



UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT

STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

**Senate Resolution No. :** R.S.1

**Date Submitted:** 2/27/2024

**Date Introduced:** 2/13/2024

**Introduced By:** Senator Poland  
Committee on Diversity, Inclusion & Equity

**Date Action Taken:** 2/27/2024

**Sponsored:**

Senator Poland

**Certified:**

Speaker of the Senate Clark

**Signed:**

President Eisenberg

**Resolution Addressing President Garimella's Response to Campus Conflicts**

WHEREAS, the administration of The University of Vermont, henceforth referred to as UVM, as well as UVM Student Government Association, henceforth referred to as SGA, holds the values of acting in spirit of the UVM Common Ground,

WHEREAS, the UVM Common Ground statement reads, “We reject bigotry, oppression, degradation, and harassment, and we challenge injustice toward any member of our community.”<sup>1</sup>,

WHEREAS, President Garimella, and all UVM presidents, holds the responsibility of representing all UVM students and ensuring they feel properly supported,

WHEREAS, campus climate and student testimony strongly suggest that President Garimella has continued to fall short in responding to various conflicts throughout the UVM community,

WHEREAS, President Garimella's responses to campus conflicts consistently fall short of the empathy that the student body needs and deserves,

WHEREAS, in the fall of 2022, President Garimella responded to anti-semitic behavior, reported through the OCR investigation, stating, “The uninformed narrative published this week has been harmful to UVM.”<sup>2</sup>,

WHEREAS, President Garimella’s initial response to the anti-semitic behavior focuses on the reputation of UVM instead of properly expressing concern for the well-being of Jewish students,

WHEREAS, after speaking with impacted Jewish student groups across campus following the OCR investigation response, President Garimella was able to engage in insightful conversation to help support Jewish communities going forward,

WHEREAS, in the fall of 2023, President Garimella responded to a shooting incident on North Prospect Street, stating, “In this period of unrest in other regions of the world, we encourage you to pay close attention to the sources and authenticity of information you receive about this incident. We ask you to do your part in helping to avoid speculation as the investigation progresses.”<sup>3</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.uvm.edu/president/our-common-ground>

<sup>2</sup> Garimella, Suresh. “OCR Investigation.” Received by Students of the University of Vermont, 15 Sep. 2022

<sup>3</sup> Garimella, Suresh. “Shooting incident on North Prospect Street, November 25.” Received by Students of the University of Vermont, 26 Nov. 2023.

WHEREAS, President Garimella’s suggestion to “avoid speculation” ignores overarching national issues of Islamophobia and anti-Palestinian rhetoric surrounding recent events worldwide, that has seen an increase in violence across campus,

WHEREAS, the Chief of Safety & Compliance Officer, Michael Schirling, responded with an email which was more comprehensive in addressing student concern and feelings, stating, “University leaders are particularly aware that our Arab, Muslim, and Palestinian community members feel specifically targeted at this time. There is no room for hate at UVM and we ask everyone to come together in helping to keep our campus conducive to the learning, working, and recreation that are hallmarks of the UVM experience.”<sup>4</sup>,

LET IT BE KNOWN, the SGA recommends going forward President Garimella implement a more similar rhetoric to the statement of Michael Schirling in response to future campus conflicts,

LET IT BE KNOWN, President Garimella’s initial responses to various incidents do not accurately represent the feelings of all UVM students, and compromise the values and shared experiences of UVM students,

LET IT BE FURTHER KNOWN, the impact of the president’s responses to campus conflicts has had negative effects on the student body, such as perceptions of safety and well-being for affected student groups, as an anonymous student quotes, “I have lost faith in their promise to protect and vouch for all students... I have felt unsafe on campus especially in light of the recent events.”<sup>5</sup>,

BE IT RESOLVED, the UVM SGA does not stand by President Garimella’s responses, which have been deemed insufficient,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the SGA suggests that, going forward, President Garimella and following UVM presidents, show equitable understanding for students, and should respond with compassion, nuance, and empathy for impacted communities,

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<sup>4</sup> Schirling, Michael. “Campus Safety.” Received by Students of the University of Vermont, 27 Nov. 2023.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the SGA suggests that the UVM President speaks with members of the SGA senate during public forum at least once a semester, in order to establish a more concrete form of communication and best express student concerns,

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, the SGA suggests that President Garimella and following presidents, work with trained communications staff to integrate empathy and thoughtfulness into future campus conflict responses in order to best show support to impacted student communities.