

Ward 1 Neighborhood Planning Assembly (NPA)
Wednesday, January 14, 2026
In-person at the Friends Meeting House, 173 North Prospect Street
And Zoom online:
<https://zoom.us/j/96245939050>
Webinar ID: 962 4593 9050
Or by phone: +1 929 205 6099 ID = 962 4593 9050

Facilitator: Carol Livingston

Recorder: Gretchen Platt

6:00 - Welcome and Food (Namaste Kitchen Express)

Formal Start - project & review agenda

Introductions: name, street

6:10 - Vote on Resolutions

Resolution for support of Redistricting Task Force - Discussion & vote

Resolution to place Apartheid-Free Community Pledge advisory question on 2026 ballot

Project resolution - Read "Be it resolved" section

Discussion and vote

6:40 - Speakout - an opportunity to raise concerns & appreciations about Ward 1 community

Announcements: share events, meetings, activities of interest to Ward 1 community.

7:00 - City Council update - Allie Schachter & Carter Neubieser

7:20 - Burlington School Commission update - Matt Price & Gary Golden

7:40 - Presentation and discussion with UVM President Marlene Tromp

8:30 - Adjourn

Ward 1 NPA Steering Committee
Carol Livingston carol.livingston1951@gmail.com,
Jonathan Chapple-Sokol chapplesokol.npasc@gmail.com,
Sam Doherty samcharlesdoherty@gmail.com
Gretchen Platt gshuman7005@yahoo.com
Rob Gutman rgutman@gmail.com

Participation Guidelines:

The Ward 1 NPA is sustained by community involvement and encourages engagement at our monthly meetings per the following guidelines:

1. We are collectively responsible for following the NPA Meeting Agenda as closely as possible regarding both presentation/discussion topics and time.
2. Participants at the NPA will act in a positive, courteous manner that respects all of those present (both participants and presenters/guests) and their differing opinions, experiences and perspectives.
3. Any attendee requesting to speak who has not yet spoken at a meeting will be called on before others who have already had a chance to speak. Priority is given to Ward 1 residents.
4. Whenever speaking, please be sure to project your voice and use the provided microphone if provided.
5. If the facilitator feels the need to redirect activity in the room based on these guidelines, the facilitator will do so per point number 1 above.

Draft Vermont Open Letter to Educational Leadership – January 2026

To be sent to:

State Legislative Leadership and Ward 1 Legislators
Governor's Office
State Secretary of Education
Redistricting Task Force
Burlington School Commission and Superintendent's Office
Burlington City Council and Mayor's Office

Burlington's Ward 1 Neighborhood Planning Assembly is writing in support of the Vermont School Redistricting Task Force's *Map for the Future: The Vermont Regional Education Model*. We feel the Task Force has objectively reviewed the data and Vermont's educational landscape and have created a process by which change can be made that will reduce costs while improving educational opportunity as well as maintaining Vermont's treasured local character.

They reiterate the well-understood and evidenced-based fact that district consolidation in and of itself does not save money, nor does it improve access to quality education. Rather, the Task Force identifies savings in BOCES-type structures that create the opportunity for districts to work together in the financial sphere as well as leave open paths to share student opportunities. Further, without a complete and complex overhaul of the whole States' school administrative structure, this creates a collaborative environment that can grow. And by being strategic and voluntary in consolidation, residents of Vermont's communities retain control over their destinies and only merge districts where true advantages are identified. Finally, a plan to create more regional high schools brings communities together and revitalizes our old and costly-to-maintain. It would also result in regional standardization of educational opportunity, to the great benefit of our children.

Please heed the product of the Task Force and recognize it as the work of a group of folks who are deeply committed to improving the educational landscape in Vermont.

