The Petrillo Platform for the Presidency of the Student Government Association

Christopher Petrillo

Hello,

Some of you may know me—many of you do not. For those who fall into the latter camp, my name is Christopher Petrillo. I currently study mechanical engineering here in my junior year at the University of Vermont. I would like your vote for the office of the Student Government Association President here at UVM for a number of reasons, all stemming from my want to instill productive and lasting change here at the university.

The responsibilities of this office are unknown to a great deal of the student body. Nonetheless, the presidency and the SGA are critical to the operations of the university. The president represents the voice of the student body and is expected to be a zealous advocate for student rights and concerns when interacting with the many levels of administration here at UVM. I am only able to offer you what you believe I may implement through the merits of my character and depth of my compassion for this outstanding university. I ask for your faith in my abilities to perform the duties of this office.

I encourage you to read through some of the issues I have identified here at the university. I am lucky enough to be running alongside my friend Nicole Woodcock, an extremely competent candidate for the vice presidency, who has discussed many of said issues with me at length. I encourage you to read through what I have written and please contact me with any concerns you may have via email: Christopher.petrillo@uvm.edu. Thank you for your time and have a great semester.

On the Issues

Academic Affairs

The SGA Academic Affairs committee has been working on many of the issues I feel are important to address here at the university. The reinstatement of reading days, the availability of syllabi prior to registration and availability of textbook requirements are all current initiatives that must be continually supported to reduce stress and provide students with adequate information on classes in a timely manner. Library hours should be increased, as it is unacceptable to not have proper late night study options beyond dorms and limited on campus facilities. Additionally, the expansion of the drop and withdrawal periods would permit struggling students more time to address academic concerns and not be punished for issues that arise during the semester. A well-prepared student body means more flexibility in the semester and reflects well on the university as a whole.

Financial Concerns
With rising tuition costs around the nation, it is important to student body that tuition costs do not increase disproportionately. Moreover, many students are unaware of what their tuition dollars actually go towards. A readily available, and approachable breakdown of tuition costs gives students information about the high costs of higher education here at UVM. Additionally, it would allow students to take advantage of the resources their tuition provides, or protest against unnecessary spending. Financial issues are some of the most important problems students here grapple with and it is absolutely necessary that the SGA and administration support the student body wherever possible.

Student Health
Students deserve healthcare that is both high quality and accessible. The student health office has a number of issues that make it an inconvenience for many in the student body. With a world-class hospital and medical school meters from the undergraduate campus, students here should absolutely be receiving adequate care. There should be reduced wait times for mental health treatment and consultations. There should be a student health office that has resources, staffing and space that match an undergraduate population of our size in a convenient location. Additionally, hours for many on-campus dining establishments should be changed to better reflect the needs of the student body that pay for such options. Continually supporting and expanding student wellbeing should be a priority of the SGA executive.

Sorority and Fraternity Life
A large portion of the university is part of Greek life here at the university. They are valuable institutions that provide valuable services for many students in the undergraduate population. Greek life is often a controversial issue nationally, but it is undeniable that the organizations here have supplied service to the Burlington area and thousands of dollars to charity while providing valuable social communities for many students here. The SGA and the University Administration should stand with the members of these organizations. It is our responsibility to address many of the concerns surrounding the new social policies that also apply to many students in SGA-recognized clubs. Additionally, the SGA should continue to support the efforts by many members of UVM Greek life to oppose the removal of tax-exempt statuses for their respective properties.

Organizational Outreach and Cooperation
Many of the on-campus organizations that exist beyond the umbrella of the SGA are marginalized by a lack of adequate communication. Better contact between student organizations on campus like IRA, UPB, Hillel, and SGA allows for better outreach and cooperation so that more students may benefit from the resources these organizations provide. It should be a priority to facilitate contact with the leadership of each organization and to emphasize student awareness of these fantastic organizations.

Student Rights
The Student Code here at UVM lists plenty of student responsibilities to the university, but lacks a comprehensive enumeration of student rights. Many students are unaware of the rights, both academic and otherwise, they possess here and the actions they can take to protect those rights. I would like to see an expansion of the code and a greater emphasis on the education of the student body regarding the options available if infractions occur. Students are not powerless when facing administrative complications, but it is difficult to take action when information is not readily available.

**Student Retention**

The university has a responsibility to those who choose to attend to try and provide a quality education and welcoming community. It is unacceptable to see many students leave UVM because of issues involving community involvement. There should be an increased emphasis on providing ample opportunities and information to students during their first years here at UVM and restructuring orientation to better accommodate the needs of students. Information from student exit surveys should be used to target specific shortcomings. With a university as large as UVM, there should be a niche for everyone’s interests and needs.

**Campus Safety**

SGA has recently passed the Safe Ride program, which provides Green Cab rides free of charge for at-risk students back to campus. This program should be monitored closely in its trial run stage to allow for future improvements and optimal implementation. The implementation of university staff or student representatives as third-party intermediaries for off-campus social infractions could reduce the need for police involvement and allow for university outreach to marginalized off campus students. Additionally, it is absolutely imperative that sexual assault issues be properly addressed on campus. It is unacceptable that students still feel unsafe at UVM and in the immediate surrounding area. The University and the SGA must continually strive to improve campus safety.