like the thing, and simply because it was almost like, well that's just part of the experience when you're a first-year, you go to the frat parties and you do the thing. So, but now in hindsight, it is very much like, gosh, what are these people are able to do and get away with. And some of these things you know, but with a lot of the people that I was friends with, especially when I was on class council and Trustees, I always loved just hearing about their experience and of course the philanthropies that their fraternities or sororities supported. But there was always a part of me that kind of felt like, 'Am I missing out on something or am I not?' It was an in-group, out-group thing. Simply because I was not part of Greek life, I felt like there were some things that maybe I was not privy to, or was experienced in, but, you know, all the other experiences that I had I felt were more aligned to what I wanted to do.

Ellie: Yeah, um, then, on a totally different note, um, what's your favorite UVA memory, if you have one?

Katelyn: There's so many. Like, okay, so this is going to be like a little cheesy kind of pseudo-love story. I remember my first boyfriend in college. He and I met, because we lived in Echols dorm together, and we weren't dating at the time but we were just kind of getting to know each other. It was after the UVA-FSU game, I think where we beat them, and we ended up staying up all night just talking, and then ended up going to the rotunda to watch the sunrise, because that's what you do as a UVA kid. So that was one of those like, impromptu things. And it was just very sweet and I thought that was like, 'Oh that's like a cute like college story, but other things that I really loved were... I got to see Frank Warren, who founded Postsecret. I don't know if you know about that but it was like a really big deal over a decade ago. And so a lot of the speakers that we brought in from the University Programs Council and being able to be exposed to different artists, writers, things like that was just really cool.

Ellie: Yeah, definitely. I feel like, I mean, on zoom like they're trying to give us programs but it's definitely.

Katelyn: It's two dimensional in that sense. I was also always looking forward to events where I'm like, 'Is there food? Are there snacks for me?' and that's usually a highlight.

Ellie: Yeah, no, definitely, I feel like the things I've gotten more involved in have revolved a little bit around, 'do they have food?' But sometimes it's fun. Um, and then similarly like what was a transformative moment for you at UVA, if you had any?

Katelyn: Yeah, a transformative moment, almost full circle that same person that I went to the rotunda with ended up breaking up, and it was, it was really crushing like that was one of the first times – That was the first time in my life that I really felt lost and as much as I love UVA, I almost considered transferring just because I didn't want to deal with it or be reminded of everything like that. So, one of my big learnings from that was just how resilient I absolutely can be. Third-year was really rough when all of that happened because then I had to really think about, 'How does this affect my friend group?' and I wasn't in a place where I could just stay and act like everything was okay or ignore that one person while still being friends. So– Oh, another

group that I was really involved with was the Organization of Young Filipino Americans, aka OYFA, and so we were both involved with that group together, and after my then-boyfriend and I broke up, I decided to like kind of take a step back from OYFA and really dig into APO. And it was through all of those friendships— and this really to me highlighted the importance of talking about life, things like, you go to school, you do the academics, but it really made a difference for me to recognize all the things that I was gaining from outside the classroom through my involvement and through meeting different people. And as a sociology major, I just love figuring out how people tick and so going through that type of experience helped me realize like, ‘What are the things that I need in my tool kit to be able to bounce back or process a life event such as that?’ A lot of journaling, or are talking to people. But, yeah, going through that experience really helped me put things into perspective for when future things in life happen.

Ellie: Definitely. And I guess— this question probably, I don't know if it's the same answer but like, what was the most challenging thing about UVA?

Katelyn: The most challenging thing about UVA is, oh my gosh, just – You are surrounded by really brilliant people, everyone is doing different courses, like, founding their own group, starting a nonprofit, all as college students. and that is very often what you hear, and so it was really— they didn't have this term back then, or at least I wasn't aware of it but like the imposter syndrome was super real but I didn't even know how to describe that or how to attribute it. And so, something that was really hard was not, ‘How do I prevent myself from comparing my path and my story from my other peers who were doing their own thing and were being successful in it?’ So it was very easy to kind of take a seat back and like compare yourself to everyone all the time but the truth is, they're on their own journey and I am too. But that, if anything, I wish I had used that as a fuel to just be to be inspired as opposed to feel bad about myself because I was achieving my own things too. So, yeah, Yeah.

