CANDIDATES FOR PRESIDENT

Michelle DiPinto

My name is Michelle DiPinto and I would like to nominate myself for the 2017-2018 GSS President of the Graduate Student Senate.

Over the past three years, I have become increasingly involved with the graduate student population, first as a senator of the Chemistry department, then as the Program Outreach Coordinator (now Communications Director), and this year as the Vice President of the Graduate Student Senate. I am in my fourth year as a Chemistry graduate student and I have enjoyed being a part of GSS and making a difference in the graduate community.

In this time, I have learned about the administration of the University of Vermont. The connection between graduate students and administrators as well as the Board of Trustees is the reason for the existence of GSS and my hope is to continue to improve the quality of graduate life using these pathways as a liaison in the role of president. Next year I hope to improve the quality of graduate student life through making avenues of mental health more available to the graduate community and continue to bring up housing issues pertaining to graduate students.

I have had the pleasure of forming relationships with senators and representatives this year, with a group of 32 graduate students who have brought forth ideas, concerns, and questions for current and future graduate students. It is in these discussions that I have been able to speak on behalf of graduate students to Cindy Forehand, the Dean of the Graduate College, President Sullivan, and in front of the Board of trustees on the Educational Policy and Institutional Resources Committee to bring up concerns with our unique student population.

I am more than willing to discuss your success (both personal and professional), challenges, and anything else you feel that I can do in this next year as your president. I really do believe we can do great things together to improve the quality of life for graduate students now and in the future.

Ethan Grey

My name is Ethan Grey, and this is my official self-nomination for the position of President on UVM's Graduate Student Senate Executive Council. I am a UVM Public Health graduate student additionally enrolled in the post bac premed program. With one year remaining until graduation, it is my hope to serve UVM's graduate students in the greatest capacity possible. Coincidently, the capacity of President of the Executive Council aligns with my abilities, experiences, and goals to proudly serve for the betterment of the University of Vermont and its graduate students. This is what I have to offer:

- Years of post-secondary & professional school student leadership
- Experience working directly with administrations representing student interests and goals
- Experience overseeing and regulating sub-committees within student government
- Experience balancing and crafting student organization/club budgets for the academic year
- Refined and routinely tested debate, public speaking, & negotiating skills
- A commitment to strengthen administrative & graduate student cohesion and presence

I am a born and raised Vermonter, and have lived in Vermont for most of my life. I achieved a Bachelors of Science in Criminal Justice with a minor in Political Science before briefly attending Albany Law School. My undergraduate extra-curricular resume includes serving as President and Vice President for several clubs/organization, while leading a competitive mock trial team as
Captain. Pertinently, my last student government position was serving as an elected Senator at Albany Law, sitting as one of the heads for the Student Ethics Committee. Serving in those capacities for professional/graduate schools affords me the experience to operate on this level, and with your vote I would be grateful for the chance to use my skills and training for your best interests. My goals would involve increasing graduate student presence, recognition, and morale. I would avidly work with UVM’s administration to see the interests of its graduate students are being acknowledged and met. Finally, I want to see that graduate students are satisfied while they are here, and prideful when they leave. My words mean nothing unless put into action, and I would be honored to show you what I can do for you. Thank you for your time.

Sean Morris

As a masters student in the Department of Community Development and Applied Economics, it’s extremely important to me to support and develop the graduate school community at UVM. The current GSS has made tremendous progress in the last several years as the group has become more legitimate in the eyes of the administration. I want to build on this momentum but also to assert the mission of the GSS to enhance academic and nonacademic aspects of graduate student life. As President, I would place an especially high emphasis on supporting international students as they transition into life at UVM (especially with respect to the difficult housing market in Burlington) and work with the administration to leverage the University’s resources to this end. A second goal would be to increase programming and events for orientation for new and returning students at this important time of year. Finally, I want to support an inclusive and fun culture within the GSS itself. As is, most of the graduate students at UVM exist in separate bubbles. Unfortunately, as many of us can relate, graduate school can be an isolating period for many; the GSS is in a unique position to foster a more supportive culture at the University that supports us as people as well as student/scholars. Thanks for considering!

Warm Regards,
Sean Morris
CANDIDATES FOR VICE PRESIDENT

Joseph Campbell

I, Joseph P Campbell, would like to run for the Graduate Student Senate Vice President for the 2017-2018 term. There is nothing more powerful than a unified student body when pursuing change and striving to better the student experience. This is something I have noticed throughout my career in a variety of executive councils including the Massachusetts Association of Student Councils(MASC) and the positions of Treasurer and President in the Student Government Association at Wheaton College. The Graduate student body represents one of the most diverse group of students spanning many different programs, backgrounds, and ways of life. With this diversity comes a wealth of knowledge and untapped potential as to how to better enhance the graduate student experience. As Vice president, I would be responsible to compile these ideas and in conjunction with the senate make many of these ideas become a reality. Over the past few years the senate has identified several important items that affect every day student lives; among them competitive stipends and Graduate Housing. As vice president, we will take these lucrative conversations and turn them into tangible outcomes. It is my goal to enhance the potency and effectiveness of the graduate student senate and not only make for a better graduate student experience but also in building a stronger graduate community here at the University of Vermont.

