

Risa Goluboff:

Dean Blazer is a magna cum laude and five beta Kappa graduate of Boston College and a 2008 graduate of UVA Law School. During law school, she was the editor for the Virginia journal of social policy and the law. She was a peer advisor. She was co-chair of the conference on public service and the law after law school, she clerked for a judge on the UN international criminal tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, and then served as a senior litigation associate at Weil Gotshal and Mandy's before entering the higher education realm, she has served in leadership roles and admissions offices at other top law schools. And we could not be more thrilled to have Natalie back here at UVA law school. And we are delighted to hear from her now, please welcome Dean Blazer.

Natalie Blazer:

I also have a huge smile under this mask. Um, class of 2024, welcome to Virginia law. And your first week of law school, you're here. You are here physically. I'm not, I'm speaking to you from a computer screen. I know we're in masks, but I'm just so excited that we can all be here together in the same room. I know we all had to wake up this morning and put on real clothes. And after the last year and a half putting on real clothes can feel hard, but you all have done hard. You have gone through hard and now you're here. When I sat where you are 16 years ago on August 15th, 2005. I think the hardest thing I had done up until that point was probably get admitted to UVA law. My biggest worry was how much reading we were going to be assigned.

My biggest fear was that first dreaded cold call. Well, it turns out it was a lot of reading and it turns out it was then Dean of the law school Dean John Jeffries, who called on me in my very first class on the very first day of law school, 9:00 AM criminal law. But you know, I had done all that reading and I answered Dean Jeffries questions, and I felt pretty tough for getting through a cold call. I felt tough, which seems very funny. Now what you all have gone through just to get to this point, to be sitting here in those seats, to be admitted to Virginia law in the most competitive law school application cycle on record, on top of everything else going on in the world and in your lives, you are tough. You are strong, you are resilient and unbelievably impressive. I want you to hear me on this point, because about six or seven weeks from now, I think usually around the beginning of October, you're going to start to forget those things. You're going to start to get in your head a little bit, start to feel like maybe you don't belong here. Maybe like the first year of law school is just too heart don't you dare insult my judgment like that.

Remember, you've done heart. Want to know a hard thing I did over the last year. It was tell about 6,400 odd people that they could not come to UVA law. I had to say, yes, I see your near perfect GPA, your LSAT in the 99 percentile. But I'm sorry. It's just not your year. And you know why I did that because it's your year, every single one of you rose to the top of that stack of 7,080 applications, and you showed us what you are made of and you made it so that could not turn you down. So every time you feel like quitting, or like, maybe you're not good enough. I want you to think of those 6,400 odd people who didn't even get the chance to walk through these doors. So now you're here. You've probably heard a million times what a special place Virginia law is.

And you're about to find out just how true that is. And I want you to start by getting to know your professors. These faculty are unbelievably brilliant people. I know they may seem terrifying at first, actually, Dean Jeffries still does terrify me to this day. And it's here in this room. I probably couldn't be giving this talk. Um, but they are also lovely kind. People who want to know you take advantage of the other brilliant people in this place. The people sitting next to you, your peers, your classmates, they're not just going to be by your side for the next three years. They're going to be beside you for a lifetime. They're going to be your general counsel. They're going to be your opposing counsel. Trust me, be nice

to each other. Now it will pay off. They could be your law firm partner. They could be your life partner lean on and into these people around you.

I'll never forget. The first time. One of my section mates invited me to be in his study group. And I really hesitated. I had heard him speak in contracts. This guy was smart. Come to find out. He actually got an A plus in contracts. He was really, really smart. He did not need me in his study group, but he convinced me to join. And I immediately realized, wow, if I'm not taking advantage and every opportunity to learn from my peers, from these classmates, my friends, then I'm really doing it wrong. That classmate who didn't need to include me, that supportive spirit, that collaboration, that is what makes Virginia law so special. That is what we are all about. Lifting each other up and helping one another succeed. If you're one of the people I interviewed this cycle, you probably remember when I admitted you. I told you that I was envious of you at that moment because you had all of this ahead of you and all of you here, you still have all of this ahead of you.

And if you've ever met another UVA law alum, you know, we all kind of feel this way. We want to be where you are right now with our friends about to start this experience that you're about to have. So do us all a favor and make the most of it. I'm going to close just by telling you that I am so excited, excited that the faculty and staff and 2Ls and 3Ls throughout this building are all about to discover what I and everyone else in admissions. He knows that you are tough, that hard doesn't scare you and that you stand ready to meet this next challenge. And more importantly, that you're going to be there for one another. When you start to doubt those things, because those qualities is why we admitted you and not those 6,400 other people, you are going to do the work, but we are going to be here cheering you on and lifting you up just like you're going to do for one another. And for the classes that come behind you and for all of your time as the Virginia Law alum. So class of 2024, I want to once again, welcome you to the Virginia law community, the Virginia law family. And now I'm going to turn it over to your SBA president, Niko Orfanedes.