



19th Meeting of the 2024-2025 Student Government Association Senate
February 11th, 2025 | 7:00 PM | Livak Ballroom

Call to Order

This meeting was called to order by Speaker Kennedy Connors.

Roll Call

Senators Gottfurcht, Forrest, Denny, Reeder, Talhouk, Oreck, Grace, Demeo, Toomey, and Chair Jones not present.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes approved unanimously.

Public Forum

Sarah O’Leary – Discussing Planetary Health Initiative

- Junior Environmental Science major with self-designed concentration in Planetary Health and minor in Health and Society.
- Planetary Health Initiative Intern through the Sustainable Solutions Lab and an Eco Rep.
- Defining Planetary Health: Planetary boundaries framework that the Earth needs to stay within limits for safe operating zone before large scale irreversible environmental change.

We have crossed 6 out of 9 boundaries as of 2023.

- Quick video: [📺 UVM Planetary Health Initiative](#)

- My internship is outlined by four main deliverables:
 - Increase student engagement, awareness, and understanding of the Planetary Health Initiative.
 - Organize student group leaders to solicit feedback and identify opportunities for involvement in potential projects.
 - Contribute student voice to Planetary Health Initiative communications through events and social media
 - Hold Planetary Health Initiative Earth Week activities for students.
- Transportation and Planetary Health: How might we be more people- and planet-healthy with our approach to busing on campus?
 - My goal is to align transportation with our Planetary Health values. We have thought of five approaches so far: addressing shuttle efficiency, focusing on Planetary Health education and the connection to transportation, walking/biking challenges, increasing campus signage, and improving/encouraging biking access.
 - Efficiency – Do we have excess with our current shuttle lines (red, green, gold)? Where can we reduce emissions and save money: less frequent, smaller buses, removing redundant non-critical stops, or rerouting buses.
 - Education – Providing students with scientific information to make informed decisions (benefits of walking or biking vs bus), incentives for using sustainable transportation with CATMA app.
 - Infrastructure – Improving signage and wayfinding (improve campus connectivity, have more walking path and timing signage), improve bike parking,

wider paths to accommodate biking and walking together, increase UVMBikes rental fleet.

- Questions for you:
 - What are your thoughts, opinions, and feelings on the transportation and Planetary Health Initiative approaches that I talked about? Do you have ideas of other ones we can explore?
 - How can UVM implement Planetary Health in other areas such as food, waste, energy, services, health, and more?

Senator Onorato: Regarding busing and limiting buses, there is a lot of crowding on the shuttles already, is there concern or a plan if service was reduced?

- **Response:** The point is to make the buses less accessible so people are less likely to take them. That is certainly a concern and a limitation that we are trying to accommodate.

Chair Garcia: I would like to emphasize that the frequency of stops is meant to provide accessibility for students who can't get to class without that. We have a hilly and weather prone campus which can present an issue to many students. The idea and motivation is great, but I think reducing the stops is not the way to go.

- **Response:** We are trying to figure out how to accommodate students with those accessibility needs. We are looking at other universities like UMass Amherst to see how they are dealing with this.

Chair Modun: I'm also concerned by the potential of cutting bus routes. Do you know what percentage the buses contribute to overall emissions? If the buses are contributing a limited amount, aren't there more effective ways that won't have such an impact on students?

- **Response:** Our buses are low-emission buses, but this is more about individual student health than emissions. We are focusing on the human planetary health aspect and encouraging these values with students. We have a greenhouse gas emission trends chart on our website which shows that transportation is a small part.

<https://www.uvm.edu/sustainabilityoffice/greenhouse-gas-inventory>)

Senator Marchant: Considering how popular bus usage is, especially for students with accessibility issues, how would their needs be addressed if there is a lot less accessibility for bus routes?

- **Response:** UMass Amherst has a program to request a personal shuttle to pick you up at a certain time. We have a similar program now which requires people to book 24 hours in advance, whereas UMass allows only 20 minutes. Changes to the shuttle system is not our main focus, it is just one of the potential ideas we have. We would be focused on getting more electric vehicles on campus to work on-demand.

Treasurer Sorensen: Thank you for presenting. You said limiting accessibility is the point which was a little concerning, I may have interpreted that differently than you meant it but I would recommend increasing alternatives before limiting accessibility. The main place to cut stops would be on Central Campus with four stops between Kalkin, Innovation, and two at Central. You could ask Burlington about bringing Bird bikes up here, also training students to drive buses and increase the hours and availability. You mentioned purchasing EVs, make sure to look for ones that are made with minerals that are not extracted in violent areas, like fair trade.

