



21st Meeting of the 2024-2025 Student Government Association Senate
February 25th, 2025 | 7:00 PM | Livak Ballroom

Call to Order

This meeting was called to order by Speaker Kennedy Connors.

Roll Call

Senators Tracy, Grace, Richardson, and Zubarev not present.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes approved unanimously.

Public Forum

Erika Lala – Campus Climate Survey

- Used to serve as Assistant Dean for Strategic Equity Initiatives in the College of Arts and Sciences. Since August 2024, Senior Director of Intergroup Dialogue and Inclusive Excellence in the Office of the Vice Provost for Inclusive Excellence
- Doctorate from UMass Amherst where I served on the Graduate Student Senate.
- In spring of 2022 we did the first Campus Climate Survey, it is repeated every three years to understand how people experience the University across faculty, staff, and students.
 - Related to creating an inclusive environment conducive to learning. It asks students about your experiences and relationships with faculty.

- It requires a certain level of response rate to be statistically significant. Last time we hit that level, so we need to do that again this year to provide comparison data.
 - I have fliers here to pass out and help advertise.
- This asks for demographic data which hopefully tells us that we have statistically significant data across all of those demographics.
- Googling “UVM Campus Climate Survey Results” takes you to the Office of Institutional Research and Assessments’ page and you can see results by identity group and by unit. This is very important when making arguments about disparities on campus.
 - The president and senior leadership cabinet use this data for creating Strategic Plans for the University, each College, each Department, and more.
- Our Inclusive Excellence Plans are founded on the 2022 data. We are now benchmarking in 2025 and figuring out how resources will be allocated going forward.
- Please encourage your peers to take the survey so we can use this data. It takes 10-15 minutes and is completely anonymous. There is a separate link to enter a raffle for prizes.

Chair Knopp: I had questions about specifics with statistical significance, do you have a certain percentage?

- **Response:** We are aiming for 30%, last time we got closer to 35%.

Chair Knopp: In the past have you noticed strong biases or difficulties reaching certain groups?

- **Response:** If people are more frustrated, they are more likely to take the survey. We haven’t noticed a significant discrepancy across colleges or identity groups.

Senator York: Do you have an idea of what percentage of students have taken the survey so far?

- **Response:** It has been open for a week and a half and will be open for another 3 weeks. We are below 10% currently, which means we are not on track to get 30% yet.

Senator Lee: Could you go into detail about the timing, why is it every three years instead of every year?

- **Response:** That relates to how often students already are asked to take surveys. We want to not miss people, but also not fatigue students with too frequent surveys.

President Teferra: You mentioned the results being used for Inclusive Excellence Plans. Are there more tangible ways that we can advertise the importance of this? Any specific impactful results coming out of this survey?

- **Response:** Think about who you are talking to and what their challenges may be. This is an opportunity for folks in decision-making positions to hear about these challenges in numbers. If we see many students expressing the same thing, that pushes senior leaders to respond. Students don't need to organize themselves to apply pressure when this survey is providing the pressure already.

President Teferra: Is there any information you can give about enforcement or pressure? Are there any check-ups regarding results in specific departments making sure they are working on issues?

- **Response:** Every unit on campus, academic or administrative, had to create an Inclusive Excellence Plan based on the 2022 data. There were five major areas: academic success, recruitment and retention, professional development, accessibility, and international/global education. Each unit made tangible goals for improvement in all areas. Every year they report to us about their progress relating to challenges, next steps, and resources needed. We are at the midway point for the current plans running through 2027, they will use this new data to assess their progress on their goals.

Senator Oreck: Are there any specific strategies of promotion that helped you reach your goal last time or anything else you want us to try?

- **Response:** I am here talking to you and to the Graduate Student Senate. There are fliers and posters up and around. I welcome any ideas you have and am open to suggestions.

Senator Wheaton: SGA is collecting a similar survey and I wonder if there are any things you would change and could pass on to us as we work on that?

- **Response:** We are very explicitly asking questions about identity in this survey. When we are doing that, it is important to think about how you are asking these questions in the current environment and how charged it is. Think about the legality and the experience relating to identity and belonging. I would talk to Jason Garvey and Rich Cohen in OIRA about how to best leverage the data relating to anonymity.

Chair Jones: Could you expand on what the process you are using to account for discrepancies in identity groups given that UVM is predominantly white for example.

- **Response:** We are behaving conservatively in how we release data. We can't report everything that we want to and sometimes have to use a larger demographic group to not identify an individual.

