



**3rd Meeting of the 2024-2025 Student Government Association Senate**  
**April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024 | 7:00 PM | Livak Ballroom**

**Call to Order**

This meeting was called to order by Speaker Kennedy Connors.

**Roll Call**

Senators Washko, Gottfurcht, Lynch, and Isenhour not present.

**Approval of Minutes**

Minutes approved unanimously.

**Emergency Business (Out of Order)**

Swearing in of New Senators, Part II

- Senator Richardson sworn in by Speaker Connors.

Swearing in of the New Treasurer

- There was a selection committee consisting of President Teferra, Vice President Bednarik, and Bethany Wolfe who interviewed applicants and selected one to nominate.

**Vice President Bednarik:** We nominate Matt Sorensen.

- **Passed** by 2/3<sup>rd</sup> majority.
- Treasurer Sorensen sworn in by Chair Murphy.

## **Public Forum**

**Logan Clark & Maeve Forbes** from Feed the Cats and Rally Cat's Cupboard – Discussing the Resolution Calling UVM to Hire a Food Justice Advocate

- **Logan:** Feed the Cats is a group of student activists from a sociology class advocating for a Food Justice Advocate. This would be a full time position to fill a much needed role.
- As students, we have seen the impact of food insecurity on campus. Our most recent data is from before Covid and at that point 1 in 5 students on campus were food insecure. 20% of our student body is not getting consistently culturally relevant food, enough food, and doesn't have access to the types of food they want and need.
- We were motivated to start this because of this class which has the goal of creating a student campaign, but we were also individually motivated to address this widespread issue that UVM currently has very limited resources around.
  - Rally Cat's Cupboard is entirely student run and relies exclusively on donations and volunteer students.
  - The Food Recovery Network is awesome, but has not been very active since the pandemic.
- We are hoping a Food Justice Advocate can be a person to bolster the existing programs and look into new ways to address food insecurity on campus.
- **Maeve:** We are having a meeting with the Provost and Vice Provost and would like to present this resolution and a student petition we have to them.
- A big piece of this is that I was looking at peer institutions and almost all of them had something like this to help students access food and basic needs.

- We have student involvement and the food pantry but no single point person at the head of it. Our system is inefficient and doesn't feed everyone.
- One thing to note is that my position is paid as a graduate student through our donation fund not through UVM.
- **Logan:** Maeve does great work, but UVM needs to step up and make this work happen. We have just under 200 signatures on our petition because it was a pretty quick turn around. We are meeting with the Provost and this resolution would help to show that SGA and the student body are behind us.

**Treasurer Sorensen:** To give more background about this, when Feed the Cats were tabling in the Davis Center I walked by and then Senator Jones and I had a meeting with them. If you read the resolution already you have seen this data, 1 in 5 students on campus translates to 2,700 total students. Swipe Out Hunger in its first year was able to provide 14 supplementary meals to students, it has grown some since then but not enough. The essence is that a lot of programs rely on donations of other students with little support from administration. A lot of other resources are off campus and can be accessible, for example people are required to work 20 hours a week to be eligible for SNAP benefits which is unreasonable for most full time students. This resolution is supplementary material to bring to this meeting and further advocate for this.

- **Response (Logan):** There are certain majors and programs that make it physically impossible to work enough for SNAP benefits. UVM lists these resources which are not relevant for many students.

**Senator Jones:** Thank you for coming in, I hope you got a chance to look over the resolution. We reference the state of living in Burlington, which the admin needs to have some accountability for. Over the past decade, UVM has impacted the state of Burlington and our

student population has created an undue burden contributing greatly to the housing crisis. When you tell students to go to a community food shelter, you are taking away from people in the community who also need that resource. UVM can make a difference on this issue and it is their responsibility to act on this.

- **Response (Logan):** There are fantastic resources in Vermont, but they are not designed to support a growing student body. There is a huge strain on the community and UVM needs to fix that.

**Vice President Bednarik:** We really appreciate the hard work you've been putting in. You mentioned a petition, where can we sign that?

- **Response (Logan):** I have a QR code that I can share with you. It will be open until Wednesday at 12 before the meeting with the Provost.

**President Teferra:** I was wondering if this is the first time that admin will hear about this request? If not, has there been pushback about it?

