



7th Meeting of the 2025-2026 Student Government Association Senate
September 23th, 2025 | 7:00 PM | Livak Ballroom

Call to Order

This meeting was called to order by Speaker Hannah York.

Roll Call

Senators not present: Senator Forrest, Senator Camacho

Approval of Minutes

Public Forum

Amelia Adutori and Maddie Priestly with UVM Athletics and SAAC

- SAAC: Student Athlete Advisory Committee: has 50-60 members, meets once a month, has representatives from the America East Conference, and connects student athletes and the administration.
 - They directly work with athletes, the America East Conference, and the Vermont community through community service and campus events.
- SAAC would like to partner with SGA in order to bridge the gap between athletics and the general student body. They are looking to increase collaboration, partnership, and opportunities.

- To increase involvement between student athletes and the general student body, they are looking to host 2-4 events per semester. However, they are having trouble getting student athletes to sign up for events because of their busy schedules.
- Previous events: She Roars, Better Together Games, Food Frenzy, and the Special Olympics.
 - In collaboration with SGA: student athletes helping move in orientees on Redstone campus, student sections at games (looking to expand), week of kindness
- Ideas for the future: SGA could participate in game day tabling.
- **Senator Siddiqui :** Some sports are not that common, such as table tennis; they can work on that area.
 - **Response:** Good idea
- **Senator Esbin:** Are you looking for a half SGA and SAAC E-board position?
 - **Response:** We are looking to add an E-board member from SGA who is also an athlete. There isn't a full plan, and they are seeking feedback from SGA
- **President Connors:** We had a meeting with Krista Balogh, and they wanted more areas for collaboration – what does that look like with Orientation
 - **Response:** Orientation is tricky for the fall sport athletes; student athletes are not present at all during orientation. SAAC wants those students out doing activities to bridge the gap between the general student body and student athletes.

Orientation leaders should reach out to athletes and encourage them to do as much as they can.

- **Response:** Orientation could reach out to coaches and make activities seem mandatory. Orientation could continue, including women's and men's soccer games.
- **Treasurer Murphy:** The idea of having a rep of SGA and SAAC would be great, but it is worrying because athletics is their entire life. How do you think we could make that work for a representative?
 - **Response:** It is impossible to be a full-time member on SAAC and SGA. It would be more of a liaison position that prioritizes someone who can openly communicate.
 - **Response:** It would be helpful to have another representative who could be in communication with SGA. Someone who could meet monthly, just to stay in touch
- **Senator Lee:** How are representatives chosen from each team to be a part of SAAC? How do you recruit? How do you run/how are you nominated for positions?
 - **Response:** It depends on the team and coach. Some student athletes are involved and want a role within the department; the swim and dive team writes an essay. There are usually 2-8 representatives depending on the size of the team.
 - For E-board positions, there are elections; you can nominate yourself or someone else, and the election is run within SAAC.

Old Business

Bill Amending Financial Policies, sponsored by Chair Rice and Treasurer Murphy

- We are diverting new clubs to supplemental funding instead of automatically granting them 350 dollars, which will allow them to plan further ahead. We are also getting rid of the 650 dollar budget limit on new clubs. We are increasing the gas gap to 1750 dollars.
- Bill: **Passed** unanimously, Senator Rice abstained.

Bill Recognizing Maple Club, sponsored by Senator Alarafi

- The Maple Club aims to work with the UVM Rubenstein College in order to teach students about the social, economic, and environmental benefits of maple.
- The club plans to do maple sugaring in partnership with a sugar mapling company to provide students with a unique experience at the intersection of science, food, and community.
- Bill: **Passed** unanimously, Senator Alarafi abstained

Emergency Business

Senator Peterson is sworn in as a new senator

Speaker election to replace Speaker York

Opening Statements:

Senator Paquette: I am a senior in Political Science and a minor in History. I am from Vergennes, Vermont, and I wish to be the new SGA Speaker.

- In Vergennes, in high school, I was the student-body president, and I fought for increased protection for LGBTQ+ students and increased punishments for hate crimes. This summer, I volunteered at Hope, which helps the homelessness issue in Vermont, and advocates for legislation for affordability and accessibility for survival necessities. This

organization advocates for people who cannot advocate for themselves. At UVM, I have gained leadership skills, expanded my interests, and seen the power of collective voice. I have been on SGA for over a year as a new club affairs senator.