- **Response:** Improving options before limiting them has been expressed to me before by the Eco Reps. Someone also brought up Bird bikes and having a specific station on campus rather than being all over.

Chair Halvorson: Bird Bikeshare is not operational in Burlington anymore.

Chair Espejo: DSU is a great group to talk to about accessibility. The Student Transportation Accessibility forum is a great event which can give you more student input, it is held twice a semester, another one near the end of this semester.

- **Response:** Thank you for the suggestion. Eco Reps and SGA was the start of outreach, so I appreciate the suggestion.

Senator York: I echo concerns about accessibility. I agree with Treasurer Sorensen about adding before taking away. Don't get rid of buses before adding shuttles or other things. I encourage you to talk to DSU and students who need and use these options, see what their direct issues are and learn from them what the best options would be. There are so many little issues I would never have thought of that I learned from that forum.

- **Response:** The next phase of this initiative for me is to ride the bus and survey students to get their thoughts about everything.

Senator Paquette: Related to UMass, I did research about Planetary Health in buildings for a Resolution last semester. They looked into windows being sealed, up-to-date piping, and not losing energy in these small places that add up. I know the Office of Sustainability was looking into geothermal heating, are there any updates on the testing wells?

- **Response:** Someone came in to talk with Eco Reps about that recently. For geothermal, two test wells were drilled and the numbers are still being crunched to see if the nearby buildings have a reasonable match for energy needs.

Senator Wheaton: With regards to bikes, the biggest step for me is to get more sheltered bike parking structures. That would be a good way to encourage people to use bikes more.

- **Response:** Thank you.

Old Business

Bill Recognizing Archery Club

Senator Alarafi: Motion to table.

- Motion **passed**.

Emergency Business

Resolution Calling for UVM Administration to Develop Protections for Students, Faculty, and Staff

Chair Garcia: Motion to table.

- Motion **passed**.

New Business

Bill Recognizing UVM Society of Ecological Restoration

Senator Theroux: Motion to Open SGA Constitution.

- Motion **passed**.

Senatorial Forum

Executive Reports

Speaker Connors

- Thank you to everyone who could make it tonight. Apparently Bernie Sanders is attending the Executive Orders event with President Prelock, so I understand.

- Judicial is reviewing the Constitution, next week there will be amendments introduced to work on updating that.
- I had many meetings this week regarding SVAM and PIVOT.
- Shoutout Senator Steele and Emeritus Senator Keppel for the Blanket Making Event today. I am loving all of the Week of Kindness work.

Senator Lee: Can you give us any insights on the amendments?

- **Response:** I don't want to speak on the exact amendment that will be proposed next week, but we looked over the responsibilities for every role and many were outdated.

Senator Esbin: Will the changes be all at once or how does it work?

- **Response:** Each amendment would be based on the section it is amending.

Vice President Bednarik

- Thank you to everyone who worked on Week of Kindness, I'm looking forward to the rest of the week.
- Makeup Retreat is February 26th, 6:30-7:30pm. You will get an email about that if you missed the Spring Retreat, if you don't then let me know.
- The Campus Climate Survey came out recently, please answer those questions thoroughly and honestly.
- Working with Senator Theroux about opening group therapy regarding women's reproductive health through WAGE.
- Working on a "How to be a Chair" manual to have more guidance for that role.
- President Teferra and I are working on a summer training for leaders in SGA, meeting with Lina and Administration to learn institutional knowledge before the year starts.
- Working with Offices of Orientation and Sustainability about traditions scavenger hunt.

- Working with Blake Reilly discussing UWell, a company offering free counseling to university students.
- Working on the Spectrum Sleep-Out, thanks to Senator Esbin, raising awareness for youth homelessness by camping out.
- Organizing office tours for new Senators, hopefully the last week of February.
- I know we lost a few people to the other event that is going on, if it is not finished when we get out I will be going over there too.
- God Bless the Eagles, Kendrick Lamar, and Cooper DeJean.

President Teferra

- Vice President Bednarik reading for President Teferra:
- Happy Tuesday! Sorry I cannot be there, I am not feeling well. I'm sure VP Bednarik has boasted about the Eagles win in her report so I apologize on her behalf.
- Thank you to all who helped and attended the Friday Breakfast at Mosaic last week! They were very excited to have us. It was great to start that tradition and I hope it continues each year.
- Last week I met with Sarah O'Leary to talk about ways SGA can engage with the Planetary Health Initiative. I encourage you all to follow this initiative and see in what ways your committee's projects can tie into it.
- I am continuing to work with Senators from COE and Corey Berman on the Thrift Store Project which I have brought up to President Prelock.
- Chair Knopp and I are working on something to encourage more public library usage and connection for National Library Week in April. That is in the early stages so we will update you all when we have more to share.