Ellie: Yeah, just the imposter syndrome definitely still exists.

Katelyn: And I'm so certain too, like especially in the midst of this pandemic when we aren't around people, the only thing that we really see is the highlight reel. Like, we don't know what's going on the inside, we're only seeing the product. And that was something that I really struggled to verbalize or process last year was, ‘Oh gosh, like it was so easy to think like I'm the only one going through this, I'm the only one who's feeling the pressure, I don't know how everyone else seems to be doing so well, when really at the end maybe we're all processing this in a very similar way, and you only see the end product but not really a lot of the labor that goes into it.

Ellie: Yeah, definitely. Um, can you talk a little bit about a woman or women at UVA who inspire you either now or from when you were at UVA?

Katelyn: I will talk about Sarah Elliott, she is currently the Director of Student Activities or student programs at Darden Business School. So, she was my mentor from the moment that she got to UVA. She used to work in the Office of the Dean of Students as a dean there. And so essentially I was just like, ‘Oh, she's the Asian Dean, I love it and so it to me it really highlighted the importance of, that representation matters, like that there was someone that I could see and be like, ‘Oh, if I wanted to go into Student Affairs, I could get to that level because here's someone

who I saw did it.' She was someone who was super influential to me when I broke up with that boyfriend. She was also like a mentor to him and like she just really highlighted to me the importance of seeing the bigger picture and a lot of things, so anytime I didn't get selected for something at UVA, she was there to encourage me, she was there to kick my butt when I wasn't doing the things that I needed to simply because I was lazy or I was afraid, but she was like my voice of reason. I think it's really for me – I know someone's a true mentor when I don't want to tell them what's going on because I know they're going to hand me the truth. So she's always been that that voice of reason and an honest reflection for me that she calls me out on my stuff when she knows that I can do better, but she also knows how to be kind and to listen and to make space for me in processing some of those big life things. So just super grateful for her and we are, of course, still in touch.

Ellie: Oh, that's great. Yeah. Um, and then kind of this section is like about just like finding relationships with like other women so, did you were you able to like easily find like other women to be friends with, to be mentored by, stuff like that.

Katelyn: Yeah, like okay yeah so I think peer mentorship is also very important so another group that I was involved with was the, gosh, it's so I mean I was involved with OYFA but then there was a larger umbrella organization for Asian and Pacific Islanders, and through that I did opt into a peer mentorship group where I was paired with other Asians, both men and women identifying-people to guide me during my time. So I took advantage of any opportunity that I had where it was about networking, or building your community and things like that. And for me, I hated networking, I hate networking, it's really tough because I don't like the idea of like feeling like I'm just asking someone because I need something from them, you know, so to me I reframe that as, I'm genuinely curious about a person; I want to establish a relationship because I think it's great to have a sense of connection. And if other things come up in the future, it's always best to have the network before you need the network. So that's how I've kind of changed my approach with that. And then as far as having other women as my friends, my confidant as my informal peer mentors, being open to just experience life with them and being honest with whatever I was experiencing myself really proved to be like, what it was that, I think, got to those deeper levels of friendship. I never felt like I had to be like, 'Oh, well, I'm Katelyn Mendoza, and here's my resume of stuff, and this is all the stuff that I was involved in.' It was just more like, I want to make some friends, like, 'What's going on in your life?' so to highlight something I had mentioned earlier, like, a lot of life talks with people like that so much of how I learned about myself I learned about how other people tick and process stuff. And I think it's so important to have peers like that, who can reflect to you honestly what it was, and to express different experiences too because, you know, as much as I love vanilla ice cream, It's also like oh well why don't you put sprinkles on it and try different types of flavors and experience stuff like that.

