

Christine Pajewski  
Class of 2014  
BSEd in kinesiology, minor in sociology  
(MEd in Counselor Education-Student Affairs from Clemson)

**Interview Questions for Alumnae (Swap out UVA when interviewing non-UVA women)**

1. Tell us a few things about yourself (family, job, things that bring you joy). Her name is Christine Pajewski. She is the oldest of four children and grew up in Charlottesville. She works in corporate communications at Capital One Bank. She enjoys running, cycling, and pre-pandemic she did local triathlons. She also has always held a love for traveling. In 2018, she went to Germany with her husband; they went from Frankfurt to the Barbarian region. She wanted to show him where her father grew up.
2. What is your UVA story? One reason she chose to go to UVA was because it was in state. She felt very lucky to have gotten in and have the opportunity to spend four years there.
  - a. How did you decide to come to UVA? Growing up in Charlottesville, she went to her first UVA football game at two months old. She felt passionate about going to other schools, but the value for in state tuition was a no brainer for her. UVA was very different and served as sort of a bubble. Despite the fact that her dad works at the health system, she could've not felt more disconnected from him; it felt like a whole different world being an undergraduate student there. Ms. Christine commented on Jim Ryan coming in and being more intentional about community touch points, but, there is still a long way to go.
  - b. What did you do when you were a student at UVA? As an undergraduate, she held a lot of leadership positions across the University. She is a member of the class of 2014 board of trustees; she served as a co-chair for her class. She noted the high participation rate (81%) of her class for this trustee organization. She served as captain of the women's

club water polo her third and fourth years. She also was recruitment chair and president of Alpha Chi Omega. She held many summer and school internships with VAF and other organizations.

- i. Were women encouraged or discouraged to join extracurriculars? She believes that women were encouraged to join; this may be because of the type of extracurriculars she completed. In 2010-2014, there were not many conversations about what it means to be a man or a woman. Furthermore, Ms. Christine noted a lack of conversation on sexism in Greek Life. Many women held leadership positions across many clubs and organizations.
- ii. Were some more welcoming than others? She never felt an inherent gender bias. There was a focus on political and social connections in order to be accepted into certain organizations, especially in Greek life. She continued to say that there was a welcoming bias in special status organizations, examples would include recruitment or interviewing. There were many coveted positions in student councils, such as Jefferson Society, which can be described as exclusive.
- iii. Greek life experience? She was a member of Alpha Chi Omega. Recruitment occurred in January, she joined the spring semester of her first year. Greek life was a big part of her college experience for better and for worse. It shaped a lot of her personal development. FSL staff (employees who worked with Greek life chapters) and her chapter advisor were amazing; they focused on leadership development and mentorship. She ended up going into student affairs because of these advisors and their passion. She also experienced the negative effects of Greek life, such as mental and social pressures. She believes Greek life is

financially driven and if it were abolished, students would find other ways to engage in risky behaviors.

3. What is your favorite UVA memory? Her favorite UVA memory happened during her fourth year. The class of 2014 had one of the best fourth years, they were pre the Rolling Stone scandal and pre Hannah Graham. Overall, they were before the national negative spotlight associated with UVA. Furthermore, they were post the 2008 recession so there was no fear of job insecurity. She firmly believes that all of this combined led to a great fourth year. Her favorite UVA memory was going to the first round of NCAA tournaments; UVA was playing Coastal Carolina. She looked back fondly at UVA's team as they remained focused despite close competition. She felt honored to see the rise of UVA men's prominence in basketball.
4. What was a transformative moment for you at UVA? A transformative moment was learning how to say no in any situation. She learned this mostly her second semester of her fourth year. With all that freedom in college, she spread herself too thin throughout the majority of her years at school. She spoke to an advisor in Greek life about student affairs and this advisor taught Ms. Christine that you have to be able to say no in this profession. Saying yes to everything in general only leads to stress. Holistic development is an important focus as well as self-care in college.
5. What was the most challenging thing about UVA? The most challenging thing about UVA was the inherent pressure by everyone to do the most, be the most, and excel in everything. Ms. Christine believes that it's not really talked about a lot and it was seen as cool to be busy. She mentioned that there almost a competition to see who would get the least amount of sleep.
6. Tell us about a woman/women at UVA who inspires you – now, or during your time on Grounds. During her time on grounds, she was super involved. One person she still sees as a steadfast, super passionate leader in the UVA student affairs world is Mary Elizabeth Luzar. Ms. Mary has

been an advisor for the fourth year trustees organization for a while. Ms. Christine noted that Ms. Mary's personality is awesome. Ms. Mary knows exactly what to say and when to say it. She always asks the right questions and considers all perspectives. Lastly, Ms. Mary wanted to make sure people were the best versions of themselves.

- a. What relationships did you form with other women and did you find it easy to make those connections? Yes, she found it easy to make those connections. She grew up with a lot of female friends and continued that during her time at UVA. She was naturally drawn to organizations with women. She loved her women's water polo team. UVA fosters a welcoming and open environment to developing friendships. She wouldn't say that her first year friends continued to her fourth year, but she never had an issue making new friends.
- b. What was the presence of women's groups and movements on campus like? There wasn't a huge movement culture while she was there at UVA. During her fourth year, there was a discussion on bystander intervention and looking out for each other. A heightened sense of awareness was emphasized. Ms. Christine also wanted to mention that Instagram only started her second or third year of college. Previously, Facebook was the most popular during this time. Therefore, she wanted to emphasize that there wasn't a huge ability to mobilize on various social media platforms. With that shift towards the middle of her college experience, the movement culture was able to diversify.
- 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? Ms. Christine would say that about 40% of her classes were taught by women; however, she also sought out courses that were taught by

women like modern dance. She distinctly remembers chemistry and economics being taught by men. She only remembers a woman teaching her introductory biology class in regard to sciences. She majored in kinesiology and the teacher split was still about 60/40 from men to women. Ms. Christine noted that women tended to teach more humanities, such as English and dance. These women did not represent any more diversity or inclusion as they didn't speak to personal backgrounds or experiences.