- If you have anything you want me to share in my weekly email to admin and campus leaders, please let me know by Thursday morning.

Treasurer Sorensen

- Finance Committee and myself did a preliminary run through of budgets this weekend. We had about 165 requests for a little over \$3.3 million.
- The Elections Committee had our first meeting and will present on the timeline soon.
- The LUVMyClub registration deadline is coming up, February 17th. Sign up for that.

Chair Arnone: Are the incentives the same as last year?

- **Response:** I think so.

Committee Reports

Public Relations Committee

- Week of Kindness is going well so far, thank you for showing up to events.
- Shoutout Senator Steele for Blanket Making.
- Events coming up: Snowman and S'mores tomorrow, Self Care Fair Thursday, and Flower Bouquet Making Friday.
- PR is planning media days for the next two Tuesdays 4-5pm. Pictures and b-roll footage for the website and other promotions.
- Fun Fact of the Week: Alaska is the only state that is typed using only one row of the keyboard.

Senator Esbin: Would it be possible to have the media day at another time on one of the days?

- **Response:** No, because that's when golden hour is.

Senator Alarafi: What is the dress code?

- **Response:** Business casual, you might be seen on the website for years.

Committee on the Environment

- Met with the director of ResLife, presented results on drinking fountains. They are incorporating it into a 10 year plan, and submitting a work request to get cost estimates before making a Sustainable Campus Fund proposal.
- Senator Wheaton looked into grants for the Accessible Trails Project.
- Senator Powell met with Corey Berman on the Thrift Store Project with Senator Gottfurcht. We are tabling with Week of Kindness 10-12 tomorrow and having a thrift swap. There will be a similar thing in the Galaxy Space every two weeks, starting the week before Spring Break.
- Compost concerns on campus, Senator Wheaton might work on that as a project. There are issues with Green Mountain Compost taking only food scraps and napkins so UVM is getting fined for having compostable packaging in the bins.

Senator Powell: Collecting clothes is a next step, if you have ideas about collecting on or off campus we would love to hear it.

Committee on Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity

- Senator Osei has the trivia night tomorrow, there will be more info in the Teams. Show up for Black History Month!
- Working on SVAM a lot with the ad hoc, talking with student groups on campus.
- Show of the Week: Summer House, new season coming out tomorrow on Peacock.

Vice President Bednarik: Did you find the quilt yet?

- **Response:** No, we are still looking. HOPE Works doesn't know either.

Committee on Legislative and Community Affairs

- Great Community Coalition this past Friday, we talked about impacts to the local area from federal changes.
- Senator Laychak met with the Emergency Services department, and they are moving forward with changes to the LiveSafe app pending approval.
- Senator Talhouk is working on ResLife sending notification for letters as well.
- Senator Lee is collaborating with the Student Alumni Association to get more Parents Weekend events.

Committee on Student Action and Well-Being

- Senator Steele reading for Chair Jones:
- Met with Sarah O’Leary last week to discuss Planetary Health.
- Swamped with Week of Kindness, the events have been going well.
- More project updates coming up with a new tracking system in CSAW.
- Artist of the Week: KENDRICK LAMAR but also SZA.

Club Affairs Committee

- Working on a new Clubsigner quiz to make sure we are all on the same page. Also a transition packet with Ana Sola.
- This past year we were in charge of making sure that every club created a new Constitution matching the template. We have six clubs left, the deadline is Friday.
- Working on confirmations and good standing. Shoutout Finance for budgets work.

Academic Affairs Committee

- Meeting with Dani Comey to work on the student-facing side of study skills program.
- Go Birds!

Finance Committee

- Fun weekend of budgeting.

Senatorial Comments/Announcements

Senator Esbin: We didn't have enough people to officially sign up for the hockey game, but I am planning a lacrosse game where we can interact with students and have a microphone.

Senator Osei: I hope you bought tickets for the BSU Fashion Show on February 22nd. There is trivia tomorrow and a late night study session. Steppers are coming on February 13th. If your RA does a BHM bulletin board, let me know and send pictures.

Vice President Bednarik: The event is doing Q&A now, so if you want to go that's where they are at. There is an author, Sigal R. Ben-Porath, coming to speak on February 18th in the early afternoon, Erica Caloiero wanted me to ask if any Senators were interested in meeting with them. *Cancel Wars* is the book that they wrote. Let me know by tonight if they should set up a time.

Senator Steele: Thank you to everyone who came to the Blanket Making event.

Adjournment