- **Response (Maeve):** I believe this is the first time a student is bringing it forward. I've been in conversation with Erica to do training and make sure the Executive Summary I am working on is correct. She cares deeply about this issue and wants to see change.
- This came up with Gail Champnois, head of the Office of Student and Community Relations, and Nicole Reilly, Sustainability and Campus Partnership Manager at Sodexo, and that started the ad hoc Basic Needs Committee which is faculty and staff who are looking at housing, food, and financial issues.
- They know this is coming and are aware of it. I will keep you updated on the reaction, I am expecting a positive outcome. It can only benefit them to have this person on campus. The possible hang up we could see is about funding.

**Dr. Peter VonDoepp, Chair of the Political Science Department** – Discussing Election Week

- I am amending the title to say election fall instead of just election week. That is how we in Political Science are thinking about this. We are joining with people from Residential Life, CAPS and more.
  - Along with you all on SGA, thinking about how we can create heightened levels of awareness and positive educational experience around the election. A variety of other places are thinking about other aspects, in Political Science we are thinking as educators.
- In this room on October 1<sup>st</sup> we have Daniel Ziblatt, author of Tyranny of the Minority, coming to speak. That book is about our political system and how it is susceptible to minority rule and transitions to authoritarianism and we are encouraging our majors to read it as part of our student/faculty book club this summer.
  - We will be talking in the context of the election and where different outcomes might lead us.
- We are developing a set of information panels with faculty in Political Science around issues relating to the election. We are thinking of 3 panels, starting in September and going to maybe even after the election.
  - First is policy, what's at stake. We have experts in reproductive rights, environmental policy, foreign policy, and more and can bring together a set of presentations to get us thinking about what is at stake.
  - Second is on elections. In particular, the peculiar nature of American elections, not just the electoral college but also how we administer elections. Also focusing

on vulnerabilities in our electoral process to malfeasance, corruption, and violence.

- Last is what the transition to authoritarianism looks like. Something that is on our minds and dovetails nicely with the Ziblatt lecture.
- We will not take on topics that we don't have expertise on.
- We are hoping to partner with you and the Office of Civic Engagement for a website with basic information about the election, how to register and vote. We want to respond to disinformation, which will be abundant. We are well positioned to do that in Political Science and to help people develop the capacity to discern for themselves.
- We will be partnering with the Political Science Club.
- I am open to questions and suggestions.

**Senator Jones:** We saw the transition from last cycle and I anticipate unease and stress for many students again this time, especially students from minorities and protected classes. I think it is great for the department to hold these panels and for SGA Senators to go to those as many students will be more politically attuned and looking to us for resources and information. I think the website would be great and I would love to help as a Computer Science student.

**Chair Garcia:** In terms of the website, do you have plans to include information about vote by mail? Resources to make it more accessible in dorms?

- **Response:** That is something we want to include and the Office of Civic Engagement talked about TurboVote which has information about how to vote in your home area so we will include that.

**Vice President Bednarik:** Last time someone mentioned getting stamps in the dorm. I have mentioned it to Charles and that is a conversation we are having.

- **Response:** That's a great idea, we just had a postcard campaign in Political Science. We used to put stamps on things all the time.

**Senator Arnone:** You usually don't need a stamp for vote by mail, my ballot was prepaid.

**Treasurer Sorensen:** Programming beyond the election would be beneficial, elections don't end on election day. Spreading accurate voting information would be helpful, specifically that you can't vote in multiple states at the same time which was misinformation being spread recently.

**Chair Knopp:** Is the website primarily focused on disinformation for elections or in general?

- **Response:** Specifically around voting and the process. We would have to be a little more judicious around disinformation on issues, and more about developing skills for students to see that for themselves. We are open to suggestions about that.

**Senator Demeo:** You mentioned CAPS being part of this, what would their role be?

- **Response:** I have to stay within my role as Chair of Political Science. I can tell you what I think they should be doing, but it's their job. There are meaningful discussions about support around anxiety and mental health that extends to Residential Life and other entities on campus. I can't say more because I don't know. The bigger goal at the University level is that various entities play to their strengths.

**Chair Halvorson:** When do you think that website would be up?

- **Response:** I hope by the end of September, maybe sooner.

**Vice President Bednarik:** I love the work you are doing. I want to stress the importance of info sessions being hosted somewhere like WAGE, Prism, or Mosaic to give a more holistic setting compared to more sterile settings like a ballroom. Being in a room with all white students talking about my rights can be hard.

**Chair Petrosyan:** I am working with Chair Espejo and Dr. VonDoepp on this website and talking with my coworkers in Civic Engagement. For the panels, will it be a mix of lecture and questions?

