Hello Graduate Students,

Thank you to everyone who submitted nominations for the Graduate Student Senate Executive Board. At this point in time, nominations are closed and the following candidates are running for GSS executive board positions. Campaigning may begin now and will conclude with a formal vote from April 20th to April 22nd via electronic ballot that coincides with the Graduate Student Senate constitution and bylaws.

The candidates running for office are listed here and their statements are attached below:

- **President**
  - Avery Rasmussen, Master’s Student, Public Health

- **Vice President**
  - Aayudh Das, PhD Student, Plant Biology

- **Treasurer**
  - Jared Percoco, Master’s Student, Accountancy
  - Jaspreet Singh Nagi, PhD Student, Bioengineering

- **Communications Director**
  - Rosaura “Rosie” Chapina, PhD Student, Natural Resources
  - Erin Cullen, PhD Student, Neuroscience

- **Secretary**
  - Ryan Doncaster, Master’s Student, Public Health
  - Mike Hoaglund, Master’s Student, Medical Sciences

If there are any questions or concerns, please contact Jessica Bocanegra (jbocaneg@uvm.edu), Fonda Heenehan (Fonda.Heenehan@uvm.edu), or Andy Klem (Andrew.Klem@uvm.edu).

Best,
GSS Election Committee
Candidates for President

Avery Rasmussen, Master's Student, Public Health

Hello fellow graduate students! My name is Avery Rasmussen, I use she/her/hers pronouns, and I am a student in the Master of Public Health program. I am running to represent graduate students as the President of Graduate Student Senate (GSS). I believe my leadership experience and commitment to serving our graduate community qualify me to be your representative and I am grateful for the opportunity to earn your vote.

As Vice President this year, I’ve had the opportunity to support and lead the largest and most representative Senate body in GSS history. It’s been an inspiring experience to work alongside Senators whose passion and drive to improve the lives of graduate students has led to tangible actions. One of my goals as Vice President was to prioritize efforts to provide a more equitable graduate student experience. As a first step towards identifying these gaps, I analyzed graduate student responses to the Campus Climate Survey, presented the results to the Senate, and facilitated the first GSS Open Forum to gather additional insights from our grad student community. Two themes that emerged from this data were bias incident prevalence and reporting and accessibility and disability inclusion. Here are a few examples of the actions we took to begin addressing these gaps:

- Collaborated with UVM Professional Development and Living Well to develop a 3-part bias training series (postponed until fall 2020 due to the pandemic).
- Worked with the UVM Women’s Center to provide a workshop on ableism and disability for GSS Senators.
- Worked with the UVM Center on Disability and Community Inclusion to create an event planning guide to ensure GSS events are accessible to our graduate student community.
- Held a second open forum in the Spring of 2020 to provide additional space for graduate students to share their thoughts and insights.

As President, I will use my leadership experience and understanding of the nuances of how to work with the UVM administration to amplify graduate student interests and turn ideas into tangible action. In order to represent the diverse interests and needs of graduate students to the administration, I will actively seek out opportunities to engage with as many fellow graduate students as possible. I plan to continue holding open forums, which provide space (with food!) for graduate students to voice their thoughts and concerns and help us better advocate for what our constituents want to see from the administration. I will continue working with the Graduate College to expand Graduate Student Orientation to include bias training, community resources and more extensive GTA training with optional refresher sessions throughout the semester. The availability of affordable convenient housing for graduate students continues to be a serious issue. I will continue to advocate for the need for additional affordable accommodations to the administration and support initiatives by the Burlington City Council and the Office of Student and Community Relations that aim to improve living conditions and the availability of affordable housing, specifically as it pertains to the barriers faced by international students. Additionally, I will continue to work to increase the transparency of our graduate student fees. We should know what our comprehensive fees are paying for and what on and off campus services we can receive as part of these fees. I will push UVM to conduct an internal review to determine
graduate student utilization of services provided by each of the student fees and advocate for a reduction in fees accordingly.

