

Knowledge Without Boundaries: The Middlebury College Strategic Plan

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Acknowledgment of Task Force members

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Knowledge Without Boundaries Introduction and Overview

At Middlebury College we have undertaken a strategic planning process in order to re-evaluate our educational mission, our identity, and our direction. We have examined our institutional priorities and asked whether some adjustments or even an overhaul of these priorities will better serve us now and in the future. The Planning Steering Committee presents this report in the belief that it will guide the College in the pursuit of our highest aspirations while preserving what we value most deeply about Middlebury.

Charting the Future of Middlebury

A strategic planning process requires an understanding of our past and present realities, but it is mostly about our future. What are the external forces that are likely to influence our place in the larger world of higher education? What is it that will enable such an expensive mode of education to survive and thrive? What are the internal forces? Will we grow or shrink? Will we devote substantial new resources to our infrastructure? Our curriculum? Our people? What kind of students do we hope to attract to Middlebury in the future? How can we better address the needs of the larger society that we serve?

Such planning also brings with it some concrete and practical benefits. It helps us to allocate and/or reallocate our resources in ways we believe will most benefit the College in the long run, and it articulates the priorities and directions on which we will need to focus in future fund raising. Within this context, it promotes communication with thousands of loyal alumni, parents, and friends of the College about where their help and support can make the greatest difference. It prompts us to ask how we can better keep these loyal friends and alumni engaged in the life and mission of the College, and with those aspects of the College that hold the greatest meaning for them.

Most importantly, strategic planning helps us to look beyond external pressures to define for ourselves the College we want to be. It articulates the strategic goals that we believe will help us to fully realize our vision of Middlebury as a place in which the pursuit of knowledge knows no boundaries.

Although our broad-based planning process developed more than 230 planning proposals and initiatives, we have found that much of what our community values and hopes for is not easily framed in specific proposals. Some of our most important aspirations are nuanced, particularly those relating to the culture of our own community. Middlebury's identity has long embraced care and compassion, and we want to preserve these values for Middlebury generations to come. We understand that we are a privileged community, and we aim to serve the society at large. Our roles and responsibilities are specific and often unique, and we seek to be a part of a cohesive community that values and honors each others' successes. The context for higher education, and even the global context, is changing rapidly and we hope to unleash creative and imaginative responses from within

ourselves. We recognize challenges both to the environment and to economic and social justice in our world, and we long to contribute to solutions that aid the very survival of our society and our planet. In short we are idealists, and we yearn to reflect our ideals in what we do and how we educate our students.

Strategic Goals

Among the many recommendations identified through the planning process, three strategic goals stand out as critical to Middlebury's future development. These three strategic goals form the rationale for many of the specific recommendations found in the report.

Strategic Goal #1: Strengthen support for a diverse student community.

For many years, Middlebury's strength has derived in large part from the quality of its student body. We should continue to admit those students who are most gifted intellectually, best able to contribute to the education of their peers, and have the greatest potential for strong leadership. Middlebury's success over the past decades in creating a more diverse student community has already contributed immeasurably to these outcomes.

Our first strategic goal is to attract an ever-stronger and more diverse student body to Middlebury by lowering some of the financial barriers to a Middlebury education. A diverse student body broadens the horizons of each student to include perspectives, attitudes, cultures, personal circumstances, and histories different from one's own, and it thereby contributes to the learning of all students. But matriculating a diverse student body is costly. The costs of a college education, whether private or public, have increased faster than the consumer price index for more than two decades. At the same time, financial aid programs from government sources have tended to shift resources away from outright grants and into loan programs. Some very able students and their families, lacking the financial means to pay for a private education at a selective college like Middlebury, are discouraged from even applying for admission and financial assistance at private colleges. At least a few of these colleges have started to respond to these realities by publicizing new financial aid packaging that increases grants and therefore reduces the debt incurred by their students. These circumstances mean that competition for the best students from families with limited resources is greater than ever. Improved financial aid packages with a reduced reliance on borrowing, especially for families with the greatest need, will help Middlebury College continue to attract the best students.

Strategic Goal #2: Strengthen the academic program and foster intensive student-faculty interaction.

This plan makes recommendations designed to ensure that a Middlebury College education will continue to be worth the substantial investments made both by students and their families and by donors to the College. The individualized attention given our

students by faculty and staff members is a key part of this value. Significant teaching resources are required to support an engaged and active faculty, and to ensure small classes, excellent advising, and meaningful mentoring. Increasing the size of the faculty, while also making the best use of current teaching resources, will enable some important curricular changes. Our curricular recommendations are aimed at what we believe our students will need after leaving Middlebury as they engage the 21st century; the changes will strengthen the overall academic program. These proposals include required independent senior work in various forms, a laboratory science requirement, and revised and simplified distribution requirements that ensure a liberally educated student body. Enhancing faculty resources will also strengthen the academic profile of the College by ensuring that faculty members are able to maintain the high level of scholarly and creative achievement that makes Middlebury a vibrant intellectual community.

