

# State of Student Council Address - Spring 2017

## Introduction

Hello. My name is Sarah Kenny, and on behalf of Student Council, I would like to thank you for tuning in to watch our first State of the Student Council address. The updates that I'm sharing with you all this evening comprise part of a greater effort to increase the transparency of Student Council's affairs and goals, as well as to increase the accessibility of the projects and issues that we are pursuing. Before I share some of the work that my Cabinet and your representatives have been pursuing this spring, I'd like to say congratulations to all of you on finishing this year. Whether the end of this term marks the conclusion of your first year of college or the conclusion of this chapter of your life as a college student, I hope that these last several months have been both rewarding and exciting.

This summer, members of Student Council will be traveling, working, and interning across the world, whether that be here in Virginia or at Oxford, Berlin, or Dubai.

Among your StudCo executive officers, Alex Cintron, Ty Zirkle, David Birkenthal and I will be staying in Charlottesville to work on Student Council initiatives. We will dedicate our summers to the following projects: bolstering the Student Senate; **working** alongside the Student Member of the Board of Visitors, Bryanna Miller, to strategize how to increase student engagement with the board members; and **examining** how to increase support for our fellow graduate and professional students through our representative structure and funding processes. Furthermore, we will **setting up** an external audit of our Student Activities Fee Allocation Process; **engaging** with the Strategic Investment Fund; and **developing** the infrastructure of the Diversity Engagement committee to support the work of our new Vice Chairs; **Lastly, we will be collaborating** on a Strategic Diversity Plan with other student leaders; **structuring** educational resources around health insurance, landlords and leasing, and **rebranding** in time for the University's 200th birthday.

Before diving into a summer of planning and preparation for Fall 2017, I want to share with you what Student Council has accomplished since our March transition. We have passed two presidential orders, one that created a series of Vice Chair Positions under the chair of the diversity engagement committee, and one that will bring together stakeholders across Grounds to create a lecture on the history of the relationship between Charlottesville and UVA with a focus on diversity.

We held our first Student Senate of the Term, where student leaders overwhelmingly approved proposals for an LGBTQ Identifier Question, an Advisory Committee on Sustainable Investment, and Student Council's Presidential Order. We hosted a Graduate Student Wine and Cheese Night in the Rotunda with Provost Katsouleas to discuss how Student Council can better represent the concerns of our fellow graduate and professional students both on North and Central Grounds, as well as how we can meet their funding needs. In conjunction with Cav Daily, we organized the first Leadership Livestream to increase transparency and accessibility to student leaders, as well as provide students with a forum to ask questions and hold those that represent their interests accountable. We hope to host a wide array of student leaders through such panels over the course of the next academic year.

Alex Cintron, the Vice President of Administration, has been working diligently to streamline the operations of the agency and special status sides of Student Council. He has appointed the next round of representatives to the Student Legal Service Committee, a group that advises our student body's lawyer, Lester Wilson, whose office is on the 4th floor of Newcomb. He organized our annual Student Memorial Service, has supervised the creation of a robust new plan to reach out and engage pockets of the student body who do not regularly interact with their representatives on StudCo. He accompanied incoming Student BOV member Bryanna Miller, our Director of State Relations Zaakir Tameez, and our Director of National Relations Stuart DeButts on a trip to Washington, DC to lobby in support of financial aid, relying on survey data that nearly 3,000 of you contributed to through a survey we disseminated in April.

Ty Zirkle, our Vice President for Organizations, is beginning an external audit of Student Council's appropriation process. He will be assembling a team of stakeholders from across the University to audit the way that we allocate Student Activity Fees, fees that all students pay, in an effort to ensure that Student Council is serving an equitable steward of the funds that have been entrusted to us. Under Ty's supervision, Student Council granted official Contracted Independent Organization status to over thirty student organizations who will now be able to reserve space and request funds through the Student Activities Fee. The organizations represent a diversity of activities, including pre-professional organizations, faith-based communities, a student magazine, and advocacy groups. We are excited to watch their contributions to these Grounds unfold.

David Birkenthal, Chair of the Representative Body, has dedicated energy to educating newly-elected Representatives to the legislative process of Student Council. David has begun to supervise a number of representative projects as well, such as an effort to research on past attempts at creating pantries for food insecure members of the university community to have readily available access to a healthy diet for themselves and all their dependents.

Liam Wolf, my Chief of Cabinet, has focused on onboarding new leadership and increasing two key components of the my cabinet's success: efficiency and follow through. All chairs and committee members will be required to complete a Project Proposal with a discrete timeline, key stakeholders, indicators of success, intended outcomes, and project deliverables. Additionally, Liam is striving to improve member retention by making available more leadership opportunities for first and second year students.

## **Cabinet Updates**

### *Diversity Engagement*

The committee is striving to restructure how student council approaches diversity. Through working with concrete resources such as the career center, Multicultural Student Center, and LGBTQ center the committee will strive to be a long-term, sustained ally to CIOs representing diverse population.

### *Legislative Affairs*

The Legislative Affairs committee will be implementing voter registration on grounds at Orientation and New Student Programming, and will continue to support voter shuttles to the polls.

Additionally the committee is working to tackle political polarization on grounds and has collected and will continue to collect data on the public opinion of the student body.

#### *Safety and Wellness*

The Safety and Wellness committee plans to cultivate student resilience and mindfulness by furthering nascent plans to create a nap room in Newcomb. Additionally, Safety and Wellness worked with the Presidential Student Climate Committee to finalize and present recommendations on the climate related to sexual and gender based harassment and other forms of interpersonal violence to President Sullivan.

#### *Athletic Affairs*

The athletic affairs committee strives to improve representation of athletes and enhance the relationship of the athletics community and student council. The committee is working toward improved connections between the university's varsity athletes and club sports CIOs.

#### *Buildings and Grounds*

The buildings and grounds committee is capitalizing on a groundswell of community support to increase accessibility on Grounds.

#### *Academic Affairs*

The academic affairs committee is developing an academic resource fair for students in line with the opening of the Total Advising Center in Clemons Library in Fall of 2017 and is working with administration to reintroduce a Common Read for incoming students.

#### *Community Engagement*

The community engagement committee is working with CIOs to ensure their awareness of community needs through a Service Code of Ethics. Additionally, the committee redeveloped and reinvigorated the service scholar program over the past year, working with Totem Apps.

#### *Sustainability*

The StudCo Sustainability committee is working closely with the administration to expand zero-waste events and composting interests. Additionally, the committee will be implementing the Green Council next year to streamline the efforts of Green CIOs and serve as a more direct point of advocacy to the administration

### **Regarding the Presidential Search to find UVA's next leader...**

We distributed a survey to gauge student input on the qualities most important in our New University President, in preparation for a session we held with the undergraduate Presidential Search Committee Representative, Aryn Frazier.

### **Additionally, We codified a Bicentennial Programming Committee that is working to**

a.) Advertise and volunteer for kick off weekend October 5th-7th

b.) As well as host three panels in the coming fall: 1) Legacy of Jefferson, and others under consideration are 2) Protests on Grounds 3) Slavery/Black Students at UVA 4) Civil War 5) Women at UVA 6) UVA Traditions

### **Closing**

I'm inspired by the team of talented, enthusiastic leaders in Student Council who have so notably begun to improve the quality of student life at UVA. As we approach the third century of student self-governance, now is the time for Student Government to live up to the hopes and needs of the 22,000 students that we represent. There's a lot more work to be done, and I look forward to the strides we will make together, big and small, towards a stronger, more engaged community.