Platform for Senator Seat, University of Vermont Student Government Association

Rachel Frankenfield

2017-2018

Objectives

● Promote Diversity & Inclusion on campus at UVM.
● Advocate for the cultivation of a healthy and productive academic environment.
● Best represent my peers on SGA senate by being accessible and communicative.

Please read on for further detail regarding my background, experience, and ideas.

Hello,

My name is Rachel Frankenfield, and I am a rising junior at the University of Vermont. I wear many hats on our campus, so you may recognize my name or face for a number of reasons. I am a Residential Advisor in Christie Wright Patterson, working directly with the Wellness Environment. I am a member of University of Vermont Program Board (UPB), currently on the production team and moving this fall to our committee on Arts, Culture, and Film. I am Secretary of Student Dietetics Association. Majoring in Food Systems with a concentration in Nutrition, I am highly engaged within the College of Agriculture and Life Science. Beyond my obligations through these organizations, I make every effort to be present on campus, attending a variety of events and other enrichment opportunities, such as those at the Gund Institute for Ecological Economics, Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont’s annual winter conference in the Davis Center, and Next Step Social Justice Retreat.

If you know me, you know that I care deeply about this university and the experience of undergraduate students within it. If you do not know me, I look forward to meeting and representing you. I welcome you to contact me at any time at rfranken@uvm.edu to say hello.

In my experience campaigning to be and serving as secretary of my high school class, I learned a lot about effective leadership. At the time, I stated my desire to truly know those who I would represent, and made the effort to personally acquaint myself with each member of my class before beginning my campaign. Today, I hold the same value— but having gained a greater understanding of diversity and social justice, I am far more effective in expressing it. To me, it is essential to avoid grouping “the student experience” together without examining the
ways in which that experience differs for various members of our community who may be divided by race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, or any number of other identities held. In my experience as a student leader at UVM, especially as an RA, I have learned to look to others as experts of their own experience. You know the issues that matter most to you, and I ask that you tell me about them from your perspective so that I can represent you.

Personally, I am most concerned about furthering diversity and inclusion on our campus and cultivating the best possible environment for students to perform academically. Please read on about those issues most important to me, and remember to vote on April 12 & 13. I certainly hope you will share this platform and vote for me; but above all I want you to have the Student Government Association that will work for you, regardless of who that may include.

Diversity and Inclusion

The Departments of Residential Life and Student Life are perhaps the most diverse and inclusive communities at the University of Vermont, and it has been an honor and a privilege to be a student leader within both of them. I have learned an incredible amount about how to be more inclusive on our campus and promote diversity in all senses of the word.

The requirement to take classes around diversity (D1 & D2) is a great start, and some of the classes counting toward this requirement offer an excellent basic understanding of the issues as they exist in the United States and on our campus. That being said, UVM students need a better understanding of what diversity and inclusion look like. These issues are largely around race, but extend beyond race to apply to all identities. I have heard “UVM is not diverse” and “but we don’t discriminate based on race” from one too many students, demonstrating a fundamental misunderstanding of diversity and inclusion. The key to a better understanding of these issues is rooted in the leadership of our peers, and thus SGA has the responsibility to uphold and promote diversity on our campus.

Organizations such as Alianza LatinX, Asian American Student Union, and Black Student Union truly serve our community by offering visibility and community to members. These organizations deserve recognition for their work in promoting diversity and inclusion around race and ethnicity on our campus, and every opportunity for collaboration with these organizations and the Mosaic Center for Students of Color (MCSC) as a whole should be examined.

The LGBTQA Center and related groups at UVM are equally essential in promoting visibility, diversity and inclusion. I commend the student-led movement in recent years to use preferred names and pronouns on university documents when possible. Groups such as Free to
Be, QTPOC (Queer and Trans People of Color), and LGBTQuiet provide space for leadership by historically oppressed groups on our campus. The LGBTQA+ student community should be recognized as fundamental to the diversity of UVM, and supported in any way possible by SGA.

**Academic Affairs**

I applaud the recent work of Student Government Association toward the cultivation of a healthy and productive academic environment. We are here to study, and must be supported in our academic endeavors by the administration. Recently, SGA has passed bills to recognize UVM Historical Club, UVM Pre-Physician’s Assistant Club, and UVM Creative Writer’s Guild. While considered part of club affairs, these organizations enrich our academic experience by providing a community around which to gather and are therefore essential to our experience as students. I am a firm believer that the student experience, to be whole, must extend outside of the classroom— and groups like these are the first step for many students toward greater extracurricular involvement and leadership.

SGA has worked to reinstate reading days after receiving (and listening to!) student feedback. These actions and many more reinforce the priorities of SGA, an organization I will be proud to join.

Further action required includes monitoring student mental health closely to examine how academic changes influence overall college experience, and extends to considering any and all feedback presented by students in the coming year about what changes would best support their education at UVM. Our president-elect, Chris Petrillo, speaks to the ways in which we can improve mental health care at UVM and I look forward to his leadership in this area.

I reiterate that I will prioritize the issues most important to those I represent, but I value the opportunity in this context to speak to the issues I feel most passionate about. I hope that the contents of this platform show that I want and am willing to advocate for the best possible student experience for each of you. If not, please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns about my platform or candidacy.

Thank you for your consideration and for participating in SGA elections!

Sincerely,
Rachel Frankenfield
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