Ellie: Yeah. Um, oh so was there like a, like a presence of women's groups on campus?

Katelyn: Like, so groups that were geared towards like progressing women. I'm sure that there were, I can't name them off the top of my head and I wasn't as involved with those types of groups but if I did have friends that were involved with them I would support their initiatives by attending an event or learning more about it, but I wasn't involved with them myself.

Ellie: Um, and then how many courses, did you take it up that were taught by women professors, and like, what, what types of courses were they, if that makes sense.

Katelyn: Mm hmm. Now you got me thinking, what was my course load like and who was leading some of those days. I did have a good number of women professors that were in the STEM field so a lot of the math classes I took were led by women. And my French courses too. A lot of my sociology courses were taught by men, so that's a good reflection point of who were the professors during that time.

Ellie: Yeah. I think it's very interesting— I'm a WGS major, and then I'm adding the politics major and then I'm also a French minor, and so WGS is like pretty much all women except for one, but in politics I've only had male professors so far. I think French has been mostly women actually.

Katelyn: What do you think are the benefits to having more equity in in the male to female ratios of professors, especially in like politics and things like that for you.

Ellie: Yeah, I feel like it's easier to relate to a professor and to learn from them, if they have an understanding of you and what you might be going through. Um, and so, I think it's much easier to relate to women professors for me. I don't think it's necessarily the case with all women, like, I was talking to my roommate, she's a physics and envi-sci double major. And so for her she's had mostly male professors. Um, but she was also talking about how like some of the female professors have been the ones to be more like, not sexism necessarily, but like women professors are pushing women out of STEM just as much as male professors are sometimes, which I thought was interesting.

Katelyn: I wonder how much of that too is like, but the insidiousness of sexism in what is already happening, whether or not you realize it. Like, I remember, so not UVA that it happened but when I was in grad school in Colorado, like, I remember working with Fraternity and Sorority Life, actually, and the President of the panhellenic council overseeing all of the sororities, she was a tough cookie, she knew what she wanted and she knew what she needed to do. And I remember saying, 'Oh gosh, Olivia is like judge-y, she's just really rough and pushy. And then someone called me on that and was like, 'If she was a man, would you say that?' and I was like, 'Oh my gosh, you are absolutely right.' And as someone who talks about like differences and life experiences, as someone who's going into that this actual field to be aware of it, and to not even realize my own biases, like, that was a big red flag moment and it is something that I think it takes so much practice to even question like, 'Where did that gut feeling come from? Where does that opinion come from? And, is that something that I need to address and change?'

Ellie: Yeah, definitely. I think also, relating to that with the female Professor thing, I think also that it's helpful because it also helps me unpack those biases. Because definitely there is some internalized misogyny and that like, definitely I'm much harder on my female professors than my male professors. If my female professors, like, mess up, or send me like an email that like has a little bit of tone in it, I'm much more critical of them. And then it's kind of me thinking back and

being like, 'Okay, if my politics Professor sent me this same email, would I be more okay with it?' I think that's definitely part of it, yeah.

Katelyn: And that is a work in progress, because think about, like, how did we get so wired to be this way, and how much work it would take to unwire that when our brains are just kind of making these shortcuts. So, thanks for sharing that. I'm glad that you flag that for yourself and you recognize that too much earlier than I would, you know.

Ellie: I mean definitely I think the Gender Studies major is very eye-opening, like it's something people look down upon, unfortunately they still do like part of the reason I'm double-majoring is because people look at my WGS major and they think, 'Really, like, that's your major?' that's not the whole reason— I also do like politics— but I'm definitely like, it's so eye opening to just learn about where so many of these biases come from. And a lot of people take like, the lower-level WGS courses as like a one-off like to fill a certain Gen-Ed, like second writing and stuff. And a lot of them just get very engrossed in it, because they're like, I've never thought about anything this way before, and I think that's really cool.