Strategic Goal #3: Reinforce the role of the Commons as a place to bring together academic and residential life.

Middlebury's residential Commons system has sought to provide a seamless interface between academic life and other spheres of our students' lives. Although the infrastructure is completed for just two of the five Commons, many successes in the Commons program are already visible. The decentralization of student deans has meant that students are better known to those who provide them with administrative and personal support. The location of many first-year seminar groups within a single residence hall in a Commons affords several advantages to the first-year seminar program and its associated academic advising, including out-of-class engagement among classmates that otherwise would not happen. The Commons have provided many of our students with opportunities for leadership and for programming initiatives. Commons serve as hosts for lectures, panel discussions, and other programs of enrichment, and they give participating students more immediate and personal access to these programs.

Even with these successes, many in our community believe that the Commons have yet to realize their full potential for enhancing student experiences. Our recommendations focus on expanding Commons programming over the next few years. We encourage greater connections between the Commons and the academic program, and an elevated role for the Commons Heads as intellectual leaders in the community. When College resources permit, we also support the strategically phased completion of the Commons infrastructure in the other three Commons. The College's financial capacity will dictate the pace at which we can complete the Commons physical infrastructure.

These strategic goals relate to the human dimension of Middlebury and the way in which all members of the community can work together to attain them. Our planning has also led us to see the value of expanding Middlebury's reach beyond the boundaries of the campus. Collaboration with other institutions, illustrated by our Language Schools' expanding affiliations with other universities, may be increasingly important in the coming years, both because of growing complexities in higher education and because of economic and technological challenges and advances. More connections to our local communities, and more openness to relating a liberal education to the needs of society,

will play a role in shaping the Middlebury College of the future. We should strengthen our offerings in service learning to provide more opportunities for students to link what is learned in the classroom with applied work in the community and the larger society. Building on our existing strengths in specific areas of the curriculum, the College should seek enhanced support from foundations and other sources that will facilitate innovation and help develop emerging areas.

We already value leadership in students, both through our admissions decisions and in opportunities provided by our campus community. We should foster a campus culture that supports creative, imaginative, and ethical leadership by our students, and reduces bureaucratic barriers to student initiative, encouraging them to take the intellectual risks that are an essential part of learning. Students should develop a sense of balance and personal responsibility in their own lives that helps to cultivate a sense of civic responsibility and stewardship in relation to the world beyond. These qualities will be increasingly important in the world community that our students will enter when they leave Middlebury.

Mission and Mission Statement: What Makes Middlebury Special?

From its proud history spanning more than two centuries, Middlebury College has emerged as one of a handful of the most highly regarded liberal arts colleges. Middlebury is unique among these schools in being a classic liberal arts college that also offers graduate and specialized programs operating around the world. Our planning has aimed to build on these strengths in a time of global change and intense competition in higher education by redefining the boundaries of the institution for a new century. Middlebury College is committed to educating students in the tradition of the liberal arts. This tradition embodies a method of discourse as well as a group of disciplines; in our scientifically and mathematically oriented majors, just as in the humanities, the social sciences, the arts, and the languages, we emphasize reflection, discussion, and intensive interactions between students and faculty members. Our vibrant residential community, remarkable facilities, and the diversity of our co-curricular activities and support services all exist primarily to serve these educational purposes.

As a residential college, Middlebury recognizes that education takes place both within and beyond the classroom. Since our founding in 1800, the College has sought to create and sustain an environment on campus that is conducive to learning and that fosters engaged discourse. Middlebury is centrally committed to the value of a diverse and respectful community. Our natural setting in Vermont's Champlain Valley, with the Green Mountains to the east and the Adirondacks to the west, is also crucial to our identity, providing refreshment and inspiration as well as a natural laboratory for research. The beauty of our well-maintained campus provides a sense of permanence, stability, tradition, and stewardship. Middlebury has established itself as a leader in campus environmental initiatives, with an accompanying educational focus on environmental issues around the globe.

Middlebury's borders extend far beyond Addison County. Middlebury's Language Schools, Schools Abroad, Bread Loaf School of English, Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, and the Monterey Institute for International Studies provide top-quality specialized education, including graduate education, in selected areas of critical importance to a rapidly changing world community. These areas include an unusually wide array of languages, literatures, and culture—including our programs in English and writing at Bread Loaf. The first of Middlebury's internationally acclaimed language programs originated at the graduate level more than ninety years ago, and the Bread Loaf programs were inaugurated in 1920.

Both in our central mission as a liberal arts college and in the various forms of specialized study and outreach with which we extend it, Middlebury seeks to promote the values of learning, reflection, leadership, community, local responsibility, and international awareness.

We expect our graduates to be thoughtful and ethical leaders able to meet the challenges of informed citizenship both in their communities and as world citizens. They should be independent thinkers, committed to service, with the courage to follow their convictions and to accept responsibility for their actions. They should be skilled in the use of language, and in the analysis of evidence, in whatever context it may present itself. They should be physically active, mentally disciplined, and motivated to continue learning. Most important, they should be both grounded in an understanding of the Western intellectual tradition that has shaped this College, and educated so as to comprehend and appreciate cultures, ideas, societies, traditions, and values that may be less immediately familiar to them.

