

FORUM

UPPER VALLEY'S SOCIAL GEOGRAPHY

To the Editor:

The recent election of Vanessa Sievers as Grafton County treasurer brings out an elephant in the room that I have sensed all my life. As a resident of the Upper Valley (born and raised in Cornish and schooled in Lebanon and Hartford) and as a current student at Dartmouth College, you might say I fall exactly on both sides of the fence. As someone concerned about national, local and state politics, I would also consider myself one of the many Dartmouth students who cares. Allowing Sievers to do the excellent job I am sure she is capable of, given her commitment to achieving this position, will open a door to more seriously involve Dartmouth students in local politics in the future.

As a geography major, I find this topic raises a particularly interesting question: Is Dartmouth part of the Upper Valley or not? Physically, the Dartmouth campus is just north of Lebanon and east of Norwich. Socially, it seems to be somewhere between New York and Boston. Politically, Dartmouth and the Upper Valley seem to be on entirely different pages of the atlas, excepting the several large arteries of regional interaction. How does the Upper Valley community maintain pride and independence despite the strong presence of an Ivy League school? This is what we are really feeling, I think, when questioning Sievers' capabilities and the legitimacy of her election.

With this said, I think Sievers' new position in the Grafton County government offers an important opportunity to minimize this rift between socio-political geographies of the Upper Valley region and the Dartmouth "bub-

ble," as it is so affectionately called by students. Sievers' involvement in local government will encourage other Dartmouth students to consider local politics. Let us not forget that Dartmouth students have been motivationally and politically involved during many important local and state events of the past — opposing CACR 34 in 2006 (an attempt to ban gay civil marriage in the state Constitution) and the recent presidential election come to mind.

I hope the outstanding members of our community will welcome Sievers as she begins the job she was elected to do.

RIGEL CABLE
Cornish