



5th Meeting of the 2024-2025 Student Government Association Senate
September 10th, 2024 | 7:00 PM | Livak Ballroom

Call to Order

This meeting was called to order by Speaker Kennedy Connors.

Roll Call

Senators Washko, Arnone, Garcia, Bibbins, Isenhour and Ranallo not present.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes approved unanimously.

Public Forum

Michael Schirling & Kevin Hytten – Discussing Campus Safety Strategies

- **Michael:** I serve as the Chief Safety and Compliance Officer at UVM. I have also served as Commissioner of the Vermont Department of Public Safety, Secretary of Commerce, and 26 years with Burlington Police Department, 8 of which were as Chief of Police.
- **Kevin:** For the last year and a half I have been the Training Coordinator for the Division of Safety and Compliance. This is a new, more outwardly facing position doing training for departments and student organizations on safety related topics.
- **Michael:** Safety and security has taken on a renewed urgency this semester with focus particularly on safety off campus in Burlington.

- Download and install the CatSafe app, it has a variety of safety information and features.
 - Safewalk anywhere with Internet connectivity including on campus.
 - Ability to message police services to make a report without making an emergency phone call.
 - Almost 10,400 people are using the app now compared to 1,000 two years ago.
- We are growing the footprint of campus security cameras. Two decades ago, people were skeptical of cameras in public places, now the expectation is that cameras exist everywhere.
 - 500 on campus and in use, not used for surveillance unless there is a reason to suspect ongoing criminal or suspicious activity.
- CatAlert emergency alerting system, you should have gotten the test for this recently. It is meant to provide information about on or near campus. You can use BTVAAlert or VTAlert to get broadcasts from different geographic areas.
- Cat ECare stations are located around campus equipped with an automatic external defibrillator, Narcan, and a stop the bleed kit.
 - Two years ago there were 4, on Thursday we will unveil the 100th.
- Threat recognition toolkit, because unfortunately violence in schools is now a common issue. You can look at various behaviors that may be concerning.
 - We have a unified reporting form at uvm.edu/report which will guide you through the process to make a report about anything you might be concerned about.
- **Kevin:** We wrote a federal grant last year for funding in statewide work about terrorist prevention and violence prevention, and were awarded around \$946,000 to do 4 major projects.

- Healthy Campuses and Workplaces Symposium is a full day conference with organizations from around the state including colleges, universities, businesses, state agencies, and social service agencies. There will be about 168 people in the Grand Maple Ballroom to network, collaborate, and learn about services we created.
- Created a Violence Prevention Toolkit with 11 short videos on topics including active threat response.
- Refined a Communities Acting to Refer and Engage (CARE) curriculum from the Department of Homeland Security which we got down from 5 hours to 2.
- Trying to improve access to training for community threat assessment teams. K-12 environments typically have this and we are trying to encourage our communities to create community-based teams. Also created a free LMS course.
- Safety Week this year has 26 or 27 different activities related to aspects of safety.
 - Tabling in Davis Center Atrium Tuesday-Thursday from 9am-1pm.
 - Cones for CatSafe, free ice cream coupon if you have the CatSafe app.
 - Opportunities outside Davis to learn to shoot a fire extinguisher with the fire marshal teaching you to put out a real fire.
 - Opportunities to attend Active Threat Training. Tuesday-Thursday evenings, Wednesday at 1pm, and Friday at 9am.
 - There will be prizes and swag at many of these events.
 - Parking and Transportation Services will park a bus in Andrew Harris Commons and allow people to sit in the driver's seat with chalk markings to show where blindspots are.

- Opportunity to tour UVM Rescue which is a student organization staffed by UVM students and alumni.
- Week long scavenger hunt on safety week website, 20 question Qualtrix survey about things you have done based on the activities.
- **Michael:** On Burlington safety, there has never been a time to be more vigilant going downtown in my lifetime, especially after dark. It is still a relatively safe small city, but we are not the pinnacle of safety that we were a couple years ago.
 - Trust your instincts, use the CatSafe app, display confidence but don't be aggressive, and know how to call for help.
 - Chances are low that you will be a random victim of violence, chances of theft are high if you leave things in your car.

Vice President Bednarik: Regarding CatAlert notifications, a lot of the time UVM doesn't learn about incidents until later. Are you thinking about expanding that notification to include different areas like downtown?

- **Response (Michael):** If we want you to take action or avoid an area, we will send a message out. That is pretty rare.
 - There was an incident on Green Street recently, and no CatAlert was sent out. We didn't know about it immediately, it didn't have a big impact, and the alerts go to 22,000 people: parents, relatives, guardians, faculty, staff, and students.