Ward 1 Neighborhood Planning Assembly (NPA)
Resolution Urging City Council to Place Apartheid-Free Community Pledge Advisory Question
on the 2026 Town Meeting Day Ballot

WHEREAS for two consecutive years, petitions were submitted to place the following non-binding advisory question regarding the Apartheid-Free Community Pledge on the 2024 and 2025 Town Meeting Day ballot: **“Shall the voters of the City of Burlington advise the Mayor and City Council to adopt the following pledge? WE AFFIRM our commitment to freedom, justice, and equality for the Palestinian people and all people; and WE OPPOSE all forms of racism, bigotry, discrimination, and oppression; and WE DECLARE ourselves an apartheid-free community, and to that end, WE PLEDGE to join others in working to end all support to Israel’s apartheid regime, settler colonialism, and military occupation.”**; and

WHEREAS, in both years, the City verified that the petitions contained a sufficient number of signatures to meet the requirements of 17 VSA § 2642 and Burlington City Charter § 6 (5% of the registered voters of the City); and

WHEREAS, in both years, the City Council voted to block the aforementioned ballot question from appearing on the Town Meeting Day ballot; and

WHEREAS, the City has discretion to include advisory questions on the ballot, and exercising such discretion “... furthers the Council’s ability to balance the efficient transaction of city business with the provisions of a local forum for discussing state and national issues”¹; and

WHEREAS, there is abundant precedent across Vermont for placing non-binding advisory questions about national or global issues on the Town Meeting Day ballot, including a call for a nuclear arms freeze passed in 155 Vermont municipalities in 1982, a vote opposing the Patriot Act passed in Waitsfield in 2003, a call to withdraw US troops from Iraq in 2005, and a measure opposing the basing of F-35 fighter jets in Burlington passed in 2018; and

WHEREAS, similar petitions to place the Apartheid-Free Community Pledge on the 2025 Town Meeting Day ballot were respected by municipal officials in Winooski, Brattleboro, Newfane, Thetford, Plainfield, Montpelier, Vergennes, Bristol, and Weybridge; and

WHEREAS, in April 2025, the City Council unanimously approved a resolution for protecting free speech on Palestine;

WHEREAS, the pre-condition of responsible and accountable local governance is free speech and democracy;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Ward 1 Neighborhood Planning Assembly urges the City Council to place the aforementioned non-binding advisory question regarding the Apartheid-Free Community Pledge on the 2026 Town Meeting Day Ballot.

¹ Clift v. City of South Burlington 181 Vt. 571 (2007).



Ben Traverse
City Council President

January 26, 2026

Dear Colleagues:

For the third year in a row, we are being asked to place a question on our Town Meeting Day ballot on whether our community should “work to end all support to Israel’s apartheid regime, settler colonialism, and military occupation.” As some of you may know, in my role as City Council President, I previously voiced my commitment to not include this issue on any future Council agendas.

To be clear, I firmly believe all Palestinians and Israelis alike are entitled to live in safety, with dignity, freedom, equality, self-determination, and the opportunity to thrive. I also acknowledge the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is deeply complex, with many differing viewpoints. Particularly since October 7, 2023 and the ensuing war in Gaza, conversations around this issue have become more difficult — and at times, discriminatory and even violent.

When deciding whether to place an item on our Council agenda or Town Meeting Day ballot, my minimum standard is that members of our community must be able to discuss it openly and safely, without fear of retaliation. I firmly believe that standard is not met here.

For each of the past two years, a majority of the City Council has declined to place this question on the ballot. For some Councilors, including myself, this decision has been motivated by a desire to protect our ballot — and our community — from unnecessary divisiveness. For others, the priority has been to focus our local government’s efforts on local issues, rather than international affairs. Whatever our reasons, the responses we have received have too often been severe.

In the past, when I declined to place this question on the ballot, I received an anonymous phone call asking, “how much did the Jews pay for your vote?” Another caller wished that my family and I “burn in hell.” A third threatened that I was being watched wherever I went. Many emails accused me and our colleagues of being “racist,” “pro-genocide,” and “baby killers.” I received a vile anti-Semitic letter in my mailbox, which my wife and I fortunately retrieved before our children came home from school. Once, when I asked rhetorically during a Council meeting whether someone displaying a “Vote No” sign on this ballot question might have it torn out of their lawn or be threatened, some members of the public actually responded back, “Yes” and “Yes.” Will those displaying the “Vote No” sign also be asked how much money “the Jews” paid for it?

I personally know many of the individuals advocating for this ballot question. I respect their commitment and I trust they condemn the behavior I have just described as strongly as I do. I also recognize Palestinian activists have faced their own harassment and, in very troubling cases, unacceptable and unjust scrutiny from federal immigration authorities. My chief concern remains that placing such a polarizing issue on our City Council agenda or local ballot will continue to deepen fractures in our community more than leaving it off. I am honored to serve as City Council President and view the holders of this office as bound to protecting the integrity of our local democracy and the wellbeing of everyone who calls Burlington home.