Katelyn: Yeah, that's how I fell into sociology as my major was a gen-ed course, and I was trying to figure out what it was I want to major in, and going into sociology. Oh, I think it was like, the sociology of pop culture or something coming into there and being like, 'Oh my gosh, I thought I was the only one who thought these things!' And to feel validated in the connections that I had independently made and realize that there was a whole study behind it. So in that way I was like, 'College is so cool! Learning is so fun!'

Ellie: Yeah. Um, did you have any experiences with like sexism or misogyny at UVA?

Katelyn: Oh I'm absolutely sure that I did, but I, I do consider myself very blessed and very lucky that I am not one-in-four women who have been sexually assaulted you know you hear these statistics and how frequent it is. If anything, I think I actually fell more into the role of what is expected of a woman, or what you would think girls should be acting like. Here's a story and I'll keep it here for you to record and do as you wish, but talking about like the frat parties and things like that. I remember my first year, and you hear these stories of like, 'Oh frat guys won't let guys in unless they're with a girl, so be paired up,' or, 'You should have an easy time getting into a frat party because you're a girl,' and I was like, oh cool that's easy. Never realizing or questioning why is it that women are more welcome— because they're probably preying on you. There's probably lots of bad stuff that could potentially go down. And I remember being at one of the parties and going to the bartender person and they were like, so tell me why I should give you a beer and I'm like, 'cause I'm a first-year girl!' Like, actually used that line just to see how effective that would be, and girlfriend, like that got me a beer, of course, and then I felt really gross like doing that and not as a judgment for anyone who gets the things that they want but just more I knew that did not align with how I really felt, or maybe on a deeper level realizing— Wow, that is just trash, the things that men expect of women, how did I become socialized to think that using this line would get me a beer? So, I think it was in those types of interactions where now looking back on it, I can see like, 'Oh, young Katelyn, you played into these roles and you kind of gave into it.' But in the moment when I was there, I was just kind of going along with the unsaid rules of whatever society expected of me. So, did I girly it up a lot

because that's what a lot of women I saw were doing? Sure, like I played into I think I played a lot into a lot of those sexist roles as opposed to, while I did not maybe experience it directly, or maybe was maybe too aloof or ignorant to actually realize that was pretty sexist, I certainly did play into it.

Ellie: Yeah, definitely. I think the frat culture is where a lot of the sexism comes in.

Katelyn: Right. And then and I think a big part of it too is, this is college and it's so much easier to go with the flow of how things are going as opposed to being the one to stand out. So I just didn't have that confidence in myself at that point to stand alone and be my, my fully authentic self. And as I got older and found the friends that I definitely jive with it, it definitely felt more comfortable. But my first two years definitely there were more of those, 'I'm just going to go do what everyone else is doing.' Even though I knew I had a mind of my own.

Ellie: Yeah, definitely. Um, did you ever like feel pressure to go into or avoid certain majors career fields, either at UVA or beyond?

Katelyn: I knew I did not like politics, and I knew math and science were out for me, so there were definitely things I was like, 'Oh, my brain just doesn't work that way.' It was almost like I did really well in math, all throughout high school until I got to college and then college-level math was just like – Nope, not happening. So I avoided majors or classes that I knew that I was not really interested in, which is why I was so happy to find sociology, and having a passion for those topics and psychology too. So with things that help that maybe learn how people were thinking or the reasons why. Those are the things that I was attracted to.

Ellie: Um, and then, did you notice a disparity in like the population of women and men within sociology major at all?

Katelyn: Oh, it seemed a little bit more even I wouldn't be surprised if there were just more men, but now I'm overthinking that because I had a lot of male professors in that. I don't recall like specifically just the gender distribution for that class, but I remember one of my girlfriends who was going into nursing school, nursing is very skewed to more women. So there are some, some things like that but it was like I always found interesting, like how many men are in Women and Gender Studies major, for example?

