Hello, my name is Aidan Doherty and I’m running to be one of your SGA Senators.

The UVM Student Government has a great opportunity in front of it: a new chance to look at how it engages with students. For too long, the SGA has felt distant, intimidating, and unrepresentative. This last election can be read as a referendum against the old ways of the SGA and that means students at UVM are ready for a new way of doing things. A good leader knows when their time has passed and, as a three-year incumbent Senator, where do I fit in? I believe in change, in connecting with students, and in coming together for a better future, I know there is a place for me in the upcoming year.

My institutional knowledge of the Student Government Association is more important now than it ever has been. My time in the Senate equips me to guide the body away from past problems and share my understanding of UVM’s structure and process. Fresh perspectives and new ideas keep organizations from stagnation, but memory of past mistakes help prevent future ones. Whether it’s an initiative that has already been pursued or an old way of doing things, I can be the voice in the room to remind folks of their history. Basically Bran from Game of Thrones with no fun warg stuff. Another benefit of my experience is my understanding of how UVM functions. I’ve been around a while: have sat in on a lot of meetings, have spoken with a lot of administrators, and have begun to understand the vast and expansive UVM bureaucracy. My experience runs deep and wide, and it will be very useful in the year ahead. In the past I’ve worked to support student activists by giving them resources, I’ve run large scale mental health awareness events, and advised University administration on public health and student services. I even explained to UVM’s Public Health Officer what a mole is, so he could really understand the student experience (all he responded with was “Why?”).

Along with my experience, I am ready to bring tangible change to the student body in the year ahead. Many students have proposed rebuilding the Student Government from the ground up, and I’m not totally opposed. If re-elected, I will work diligently on restructuring the SGA. In lieu of a traditional platform, I have assembled an early proposal for a restructured student-wide organization. Below are some of the changes to our SGA that would make students better connected. Our ability to organize with one another is our strength, we must make sure the foundation for that is as solid as it can be.

Best,
Aidan Doherty
• **Recharter the Student Government Association to be a Student Union**
  ○ *The Student Government ought to be restructured with four different branches. The General Assembly, the Executive Branch, the Organizing Corps, and the Judicial Board.*
  ○ Elections are often the sole piece of input many students give and during this past election, students said in a thousand voices that they wanted change. While the full dissolution of the SGA is one damn appealing offer, it’s not fully thought out. There’s a lot of strong systems in place that can be grown and shaped, so there is no need to absolve the Senate or the Presidency but they do need new elements and new rules.
  ○ The rhetorical change of Student Union feels more approachable and better shows that our strength comes from our togetherness not our power structure.

• **Create a Judicial Board**
  ○ *Accountability within the SGA needs to be made more institutionalized. Having an element of the institution to reprimand, discipline, review, and remove other parts within it would give a clear avenue for impartial oversight.*
  ○ The Judicial Board would consist of six Officers and would be chaired by the Speaker of the Senate. Officers would be appointed by the President with approval by the Senate, and could hold their position until graduation or removal by a two-thirds majority of the Senate.
  ○ They would be responsible for reviewing language in legislation, accepting both internal and outside grievances, accepting impeachments and conducting removal hearings, and issuing statements of official disapproval.

• **Create an Organizing Corps**
  ○ *Based on the principles of open access, justice, coordination, and argumentation, the Organizing Corps would be the organizing arm of the SU.*
  ○ Meeting monthly in town hall style forums, students would be able to discuss goals, problems, campaigns, events, and ideas. The OC would be led by a Marshall who would be elected by the student body annually.
  ○ Any student can be a member of the OC with written approval from the Marshall, President, or Speaker of the Assembly. Membership lasts until graduation or removal by the Judicial Board. Student organizations can be member organizations of the OC with a majority vote from the OC members and can have their status removed by the Judicial Board.
  ○ A slate of campaigns will be determined on a rolling basis based on success, with the entire OC working on unified initiatives. The OC would also be responsible for training students on public speaking, organizing skills, and taking in student input.
  ○ At the first meeting after the installation of the Marshall, there will be some process where a leadership group is assembled (or not? maybe it’s always just an open forum accountability session?). Tasks within campaigns would be delegated by the Marshall.
All actions done by OC members under the direction of the Marshall are considered actions by the OC and represent the interests of the student body.

○ The OC will have access to SU resources, including a budget. The budget approval process would have to guarantee the independence and sustainability of the OC.

○ During the monthly OC meeting, any member of the student body may submit a bill or resolution to the Marshall. If approved by the Marshall, it will be submitted to the GA for a vote.

○ The Marshall would be the link between the Organizing Corps, the Speaker of the Senate, and the President.

● Develop a General Assembly

○ The GA would be the standing legislative chamber of the SU. An elected forty member assembly, with seats allocated by college, would provide a regular space for students to discuss issues, bear presentations from non-student entities, appropriate the SU budget, pass detailed resolutions to express student voice, and pass bills to change the function of the SU.

○ The SGA’s Senate would be replaced by a General Assembly. With the broader name change, it felt like it was time for the Senate to go too. Plus, the real-life Senate is a racist institution that should be dismantled so it’d be fun to call yourself “The Students Who Killed the Senate”, right?

○ With the option of casting 40 ballots comes the high possibility that the voters don’t know who their last bunch of votes are going to and are awarding those excess votes to whoever’s name sounds cool. Limiting elections to the college level gives students a better experience by encouraging them to know all the candidates running.

○ Along with making a better link between members and voters, it will make elections more competitive, and hopefully, better.

● Restructure Standing Committees

○ Every Member ought to be a part of two committees: a primary committee and a secondary committee. The primary committees would be Academic Affairs, Student Action and Wellbeing, Environment, and Legislative & Community Affairs. The secondary committees would be Constitution, Club Affairs, Finance, and Diversity, Inclusion and Equity.

○ Many members of the Senate are already a part of two committees, whether it be Constitution or Elections, but it is not a uniform standard. With one exception, the difference between primary and secondary committees would be whether they regard external or internal issues. Primary committees will address student concerns and issues on campus as they relate to the subject under their jurisdiction. Most secondary committees deal with oversight and management of day-to-day service provision.

○ The logic behind moving CODIE to a “secondary” committee is not to devalue the importance of Diversity, Inclusion, & Equity but to guarantee that numerous Senators
on each primary committee have a social justice and equity lens. That expectation of equity scrutiny must be expected of all affiliates regardless of their role, but this provides an institutionalized check on primary committees. The manifestation of many equity issues appear in academics, health and wellbeing, the environment, and our government and communities and would be better addressed with overlapping oversight.

○ The Finance Committee would receive Bills from the Financial Advisors to put up to the GA. They would assist in the annual budgeting process, large allocations, and other financial matters.

○ This model would allow for more coordination outside of individual committees and make Members feel more united to one another.

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• Expansion of Executive Branch

○ Two of the standing committees ought to be removed. The duties of the committee ought to be given to newly created positions within an Executive Branch and operate under the discretion of the President.

○ The function of these committees are vital for the function of the SU. However, there is no need for those carrying out that function to be elected officials. They ought to work under the direction of the SU, but daily operation can be handled by three appointed Communications Managers. They would work at the discretion of the President and in close contact with the Office Manager. The same argument applies to the Finance Committee, which could be transferred to four Financial Advisors that would work with the Finance Office, President, and Chair of the Club Affairs Committee.