- I have two key goals: defend and dialogue. SGA must strengthen its defense of student interests, safety, well-being, and success. For dialogue, we must increase the number of people at the table and build new tables. We must also support people putting themselves at the table.

Senator Onorato: I am originally from New York, and I am a sophomore studying psychology, business, and a minor in childhood studies. Throughout my time on SGA, I have served on the committee of student action and wellbeing, the public relations committee, in addition to working on various cross-committee initiatives. I took my previous experience of running for speaker as a learning opportunity and an opportunity for growth. Since then, I have sought feedback, gained clarity, and worked on the ways I serve this body. I understand the importance of open communication and how it is critical to facilitating an environment where everyone feels comfortable sharing their opinions.

- Implemented the mentor program to help new senators and everyone else in SGA. As your speaker, I would continue to work towards creating an environment where everyone feels supported in using their voice and pursuing their goals. My vision for the role of speaker rests on the following three commitments
 - Well-rounded judicial leadership: the SGA constitution and operation documents are fundamental and require diligent review to make sure they are accurately represented. This would be facilitated in the position of judicial committee chair. Also, growing everyone's understanding of these documents will allow for more

informed and intentional work to be done. I plan to create more opportunities for us all to interact with these documents to build constitutional knowledge and hold senators accountable to complete their duties.

- Accessibility: our work should not be limited to those already in this room. I want to open Senate to more groups across campus. By continuing to practice transparency and performing outreach, we can ensure that more groups on campus see themselves reflected in SGA.
- Neutrality: the role of the speaker is to ensure that every voice in this space has space in our conversations. The speaker must remain unbiased during difficult conversations. I will facilitate equitable dialogue and uphold fairness.
- My commitment is to fairness, strong judicial leadership, bringing SGA to as many community members as possible, and fostering an environment that allows senators to enact the change they want to see at the university.

Senator Jones: I am a senior Computer Science and Political Science double major, and the longest tenured representative in this body. I have served four terms in varying committees, including the legislative and community affairs committee, the chair of the student action and wellbeing committee, and served on the judicial committee for two years.

- I believe the speaker's role consists of presiding over meetings, collaborating with the scribe, chairing the judicial committee, which handles conduct-related issues and constitutional questions, and serving as a guide for the rest of the Senate. These responsibilities require key qualities, including being neutral and impartial, being an expert on the Constitution, the ability to determine legality in legislation, being capable of dealing with sensitive issues, and balancing discipline with compassion.

- I spent time on multiple committees, allowing me to understand our operations from multiple perspectives. I sponsored and wrote dozens of pieces of legislation, all of which have passed. I spent two full terms on the judicial committee, giving me an intimate understanding of our constitution and operating documents.
- The speaker's role is to put aside their personal thoughts and remain neutral so that senators can represent their constituencies. In the past, you have been used to seeing me right in the middle of these difficult conversations. I believe it is my role to do so as a senator. However, I understand the difference between my role as a speaker versus a senator.
- Being a speaker means being a pillar for the rest of the senate, and that is best done by emphasizing neutrality, proactive efficiency, diligent attention to detail, transparency, and compassion.
- I will curate public forum guests whose interests align with one or more of the goals outlined by the president and vice president. Building opportunities for our senators, hosting legislative office hours for senators, sitting on each committee's meetings on a rotational basis, and conducting by-law reviews of each committee's constitutional duties.
- I want to use my experience to help guide the members of this body. I could help facilitate a content, productive, and empowered senate.

Senator Castañeda: I am a freshman senator, majoring in Political Science, from Annapolis, Maryland. The biggest issue with my candidacy is that I am a freshman, but I would like to talk about the experience I already have. I have served in a variety of positions, including: class office, my school's SGA, my school's country student government, and my school's state student

government. I have been the treasurer and vice president of my high school, I have served in a variety of committee positions at the county level, and a speaker at my state student government.

- To me, speaker is the face of SGA; they guide the rest of us towards the best we can be, new projects, and expanding the role of students at UVM. I promise I will work as hard as possible to meet that objective. I don't have the same experience, but I do have drive. I believe I can do a great job at helping our SGA succeed.