My earnest objective in running for this position is to improve the lives of graduate students and I would be grateful to hear any ideas, concerns or feedback from you. Please don’t hesitate to reach out to me via email (avery.rasmussen@uvm.edu) or phone (612-558-2687) to share your thoughts.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Avery Rasmussen
Candidates for Vice President

Aayudh Das, PhD Student, Plant Biology

Dear Graduate Student community, I’m Aayudh Das, a graduate student from plant biology and I’m running for the Vice-President position for 2020-2021 to improve the graduate student experience at UVM. My prioritized efforts as a GSS Vice President will include:

1) Improving the graduate student housing experience at UVM by collaborating with UVM administration to propose realistic strategies, such as partnering with various housing trusts, Burlington City Council and local Burlington neighborhood landlords for affordable housing for graduate students, until UVM has its own graduate housing. Additionally, I’m interested in providing secure housing priority for our international graduate students for their very first year of enrollment.

2) Articulating my attentions for graduate student stipend that determines the basic quality of life. While working closely with the GSS stipends committee and based on GSS stipend survey results conducted in 2018, it’s clear that general stipend structure of UVM needs some revisions and I’m interested to extend my understanding to the UVM administration.

3) Strengthening the GSS’s diversity and equity ventures, by taking essential measures, from arranging UVM identity center workshops to discussion series by UVM identity group leaders and finally collaborating with graduate college to provide teaching workshops with diversity training for graduate students who participates in teaching.

4) Taking initiatives for the campus wide food insecurity management, especially by providing grocery gifts from GSS and collaborating with SGA for Rally Cat cupboard initiative for the food insecure graduate students.

5) Formulating a graduate student professional development action committee to run various career focused workshops monthly, and conference annually with speakers from industry, government, and or nonprofit organizations to share their strategical and personal experiences for career development after graduate school. This also includes, a collaborative effort with UVM Career Center and UVM Alumni Foundation to develop a professional network.

6) Advocating to make grads give back initiative, a standing committee to better highlight the efforts of graduate students in contributing and collaborating with the greater Burlington community and to involve UVM graduates for community development.

7) Collaborating with Graduate College to establish a well-developed marketing strategy for better highlighting the presence of UVM in the research community to for improved graduate student enrollment (both local and international).

8) Voicing the need to include eye and dental care as a part of the graduate student health insurance as well as affordable graduate student spouse insurance.

In my four years at UVM I had an opportunity to explore a diverse leadership experiences which will assist me to advocate for and improve the lives of graduate students.
For the past two years, I’ve served as the treasurer of GSS. My top priorities were to ensure a proper financial management of a $45k budget and usage of almost 80% of my proposed budget. I also enabled the transition of the online platform of mini-grant submission from the original paper format. This also incorporated the re-structuring of an unbiased reviewer’s guideline for better management of mini grants for graduate students. I also established a full-scale GSS recognized club finance policy with a full finance workshop for the first time.

I’m also deeply involved in various diversity initiatives at UVM. Serving as a president (2017-19) and vice-president (2019-20) of Indian Student’s Association (ISA), I led a group of international students that executed our charter and the university’s diversity mission. Starting from Diwali (festival of light) to Holi (festival of color), we organized many cultural events throughout the year that aimed at bringing the international students together.

Moreover, I served on the board of advisors for College of Agriculture and Life Science (CALS) where I had counseled CALS dean and gave a voice to CALS graduate students. In this period, I have advocated for enhancing the stipend for CALS graduate students (in effect from 2020 academic year), enhanced CALS travel grants and established a graduate student research award for CALS.

I hope to serve you with the consistent zeal and responsibility as a Vice-President as I have served as in my current and previous appointments. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me (aadas@uvm.edu) with any questions or concerns.
Candidates for Treasurer

Jared Percoco, Master's Student, Accountancy

During my time at UVM as an undergraduate student I served as the Treasurer of the Student Government Association. While looking at the responsibilities of the Treasurer in the Bylaws I believe I have a lot of relevant experience to bring to the Graduate Student Senate Executive Board. While in the position of SGA Treasurer I was responsible for the financial overview of 200+ club’s operations. I managed $4.5 million budget distributed between clubs, senate operations, and other undergraduate programs. In addition, I worked with the Business Manager, Blanka Caha, to assure financial data is properly maintained along with preparing and presenting an overview of the SGA Financial Policies to 200 Clubsigners at the Treasurer’s Workshop. Lastly, I have experience using university assigned purchase cards during my time as the Treasurer of the Catamount Innovation Fund.