Ellie: Yeah, not, not many. I think I'm not sure about the major. Like in the, in the major-required class I took last, I took feminist theory as one of the major requirements and I took that last semester and there was one boy in the class, and I think the class had like 25 people so it was 24 to one. Um, it depends on the course because like right now for second writing, and for a WGS requirement I'm taking a course called "men and masculinities" And so, that one is still female-dominated but there are like, 10 guys instead of one. Obviously, in a 60-person class I think there were like 10.

Katelyn: Have you ever talked with any of those male classmates to understand why they are taking those courses?

Ellie: With the men and masculinity one, most of them are taking it to fill second writing. It's a lower-level second-writing class, it's like 2000-level, so it's an easy requirement filler. Um, some of them, like for my like upper-level WGS courses, a lot of them are in the major. Like one of them is a WGS and politics double major like I am. And they feed very well together, because there is so much like policy and politics based around identities. Another one, in that class. He wants to be a social worker focusing on gender and LGBT-related issues so he's psych and WGS. So a lot of it is the double majors who are there, they want to go into a career that has some gender-based or sexuality-based element. It's very interesting.

Katelyn: I mean, it does make me curious because then it's also like I've shared, there are a couple of things that I didn't really learn about myself in hindsight, and these are reflective questions. So I was just curious, like, what is it like, especially as you are studying women and Gender Studies, what does that look like in your own space and in real time?

Ellie: Yeah, I think definitely part of it is very much in my comfort zone, unfortunately, like when I'm in my politics discussions and politics lectures where they ask people to speak, I am not as comfortable speaking because I'm in the minority. Um, versus in WGS when I'm in the majority, I'm a lot more comfortable and I know I won't be judged as much because I know that we're all their kind of for the same reason.

Katelyn: Well, use your voice, Ellie, because you have very good thoughtful points to make and of course it's easier said than done, but I'm not the one in class. But I think that would be a fun challenge to just see what's on your mind.

Ellie: Yeah, I'm trying.

Katelyn: I believe you; you've got it. So, this is, I hope you recognize my vote of confidence in you.

Ellie: Yes, definitely. Um, what was relationship and hookup culture like while you were while you were here?

Katelyn: Very present, like it's around, it's a bunch of just new college students all over the place. I think it was one of those things where you can come to expect it, and especially when you mix alcohol in there, when you are going out and some people were exclusively looking for a hookup some people were just looking to have fun and then it just kind of happened. So at least within my friend groups, it was just for me as the sociologist, I love people-watching so when anytime like people were about to get together, I think for at least with my friend groups, it was more around like the gossip being part of it after the fact. I definitely noticed a difference between how men versus women were approaching these kinds of escapades or interactions. And there was more shaming around women who did it versus men, like it was still very prevalent back then, like, oh you're labeled as a slut. If you are a woman and hooked up with the same number as a guy does, but guys are "just being guys," so I think for me, like, even after I broke up with said boyfriend, it was just kind of like, who is out there and personally for me I was more looking to hook up with the hopes of relationship as opposed to just the relationship piece. But yeah, that it was there it was part of a college experience and it was just like a constant thing and in my friend

groups, even if we were all friends, who was trying to get with who, or how is this looking and how did that come to be.

Ellie: Yeah, definitely. It hasn't changed too much.

Katelyn: And of course, there's also still like that, you know, young, late teens, early 20s awkwardness around that. Whether it's the dating and hookup culture it's interesting so here's here's a little side story. My current fiancé, he never dated when he was in college, we did not meet in college, he went to school up here in the West Coast. And now we compare like some dating stories because when we first started dating. His name is Brian, he was very awkward at first. And I was just like, I'm gonna keep giving this a try. I think that there are things that you can learn from hooking up if you are in a safe environment and you are comfortable and all that stuff that hopefully helps with, what does life after college look like, because how do you deal with the awkwardness when you're younger and learning how to push through that, as opposed to when you're a little bit older. So I would say that that that is at least a pro that I learned for myself. You know, I'm loving these questions did not know we're gonna get deep into this, too. I love it.

Ellie: No, yeah, we came up with these as a whole class on the first day, and it's a very long list I'm kind of jumping around through them.