Vice President Bednarik: To follow up with another example is the Red Square shooting. What was the reason behind not sending out a CatAlert then? It was after hours but many of my friends were down there and witnessed it or nearby.

- **Response (Michael):** The University was not aware of the event until around the same time as you probably, and the suspect was in custody within 4-5 minutes of the event.

There wasn't an ongoing danger or instruction to avoid a particular area.

- An example from last year was a report of gunshots at the Staples Plaza up the road and a CatAlert went out to avoid the area. It turned out to be a car backfiring.
- When we need you to do something to stay safe and it's in reasonable proximity, we look to get that out.

Treasurer Sorensen: What is the general timeline between an event occurring and Police Services becoming aware of it?

- **Response (Michael):** Depends on the incident. If it is called into Police Services or there is a mutual aid call we might be aware very quickly or we might read about it in the news the next day.

Treasurer Sorensen: Is there a process for Burlington Police to contact UVM Police, like with the shooting at Red Square?

- **Response (Michael):** Only if they need assistance.

Treasurer Sorensen: That's troubling that there's no direct line of communication.

- **Response (Michael):** There are radio frequencies and phone calls all the time. There are many lines of communication and calls for service going on at the same time, so information is shared when it's needed. In that case, an officer walking to the scene encountered the suspect within a few minutes.

Treasurer Sorensen: What conversations are UVM administrators having with city officials about coordinating security efforts?

- **Response (Michael):** I met with multiple people in the past week, we are in constant contact with all neighboring agencies.

Treasurer Sorensen: Is there any conversation about expanding UVM's security presence downtown on weekends?

- **Response (Michael):** Our Police Services are present making random patrols downtown and in areas where students live when available. They are not responsible for responding to those areas, but in a pinch if you are stuck somewhere and can't get service from Burlington because they don't have resources, call UVM Police as a last resort.

Treasurer Sorensen: Has the University or have you made specific asks to city officials about updating policies?

- **Response (Michael):** I've had a number of conversations with elected officials and public safety folks. The asks are for public policy changes because the state and city have made choices that make safety difficult.
 - Nobody is asking to throw everyone with challenges in jail, but when people are constantly victimizing others, we need to look at a different response.

Treasurer Sorensen: What is their response to that?

- **Response (Michael):** Some are receptive, some have different views on how to approach that. We had a safety forum with 544 families participating, it is usually half of that. We have said directly that you need to talk to the Vermont legislature and city council to make this change.

President Teferra: You said CatAlerts are made if the event is contiguous to campus. Does it have to be on or immediately next to campus? Can you elaborate on that?

- **Response (Michael):** There are regulations about the actual distance, we'll go beyond that if there is a reasonable connection or expectation that students, faculty, or staff will be present.

President Teferra: In the Red Square and Green Street cases, you said the threat was contained by the time you heard about it. I think with other incidents last year, we had emails afterwards informing us. Can you clarify why that hasn't happened recently?

- **Response (Michael):** That is why we suggest signing up for BTVAAlert and VTAlert. We don't cull through crime from Chittenden County to send out emails. There was a communication from the Provost, not specifically about Red Square but also about a report from BPD about a group of young people being aggressive.

President Teferra: I am personally signed up for VTAlert and didn't hear about it there either. So if that's the message you are telling students, it might not be covering everything either.

- **Response (Michael):** We don't control what the city reports on. BPD usually posts press releases on their website within a day if you want the details of an event.

Motion to extend debate.

- Motion **passed**.

Senator Jones: What do you say to the critique of the CatSafe app being unsafe or inefficient in an active threat situation where you might be running away and can't get out your phone?

- **Response (Michael):** That is one of the reasons we recommend having the setting to automatically call emergency services by pushing buttons on your phone. If you have the app open already, it is just pushing a button.

Senator Jones: Commuter and off campus students, particularly living downtown, are wondering about carrying tasers or pepper spray. Can you clarify policy on those items?

- **Response (Michael):** The University has a no weapons policy with an exception for pepper spray. We don't specifically endorse it, my recommendation for my children was to carry it and I bought it for them. Unlike a firearm or a knife, if it's taken from you and used against you, it can't do permanent harm.

Senator Steele: Where can we find these resources, especially for off campus students?

- **Response (Michael):** At the Division of Safety and Compliance website: uvm.edu/dsc. Also in the CatSafe app. All the information is in bite sized chunks.

Chair Halvorson: I was wondering with the grant money, have you thought about doing a self defense class for free with students?