Despite knowing UVM’s business processes through my responsibilities as SGA Treasurer I worked to make SGA an equitable and transparent place for all students. I met with every club at least once throughout my term and made sure they had all the relevant information they needed to pursue any activities they wanted as long as it was within the purview of our Financial Policies. I even met with the Treasurer of GSS, Aayudh Das, during my term to speak about ways to fund the Holi Festival despite the Indian Student Association not being an SGA recognized club. As Graduate Student Senate Treasurer I would like to bring my experience to the graduate student body and help students pursue projects they have passion for as I had done as SGA Treasurer.

If you have any questions about myself or my experiences feel free to email me at jpercoco@uvm.edu. Thank you for taking the time to read through my application.

Jaspreet Singh Nagi, PhD Student, Bioengineering

Hello everyone! I, Jaspreet Singh Nagi, would like to run for the Treasurer of the Graduate Student Senate (GSS) for the term 2020-21.

I am currently a second-year Ph.D. candidate in the bioengineering program. After joining UVM in Fall 2018, I have been actively involved with the GSS. I have been working with the GSS as a Senator representing my department for almost 2 years now. I have been part of the three committees including the Finance committee, Compensation and Benefits Committee, and Assistantship and Support Committee.

In the past two years with GSS, I have worked on the stipend survey and its results, gathered stipend and health insurance data from other universities to understand the financial burden faced by our fellow graduate students. I am currently working for bringing transparency on the fees being collected from graduate students and also to form an appropriate training for Graduate teaching assistants to make sure that nobody enters a classroom underprepared for teaching a class. As one of the unbiased reviewers for the GSS mini-grants, I have been responsible for carefully reviewing mini-grants in January, April and September cycle of every year for 2 years now.
I believe the position of the Treasurer calls for specific skill sets and characteristics, namely Accountability and Integrity in order to uphold the core principles of the GSS. Throughout my academic and extra-curricular career, I have strived to develop a character that embodies these key attributes as follows:

**Accountability:** Responsibility and punctuality are traits that are found in leaders across all disciplines. I have been the President of the Indian Students’ Association (ISA) since Spring 2019. The events hosted by me and my team speaks for itself about my moto for promoting diversity on the UVM campus. Me and my team successfully accommodated over 400 guests during Diwali Night and over 250 guests during Holi 2019 at UVM. This not only included graduate & undergraduate students, but also faculty & staff, and people from the Burlington community, drawing attention of the local media as well.

**Integrity:** It is paramount that members of the e-board, and especially the Treasurer, implement a strong and clear sense of morals and ethics in their day-to-day activities. In my tenure as the President, I have worked closely with the Treasurer in regards of the ISA budget. I have been responsible in maintaining all the financial records in his/her absence, for handling the purchasing card linked to ISA, and for reporting all expenses to the Administrative and Business Service Center before the deadline.

With all the above experiences related to Treasurer and finance committee with ISA and GSS respectively, the transition for me as the Treasurer of the GSS wouldn't be as difficult.

I, as the Treasurer would ensure proper management of the budget allotted to the GSS and maintain all the financial records. I would make sure that we keep the diversity enhancement fund intact which was started in 2019-20, it accounts for 10% of the total GSS budget to support diversity initiatives. I would want to start a food insecurity fund which would account for at least 5% of the total GSS budget. A Wellness & Engagement fund to initiate more professional development series with special emphasis to graduate student mental health and career networking for at least 5% of the total GSS budget will also be included. I will continue to work on all the graduate community concerns that I was already dealing with such as stipends, transparency in student fees, and formation of appropriate trainings for them. I will keep working on making the online platform for the mini-grant submissions more user-friendly to make the overall submission process as smooth as possible for the graduate students. We will work on the issue of graduate student housing and parking to make sure we can have something setup for the future incoming students as well.