Chair Jones: Is that being communicated to students? I can imagine that knowing they won't be identified in that way would be helpful.

- **Response:** If you go to the Campus Climate Survey access page it talks about how data is used and protected.

Senator Denny: Have you considered tabling? I get overwhelmed by seeing so many fliers on bulletin boards and have found success in connecting with students through tabling.

- **Response:** Thank you, I will look into that.

Senator Onorato: Do you find a statistically significant difference in how white students or students of color answer the survey?

- **Response:** There tend to be more reports of discrimination and bias from students of color.

Senator Talhouk: In the past, students have asked to bring something like this up in their class, would that be helpful?

- **Response:** Yes, that would be great.
- Anything you can do to increase student voice is helpful. When we are looking to poll students for feedback, and see that they are the lowest relative response rate it is very discouraging. Big decisions come from this data and the more students that are represented, the more powerful and representative it can be.

Old Business

Bill Recognizing Archery Club

Senator Alarafi: Motion to table.

- Motion **passed**.

Bill Recognizing Women's Flag Football

Chair Halvorson: Motion to table.

- Motion **passed**.

Bill Amending Article IV, Section E, Part VI of the SGA Constitution, sponsored by Senator Theroux

- **Chair Espejo:** This amendment is changing the name of the Committee on Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity to Committee on Our Common Ground Values. This decision was made in conversations with Lina, our committee, and Judicial Committee. All of the work that we do is encapsulated by the values of Our Common Ground and we don't want any of our programming or issues that we tackle to be affected because of our name.

Senator Esbin: Do you see this being a permanent change or ever going back to CODIE?

- **Response:** Good question, it depends on what happens with the future of how our country and the University operates. The short answer is no because this is a change to the Constitution.

Chair Garcia: What are Our Common Ground Values and what does that mean?

- **Response:** Respect, Integrity, Innovation, Openness, Justice, and Responsibility.

Senator Oreck: Relating to the change with the Office of Inclusive Excellence, they are trying not to let it change the work that they are doing. So do you think this changes the work you are doing now or in the future?

- **Response:** This will not change the work we do. We are taking precautionary measures because of what is happening with the Trump administration and we want our programming not to get flagged.

BILL: Passed unanimously, Senator Theroux abstained

Chair Knopp: Motion for 2 minute recess to address technical difficulties.

- Motion **passed**.

Emergency Business

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

Chair Garcia: Motion to indefinitely table.

- Motion **passed**.

Resolution Calling for Increased Protections for Students on Campus in Response to Stricter Immigration Enforcement Efforts, sponsored by Chairs Jones, Garcia and Espejo

- **Chair Jones:** I would like everyone to take note that there are significant changes from the first iteration you may have read. I hope you got the chance to read it through and voice any concerns here.
- **Chair Garcia:** Vermont is close to a national border and with changes at the federal level we expect an increase in border patrol agents that may be scary to some members of our community. We wrote this to commit ourselves to efforts supporting these members of our community.

Vice President Bednarik: Thank you for hearing feedback and going through this long process.

Do you know if UVM already discloses personal information? There is a clause that seems to imply that they do but I don't believe that is true.

- **Response (Chair Jones):** The rationale behind that is that it is illegal for the University to give out your personal information under FERPA. This is an unprecedented time where there are levels of intimidation and we are calling for reinforcement of these guidelines and reminders that there is a legal process to go through.

Vice President Bednarik: Motion to amend the resolution.

- Motion **passed**.

Senator Lee: Because we are a public institution and students have varying views, we have talked about not introducing partisan legislation. How does this relate to that?

- **Response (Chair Espejo):** We tried to keep this unbiased and non-partisan. Our main concern is protecting students and making sure that UVM is complying with that. This is the state of what is going on.
- **Response (Chair Jones):** Just because an issue is political, does not mean a solution is partisan. We are addressing the objective impact on our students and we don't need to shy away because it comes from a political background. We are protecting students and addressing the betterment of their life on campus, if we don't address this we would be leaving a community behind in a way that doesn't sit right with me.

Senator Ranallo: Relating to the wording that Vice President Bednarik brought up, where it says "knowingly disclose", this sounds like we are implying they should disregard a warrant or other similar legal processes.

- **Response (Chair Garcia):** The wording in this clause comes from a standing Vermont law that UVM has not fully adopted as their policy. UVM as a public university is required to report certain information to certain agencies and will continue doing so. We are not asking them to not comply with the law.

Senator Ranallo: Motion to amend the resolution.

- Motion **failed**.