- **Response (Kevin):** Unfortunately, with regards to the grant money, it's very spoken for. I've been working with Elliot Ruggles to bring back a self defense program on campus, looking specifically at empowerment self defense. Two workshops are being offered through Campus Rec this fall exclusively for women identifying people. We want to create a more inclusive program.
- **Response (Michael):** I can give you a quick overview of self-defense. There are three things you need to be able to attack someone: stand, see, and breath. If you can take away one of those three things you will take out someone's ability to hurt you.
 - If someone grabs you from behind, grab the smallest finger and bend until it breaks and keep going. It's hard to get in that mindset to be able to do it and it sounds terrible but if your life is in danger you might need to.

Senator Steele: I know some organizations on campus have offered programs in the past. Girl Gains has offered a self defense kickboxing class, I took it and it was very good.

- **Response (Michael):** A big thing is learning the confidence to defend yourself and engage in a fight.

Senator Jones: Kickboxing is no longer offered at UVM because the instructor left so clubs would have to pay for that by themselves which is unlikely.

- **Response (Kevin):** We are working with Shelby at Campus Rec on that.

Senator Laychak: I was wondering if you have numbers on how many students are actively using features in the CatSafe app, for example the safe walk?

- **Response (Michael):** I don't have those numbers with me, but probably 10-12 a week.

Senator Laychak: You said earlier that you were pushing for alternative policies with the city, can you elaborate on what you are pushing for?

- **Response (Michael):** There are a number of challenges. Accountability in the justice system, people arrested everyday victimizing others. Everything from housing to easy access to mental health treatment, lobbying for more mental health support. There's a wide array of public policy decisions that would help, it's not one thing that would solve the problem. We need additional resources and attention on all of it.
 - To be clear, that is my position. The University does not have a specific position.

Senator Jones: Have you considered going to the Community Coalition which COLCA is involved with to speak with them?

- **Response (Michael):** We haven't, but are happy to get in touch if you send us their information.

Senator Laychak: Could you send the numbers for the CatSafe app to SGA so we can see them?

- **Response (Michael):** Yes.

Jenn Ha, Student Trustee for the Board of Trustees

- I am a Political Psychology PhD student serving on the Board of Trustees.
- The Board is made up of 25 members, 2 of which are students. The other Student Trustee is Katelynn Giroux, I think she is coming to a later Public Forum.
 - There are 9 Legislative Trustees, 9 Self-Perpetuating Trustees, 3 appointed by the Governor, and the President and Governor serve as ex officio members.
 - We are the official governing body of the University of Vermont with management control of University affairs and policy for the University.
- I want to highlight that Student Trustees don't represent the student body or speak on behalf of students, but serve to bring a student perspective to the Board.
- I would like to hear about your priorities and what topics are important for the Board to know so I can provide that perspective more holistically.

Treasurer Sorensen: If you haven't met Jenn yet, she is great. Can you tell people what committees you are on?

- **Response:** There are 4 different committees on the Board, I'm on the Educational Policies and Institutional Resources Committee which oversees new majors, student affairs, and other educational matters. There is also the Budget Committee, Executive Committee, and the Audit Committee.

Treasurer Sorensen: Next week, myself, President Teferra, and Vice President Bednarik are meeting with Provost Prelock, Vice Provost Caloiero, and Richard Cate to discuss increasing the Student Activity Fee. Wanted to put that on your radar, and we will probably reach out afterwards.

- **Response:** Thank you for telling me, I remember we met about that last year.

Senator Keppel: Is the other Student Trustee also a graduate student?

- **Response:** They are a medical student. Each year a new Student Trustee is selected and can come from any of the colleges, and there have been undergrad students before.

President Teferra will lead a committee to select the Student Trustee.

Senator Jones: Two primary concerns are about sexual violence and free speech concerns with crackdowns on student protests and UVM administration taking unilateral action against them.

- **Response:** Thank you for sharing that.

Vice President Bednarik: Could you explain what the extent of student affairs is on the committee you are on? You said it is more educational policy than student affairs?

- **Response:** We do broad overviews of policies, not deciding on specific students and cases. That is Erica's department and we have meetings with her on general plans.

Vice President Bednarik: I want to put the idea on your radar of looking at the structure of ResLife and how people are employed and compensated for their work. I am happy to go into detail about that because I think it is a bigger conversation that needs to happen outside of the Department of Student Affairs.

- **Response:** Are you talking about RAs or professional staff?