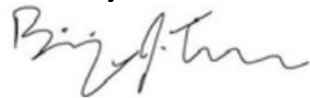
In fairness, and with these same concerns in mind, I previously told some of my colleagues that I would also not place any other resolution regarding Israel and Palestine on our agenda, including that regarding “community dialogue.” While I remain committed to fostering dialogue, empathy, and education around this issue — and was privileged to join the Mayor in related discussions with local faith community leaders — our prior debates have demonstrated that Council meetings are not the proper venue for these conversations.

In preparation for our Council meeting on January 26, I asked the City Attorney’s Office for its opinion on whether the Council President may unilaterally keep matters off Council agendas. Section 6(b) of our Council rules provides that: “The president in consultation with the chief administrative officer or designee shall prepare an agenda for each city council meeting.” The City Attorney’s position, however, is that as long as materials are timely submitted, the Council President must place them on our agenda. The City Attorney cites Rule 17(c), which states: “It is expected that councilors will submit all materials on time, and the council president may refuse to accept any materials outside of these time frames.” Per the City Attorney, the inverse of this rule must also be true — meaning the Council President may not refuse to accept materials submitted within our time frames.

With all due respect, I strongly disagree with the City Attorney’s position. In my opinion, while timeliness is a necessary condition, it is not one that mandates agenda placement. If the Council President has no gatekeeping function whatsoever, a single Councilor could force an untold number of measures onto our agendas, effectively hijacking our legislative process.

All that said, my goal of moving our City beyond divisive debates would not be met by embroiling our Council and City in a related legal dispute. Moreover, I acknowledge the Ward 1, Ward 2, and Ward 5 Neighborhood Planning Assemblies formally requested consideration of the aforementioned ballot question. Out of respect for these circumstances, I chose to place both the proposed ballot question and the “community dialogue” resolution on our January 26 agenda. I do so while reserving the right for myself and future Council Presidents to elect against placing items on Council agendas at our discretion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Ben Traverse", with a stylized, cursive script.

Ben Traverse
City Council President

Cc: Ward 1 Neighborhood Planning Assembly
Ward 2 Neighborhood Planning Assembly
Ward 5 Neighborhood Planning Assembly



Working Together for a Stronger Vermont

Dr. Marlene Tromp
President



University
of Vermont

Vermont's Flagship Public Land-Grant University

UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT AT A GLANCE

Enrollment

11,595 undergraduates

886 master's

837 doctoral

487 medical

56 post-baccalaureate
certificate students



R1 RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

Less than

3%

of higher education
institutions are
recognized with this
Carnegie
Classification