Senator Laychak: Some state DMVs notify individuals that ICE is requesting their information, so I wonder if the University could have a similar system.

- **Response (Chair Garcia):** We are going on to have more conversations about the specifics of how this issue should be addressed going forward.
- **Response (Chair Jones):** Our previous resolution had more recommendations but we felt the important part was to have a discussion with administration and increase support. We can go into specifics of policies later on, but I fear we could get too caught up in that right now.

Treasurer Sorensen: Motion to amend resolution.

- Motion **passed**.

Senator Toomey: Is there a way to extend this to staff as well as students?

- **Response (Chair Garcia):** We are committed to students first and we will work to extend protections to staff as well. We want to stand on stable ground and that is intentional because we are specifically student representatives.

Vice President Bednarik: There have been conversations happening with other groups and we want to focus on the student body so that those groups can speak for themselves.

Senator Steele: Relating to partisan language, it might be better to say the federal administration rather than the president by name. I think the original version of the resolution did this.

- **Response (Chair Jones):** Good idea.

Senator Steele: Motion to amend the resolution.

- Motion **passed**.

Senator Oreck: We heard recently that three unions are trying to sign ICE non-cooperation agreements, has that been considered as a part of this resolution?

- **Response (Chair Jones):** That was what our initial resolution was based on. We received feedback and had further conversations and decided to put forward a separate piece of

legislation that aligns similarly but has our own language and intentions behind it as well.

We are student representatives and want to act independently with the voice of the students.

Senator Oreck: Additionally, in regards to partisan implications, it could be helpful to express that students are unified and this is coming from common concern.

Senator Esbin: I was wondering what offices and resources on campus you talked to about this? Do you know what percent of students are affected by changes?

- **Response (Chair Espejo):** We are trying to get a meeting with Interim President Prelock about how they are tackling this. I have talked to the Faculty Senate President and he was involved in meetings with administration and the unions.
- **Response (Chair Jones):** We have been in communication with the other groups that wrote that letter. I don't believe we have a specific statistic due to the sensitive nature.
- **Response (Chair Garcia):** This was a major topic of discussion at Community Coalition, many offices were in attendance.

Senator Onorato: Motion to amend the resolution.

- Motion **passed**.

Treasurer Sorensen: Motion to bring the resolution to a vote.

- Motion **passed**.

RESOLUTION: **Passed** unanimously; Chairs Jones, Garcia, and Espejo abstained

Bill Allocating Funds to Freeski, sponsored by Chair Rice

- Requesting \$25,347.97, allocating \$10,380.

BILL: **Passed** unanimously, Chair Rice abstained

New Business

Bill Amending Article IV, Section E, Part II

Bill Recognizing Landscape and Design Club

Bill Recognizing Fellowship of Christian Athletes

Bill Amending Article IV, Section E, Part I

Bill Amending Article IV, Section E, Part IV

Senatorial Forum

President Teferra and Vice President Bednarik – Going over Semester Goals

- **Vice President Bednarik:** SGA has never listed out goals from the top down like this but many organizations do this. We have come up with three goals that we believe we are working towards this semester:
 - Informing and providing students with resources to aid in the navigation of political and social issues such as the impact of executive orders and the ever-changing political landscape.
 - Providing UVM students with a sense of community through programming such as Week of Kindness, SVAM, Earth Week, and more.
 - Continuing to strengthen the relationship between SGA and the student body to ensure the accurate representation of the students' needs on and off campus.
- **President Teferra:** This is obviously late in the semester but we are hoping in the future this can come up earlier in the semester to help provide direction. Part of what prompted

this were people being interviewed by the Cynic and asked about unified goals. This can help provide an answer to explain what we are up to.

Senator Esbin: Thank you for presenting on this. How can these goals be measured or are they just guidelines? Beyond surveys relating to the Strategic Plan, how can we measure the impact?

- **Response (Vice President Bednarik):** Progress can look different to a lot of different people, it is hard to have quantitative measurements. The Board of Trustees gets three reports from the SGA President, this is a great way to show what people are working on. At the beginning set goals, in the middle talk about progress, and at the end report on what projects and initiatives contributed to those goals.

Senator Wheaton: Something that might be missing is specifically enacting change or advocating for the student body instead of just representing their needs.

- **Response (President Teferra):** I think that is the intention of SGA for every semester. The idea of having session or semester goals that change year to year is to best fit what is going on currently. These goals can carry over or change over time.