If given the opportunity, I shall apply all my experience to further the progression of the GSS. I will make sure that our team works together, take fair decisions which are beneficial for the entire graduate community to make sure that all of them have a great graduate experience.

Thanks for your time and consideration.
Candidates for Communications Director

Rosaura "Rosie" Chapina, PhD Student, Natural Resources

I, Rosaura “Rosie” Chapina, am interested in running for the Graduate Student Senate (GSS) Communications Director for the 2020-2021 term. I am a second year PhD student in the Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources. For the past two years I have had the pleasure of serving as a GSS senator and working alongside exceptionally driven individuals. I am currently a part of three GSS committees serving as a chair for two; the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI) Committee and Parking and Transportation (PT) Committee. As chair I was able to help implement a graduate student parking pass permit, host multicultural night events, and help draft a divestment resolution bill which was passed by the GSS on March 4, 2020. In addition to my experience with GSS, I am also the Treasurer for the Rubenstein Graduate Student Association, and serve as the graduate student representative for the Rubenstein Board of Advisors.

If elected as a Communications Director, one of my objectives will be to use several platforms of electronic communication (e.g., Email, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) to reach the entirety of the graduate student population. Email is a very effective means of communication however, it is easy to get bombarded with emails and to feel overwhelmed. Thus, I would like to maximize communication via social media.

Aside from enhancing communication between the graduate student and the GSS, I would like to advocate for issues that I know are important to graduate students including but not limited to parking, housing, and mental health issues. As Communications Director, I will encourage cross-disciplinary events that foster a sense of community.

Serving as a senator has allowed me to play a role in making sure that the best interests of graduate students are met. If elected, I promise to serve the graduate student body to the best of my ability. I look forward to the opportunity to work with the GSS to enhance the experience of all graduate students across UVM.

Erin Cullen, PhD Student, Neuroscience

I have been attending GSS events since my first year at UVM and serving as a GSS Senator for the past two years. For the 2018-2019 school year, I served as co-chair of what was then called the Diversity Committee (since renamed Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee) and was also a member of the Constitution and Bylaws Committee. For the past year, I’ve been serving as a Member-At-Large coordinating room reservations and other business for GSS-recognized clubs. As an out-of-state student and a student in a smaller program, GSS has been instrumental for me in meeting other grad students and finding community at UVM.

I’m running for the position of Communications Director because I am eager to continue to serve GSS and the graduate student community as an E-board member. I believe that the position of Communications Director would allow me to play to my strengths. Though I’m continuing my studies in neuroscience here at UVM, I also completed an undergraduate major in nonfiction writing. I am comfortable crafting emails to send to large groups of people and utilizing strategies for making those emails concise and easy to read. I have familiarized myself with the resources for graduate students around campus as a Senator and especially as a member of
the DEI committee, so I believe I’m in a good position to find non-GSS events and announcements that ought to be advertised to the graduate student community.

As Communications Director, my primary goal will be to ensure that important information from GSS will be disseminated to the UVM graduate student community in an easily interpretable, accessible way. I plan to regularly update the Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram pages with announcements, fliers, student spotlights, content for relevant social media events such as International Day of Women & Girls in Science, and pictures from GSS events. I’m also interested in exploring the possibility of converting or copying the GSS events calendar to a Google Calendar so that students can access information about GSS events easily from their smartphones. I also plan to use my familiarity with the current GSS-recognized clubs to ensure that club events are advertised to their full potential audience.

Thank you for your consideration!
Candidates for Secretary

Ryan Doncaster, Master’s Student, Public Health

Hello Graduate Student Community and Election Committee,

The following is my nomination for the secretary role within the GSS Executive Board. I first became aware of this role this past year while attending GSS events, and I became aware of its opening through the GSS email communications. This past fall I had the privilege of joining the graduate student community as I began my accelerated master’s program here at UVM. Within an accelerated program, I have had the somewhat unique experience of beginning graduate coursework while still finishing my undergraduate degree, situating myself in this overlapping space existing as both an undergraduate and graduate student concurrently. So far, my understanding of what GSS hopes to achieve is advocating for graduate student wellbeing, providing platforms for professional development, and strengthen the graduate student community. Each of these aspects of GSS I believe are valuable to the graduate community as a whole, and are something I would strive to contribute to in my term as secretary.

