

My name is Ryan Shea Gyukeri. I'm a senior majoring in history at UVM, and I'm one of many Vermonters who pay tuition at a public institution.

Since moving off-campus (a lack of affordable housing is a whole other issue) I've had to work part-time and live with my parents to afford living expenses. We had hoped I could just work full-time during my breaks and focus on my studies during the semester, but that isn't possible for me and many other students. The multiple pulls on my time can get stressful, and it's hard to think about my future when I'm not sure how to afford it.

Vermont has one of the highest secondary graduation rates in the country, and one of the lowest rates of college attendance. Having grown up in Middlebury, the divide between college families and the rest is palpable. The skills and experiences that come from attending college have been a huge benefit to me. They shouldn't be limited to people based on wealth, and people shouldn't be stretched thin to afford it.

Vermont's state colleges and universities should be tuition-free for Vermont residents. Everyone who lives and works here should be able to benefit from our largest economic drivers and access a 21st-century education.