Treasurer Sorensen – Elections

- The elections committee of myself, President Teferra, and Senator Peterson is hard at work. I will present information to you and then it will be publicly available online at 8am on Monday.
- In order to be an official candidate you must attend an info session and submit a form with your platform. We are hosting info sessions next week and after break until March 31st when all materials are due.
- The P/VP debate is Wednesday March 26th from 5-7pm in Livak Ballroom

- Voting is open April 2-4 online and there are in person voting options also.
- New P/VP and Senate will be sworn in April 8th, The Treasurer and new Chairs will be sworn in April 15th.

Vice President Bednarik: Last year to run for P/VP, you had to collect 150 electronic signatures, is that the same this year?

- **Response:** Yes, there is an online form or it can be on paper as long as they are legible.

President Teferra: Anyone on the Elections Committee is not allowed to endorse anyone running. If you have questions about elections you have to go through the same channels, emailing the elections email, as anyone else who is not on SGA for fairness.

Chair Arnone: To clarify, you still have to attend an info session and fill out the form if you are on Senate now?

- **Response:** Yes.

Senator Laychak: If three people running were for president, how would voting work?

- **Response:** All elections are determined by plurality as outlined in the Constitution.

Vice President Bednarik – Project with Spectrum

- I am working on a project with Spectrum, an organization downtown raising awareness and resources for the youth homeless population in Burlington. It is a bigger project than I anticipated, if you are interested in helping come talk to me.

Senator Forrest – University of Vermont History

- I'm working on adding more awareness of the history of UVM and the land it is built on relating to indigenous history.

- We do have a land acknowledgement which is not very long or detailed. We want to add more education on this for UVM students and I want to get your ideas and feedback.
- It would be good to use the first-year seminars to have more knowledge of the school and how we got here.
- Originally I wanted to add to the core curriculum but seeing how difficult that might be I am now thinking about starting something more like PIVOT. I talked to Chair Knopp about this and having an additional class relating to indigenous land.

President Teferra: Thank you for coming on and talking about this. I wrote the land acknowledgement for the Vermont Green after doing research and I think that could be a good place to start looking into how this could be better.

You mentioned PIVOT, there might be concern about interest because that came from a large wave of activism relating to sexual assault. It took a lot of momentum and effort and was still difficult to make a reality. Starting with an elective class and then trying to add it to the core curriculum later would be great.

Vice President Bednarik: I know of two classes relating to this that Emeritus Senator Carter Purple took and he would be a good person to talk to about that. There is a History of Vermont class but that starts with European settlers. The other one is regarding the indigenous population from Canada which has tension with the Vermont Statehouse. Those are 3000-level courses however which makes them less accessible.

- **Response:** There is an elective class for first-years called North American Indigenous History as well, but not specific to Vermont.

Chair Espejo: I took a class called Native American Community and Religion with Kenneth Richards in the Religion department. He works with indigenous groups across the US on law

cases. That class touches on Abenaki land and traditions. Another class is Defending the Sacred Earth which counts for catamount core and is open to everyone. I believe those are both 1000-level classes.

Senator York: I would encourage you to think about opportunities that are open to all students, not just first-years, especially when first implementing it.

- **Response:** I didn't think about that because I hoped once it is implemented it would carry forward for each year, but that makes sense.

Senator Laychak: As a Vermonter, this subject fascinates me. Our education gave the flowery side so having more classes about Vermont and UVM history would be fascinating.

Senator Denny: You said your main goal is trying to get more implemented into the curriculum. You could try doing something during Orientation Week in collaboration with the professors who teach these courses also to get more awareness.

Senator Talhouk: I've been an Orientation Leader and would be against adding something like this. It is very intense and many days can be long. Having additional events outside of that could be good though.

- **Response:** What would you think about something partway through the first semester instead?

Senator Talhouk: I would like that better.

Chair Knopp: To give a short background on the course route. When you register, you may see a special topics course that ends in 990 which has gone through a process with interest from the student body and the professor. It has to run for three semesters to get interest from students and faculty then can become a permanent class that can be added to Catamount Core.

Senator Oreck: I think the colonization of indigenous land and culture is fundamental to many parts of a University so it doesn't have to be just one of these things, it could be any and all.

- **Response:** My original plan was to be a part of the core curriculum because it is so important but smaller things first sounds more achievable to start.

President Teferra: Reach out to the Indigenous Peoples Collective and other organizations around Vermont. It is important to get their perspective and hear what they would want done.

- **Response:** Yes, that would be great especially since a lot of the professors teaching these courses are white and bringing in indigenous voices is important.