Questions

- Speaker York: One of the most important responsibilities is to remain impartial. How would you maintain neutrality?
 - **Senator Paquette:** When I was in high school, I was single-minded. I knew that I wanted to make change and that change to last, but I only saw it as something I could do by myself. As I have developed at UVM, I have learned that the voice of one person is nothing compared to the voice of the many. The voices that I see in this room inspire me to take on this leadership position to provide support for you during these difficult topics, in which I may have a strong opinion, but I will ensure that I will not share those opinions because that is not the job that I am taking on. The job I am taking on is supporting each and every one of you.
 - **Senator Onorato:** I want to acknowledge that being neutral doesn't mean that you have no opinion on the matter; it just means that, within your role as speaker, you need to maintain neutrality and equitable speech for different positions within the senate. My experience as an RA has prepared me to mediate difficult conversations. I have learned how to remove my personal bias from these

situations. The key to impartiality is active listening, staying calm, and overseeing productive dialogue between parties.

- **Senator Jones:** A speaker is not expected to become a robot once elected; however, neutrality is required. When it comes to interpreting the Constitution and maintaining neutrality, I believe that it is the speaker's role to rely on the Constitution and precedent, and previous legislation, to call balls and strikes. I wouldn't be interpreting things based on my own opinion. I would instead be looking to call decisions and make my choices based on what is already in our legislation. When it comes to answering new constitutional questions, I believe that it is the speaker's responsibility to rely on the judicial committee to have conversation and increase dialogue to make sure they are not taking unilateral action. When it comes to conflict resolution, making sure that you are hearing all sides of any conversation and making sure you are not taking any personal relationships into mind increases the ability to remain neutral.
- **Senator Castañeda:** In terms of neutrality, that would be my biggest strength as a freshman senator. I haven't had time to develop any biases, and as Speaker, that is a very important role. On the other hand, another important role is to serve as the head of the committee, which I have had a lot of experience with in the past. At my high school, I connected different organizations across my county. In general, the speaker needs to unite people to bring together different opinions. I promise, I will work as hard as possible to ensure there isn't conflict, but if there is, we can move past it.

- **Speaker York:** Having a firm understanding of the SGA Constitution is the central responsibility of the speaker. Please describe some of the specific responsibilities of the speaker as they are listed in our constitution.
 - **Senator Castañeda:** The two biggest roles outlined in the constitution are to serve as the head of our SGA meetings and the head of the judicial committees. For the former, it would require neutrality and being proactive. For the latter, I served as the head of several committees at the time, and I consider myself to love to lead so I can boost the voice of others. I want to maximize the potential of the judicial committee to do that by making it as available and proactive a body as possible. As the head of our body meetings, I will make sure that everyone's voice is equitably and fairly heard.
 - **Senator Jones:** There are several formal and informal responsibilities of the speaker. Formally, it is their job to chair the judicial committee to ensure that legislation is constitutional, legal, and quality. This would require the speaker to review legislation ahead of time to resolve any constitutional questions and to hold conduct meetings whenever an issue arises. A strong understanding of the Constitution and an impartial disposition are crucial.
 - The informal responsibilities include being a pillar of support and a guiding member to the rest of the Senate for when they have questions or need help. There is opportunity for the speaker to reach out to committees and senators to make sure they are comfortable

- **Senator Onorato:** There are three main responsibilities; the first is running the meetings. The role of the speaker is not to dominate the conversation, but rather, to provide structure and guidance. We can have more effective meetings through my neutrality as a speaker, and through organized and clear agendas. Running the judicial committee is incredibly important. I would like to implement making sure that the legislation and documents we use here at SGA are understood by all senators. The Speaker's outward-facing role is also important. A strong leader should face the community and bring in different aspects of campus into our meetings.
- **Senator Paquette:** One of the most important jobs is to be the head of the judicial committees and our meetings. Throughout my time on SGA, I have had immense familiarity with legislation through club affairs. A key task of the judicial committee is overseeing our operational documents. I have worked with Chair Demeo and Chair Grace to increase the efficiency of club affairs, and I would expand this to all committees on SGA. Communication is a key aspect; I am regularly talking with administration, students, faculty, and staff across campus. This has allowed me to develop a diverse view of this campus, which would be beneficial to me as a speaker if elected.