Leslie Sepaniac

I want to be Vice President of the Graduate Student Senate to become more involved in representing the interests of UVM graduate students. As Vice President, my goal would be to involve a wider range of graduate students from more programs, and engaging the Graduate Senate body to actively represent a larger group of graduate students at UVM. As a senator for the Cellular, Molecular, and Biomedical Sciences program, I have become more aware of and involved in GSS activities and the role GSS plays in representing graduate student interests to the UVM administration.

I served for three years as the Vice President and then President of the Dance Club at my undergraduate institution, one of its largest and most active clubs on campus. This provided me with experience in developing working relationships with campus administration and bringing people from different programs and backgrounds together to work toward a common interest.

Thank you for your consideration,
Leslie Sepaniac
CANDIDATES FOR COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

Jessica Bocanegra

I, Jessica L. Bocanegra, would like to run for the Graduate Student Senate Communications Director for the 2017-2018 term.

As an undergraduate at The College of New Jersey, I was a part of the Student Chemists Association (SCA) and Kappa Delta Sorority. Holding the position of Formal Chair on the SCA Executive Board, I was able to bring about positive change by starting the first annual spring formal. As assistant Panhellenic Delegate in Kappa Delta, I facilitated weekly meetings, ensured communication between the other sororities and fraternities on campus, and organized events with other chapters on campus.

Here at UVM, I am the acting Head TA for CHEM 031 & 032 lab sections in the department and formulate questions and answers for TAs to use to review concepts with their students each week. I’ve made an impact on our TA group by creating an online survey that TAs can fill out to assess students’ comprehension of current concepts during recitation each week. I also hold the position of Chapter Advisory Board member of Alumni Relations for the Alpha Theta chapter of Kappa Delta at UVM (help plan an annual alumni reunion for local KD alumni and approving the alumni newsletter). Currently, I run the Kappa Delta Greater VT Alumnae Chapter Facebook page, where I keep the alumni informed on upcoming alumni events/opportunities.

If elected as Communications Director, I will lead the Graduate Student Senate in building its social media presence. Since social media is a major form of communication for our generation, I believe we should use it to our advantage! I would like to maintain a Snapchat profile for GSS to post upcoming events and start a Snapchat series called “take over Tuesday” (graduate students from different programs could show us what a day in their shoes is like). I would also like to start an Instagram series called “for the future Friday” (a more senior graduate student would answer questions and give words of advice regarding their experience in the UVM graduate program). These series will open up a new channel of communication between graduate students that we’ve never had before, and make us a more cohesive and supportive group.

Although e-mail is a great tool to communicate between the graduate students and the Senate, I strongly believe that social media could be an easy and quick way to spread the word about graduate student events, GSS meetings, professional development events, etc. Communication is key to the successful operation of any program, organization, or department. By increasing our use of social media and incorporating these series, graduate students can engage with GSS in a more modern and personal way.

Sami Jarjour

As a master’s student in the Community Development and Applied Economics program, I am especially interested in generating more involvement from graduate students in GSS decision-making and activities. Important institutions are better held accountable and produce more advantageous outcomes when there is significant community involvement in these institutions. And without effective communication, graduate student engagement will be weak and unimpactful. That is why I am interested in the position of Communications Director. As a budding political activist, communication is something I have closely researched and practiced to be able to reach the public in effective ways. I have created numerous pamphlets on various issues, from increasing the minimum wage to strengthening democratic political institutions to creating a democratic economy. With regard to the GSS, I would like to pursue participatory budgeting as a means to allocate the GSS budget. This process is a form of direct democracy that would
allow any and all graduate students to vote on how the GSS budget is allocated. I appreciate you considering me for this position and I hope I can serve the graduate student community well.
CANDIDATE FOR TREASURER

Jesse Cases-Villablanca

I would like to be considered for the position of Treasurer in the Graduate Student Senate. I believe I am an ideal candidate for the position because of my skill set, my educational experience and, my prior work experience.

I have an MS in Actuarial Science from the Fox School of Business at Temple University. Before entering my program at UVM, I worked in corporate insurance as an actuary for The Hartford – a company with roughly $250 billion in total assets. Part of my responsibilities was to aid the finance department in setting the prospective year’s budget for my department and reporting on my department’s financials every month and quarter. Therefore, I have experience setting budgets and monitoring financial performance. I have also passed an actuarial exam that covered the topic of financial mathematics, making me uniquely qualified for this position.

I believe in closely monitoring the funds allocated to the GSS in an effort to minimize wastage, and in making this information readily accessible to all graduate students.
CANDIDATE FOR SECRETARY

Mahafuza Aktar

My Name is Mahafuza Aktar and I am running for the position of Secretary. I am a neuroscience grad student in my first year at UVM. I am grateful to be studying in beautiful Vermont, especially at UVM!, and I want to serve in a leadership position in order to understand my classmates’ needs and help improve the graduate student experience for everyone.

My recent relevant experience includes one year as vice president of the 80-member Bangladesh Student Organization (BSO) at the University of Texas at Dallas (UTD) where I earned my M.S. degree, and one year serving in the UTD Student Affairs office, assisting students of all ages and ethnicities, and two years’ volunteering in various activities on and off campus.

I have the ability and experience for this position. I want to strengthen the relationship of GSS with every graduate student by making sure that every voice is heard. As an international student studying and working in American universities for almost four years, I can relate to both American and international students. With my diverse experience and fresh perspective, I think I would be a perfect candidate for this position. I love the University of Vermont and would be honored to serve in the UVM Graduate Student Senate.