- **Response:** I don't know. The conventional format is brief presentations, probably 15 minutes each, and then opening up to students for questions. I don't envision 45 minute lectures by single faculty members. We want to respond to student interest and engagement.

**Chair Murphy:** I have questions about Civic Engagement. Can you promote this to the general public as well, or students who are non-political science majors? Do you have ideas on how to expand this to outside of Political Science?

- **Response:** We are not targeting Political Science majors with this, or even students, but the larger community as well. We see that as part of our role. This is where a lot of your work comes in as well to get students who are not as involved to come into these things.

**Senator Jones:** Another suggestion is for more niche presentation topics to inspire more engagement. Professor Holmes could talk about the impact of the Supreme Court and what it means to vote for a President when neither option feels right. Part of that conversation can be bolstered with the lasting impacts of the Supreme Court and the state of the Supreme Court today being largely thanks to Donald Trump. Your vote can have a significant policy and historical implication over the next many decades.

- **Response:** Yes, thank you.

**President Teferra:** A big part of misinformation is students not knowing how to vet their sources for bias. Providing sources on how to check biases of news sources and independent sources of news.

### **Old Business**

Bill Recognizing Mixed Ultimate Frisbee Club, sponsored by Senator Grace

- This would be an all inclusive mixed ultimate club on campus.

BILL: **Passed** unanimously, Senator Grace abstained

Bill Recognizing Run on Climate Club, sponsored by Senator Demeo

BILL: **Passed** unanimously, Senator Demeo abstained

Resolution Calling UVM to Hire a Food Justice Advocate, sponsored by Senator Jones

**Chair Petrosyan:** Correct me if I'm wrong, but I didn't see it actually saying "hire a Food Justice Advocate" anywhere.

- **Response:** It does. We were trying to be inclusive and intentional about our language so that we weren't telling admin what exactly this role looks like. This role should take some thought and we don't want to narrow it down.

RESOLUTION: **Passed** unanimously, Senator Jones abstained

Resolution Establishing SGA's Commitment to MARCH! A Celebration of Leaders and Gender Equity in Partnership with the WAGE Center, sponsored by Chair Espejo

RESOLUTION: **Passed** unanimously, Chair Espejo abstained

### **Emergency Business**

Bill Amending Fiscal Year 2025 Budget, sponsored by Chair Murphy

- This is related to the Society of Women Engineers. They pointed out that we didn't allocate money to them for something and there was no reason given.
- Their allocation was originally \$490, and is now \$2,890.

**Treasurer Sorensen:** This is a small amendment, but it is a change to the fiscal year budget rather than a supplemental allocation so we need to have a bill for it.

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

**President Teferra:** Motion for a 5 minute recess with the intention to enter Executive Session.

- Motion **passed**.

**President Teferra:** Motion to enter Executive Session.

- Motion **passed**.

Resolution Denouncing the 2024 UVM Commencement Speaker Choice of Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield, sponsored by Senator Jones

**RESOLUTION: Passed** by majority; Senator Peterson opposed; Chair Garcia, Chair Murphy, Senator Zubarev, and Senator Jones abstained

### **New Business**

### **Senatorial Forum**

**President Teferra & Vice President Bednarik** – Discussing an Emergency Statement

- We went over this already, so we will just go right into the vote.

Motion to release SGA Emergency Statement.

- Motion **passed**.

Motion for paper reports.

- Motion **passed**.

### **Executive Reports**

#### **Speaker Connors**

- I appreciate everyone staying engaged as it was a lengthy but important meeting.
- I have a meeting with the head of Digital Collections tomorrow and am excited to learn more about the process of getting our legislation in the collection. Hopefully, this will be a summer project!
- Other than that, I've been working on my other projects and am beginning to reach out to the Art Department regarding crosswalk art.

#### **Vice President Bednarik**

- Nothing to report.

#### **President Teferra**

- Thank you all for speaking in this hard meeting. It's been a long semester and a long week. This is an important issue and it's important to address student concerns.
- I am excited to see what we do next year!

#### **Treasurer Sorensen**

- The clubsigner training went well Monday night and I'm excited for another year in SGA with everyone.

## **Committee Reports**

### **Public Relations Committee**

- Nothing to report.

### **Committee on the Environment**

- We had our first committee meeting on Tuesday before Senate! It was great, we talked over some ideas and possible project topics! I plan on having a follow up meeting with the rest of my committee once everyone gets back!
- I have been emailing with Joshua Beneš and Lori Anderson from the office of the VP for Research about possible collaborations between COE and their campus locations.
- I also am talking with Liz Palchak who is the chair of the Office of Sustainability about the Comprehensive Sustainability Plan that the University has set up until 2040!
- That's all and good luck with finals everyone!

