SGA Opinion Document
University of Vermont 2018 Presidential Search

Hello Chair Daigle,

Below, I have compiled a list of answers to the Search Committee’s questions regarding the Presidential Search in the eyes of UVM’s Student Government Association. I forwarded your message to SGA’s Executive Committee, asking them to urge their Senators to answer and provide their opinions as well. I also announced the need for SGA to answer these questions at our most recent Senate meeting, expressing to everyone the importance of responding to the Search Committee’s questions. I did this in order to paint the most accurate picture of SGA’s views and opinions on the Presidential Search, and hope that this information is useful for the Search Committee. Below are the answers of SGA representatives, copied and pasted into this document. Thanks in advance to the Search Committee for taking student perspective into account.

Ethan Foley
President
Student Government Association
University of Vermont ’20

1. **What opportunities do you see facing the University of Vermont in the next ten years?**
   I see great potential for growth. Opportunities for out-of-state students to find more affordable and accessible ways to pay for their UVM education. Opportunities for students to engage more deeply with the Burlington community and cultivate meaningful relationships through more effectively run Programmed Housing. Opportunities for students to benefit from a new Recreation facility in the Multipurpose Center. Opportunities for students to find more affordable housing, and also face less challenges with Food Insecurity. The next ten years should have an emphasis on affordability and remembering students who may not be the most vocal on campus, but may also have the most needs.

The university has done an incredible job of providing funding for internships and expanding the offerings of outside-the-classroom opportunities for students to gain professional experience in their fields of interest. Continuing to offer these experiences, especially for students pursuing Fine Arts degrees and other humanities-based majors, is crucial. The University needs to network with more Vermont businesses so that students have more prospective in-state job opportunities upon graduating. With recent activism spurring a university focus on diversity, UVM has the opportunity in the near future to affirm its commitment to becoming a more inclusive institution by providing greater support to retain students and faculty of color and developing its Diversity Fellows program. Some problems are inherent with having such a small percentage of POC on a
majority-white campus, but this percentage has increased over the past 20 years, and it is essential to continuing this upward progress.

In the next ten or so years I see the University facing big changes in both the size of our school (more student and faculty/staff) and the prestige. The acceptance rate for the University will go down, especially for in state students. UVM will continue to considered the Public Ivy.

Increasing number of undergrad applications; Technology/ access to data/ data on the university; Multi-purpose center; Student activism- interest in change on and off campus- students are passionate, set goals, and work to achieve them.

The University of Vermont is a constantly changing place, so many environmental, academic, and social change has been happening; An environmentally friendly and aware president would be ideal!

Continuing growth of incoming class GPAs + test scores, improving status as strong university. Opportunity to position ourselves as a very accepting and open campus, welcoming students of all backgrounds particularly by improving racial diversity and sexual/gender diversity. Ability to divest from fossil fuels and make name for ourselves as green institution.

Increase in the amount of talent pulled from all over the world. Increasing the commitment to social justice and environmental ethics. Become more prestigious and difficult to get into for graduate and undergraduate admissions.

With each year, a new group of applicants will apply to UVM that will bring about the skills, diversity, and background necessary for UVM to succeed as a top-level institution; further access to data and technology for all students; more students are paying attention to the world around them, likely meaning larger student participation and activism in our community.

An emphasis on entrepreneurship, research and other forms of experiential learning.

Talented students and faculty.

Making campus more green, divesting from fossil fuels, more on campus/reasonably priced housing for upperclassmen, diversification of student body, diversification of faculty and staff, continuing to give scholarships, improving first year experience/retention rates.

Leadership in sustainability, better student health services, more diverse student body.

UVM has a great chance to become a leader in Environmental Science programs. The environment is an enormous part of what makes Vermont, Vermont, interns of public image, tourism, and government policy. Though UVM has a great program, there is an opportunity to grow this field even more and really become a national leader.

With a growing college population around the country, I see more applicants for UVM.
Greater connection with surrounding schools, potential to create a state school network akin to the SUNY system, with great cross-collaboration and in-depth co-op opportunities for students. Our messaging and institutional values based on wellness, social justice, and environmental stewardship are pretty bold compared to other schools. If the University is willing to use the test-bed of Vermont and take risks based in belief in what’s right, we could be real leaders in the future of the changing higher education landscape.

I see the university in a prime position to overcome many social barriers regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion within the next ten years. We can continue to strive to become an accepting, safe space for students of all backgrounds and identities in the years to come.

There is already a great opportunity for new leadership bringing in new ideas. I can’t imagine how many more high level positions in the University will be changing in the next 10 years. I think it is important that leadership changes at a good rate to keep ideas fresh and to make sure the school is "keeping up”.