University
of Vermont





PROGRAM OFFERINGS

100+ bachelor's degrees

55 master's degrees

30 doctoral degrees

33 accelerated master's pathways

36 certificates and micro-certificates of graduate study



University
of Vermont

Workforce Development

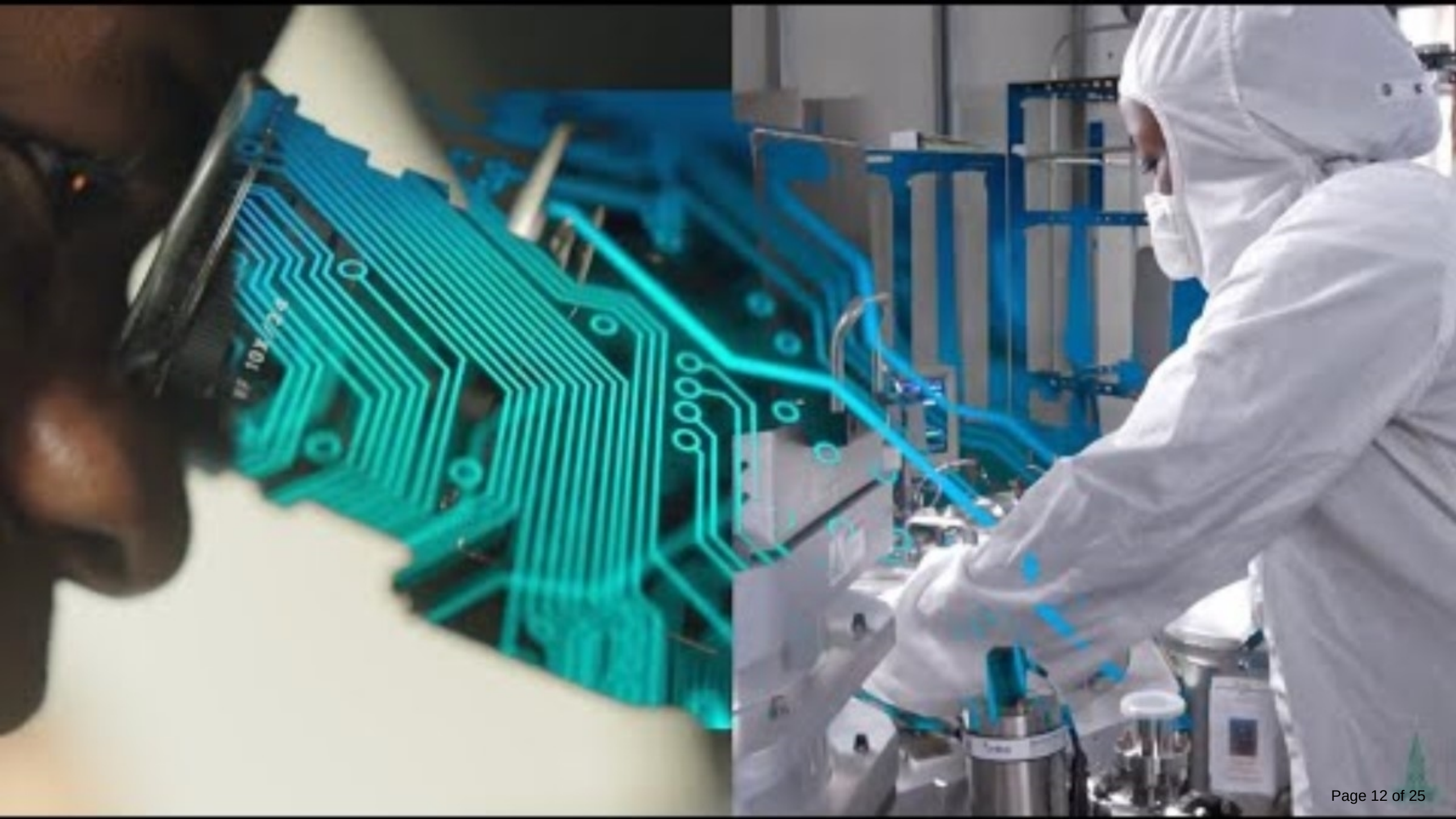
**UVM STRENGTHENS
VERMONT'S LABOR FORCE**