Vice President Bednarik: Everyone. Regarding professional staff, the way they are hired and how they find applicants, the retention rate is horrible. That leaves a lot of duties to fall on RAs who are students and not compensated fairly at all. We are expected to be RA, teacher, parent, nurse, which is not fair and we aren't trained for. The lack of support for RAs is disgraceful. I am happy to meet and talk more about this so it can be brought up in a bigger room.

- **Response:** I was an RA in undergrad and can relate. The Board oversees which buildings we have for student beds, not so much overseeing ResLife operations. I am happy to have that conversation but our role isn't to oversee employment or operations.

Vice President Bednarik: Then another point is that we don't have enough housing for students. People are still in forced triples and a lot of these buildings are not up to code.

- **Response:** That is something we are working on. More juniors and seniors are wanting to stay on campus. We are hoping to have solutions soon.

Senator Demeo: You briefly mentioned meeting with Treasurer Sorensen about raising the Student Activity Fee. Has there been any progress on that?

- **Response:** Treasurer Sorensen might know more.

Treasurer Sorensen: I will say more about this next week. The Student Activity Fee funds all of SGA and every club on campus. It is \$111 of our tuition each semester and has been flat for the last 6 years through expanding roles, inflation, Covid, new staff members, and increasing clubs. I have been writing a proposal which we will present to Interim President Prelock, Vice Provost Caloiero, and CFO Richard Kate. Myself and Senator Rice also sit on the Budget, Finance, and Investment Board of Trustees Committee.

- **Response:** Once the Budget, Finance, and Investment Committee looks at that it will come to the full Board for a vote.

President Teferra: There is an Instagram account called UVMHousingHell which has details about housing issues on campus. It is a dire issue that capping acceptance has probably helped a little with, but some living conditions are unbearable and unhealthy.

- **Response:** I think that is a common theme that a lot of students are experiencing. We have plans I can't share currently, but we are working on it.

Chair Knopp: Is there a good way to reach out to you?

- **Response:** Email is great. We are happy to meet or communicate via email with students about perspectives and concerns.

Old Business

Emergency Business

Bill Finalizing SGA Financial Policies, Sponsored by Chair Murphy

- The Finance Committee, Treasurer Sorensen, and myself have decided to limit gas supplemental funding for clubs to \$1,500 this year. The supplemental funding budget has decreased from \$300,000 to \$250,000 and we were already significantly over budget last year. Hopefully this can bring down overspending and even out gas spending.

BILL: Passed unanimously, Chair Murphy abstained

New Business

Resolution Supporting Raising the Student Activity Fee

Senatorial Forum

Senator Jones: I know this is not the most fun topic to come back to, but I want to make everyone aware of a lawsuit filed against the University, Lina Balcom, and Jerome Budomo by Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) which is a recognized SGA club that has been put on interim suspension for 4 months now. They are working with a lawyer and filed this lawsuit, if you want a copy of it you can reach out to me. This runs adjacent to what we do and the basis of

their case is the lack of due process they received for their suspension which normally would be carried out through SGA since we cover clubs. You may get questions because this could be big news, possibly nationally. I am happy to talk to anyone, you should be knowledgeable to answer or direct questions.

Vice President Bednarik: Quick announcement regarding this which we will talk more about at SGA retreat. If anyone comes up to you and asks for an interview, you cannot speak on SGA's behalf. You can speak as a UVM student, mentioning that you are a Senator or anything does not represent our official position. We will have a presentation about this, you can choose not to respond to something like this, but if you do take the time to prep, go to Chair Modun to prep and get advice.

Senator Jones: I will also say if you are reached out to, you can direct questions to me or directly to SJP. If you aren't personally involved or very knowledgeable about the situation I would caution you against speaking at the risk of saying something that isn't completely true.

Executive Reports

Speaker Connors

- Thank you for lively conversations with our two guests.
- Excited for the new freshman Senators coming in next week.
- We will be updating the motion cards this year for clarity.
- Going off what I said in my email, it was brought to my attention that we had a communication problem. I would like to remind you that to get work done you have to be able to reach out and make things happen. If you are having any issues, reach out to myself or Vice President Bednarik.

Vice President Bednarik

- Thanks for being respectful and listening carefully in Public Forums. You can also email our guests afterwards if you have follow up questions.
- Make sure you are telling people to vote, polls open soon and the Election Committee has been working hard. Ask professors if you can put up the QR code before class.
- Appointment applications are due Saturday at midnight, you can tell people to find the email from yesterday or send them the link. Interviews have been going well so far.
- I will speak more about Retreat next week. Come hang out in the P/VP office and enjoy the décor.