The community and institution as a whole is proactive and generally open to new ideas with cautious moderation. I think a new president can bring new initiatives to UVM and get a lot of receptive feedback. Additionally, Burlington is emerging as a tech-hub and I see potential in expanding UVM's stake in that domain.

2. **What challenges do you see facing the University of Vermont in the next ten years?**

Challenges include ensuring that affordability is kept in mind, especially for out-of-state students. UVM’s administration should be consciously trying to find means other than student tuition dollars to pay for development and institutional expenses. Making a conscious effort to work with the State House to try and find ways for the Vermont State Legislature to better fund UVM would greatly benefit students, and will be a challenge. This should absolutely be a priority. Additionally, knowing that the most vocal students on campus, especially when only representing a single political viewpoint, often do not accurately represent the majority of students’ opinions. Student groups that consciously try to represent all students on campus should be listened to and called upon to provide input.

UVM is experiencing the growing pains of being a state institution that is expanding its course offerings and revamping its facilities to attract the high caliber students that it continues to welcome each year. With decreasing state funding, it is important that UVM have a presence in Montpelier. The university and the state must work together to provide a job market that attracts graduating students to stay in the state, and solve an affordable housing crisis that creates a barrier to staying. It is essential to advocate for greater state funding to prevent tuition increases that sink students in so much debt, they are unable to pursue their passions post-graduation.

I see the University facing increasing pressure for Diversity, specifically a push for gaining more students and faculty/staff of minority communities. But I encourage the committee to remember
that this school is the state University, and it is very important to be supportive if in-state students opportunities to stay here in VT.

Housing shortage; Divestment; demand for diversity; restructuring CAS (meet needs of students while being practical for enrollment numbers); political identity of campus (remain welcoming and allow respectful expression of all sides of political spectrum/opinions.); Cost of attendance/cost of operation; Gender ratio- less men going to college.

We foresee UVM facing quite a few social justice issues. We believe that there have been many steps in the right direction although having a president who is completely onboard with allowed student of all identities is ESSENTIAL!

Racial tensions on campus (fueled by current political climate); Continuing to improve our standing as a 'public ivy'.

How expensive it is to attend University, not just UVM, but Universities all over the country. More and more folks might end up skipping out on the opportunity to come to a campus to study such as UVM. It is a privilege to study at a school like UVM, and many can't afford it. Moving too quickly to prioritize STEM rather than a holistic approach to achieving a Bachelor’s degree. Ignoring the needs of students in underrepresented communities, because this will push more of these identities away from UVM. We should be embracing and serving people of all identities.

The lack of care for the current Mental Health facilities and resources. The challenges that the College of Arts & Sciences are facing, even though it's the largest of the schools. Housing. Cost of Attendance / Tuition continuing to increase. Diversity. Lack of transparency between the Administration and the Student Body. Continuing to balance the different majors / fields of study and showing each equal respect, especially in an increasingly STEM-focused world.

Funding, especially for the Arts & Sciences as we have been pushing STEM in order to “keep up” with our comparator schools. Also recruiting a more diverse student body across a range of backgrounds.

Student retention.

Continuing to find ways to be sustainable, divesting from fossil fuels, programs like RLCs not going as planned, actually making students want to leave, diversification, restorative practices.

Inability to attract more diverse student body, housing crisis, apathy.

The cost of attendance is a huge concern for UVM. Though there are many aspects of UVM that are a great draw, there are also alternative options to getting say a History and English degree that are cheaper for out-of-state students. Given the state of higher education as a whole, increasing the cost of education runs the risk of hurting UVM. I would also caution UVM to look into alternative
classroom styles; though online and hybrid classes can be great, there is also a lot to be said for in person (traditional) style, and field work classes and labs. As trends in higher education shift, UVM administration needs to keep in perspective not only cost, but also what value UVM education is giving students.

Our national trend away from the arts and humanities has led to concerning decline in CAS enrollment at the start, and reduction in retention rates for students in the college. Without serious evaluation of the mission of CAS, the purpose and value of a broad-based liberal arts education, and the emphasis placed on in-unit SCH and headcount, we may wind up losing our oldest college. UVM is growing, and Vermont is barely big enough to sustain us. Unless we find ways to grow laterally (like with a state system), the divide between the ivory tower and the community it came from will grow, and funding and support from the state may be impacted. The relationship between UVM and the legislature could use some work.

I see my previous answer surrounding diversity inclusion as also being one of the main challenges the university will face in the next ten years. Overcoming prejudice and implicit bias in order to overcome these barriers is not an easy feat.

In the past year I think we saw that a good portion of the University’s students were not happy with how certain things were operating or being handled. I think one of the toughest challenges will be working to find a middle ground between students and the administration/faculty/staff to make sure that students and professors are satisfied with the environment they are expected to live and work in every day while also complying with the University’s standards.

