UVM Community, My name is Oliver Minshall and I am running for a spot on the SGA Senate!

About Me:

- I am a freshman double majoring economics and philosophy in the College of Arts and Sciences
- I am from a small town here in Vermont called Norwich! We are mostly known for being close to Dartmouth college and for the fact that our great congressman Peter Welch lives in town. We were also the original site of Norwich University, but it burned down and moved to North Field
- I grew up with my mother and one sister who is considering UVM and St Michael’s College
- I have experience in student government including serving as a nonvoting liaison from my High School’s Student Council to the School Board
- I work in the registrar’s office as part of the federal work study program and I am also a tutor in the center for academic success (for phil 013)
- I am a huge VT politics/history nerd
- I’m part of the UVM Lawrence Debate Union
- My main interests are politics (Bernie 2020), public policy, political writing, activism and generally trying to make the world a better place

Before I lay out my ideas about how we can improve our community a word on the recent SGA presidential election: Though voting is over, as a candidate I feel it’s important to let you know who I supported in the election. I supported Lana and Peter and I hope they prevail in the election.

I’m running for SGA senate because I have ideas to make UVM a more just and equitable institution.

Here are some big picture goals for the UVM Community as a whole. While the SGA doesn’t have jurisdiction over all of these issues, I believe that it can be part of facilitating important discussions about these issues across our community.

- We must support divestment: UVM and other public universities role as key investors in fossil fuel companies is an important factor in our continued inability to transition to more environmentally sustainable energy sources. We need to find ways to continue to fund our university that do not involve profiting of of the continued degradation of the environment
- We must reevaluate our business relationship with Sodexo. Sodexo and its workers provide an enormous service for the UVM community but they also play an important role in the international carceral system. I completely oppose the private prison industry and mass incarceration here and abroad. In the long run we should work to ensure the companies our university do not further this industry.
- We must support academics here at UVM. The professors, lecturers, graduate student and other academic workers on campus are vital parts of our academic ecosystem on campus. We must show solidarity with them in their fight for higher salary and benefits. UVM should fight against the prevailing trends in higher education towards more spending on administration and less on education, a more equitable distribution of resources between teaching and administrative staff is an important goal.

As an SGA senator, here are some concrete policies that we should act on now.

- I support making more information available to students during the course registration process: several presidential candidates have proposed measures to make syllabi and other course information more available to students so we can make more informed decisions during course registration. All of these ideas are good important to increasing information for students.
- Increase mental health resources on campus: mental health challenges inhibit a student’s ability to learn, participate in social activities and participate fully in our community we should provide more
resources to vital services in our community that assist members of our community dealing with mental health challenges. All of the presidential candidates in the recently concluded election had good plans to accomplish this goal!

- Fight for more funding for the College of Arts and Sciences: I believe the arts and sciences are a vital part of our UVM community. Departments in CAS struggle to attract students due to their limited resources. Departments have been forced to stop replacing retiring faculty members. While student choice surely plays some role in this cutting funding for departments with declining enrollment only makes the problem worse by limiting the course options in that department. According to UVM classics professor John Franklin in a recent article in the VT Cynic Some members of the UVM community fear that a “death spiral” of decreasing funding and enrollment. This is a travesty, these departments are valuable in their own right. In addition to preparing students for the competition of the global community, universities like UVM play an important role in social formation, teaching us to be better citizens and to understand important issues and perspective. Cutting our humanities programs to send money to more popular and economically lucrative departments and colleges threatens to harm the vital moral and civic education that the humanities provide here at UVM.

- More Funding for identity-based clubs. I’m proud of and grateful for the work UVM has already done to create equitable spaces for people of all identities and to allow members of community to express their identities if they choose. Identity based clubs on campus are important to creating a just and equitable campus community I support making more resources available for such organizations.

- Support Campus Media: The VT Cynic and other campus media organizations provide an invaluable service to our community. They help hold SGA and the UVM administration accountable for decisions affecting our community. We need to ensure they have the resources they need to continue this important work.

- This is not an exhaustive list! Our community is a big place and there are lots of important issues that I couldn’t get to here. I’m committed to the values of social, economic and racial justice and I promise I’ll keep these values in mind in all the decisions I make if I’m elected. Please feel free to reach out with any questions, suggestions or issues you’re interested in. My email is Oliver.Minshall@uvm.edu