My name is Finlay Buchanan Jacobs, and I am a sophomore at UVM currently studying Environmental Engineering. This will be my first time running for SGA Senate. I have chosen to run because I have a great deal of concerns with the current state of our university. Here’s some relevant information about my candidacy:

- I live with my twin brother and two parents and one pup in the epitome of suburbia, Mount Laurel New Jersey.
- I am the treasurer/vice president for UVM club disc golf
- I have recently been a main advocate behind the reimbursement movement, and have consulted with various administrators in an effort to address the issue, while also working with various journalists to publish articles aimed at increasing pressure on University Administration
- For the past year, I have been the campaign coordinator for PennEnvironment. I am a part of a team that drafted, introduced, and campaigned for the passage of an extensive 100% renewable energy bill and the Zero Waste PA bill package, a package focused primarily on reducing plastic, electronic, and related emissions in PA. Our team was able to persuade legislators to create the first bipartisan introduction of renewable energy legislation in the country. I frequently spoke with state and local elected officials and encouraged them to support our legislation as well as other state and local initiatives.

Residential Life Reform

University of Vermont Residential Life imposes intentionally punitive sanctions and fines on students. In theory, such sanctions would deter students from committing unnecessary and potentially dangerous violations. In reality, students take extensive and often dangerous measures to avoid being caught. Residential life officials and administrators often use personal discretion rather than evidence to fine students, and in doing so severely hinder protected due process rights held by every American. Student fines should NOT serve as a source of revenue! It creates an unnecessary incentive that encourages Residential Life employees to impose arbitrary and exorbitant fines on students.

Solution:

- Consult legal counsel to clarify vague language and clauses that allow administration to systematically take advantage of students.
- Create/expand program that provides students with campus work alternatives to paying fines
- Eliminate fines for first time offenders. Create a compliance and safety class that would help to better educate students
- Remove erroneous clauses that fine students for the possession of items found during health and safety inspections deemed to be legal
- Increase amount of time Residential Life employees (not RA’s) spend learning the language and content of the student housing contract
- Creation of a test by student government to be taken by Residential Life employees (Not RA’s). This would ensure that Residential Life officials are competent enough to enforce their own policies and adequately respond to student questions and concerns.

Environmentalism:

The University of Vermont prides itself on being an environmentally conscious school. While administration has taken measures to lessen the environmental impact of the university, much more can be done. If the university continues to advertise itself as an environmentally conscious institution, administration should be held accountable to meet the standard they advertise.

Solution:

- DIVEST. Investment in an industry that systematically contributes to the deaths of nearly 150,000 people each year via climate change is not only ethically irresponsible, but financially irresponsible, as fossil fuel supply is finite and will eventually run dry.
- Transition from natural gas-powered buses to electric buses.
- Increase availability of charging stations on campus
- Incentivize faculty to use public transportation for commutes
- Set up a long-term plan for revitalization/construction of LEED certified green buildings to replace outdated existing infrastructure.
- Provide grants to students interested in researching and developing energy efficient technologies and infrastructure.

Administrative Accountability and SGA Accessibility

Students should be treated as shareholders of University of Vermont. After all, student tuition money and attendance ultimately keep the university afloat. In a business setting, shareholder’s opinions and concerns do not fall on deaf ears. Unfortunately, all too often, students’ concerns are not adequately addressed.

Solution:

- Require administration to release documents that show the full allocation of university tuition and housing money. Students should know where their hard-earned tuition dollars end up. If university administration fails to comply, I will personally file a freedom of information act request, as UVM is a public university. Students deserve clarity.
- Establish a web page containing contact information for every SGA elected official and administrative official. Students deserve to have access to decision makers so that concerns do not fall on deaf ears.
- Establish a student faculty joint task force to specifically address student concerns and widespread issues on campus. Such a task force would be mainly dedicated to dealing with more widespread issues and allow students to have a more direct line of communication with administration.
- Ensure students receive adequate compensation for housing and related tuition losses incurred in the wake of the university’s decision to cease on campus operations and transition online.
- Establish a joint student administrative task force with the goal of preventing tuition and housing increases. President Garimella has said that he is concerned about rising tuition costs and students need to make sure that concern results in necessary action. If implemented, such a task force would establish a working group meant to evaluate and determine the necessity of various expenditures.
- Prevent University administration from decreasing funding for CAS. Students should have a say in where their tuition money goes, and input should be sought before making any arbitrary decisions about funding for academic colleges.

If you have any questions, comments or concerns, feel free to contact me at: fbuchana@uvm.edu