



Ben Bieri Platform

What is the main function of governance? I'm not a political science major, but I do believe that the role of government is to empower those who are governed, to enable them to make decisions that affect the whole body, and to behave in the interests of those which are represented by government. I might be conflating democracy and government here, but you get the idea.

In this sense, the Student Government Association is not a government. It has power, yes, but a limited amount, effectively only exercising power over clubs and student organizations. It has connections, yes, but no power to make change effectively through those organizations. This is not to discredit those who work tirelessly to benefit the student body through SGA, but instead recognizes a fundamental flaw. It is far too entrenched in the administration of UVM to legitimize the changes proposed except through navigating the connection points made within SGA itself. In essence, it can only make the changes that the Administration permits, as SGA only has the power that it is granted. It is neutered. If you wish to insist that it still be named a government, at least recognize that.

This is not beneficial to the student body at all. Too many changes that the students need, and even those that are simply wants, counter the administration's goals and drives too heavily for them to ever grant them to a government that cannot pressure them in any way. When I think of change at UVM, I do not think of SGA. I think of the organizations and protests that fought the administration, those organizations that won battles of racial justice and divestment. SGA condemned them, the Administration disciplined them, and yet the student body raised its voice and it was heard. It was not allowed to shout through its so-called government. The students who needed change the most were condemned by the Student Government who claimed to represent them.

I ask you: is this what we want our form of Student Government to look like? I say no. You merely have to look through the numerous documents that demonstrate SGA's continuous failure to push the administration, to take effective stances, to make change, and see the continued effort of SGA to tell its constituents that "this is the way it has always been." Is this the fault of any members of SGA? No, perhaps not. I see it as a fundamental flaw that no President, despite their intentions, could ever fix. This is why we need a new government.

We are at a time in our national politics where established institutions need to be changed. Radical thought has been injected into our politics and we would be remiss to let that slip here, where it is most prudent and local. Students need change. We need a new body to represent ourselves, a new organization to name our government, an organization which will unite students, direct them against policies that harm us, actions that interfere with our rights, and promote better activism and organization against those who harm us.

This is why we need to reinstate a Student Union.

STUDENT UNION

We have entered into a consensual relationship with this institution, where we hold mighty power in the capital we give to UVM, and they have responded by time and time again rejecting our needs, ignoring our cries, and diminishing our rights. SGA will not rectify this fundamental flaw in our relationship, but a united student body from which we can push back and fight for our rights... well I think that would do it. I also envision this union of having the same effective power that SGA has now, with the ability to create connections between student organizations and create programming between these organizations, and the power over finances that SGA holds now. SGA currently behaves as a "middle man," a connection point between organizations and students, but a Union could allow clubs to decide their own budgets, creating their own initiatives, making their own networks. Students would come out stronger, better, more informed and more prepared for an unjust world, one that is reflected in our microcosm at UVM. A Union could promote activism, organization, and most importantly: *could not be hindered*. Students, we have nothing to lose but our chains and yet; *we have everything to gain*.

INTERIM

While I will be consolidating power into a new government, I plan on addressing some major issues that I see with UVM as a whole right now. Here are a few of my plans:

Clubs: Bring back Venmo as an option to fundraise. It's a stupid rule that it cannot be used, and rules are meant to be changed.

Transport: Have an Off-Campus shuttle running during the On-Campus hours. It's an accessibility issue, and our Off-Campus community deserves just as much access to free

transport as our on campus community. I would also like to put big cat ears on the Cat Bus, which I see as a major oversight in its design.

UPB: Springfest is one of our capital events, and is trafficked more than any other at this institution. It is unfair and simply ludicrous that UPB's ability to program a larger, better Springfest has been neutered by an adamant and unwilling SGA. I plan on getting the big names, baby. We are going to give UPB hella cash.

Activism: Every student at this institution deserves an equal voice, and for far too long activists and organizers have been put down either through direct punitive measures against them, or through the lack of support system for them. I plan on rectifying this. Student organizers and activists will have the full support of the office of the President, and any resources that are made available to me. Solidarity is important when staring into the face of injustice.

Racial Justice: I will be the first to admit two things: One, that I am not an expert in this field, but I am working to improve. Two, that this institution has not done enough to support our students of color on campus. I do not plan on being a white savior, but I do plan on extending as much support as a student president that I can to organizations run by students of color, and ideas that are available are ensuring more access to staff members who can help students with leadership, such as trained program coordinators, or an increased access to funding and visibility for these organizations.

Kingdom: If we are creating a new government, then the title of President should be soon invalid. At this point, I would like to declare myself the last President of SGA and its first King. I do not think this is in any way a poor idea.

Abolish SGA: If we are successful in creating a new government, then I will sign over all of SGA's power to the new Union, and with no power, and no purpose, I will, for once and for all, destroy SGA.

I'm Ben Bieri. I'm not an expert. I'm not a genius. I'm just trying to make things better for me, for you, and for the rest of the human race. We had a Student Union once, and I believe we can have one again. Please vote for me to ensure that the establishment doesn't destroy our spirit. If you have issues with my platform, please reach out to me! I would love your feedback. I want this to be an accessible and capable monarchy, and I will need your help in achieving that. If you are better suited to address issues than I, which you probably are if you are reading this, then my plan is to enable you to do just that.

And always remember: Not Us. Me.

Let's get *that* trending.