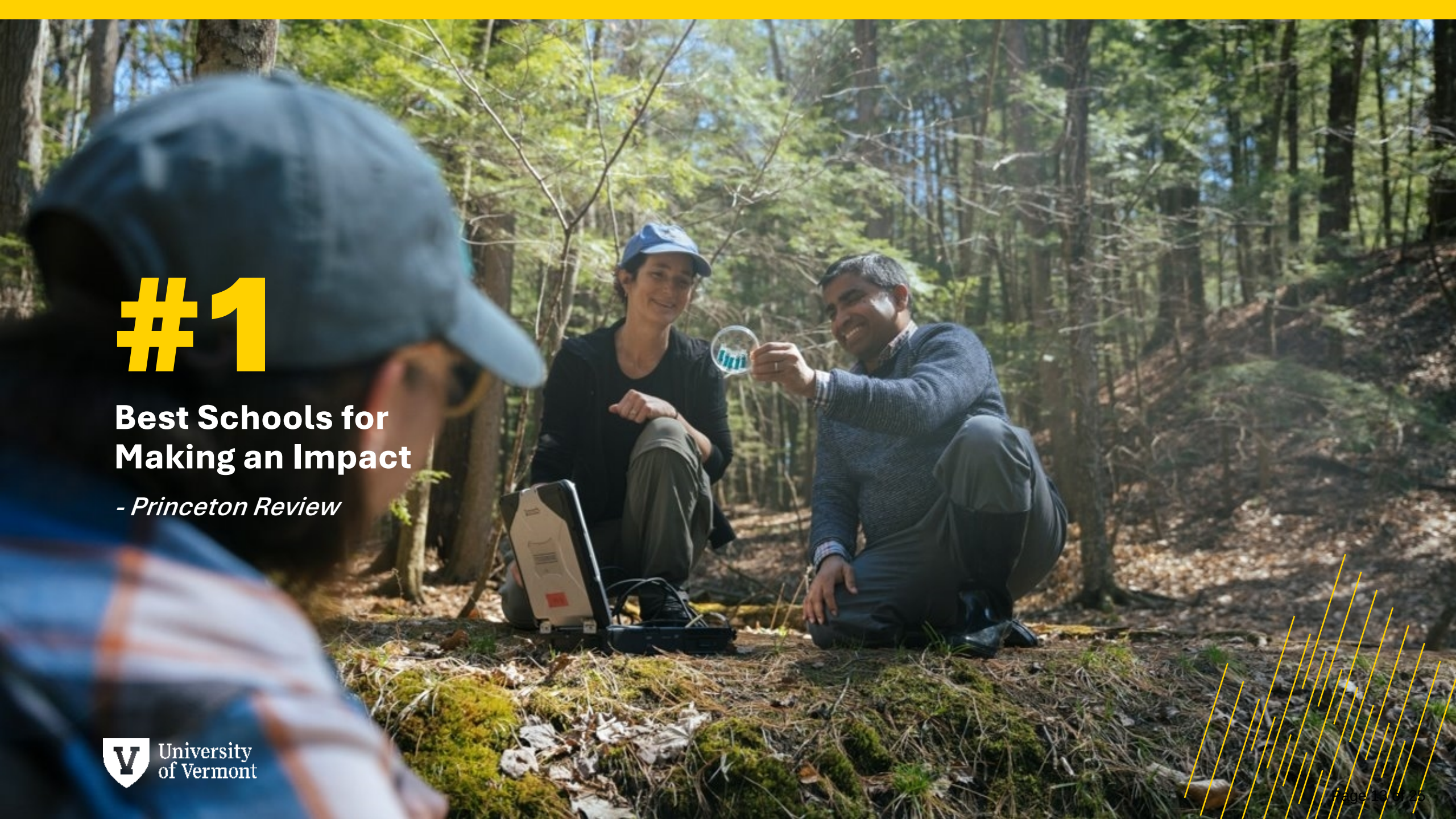
For every Vermonter

2

out-of-state graduates
stay and join the
Vermont workforce







#1

Best Schools for Making an Impact

- *Princeton Review*

A photograph of three young adults walking on a paved path on a university campus. On the left, a woman with long brown hair wears a white zip-up hoodie and blue jeans. In the center, a woman with long brown hair wears a light green sleeveless top and blue jeans. On the right, a man with dark hair and a beard wears a white t-shirt with a 'UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT' logo and khaki pants. They are all smiling and looking towards the right. The background shows green trees and a building.

More than
35,000
UVM alumni
live and work
in Vermont

Research Enterprise

RESEARCH IS A
PUBLIC GOOD

\$225 million

Extramural support for
advanced research in
FY25



VGaN Tech Hub

\$3.4 million

Awarded to the Semiconductor
lab from Northeast
Microelectronics Coalition



BioLabs

An international network of shared lab and office facilities located in key biotech innovation clusters.



Casella Center for Circular Economy and Sustainability

A research hub developing sustainable solutions for **waste and materials management** that reduce pollution and create economic opportunities.



Health Care

**RESEARCH TOWARD
BETTER HEALTH FOR
VERMONT AND BEYOND**

UVM researchers are facing, head-on, the state's ever-growing challenge of **tick-borne illnesses** with groundbreaking vaccine studies.



Health Care

TEACHING AND TRAINING
THE NEXT GENERATION
OF PROFESSIONALS

UVM is helping Vermont
address the
**statewide nursing
shortage,**
thanks to a recent \$16 million
estate gift that will expand
nursing scholarships.



Health Care

TAKING A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO TODAY'S CHALLENGES

UVM's Osher Center recently
awarded four innovative research
grants to advance

whole health

in Vermont.