7. What were your experiences with sexism or misogyny on Grounds? Ms. Christine said that it was rampant. You go to any party or bar, there would be a guy feeling up somebody or trying too hard in an inappropriate way. Some people unfortunately thought it was funny; there was never action taken by any parties to make changes. However, she wanted to note that she had a lot of male friends who were supportive and respectable.
8. Was there an open LGBTQ+ presence when you went to UVA? Yes, she believes there was. Greek life isn't always homogenous as everyone thinks; Alpha Chi Omega girls were open to diversity in her opinion. There were a number of LGBTQ+ (specifically bi and lesbian) girls in their sorority. There wasn't an open fighting for their rights but these women weren't treated differently. She never saw any bias or hate towards these individuals, however, she did want to mention that she did not actively engage in those sort of conversations.
9. Did you feel pressured to go into a certain field or avoid a certain field during your time in college? She did not feel pressured to go into a certain field or avoid a certain field. Her parents were always supportive of her choices in regard to her major. She bounced around different ideas throughout her time at UVA, such as government and biology, before moving into kinesiology. Her female friends who were engineers were mostly system engineer majors and she wonders if there was a pressure to select that form of engineering over other types.

- a. Did you notice a disparity in the population of men and women in your major? She would say that her major was split 50/50. There were a lot of student athletes in kinesiology; many wanted to go into physical therapy and personal training.
  - b. Do you know of any efforts your institution has made since you graduated to make their classes more inclusive? She does not.
10. What was relationship/hookup culture during your time at UVA? She wasn't particularly into hookup culture but she knew many people who participated in that. Many of her friends were always dating someone.
11. Was there any talk about consent and respect on campus? If so, do you think it was thorough/helpful? There were some conversations but it was not thorough at all. While she was there, there were a handful of organizations such as One in Four which tried to talk about consent, but there wasn't a ton about that from the University. Greek life had seminar requirements about topics such as consent and sexual assault. One seminar that stood out to Ms. Christine was about self-defense; she found the skills she learned to be particularly useful for safety awareness.
12. What was your journey after leaving UVA? After leaving UVA, she went into student affairs. After graduation, Ms. Christine went to Clemson. She did a masters in counselor education and student affairs. Her first job was in housing and residence life at University of Notre Dame. There was a fair labor standards law passed in 2016 which made things very difficult/complicated for those employed in housing and residence life. Positions like hers were ultimately cut and given to graduate students. She later went into higher education for a few years. After that, she shifted to communications and she now works in internal communications at Capital One.

13. Is there something you learned at UVA that you apply to your life now? One important thing is learning how to set boundaries for herself and understanding the importance of mental health. She understands that you need to be okay in order to help others. Furthermore, UVA helped illustrate the idea that not everyone is given equal opportunity; individuals come from different backgrounds and this is something everyone should be cognizant of.
14. What does the UVA alumnae community mean to you? How have fellow alumnae affected your life/career/journey? The alumnae community has been super influential for her. She stayed closely connected through the alumnae association; she believes that they do a great job keeping alumnae engaged in what is going on at the University now. She is a part of their Young Alumnae Council, which is a smaller group she finds to be rewarding.
15. In your opinion, what is the legacy of women at UVA? Ms. Christine knows women have not always been permitted the same experiences as men. This also aligns with other marginalized groups. The original students at the University were affluent, white men. Although women and these other groups are not the traditional population when thinking about UVA, we continue to learn about women's and other marginalized groups' contributions. One important example of the University moving forward is the construction of the war memorial for enslaved laborers.
16. If you could impart a piece of advice to a female student on Grounds today, what would you tell her? A piece of advice would be not to worry about the level of intensity and competition on Grounds. It is essential to be open and forthcoming, but know when to say no. Ms. Christine advocates for offering others assistance in their times of need. Lastly, no one should compete over who got less sleep!
17. Is there anything related to women's history at the University that you would like to learn more about? She would like to learn more about the founding of the University. Ms. Christine wants to know how women were integrated in this process and what it was like for the first women to

come to the university. Furthermore, she questions, how has the presence of women as leaders in staff influenced female students?

18. What do you think the biggest difference was in terms of your experience at UVA and what is going on now in 2021? The biggest difference would be the pandemic for sure. Her brother is doing a masters in data science at UVA and she mentioned that he feels very isolated at times. Being on grounds does not necessarily mean you will have a positive student experience. Another change would be social media. She notes that social media is great for information sharing but can also be harmful due to misinformation, cyberbullying and exacerbated comparison between people.

To see examples of responses to these questions go to <https://retolduva.com/alumnae/alumnae-profiles/>

To see examples of self-submitted stories on the [Retold Share Your Story platform](#) go to <https://virginia.brightcrowd.com/retold/sign-in/> The access code is **retolduva**