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Dear Freshman Self,

This is Sophomore Self, writing to you, Freshman Self, after your first, full year of college has passed. It's hard to describe what that year was like, but I intend to do my best and offer you my insights and advice should you ever bravely travel back in time and do it again. I feel surprisingly ordinary about you, freshman year; looking back, it seems as if you haven't yet reached the summit of an impossible climb, but you didn't simply step out of your backdoor either. I know that you were a long, endless experience stretching between midterm to midterm, but in retrospect, time has collapsed our worries, sorrows, and anxieties of the past. Know that whatever you worry about (chemistry midterms), or whatever you anticipate (more chemistry midterms), it will eventually come and go. Put forth your best effort and do not fret.

You never could have anticipated what freshman year would be like; the first time walking into Garrison Gym to take a test, the first time in discussion class, and the first time to oversleep and miss class were as they were, first times. On some firsts, you did surprisingly well! Your first semester GPA was immaculate. (Unfortunately, you played too many games the second semester.) Your first time running to class broke record speeds. On others, you could've done better. You could've kept up the whole gym routine in second semester. You could've made more friends or at least talked to them more so your first, deep college friendships would endure quarantine separation. I'm not sure what kind of "firsts" the future holds for you, but if you care about it and believe that it's good, then that's all you need to stay motivated and keep caring. You won't know about what you've lost only until after it's too late. Have no regrets.

Honestly, freshman year feels like a collection of memorable, special moments rather than a continuous experience. I remember you heading up to the 5th floor of the library the day before your bio midterm with a can of Monster and your stack of notes (that weird, exhilarating feeling of hunkering down to study). I remember all of the Thursday nights you spent in your friend's dorm room. I remember the feeling you had leaving Agnes Arnold Hall after you heard a group of nurses present during a health conference. I remember the view from your dorm room window and the sounds of that train at 4 am. I remember the taste of Moody coffee. I remember the empty sights of campus on a Friday afternoon. I remember the pain of taking a dodgeball to the face. I remember Bonner Bananza. I remember being on campus. The last thing I want you to know is that worrisome things will eventually work out, and I want you to cherish moments like these. I want you to read back on this letter years from now and say that that was your freshman year, your memory and your happiness. I've learned that my life isn't defined by the grades I get, but by the emotions, friends, and moments I have in my college experience. Although I'm still learning, my best advice to you is to keep an eye out for more of those moments in the future to come. And remember them.

With smiles and a cup of Moody coffee,

Allen Huang