Senator Onorato – Vector Enforcement

- I've been working with Elliot Ruggles on getting enforcement for the Vector courses. The registrar office had concerns about adding an additional hold to registration, and said they would like to see more student action and promotion for completing the courses first. We want to work on a short video to promote their importance and show how to do it. They want this done by March 6th.

President Teferra: I think that since they are the ones saying it is a requirement to complete these, adding a registration hold would not be a problem. I don't see videos making that much of a change or convincing people to do this either.

- **Response:** I brought that up in my meeting because that is my point of view as well. They felt that in order to justify adding this, they want to see more student efforts.

Senator Paquette: Would this apply to all students, including seniors who may not have completed it?

- **Response:** That is open to discussion

Chair Knopp: Could you ask for an extension to create the video? I worry that it would be difficult to make something of quality with the tight turn around. I know a videographer who will be filming me on March 6th and I could connect you with them.

Senator Demeo: Motion to enter executive session, inviting our advisor Lina Balcom.

- Motion **passed**.

Treasurer Sorensen: Motion for paper reports and to move to Senatorial Comments and Announcements.

- Motion **passed**.

Executive Reports

Speaker Connors

- Nothing to report.

Vice President Bednarik

- Nothing to report.

President Teferra

- Nothing to report.

Treasurer Sorensen

- Nothing to report.

Committee Reports

Public Relations Committee

- Nothing to report.

Committee on the Environment

- CoE has been working our way through our projects and Earth Week planning this week. We submitted our TEDx application today and also got a date secured to do an Earth Week themed Pub Quiz on April 16th.
- We have continued collecting clothes for clothing swaps from the dorms and are hoping to set up bins in the Davis Center and Waterman this week. We have our first regular biweekly clothing swap in the SGA galaxy space next Wednesday, March 5th, from 10-2. We are meeting with Sarah O'Leary and Corey Berman this Friday to talk about ways to further collaborate moving forward on this project.
- Senators Gottfurcht and Forrest are working on their curriculum project (shoutout for going on Senatorial Forum pretty last-minute).
- Senators Wheaton and Powell have also continued working on their projects.
- If anyone is willing to help at the clothing swap next week that would be greatly appreciated, and tell your friends to stop by too!
- That's all from CoE for the week, have a great spring break!

Committee on Our Common Ground Values

- Senator Osei is putting on her Drag Queen Bingo tonight in Brennan's Pub from 7-9, so huge shoutout to her for that!
- We picked a speaker for MARCH, Professor Meghan Cope from the Environmental Studies program. Her area of expertise is urban social/cultural geography and using

research methods to learn about matters that pertain to socially and economically marginalized groups.

- I also wanted to mention if you have any questions about the recent name change with our committee please let me know!
- Have a wonderful week everyone!

Committee on Legislative and Community Affairs

- Nothing to report.

Committee on Student Action and Well-Being

- Nothing to report.

Club Affairs Committee

- Thank you again for your thoughtful questions and contributions on Tuesday. If you have any follow-up questions, please reach out to me.
- The committee will not be accepting new RSO applications past tomorrow at 11:59 to finish off the Senate session with all clubs wrapped up (we have 8ish in progress).
- The committee will be inactivating clubs currently in bad standing after tomorrow at 11:59. I've emailed all of the clubs that fall into this category and we are down to 4 clubs that need to meet this requirement.
- Clubbies work continues and award nominations should be released to the general student body within the next week. Be on the lookout and VOTE!
- I have been brainstorming ways to make the position of Club Affairs Committee Chair more manageable in the future and came up with the idea of a possible Co-Chair for the Club Affairs Committee.

- This would require a constitutional amendment that is still in the works, so more to come (possible Senatorial Forum to discuss this?).
- Please reach out if you are interested in being Club Affairs Committee Chair, I'd love to talk about the work the committee and I do!

Academic Affairs Committee

- Nothing to report.

Finance Committee

- Finance finished budgeting and will be sending out budgets on Friday. Initial budget appeals will be held throughout next week, with the second round of appeals the week following spring break.
- I hope everyone has a fun weekend and a great spring break!

Senatorial Comments/Announcements

Vice President Bednarik: Shoutout Michelle for walking in the BSU Fashion Show!

Treasurer Sorensen: LUVMyClub is underway, SGA has raised \$505 so far. Please post the link everywhere you can. Tomorrow is outreach day at the Alumni House, they have a list of alumni that you can reach out to.

Chair Halvorson: Thank you for your engagement and the amazing conversation we had. Also, Student Legal Services applications are open.

Adjournment