President Teferra

- Happy Tuesday!
- Yesterday, I submitted names for the Presidential Search Committee. The bulk of the work should be done by winter break. I will let you know when meetings start and if you have specific issues or questions I can bring up, let me know.
- The Brightspace focus group still needs people to sign up for it. There's a link in the Teams.

Treasurer Sorensen

- That Brightspace focus group sounds great! I can't wait to join, you all should too!
- Next week we have a meeting about the Student Activity Fee. I will talk about the proposal and resolution next week.
- Sexual Violence Prevention Training required for club signers and all of you on 11/12.

Committee Reports

Public Relations Committee

- Debate night, couldn't be more excited!
- Senator Purple and the Elections Committee have been working hard, voting opens tomorrow.
- Fun Fact of the Week: Elephants are really, really silly.

Chair Garcia: Do you have evidence or is this just something you decided?

- **Response:** I decided and I just want to say I was right.

Senator Jones: I'd like us to revisit the difference between a fact and an opinion.

Committee on the Environment

- We scheduled our first committee meeting finally.
- I am meeting with Liz Palchak, the Director of the Office of Sustainability, to talk about the Comprehensive Sustainability Plan and what SGA can do to work with that.
- Brisket is back at Chipotle, really good, try it out.

Committee on Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity

- Event of the Week: Presidential Debate tonight.
- Meeting with Ahmed Khanani, the Director of the Mosaic Center, to talk about goals in conjunction with SGA. I also reached out to the directors of the Interfaith, WAGE, and Prism Centers.
- Disabled Student Union forum that I will send out info in the Teams. Ameritus Chair Anis wanted to continue on.

Committee on Legislative and Community Affairs

- Last semester, Vice President Bednarik, President Teferra, and I worked with Mosaic to restructure some of their Orientation events. They took our advice and are now better supporting students.
- Community Coalition in two weeks, everyone wants to be there. So much time before leaving for Retreat, forget FallFest happening the same night.
- Song of the Week: The Kill by Maggie Rogers with an honorable mention to I'm Not Gonna Teach Your Boyfriend How to Dance With You, Glee Cast version.

Committee on Student Action and Well-Being

- Nothing to report.

Club Affairs Committee

- Just wrapped up ActivitiesFest last week. Thank you to the Elections Committee, especially Senator Purple for organizing the elections table.
- Working on getting clubs recognized.

Academic Affairs Committee

- I attended my first committee meeting for the Short-Term Absence Form, the response to the pilot has been great. Requests have been getting approved and absences have been getting excused. If you have experience or feedback let me know.
- I am going to be at Community Coalition and you should be too, 9/20.

Senator Jones: I'm in one of the classes doing the pilot, I've heard positive feedback and it was good when I used it too.

Finance Committee

- Thank you for passing the bill earlier, it's already been implemented.

- Thank you Treasurer Sorensen and Chair Halvorson, I got positive feedback on the Club Signer Training.

Senatorial Comments/Announcements

President Teferra: I forgot to mention, an email was forwarded by Ana Sola from Scott Clark about the Truman Scholarship if you are a junior pursuing a career in government or public service. The application is pretty easy and the deadline is 11/15.

Senator Purple: First, something fun I learned which you can use when people ask what SGA does, passing time between classes used to be 15 minutes and SGA pushed for additional time to get between classes. If not for us, we would have to hustle more. Second, another hat I wear is as President of Spikeball Club, meetings are Monday and Thursday on Redstone Green 4:30-6:30pm. Lastly, elections open tomorrow morning, 21 candidates and 8 seats open. Shoutout Meg for posting platforms and Chair Modun for helping me with this.

Chair Garcia: First off, I also helped with info sessions. AdvoCat Tour Guide applications are open and live. I'm an AdvoCat, so is Senator Purple. Also I came in on top of fantasy this week.

Senator Purple: I would like to formally apologize to Chair Garcia, I hope this doesn't happen a third time or it's going to be more awkward. Thank you to Chair Garcia, Chair Knopp, President Teferra, and Chair Modun for helping run the info sessions when I couldn't.

Senator Jones: I did drop something in Teams, there are lots of posters from freshman running which is great to see. It is a privilege to be here, good to see that passion and reminder of the privilege. I will follow up with a fact check on this, there is a new UVM Emergency Room opening up which would be good for students to know about. Lots of students have had trouble getting seen quickly at the ER.

Senator Keppel: Is this at the Student Health Center or in the Medical Center?

- **Response:** I believe it is with the UVM Medical Center. Another in-network UVM ER, new hospital in the area might be more accessible.

Vice President Bednarik: If any of you can drive to Retreat, please let me know. We are trying to have enough cars to get people out if need be without waiting for a school bus.

Adjournment