I have experienced a general notion of students coming to Vermont for their education but not to continue their career here beyond graduation. Part of this is from resistance by the state and its residents to allow for development. Keeping development concentrated in urban centers like Burlington, building up and not out is a decent compromise.

3. **What professional qualifications/experiences should the next president possess?**
   
   An individual with a plethora of experiences, even experiences outside of Higher Education, would be valuable. President Sullivan’s expertise in Constitutional Law has been invaluable to the UVM community, and I am proud of the work he has accomplished. Finding another president with the breadth of experience with which President Sullivan entered UVM will be difficult, but should be a priority.

   Has held a position working directly with students. Competency in the political sphere so as to be a strong advocate for UVM.

   To have experience is the biggest key. Understand how this University works and what it needs to succeed in the future.
Capital fundraising experience; Management/leadership role in large organization or institution; communication—well spoken, can relate with all types of people; Connections—established professional career that can help to fulfill projects and better the institution.

A friendly and self-less president is essential. It is extremely important for this person to be approachable with their ego aside; Socially aware, UVM has some of the most diverse identities and it is extremely important for everyone to feel comfortable on this campus.

Previous leadership positions hopefully in higher education; Understanding of climate at UVM.

Experience tailored to working with all levels of an administration, along with a history of working with the people that the administration itself governs.

Experience in the academic world would certainly be a plus for somebody taking an academic position. Communication / Oratory skills, especially in terms of negotiation with others. Previous management / leadership experience. Fundraising experience, Connections, connections, connections.

Leadership experience in a complex and dynamic environment, but I do not think it necessarily has to be explicitly academic. The knowledge of how academic institutions function is crucial but I think the experience in that environment isn’t crucial, we could benefit from outsider thinking.

Professionalism, background in Higher Ed.

Ability and desire to work with students, listening skills, team oriented, works for firstly for students.

Time in senior leadership at another institution, experience in student services, and communication skills.

The incoming President should either have served as a Provost or President at another University either similar in size to UVM or perhaps a bit smaller. UVM has a unique feel to it, as well as a unique governance structure, and having experience as a higher level administration in higher education is extremely important for the incoming President. Skills with fundraising and initiating long terms plans, as well as being able to manage smaller things that come up will also be essential skills for the next President.

Our next president should be knowledgeable about UVM along with being well spoken and generally a great leader.

They should have a broad array of experience in higher ed—serving not just as provost or another high-ranking academic/administrative position, but also in student affairs, teaching or advising, etc. You can’t pull one string at UVM without twelve others coming along, and they should have the understanding of that complexity.
The next president should have experience working with diverse groups of students, as well as an ability to relate to students and communicate with them effectively.

I honestly would love to see someone who is a former professor, someone who has experience working in a classroom with students and then can apply that experience and knowledge to the expectations of the President of UVM.

Integrity has always been key to me. One must, not just should, lead by example. If he or she is to be respected by faculty and students alike, the new president needs to practice what they preach.

4. What personal leadership characteristics should the next president possess?

A good listener, effective communicator, and someone who consciously seeks to connect with the Student Body and UVM Community would be highly beneficial. Finding someone who puts forth great effort to understand the climate at UVM, and can act as a productive facilitator for conversations that include individuals with all perspectives is crucial. It is important to hire an individual who has the intent of making sure all voices are heard, not just the loudest ones.

Persuasive, engaging public speaker; Knows when to listen despite extensive education and experience; Ability to welcome uncomfortable conversations in the interest of progress and community-building.

I would like the committee to find a president that holds themselves with the highest dignity. Seeing the political state of our country at this time has reminded me how important it is to be composed. I would also like the future president to be kind, thoughtful, and engaged.

Ability to say no- take a stance on positions and do what is best for the whole institution, community, state, country; Sense of the people- able to gather the opinion of the community.

Leadership is a tough word, because many believe that leadership means “power”, although we believe that leadership means the ability to help others, and to facilitate wonderful things to happen on campus. Someone who can listen, the most essential tool one can have in both life and this position is the ability to hear what someone is saying and to truly listen.

Wanting to work with students and hear (especially) minority opinion; Ability to connect with youth.

Empathy and Humility.

An optimistic view on life. A desire to make change in the system; a sense of justice. An understanding of multiple views, even those that go into conflict with one-another.

A commitment to equity & inclusion with a drive for progress through innovation.
Good at public speaking and listening.

Kind, assertive in a positive way, able to understand people of different identities.

Transparency and honesty.

The next President should be able to delegate, inspire, and make others feel valued. For someone stepping into this position, the hiring committee should be cautious about hiring someone with a large ego, or someone who can seem standoffish. Though it is important for a leader to be able to hold their ground, also being open and making others feel heard are important qualities. UVM has a very involved staff, faculty, and student body, as well as close ties to the Burlington community and the state government. The next leader will need to be able not only to take these perspectives into consideration, but be able to work collaboratively with a wide range of people.