### **Committee on Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity**

- Hi all! As the semester is coming to an end, there is not much to report on.
- I did have a meeting with Ahmed Khanani, the director of the Mosaic center, which was very productive. We talked about some goals and ideas that we each have and share. This was a super encouraging conversation, and I am looking forward to our committee doing a lot of work with the Mosaic center, as well as some other identity groups on campus.
- I hope you all have a wonderful summer and good luck with finals!

- Finally, the Blank of the Week is... Song of the Week! The Song of the Week is Somebody Else by The 1975.

### **Committee on Legislative and Community Affairs**

- Hey All! Hope you are getting through this week without too much stress.
- Some great stuff coming out of COLCA this week, Senator Reeder got \$29,000 in funding from the Sustainable Campus Fund to make landscaping in Central Campus more sustainable!
- I hope you all have a great finals week and I am excited to see you all in the fall.
- Song of the Week: Same Boat by Lizzy McAlpine

### **Student Action and Well-Being Committee**

- Hi everyone, happy last week of classes! Really enjoyed the productive discussion we had during our last Senate meeting.
- Thank you all for the good questions you had for Dr. Peter VonDoepp, Chair of the Political Science Department, as well! I will continue to keep you all updated on my work with his department and Civic Engagement on the election resources project.
- On CSAW, Senators Keppel and Ambrose are continuing their work with Orientation on the welcome goodie bags — please check the Teams for a message from them asking about what you'd want to see in the bags (there's a form you can fill out)! Beyond that, CSAW does not have anything else to report.
- As for what I'm watching/have watched this week, I love the book "Ready Player One" and decided to watch the film a couple days ago. I thought it was pretty good (though they did make a lot of changes from the book that I wish they didn't). The VFX were actually pretty great. Definitely read the book first though!

- Last thing from me, I hope everyone is taking care of themselves during finals week — as always, please reach out if you need anything. These are stressful times but I know we can all finish out this semester strong!

### **Club Affairs Committee**

- Hey all! Just wanted to congratulate Senator Grace and Demeo for confirming their first club. Taking on this initiative at a very busy time in the semester is not an easy task. Proud of them both!
- That's it from me. Study hard. Safe travels home. Rest up: y'all earned it!

### **Academic Affairs Committee**

- Hi everyone! I hope you are all having a great final week of classes. Just two updates from me.
- Firstly, I'd like to congratulate Senator Isenhour and Emeritus Senator Siegel for successfully putting on Together Vermont! Over 80 participants participated in over 15 different service projects. For the first annual happening, this is an extraordinary turnout. I can't wait to see this event progress over my next two years here and I know Senator Isenhour will continue to improve the logistics and processes of Together Vermont. I highly encourage you all to follow @togethervermontuvm on instagram in the meantime.
- Secondly, I had my first meeting with the short term absence committee. This committee is currently putting together policies that ease the process of seeking excusals for short-term absences (not being able to attend class because of minor illness or injury or other emergency circumstance that can't be easily verified). If any of you have any strong opinions on this topic, I would love to hear from you.
- Remember to take care of yourselves and be kind. Summer is right around the corner!

## **Finance Committee**

- Thank you for passing the emergency bill amending the budget.
- Another thank you to Chair Halvorson and Treasurer Sorensen for putting on a great Club Signer training this past Monday. I hope everyone has a great summer!

## **Senatorial Comments/Announcements**

**Senator Purple:** Our hats came in. If you were part of last session and haven't gotten one yet, come with me down to the office after the meeting.

**Senator Arnone:** This is in the Teams also, but I've been working with Corey Berman on a move out project and he needs volunteers to help sort donations. It's a couple hours and they provide lunch.

**Senator Jones:** Thank you for passing both of my resolutions today and honest and thoughtful conversations. I personally will be out at the encampment tonight and I encourage any of you to stop by and talk with people to learn about what they are asking. This is important and incredible to see students exercising their right to protest.

**Chair Surak:** Centennial Woods Clean Up this Saturday from 11-1.

**Senator Ambrose:** Senator Keppel and I are working on a project around Orientation Goodie Bags. We will put something in the Teams about what people would like to see in there.

**President Teferra:** There is a memorial 5k on Saturday at 8am for a student who recently passed. I will send the flier in the Teams.

## **Adjournment**