Closing Statements

- **Senator Paquette:** Thank you to every single senator in this room. You have inspired me to seek this leadership in the first place. Through my tenure in club affairs, I have developed my time management skills, and I am amazed by the ideas and thoughts of the students on this campus. Although my love for club affairs runs deep, my love for the

entire SGA runs deeper. The most impactful work I have done has been outside of my own committee. It is clear to me that this SGA works best when communication barriers are lifted. We are strongest together.

- **Senator Onorato:** The speaker's role is to protect the energy of the SGA body and help it flourish. I see the role of speaker as an opportunity to make every one of you feel confident to step into your voice. This room has the power to shape policy and culture. I will ensure that every voice has an equal voice. As speaker, I will advocate for your best interests, expand the reach of SGA, and remain level-headed in trying times. I have taken actionable steps in response to my loss in the spring. It is imperative for your leader to receive constructive criticism and work on what was previously thought to be their shortcomings. I am prepared to lead this senate into a future defined by growth and possibility.
- **Senator Jones:** I want to reiterate that during my time as chair, I have discovered my passion for mentorship. I believe that being Speaker is a way for me to make an impact. I want to use my experience to uplift those who are in this room. The speaker is there to make sure you are able to run the show smoothly, which I can do by using my experience. Making sure that while we can foster a productive senate, we can also make a content and empowered senate, which is where the speaker's role shines.
- **Senator Castañeda:** The speaker is meant to be the face of SGA and UVM, and I believe that the speaker should work hard, have experience, and be someone who can bring a fresh perspective. I am someone who is going to work hard for each and every one of you.

Senator Onorato was elected as the new Speaker.

New Business

Senatorial Forum

Executive Reports

Speaker Onorato

- Thank you for your support. I am looking forward to a great year
- **Senator Esbin:** How does it feel to bang the gavel?
 - **Response:** Very exciting

Vice President Modun

- Congrats to the new speaker. Thanks to those who attended the fall retreat, I believe we have set strong foundations, and a final report of all of the planning will be made for the next person. If you were not able to attend, there will be a make-up retreat.
- Be on the lookout for an office tour for the new senators
- President Connors and I are continuing to work on the big tree goals. The federal actions ad hoc committee launched this week, and we are looking for more members to join. We will also be serving on the Week of Kindness committee. We are continuing to meet with the administration, and we are excited for President Tromp's installation
- **Senator Ranallo:** motion for paper committee reports after executive reports
 - Motion **passed**

President Connors

- Congratulations to speaker Onorato; all of the candidates did a lovely job.
- There will be an SGA pop-up event this Wednesday at CCRH. Please join the sign-up and attend. The sign-up link is on Teams. It is from 2:30-4, we especially need people to cover starting at 2 for set-up and for a 2-3 time block.
- Project work is continuing. President Tromp's installation is next week. If you can, please attend

Treasurer Murphy

- Congrats to Speaker Onorato, and thank you for a great retreat. If anyone has financial questions.
- If you have any questions, office hours are from 2-3 on Wednesdays.
- For fundraising for RSOs: I sent out a form to create open feedback from RSOs and club signers about their fundraising initiatives.

Committee Reports

Public Relations Committee – Chair Denny

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Committee on the Environment – Chair Arnone

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Committee on Our Common Ground Values – Chair Espejo

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Committee on Legislative and Community Affairs – Chair Laychak

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Committee on Student Action and Well-Being – Chair Steele

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Club Affairs Committee – Chairs Demeo and Grace

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Academic Affairs Committee – Chair Carroll-Millins

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Finance Committee – Chair Rice

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Senatorial Comments/Announcements

- **Senator Arnone:** There is a big a cappella concert this weekend, it is at 7:30 pm in Southwick. You should get your tickets in advance. Since Instagram changed its livestreaming rules to needing over one thousand followers to livestream, everyone should follow the @uvmviridescent Instagram account.
- **Chair Grace:** This is the only a cappella concert this year where you get five groups for the price of one.
- **Senator Forrest:** After the concert, you should go to the contradance at Trinity.
- **Senator Brito del Valle:** I made banana bread
- **Senator Esbin:** This Saturday, there will be a president vs. president at the men's soccer game. Also, for anyone looking for a project, we are looking for people to digitize archives from old concerts on campus
- **President Connors:** BSU is having its soul food social on Saturday, starting at 6 pm. It is rodeo-themed

Adjournment