The next president should be able to lead by example and already have had many leadership positions.

They need to be a good listener, a good communicator, and should be steadfast in their direction for the institution, and have belief in their vision, but should be willing to listen to input from their constituents about how best to get there.

The next president should be inclusive in his leadership. It is important for presidents to be able to take the opinions of students into account along with his fellow administrators.

The next president should be willing to work with students and staff on all matters regarding the university. Students are paying a lot of money to come to UVM and their opinions should be heard and taken into consideration.

Lead by example.

5. What other considerations should the Presidential Search Committee bear in mind as we initiate the process?

Intentionally seeking a candidate who will listen to all perspectives and not only side with the most vocal group is imperative. Someone who has a firm grasp on finance, business, education, and productive facilitation should be chosen. I am encouraged to see Xavier Giddings is serving on the Search Committee. His perspective is one that I firmly believe accurately represents undergraduates, and I put my full trust in him to represent the student body. Listen to what he has to contribute.

Representation is important, so please seek a diverse pool of candidates. Take student input strongly into account; universities are oftentimes run like businesses, but fostering an environment of creativity and academic curiosity is of utmost importance.

I would like the University to think about getting someone who can best represent ALL the students on this campus. There are some more vocal groups on campus, and I hope that their presence
doesn't sway the committees decision. All students will be affected by this choice and remembering that with be crucial.

We need a strong leader that is committed to progress and advancement. Sets aggressive goals and coaches/motivates/directs the university to accomplish them. Diversity is important and it comes in many forms. Above all we need to select the candidate that is most qualified to lead the university on an upward path.

Overall, a really intelligent and friendly person is what we need. We have so many people who handle policy, and who handle the nitty gritty stuff on campus. We need someone who we can talk to, and truly enjoy the conversation. We need someone who we see more then once or twice a semester. This person should be a familiar face on campus.

I hope that we can break the mold and diversify our leadership at UVM.

Shake things up, and pick someone who is extremely passionate about making a drastic change in how the University will better itself for the future. Please do not pick any person who is generic or thinks that no change is needed. UVM is wonderful, but it can always be improved upon.

At the end of the day, the best candidate will win. For me, the next President of UVM must be somebody who believes in helping all succeed, and puts the community as a whole ahead of self-interest. Should they commit to that, only then will UVM be recognised as a great school of progress and achievement, and one that reassures students that they made the right choice in attending our school.

Candidates from unique backgrounds to foster new modes of leadership in both style, experience & ideals.

You are voting and speaking on behalf of 10,600 students. Keep ALL of them in mind. Include student input as much as possible and at every step of the way.

President Sullivan did a wonderful job raising money for UVM but now it is time to have a President who will take action and make big changes on campus.

President Sullivan has been an amazing leader for UVM and one of the best Presidents UVM has had. His kind demeanor, professional presence, open personality, and detail oriented goals have led UVM to an incredible position. In looking toward the future, his accomplishments and legacy should be kept in mind, while also recognizing room to grow. Higher education is changing, and UVM is not a nimble institution when it comes to making changes. Bringing someone in who may be able to shake things up, while still preserving the amazing work that was done before could do wonders for the school. In picking the next President, it is not only about picking the right person for the job, but picking the person who will be true to what it means to be a member of the UVM community and someone who will continue to improve this university, just as President Sullivan was able to do.
We need somebody who is ready to lead the student and faculty population in an ever-divided world that we inhabit.

Look broadly. Obvious answer, of course, but I feel like the past presidents we’ve had have been very similar in experience and identity. Though someone’s qualifications should be the reason for their hiring, not purely their identity, I would challenge this group to ask why UVM has had only one female president in its history, and no people of color have held the office. Whoever is in the office should have an understanding of the issues students and faculty who hold marginalized identities face, and should be able to make decisions in the context of today’s college student, not the Ivy-league white male college student of decades past. Find someone who can keep UVM headed in the academics-first, research emphasizing, community based direction it is in now. President Sullivan has completely reshaped UVM’s image, and this juncture is important for whether we maintain that progress, or whether we plateau.

The Presidential Search Committee should search for authenticity as they initiate this process. I would like the University of Vermont’s next president to genuinely want to make a difference on campus.

I think diversity is something that cannot be overlooked here. Diversity and diversity based issues were one of the biggest student complaints about President Sullivan. I think if the University wants to show students they hear them, understand them, and respect them, diversity needs to play a role, whether that’s someone that brings diversity to the table themselves or someone who has committed to making diversity a key issue in their past professional experiences and will do so here and has a track record to back it up.

I will always hire an enthusiastic but less experienced candidate over an apathetic professional. Skills can be taught, interest cannot.