Katelyn: Whatever you want, Ellie, and whatever would be most helpful, because clearly, I'm an open book.

Ellie: Um, and kind of similar to the like hookup culture stuff was there any talk about like consent and respect or anything like that?

Katelyn: No, no one explicitly talked about consent. So, Peer Health Educators was another group that I was involved with. When I was a Peer health educator, it was run out of the student health. And that was one of the things that we did talk about was what resources you have if you are choosing to be sexually active, what does sexual health look like, what does health and wellness look like in general, but we did not talk explicitly about how consent is sexy, the way that it is more prevalent now which I'm so grateful for. And I think it goes back to a lot of the awkwardness that I was sharing. Not that that's an excuse not to talk about it but there's always that worry of like, 'Oh, am I going to turn off the mood?' Like, How do I talk about it? things like that. And the narrative that was given to me or at least that was running through my head what. Well, is it the action or engaging in this a form of consent, or do you need that actual verbal consent to make it happen? And I also question too, like, did people in my years know what that was? Because you always hear the fuzzy stories of like, 'Well, she went along with it,' or the ones that I hated were, 'Well, they were out there, so they were asking for it, which I think is such BS. But I'd like to also think that the groups that I was involved with, like we did talk about these things in general, like when it came when you would hear about things happening on the ground, like the groups that I was involved with did take the responsibility of addressing it and thinking about, like, how are we caring for each other. So I knew that those pockets of individuals were there and I'm very grateful that those were the people that I aligned with.

Ellie: Yeah, oh, if you could give any advice to a female student on grounds today, what do you think you would say?

Katelyn: I would say, take up all the space that you want, and that you need. I think women tend to make themselves smaller than they really are, and that those are so many intersecting societal things. Women are expected to be small, like you need to be tiny and quiet. And you have to be like the cool girl and all of these nuanced things. Women are so powerful; women have such thoughtful, empathetic things to contribute. UVA can also still very much be a 'good old boys club,' you see all the privilege that is around you. You know how it is male-slanting when it comes to like the privileges that men at UVA get. And I think that it's important for women to use their platform to push back on things like that, and not just let men take those things, I realize that have this conversation is also very dichotomous, that gender is a spectrum and we've only really been talking about men and women. So, this goes for any gender identities as well, but I want women at UVA to realize how much of a contribution we have; it's still baffles me that women were not fully accepted into UVA until the 70s, which is atrocious. But look at how much we've been able to do in just that little time. Look at all these powerhouses. So I hope that UVA is also a place where women can develop their self-confidence, find the people that are supportive to them and find their voice during this time.

Ellie: Yeah, that's great. Um, And then I guess the last question is what do you think the biggest difference was in terms of your experience that UVA, and what's happening now in 2021.

Katelyn: Yeah. The use of technology and computers and phones and the presence of social media and anything and everything. I still remember using PowerPoint to make, like my flyers for like the screens at school, whereas now there's all of these different websites that you can make everything look cool. You know, and you have to be, like, social media savvy. I think that I thought that I had a good breadth and reach during that time but now the options seem to be so overwhelming like how do you even move forward. So I think the use of technology and social media has certainly changed the way that that things are done at UVA, and it makes me wonder, gosh, would this would be something that I could have competed with when, when I was an undergrad? But I think it just goes to show that we adapt to what is going on in the present. This is what you know so this is simply how it is. But just in general, when it comes to social media, it could be a good thing and then there are things that could be very bad about it so hopefully people being responsible with, with that use.

Ellie: Yeah, definitely. Um, and then is there anything else you want to add like outside of anything I've asked, or anything you want to ask?

Katelyn: Um, I would just say, like, the time at UVA is really so precious. It's just four or five years of being there. I think, take advantage of the opportunities that you can. Lean into that curiosity and dig into whatever it is that you're interested in. Meet as many people as you can but also spend the quality time with the ones that you know you want to have those memories with. So, I hope that in the future when you graduate, you say yes to opportunities to be an involved alumna yourself.