Outside of completing coursework, I believe it is very valuable to become involved in the community. This is something I have done in my four years as an undergraduate at UVM through working as a Teaching Assistant in the Neuroscience department, working as a Supplemental Instructor for the Center for Academic Success, and most relevantly serving as the Volunteers In Action (VIA) Treasurer within our Student Government Association. Within my role as treasurer, I worked towards the following duties: assisted in facilitating the 11 VIA clubs accessing resources available to them through SGA; became a critical liaison between the finance office, SGA professional staff, and student leadership; maintained all financial records of VIA; and saw the records appropriately submitted to the finance office.

I believe all the skills developed in navigating these different roles and responsibilities become immediately relevant to the secretary role within the GSS Executive Board. Specifically, meeting with so many different student groups and offices has taught me the importance of maintaining good and true meeting minutes; understanding the goals, purpose, and spending of various student groups; maintaining important records to view how these groups have functioned in the past; clear and direct communication and resource accessibility, something that may be achieved through active use of a collective space such as a website. All of these skills I would continue to use and develop within my term as secretary of the Graduate Student Senate.

Thank you for taking the time to read my nomination. It is my wish to further integrate myself into the graduate student community, see all the great work being done, and contribute to its success by providing access and resources to graduate students. I would be happy to expand more upon any area of my work and experiences, and I would be thrilled to hear more about the work you are doing as a graduate student and as a member of the graduate student community. I can be reached at the email below. Thank you for your consideration and hope all is well.

Sincerely,
Ryan Doncaster
ryan.doncaster@uvm.edu
My name is Mike Hoaglund and I am excited to announce my candidacy for the position of Secretary in the Graduate Student Senate. Since taking on the position of Senator for the Medical Master’s program, I have very much enjoyed my involvement with the GSS and the sense of fulfillment that comes with being part of an organization. It has been my pleasure to serve as a liaison between the colleagues in my program, graduate students not in my program and the UVM administration. I would like to continue serving my peers and ameliorating the UVM Graduate College community by taking on the leadership position of Secretary in the GSS.

Since my involvement in GSS, I have volunteered as a representative on the Student Research Conference Committee where I helped to organize and recruit volunteers for the 2020 Student Research Conference. Additionally, I participated, alongside other GSS members, in the interview process to evaluate the recently appointed UVM Chief of Police. I believe that the safety and wellbeing of the UVM community is of the utmost importance. I felt privileged to be able to voice my opinion on a candidate that would be taking on such an important role that would not only affect graduate students, but also the greater UVM community. I know that being elected to the position of Secretary of the GSS would put me in a position to continue to serve others, stay informed, and get more involved alongside other outstanding student leaders here at UVM.

Aside from my involvement in the GSS, I am an active member of the greater Burlington community where I volunteer at the Winooski Food Shelf and the Vermont Pride Center. Additionally, I have held prior leadership positions by serving as the Treasurer of my Student Council while in high school, where I also developed and executed a Community Development Project as an Eagle Scout. I would like the opportunity to demonstrate and further develop my leadership skills by joining the GSS Executive Board and becoming the GSS Secretary.

If elected, I would like to expand the involvement of the Graduate Student Senate in Graduate Student’s lives. There are a multitude of untapped resources and information within the GSS that I feel most graduate students, as myself once was, are unaware of. I would like to increase the communication between the GSS and Graduate Student community to make these resources more readily available. Furthermore, I would like to communicate the needs and interests of the Graduate Student community to the UVM administration. I will do this by promoting and developing a dialogue between the UVM administration and Graduate Student Senate. I am truly excited for the prospect of being the GSS Secretary and would be honored to serve the Graduate Student body. If you feel as though I am qualified, I would ask for your vote for GSS Secretary.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best,
Mike Hoaglund