SAVE THE DATE

RISE Summit

RESEARCH, INNOVATION,
SUSTAINABILITY and
ENTREPRENEURSHIP

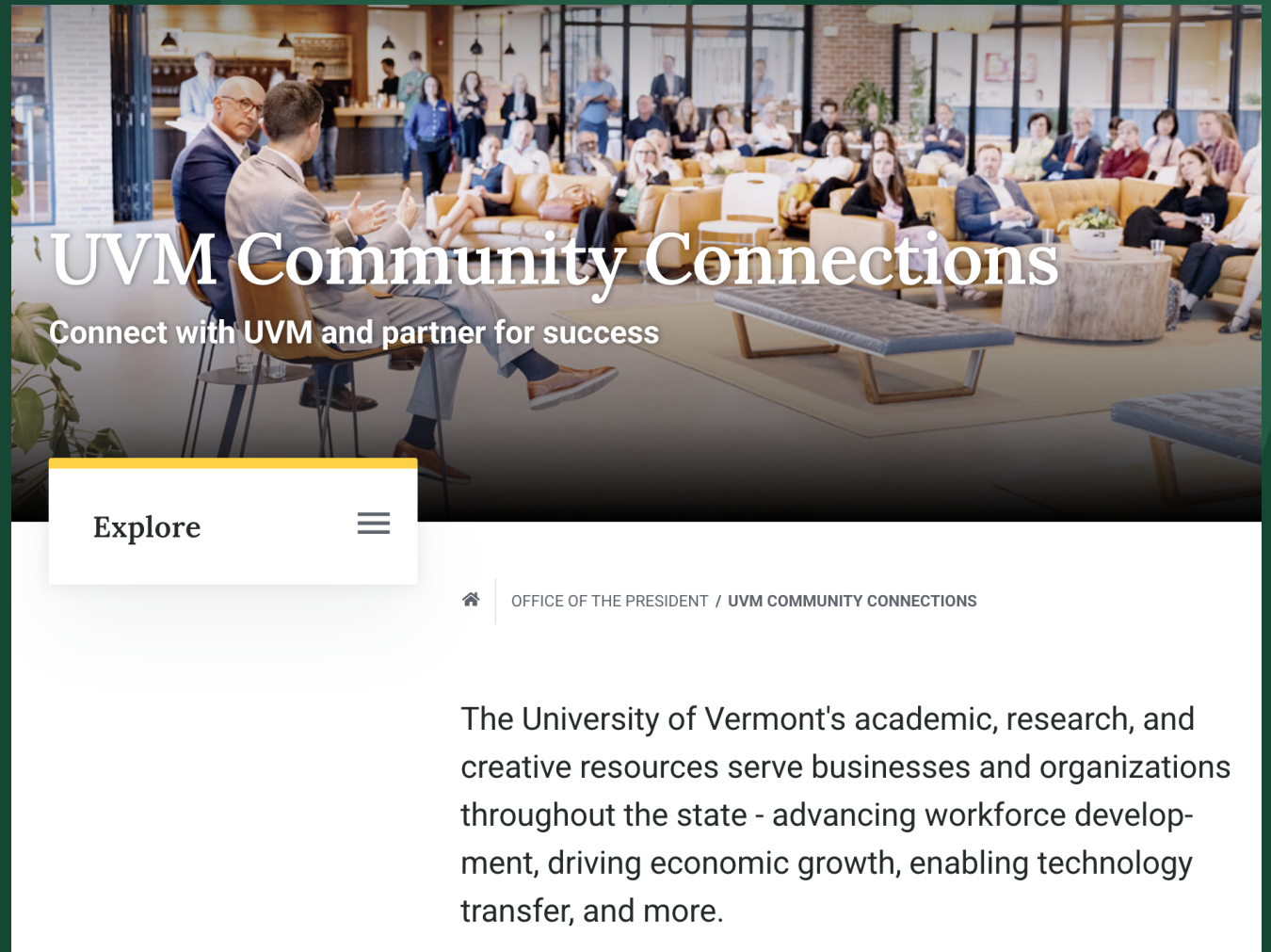
Join us in June!

This year's summit will feature a special focus on **rural prosperity**.

Plus, networking opportunities with hundreds of business innovators and entrepreneurs.



Community Connections website



Engage with UVM

**WE ARE ALWAYS SEEKING NEW
PARTNERS AND PARTNERSHIPS**

Scan the QR code to request
information about engaging with
UVM to help tackle challenges and
leverage opportunities.