Recommendation #1: Adopt a new mission statement that reflects our aspirations and future directions.

Our new mission statement reflects Middlebury's evolution over the last several decades and conveys our sense of the College as a place of unlimited possibilities where students can transcend the boundaries of their own experience by learning about different cultures, exploring new areas of study, understanding the interrelationships among different academic disciplines, and integrating that knowledge into their social and residential experience.

The following statement has now been adopted by the Middlebury College Board of Trustees through the action of its Prudential Committee on March 2, 2006.

Middlebury College Mission Statement:

At Middlebury College we challenge students to participate fully in a vibrant and diverse academic community. The College's Vermont location offers an inspirational setting for learning and reflection, reinforcing our commitment to integrating environmental stewardship into both our curriculum and our practices on campus. Yet the College also reaches far beyond the Green Mountains, offering a rich array of undergraduate and graduate programs that connect our community to other places, countries, and cultures. We strive to engage students' capacity for rigorous analysis and independent thought within a wide range of disciplines and endeavors, and to cultivate the intellectual, creative, physical, ethical, and social qualities essential for leadership in a rapidly changing global community. Through the pursuit of knowledge unconstrained by national or disciplinary boundaries, students who come to Middlebury learn to engage the world.

The Report of the Steering Committee

This document relies on reports from fifteen task forces and committees, surveys of all constituencies in our extended community, meetings with many groups on campus as well as with the Trustees, and well over one hundred hours of its own meetings and retreats throughout the past sixteen months.

Even with the diversity of approaches taken by the task forces and other contributors to the planning process, there was a surprising commonality of purpose. Middlebury's commitment to the personalized education of undergraduates is widely regarded as essential to our mission.

The focus of the plan is on strengthening the human dimension of the institution, and this means different things for different members of the Middlebury community. For faculty this means support for their creativity and growth as teachers and scholars as they work to balance these complementary roles. For staff, it represents opportunities for professional development and greater participation in the life of the College. For students it means diversifying the student body to enrich the overall learning environment and

prepare them for citizenship in the world; for alumni, it means having better opportunities to stay connected with one another and with the educational mission of the College.

Chapter One: Shaping the Student Body

Every year our student body grows stronger by most measurements. One aspect of such growth has been its increasing diversity—racially, ethnically, geographically, economically, and in other important regards. One of the distinguishing aspects of the student body at Middlebury is its inclusion of many international students. Those who commented about the composition of our student body often affirmed the value of diversity for our community, and we are committed to building upon recent gains in this area. In addition to the distinguishing factors listed above, we are motivated to attract more students with a special interest in the sciences and in the arts—areas in which we offer superb programs and facilities.

Financial aid is a major influence on our ability to recruit the students we would like to have at Middlebury; in this regard, however, we have fallen behind some of our peer colleges. The major recommendation in this chapter is thus for substantially increasing financial aid at every level. More specifically, we propose shifting the form of aid decisively toward outright grants as opposed to loans, thus limiting the level of debt for all aided students. The chapter goes into detail about how this expensive priority should be accomplished.

Chapter Two: Enhancing Community

This chapter highlights the human dimension of Middlebury College. A superb student body requires superb faculty and staff. We know the College's employees are among the finest in higher education. But there are important ways in which faculty and staff could be better supported. For faculty, research funding and staff support are increasingly necessary in order to pursue teaching and scholarship at the highest level. Technology has become central to the mission of faculty members, and it often requires specialized support. Much attention also focuses on staff, and on opportunities to integrate them more fully into the educational life, including Commons life, at Middlebury. Staff tuition-support for study both here and elsewhere, as well as increased professional development funding, are among the measures strongly supported in this chapter. The recommendations of this section are geared towards creating a fully integrated community of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and parents who have a shared understanding of the College's educational mission.

Chapter Three: Curriculum and Faculty

The curriculum is at the heart of the College. One of our three major priorities, as measured by resource demands, addresses this area. We recommend a phased schedule that will take Middlebury's current student-faculty ratio to approximately 8 to 1. Although such a shift will certainly make us more competitive with the other premier liberal arts colleges, we approach it in an emphatically qualitative, programmatic context

rather than in an externally oriented and overly quantitative one. Specifically, we look at an improved student-faculty ratio as a way to move toward a carefully shaped four-year program for students that reflects the faculty's ability to model the varied stages of the learning process through their own research and creative work. We would like to see every academic major at Middlebury include some independent senior work in its requirements. This work will vary in format from discipline to discipline, and it will be facilitated by a new ability to recognize faculty members' time-consuming involvement with individual students and small groups as they pursue independent projects.

An improved student-faculty ratio will also allow our faculty to continue to pursue the scholarly and artistic work that has already contributed to raising the College's academic profile. We recommend supporting this continued success in scholarship with additional resources for faculty research and development. Our strengthening of the faculty will enable major advances in the quality of a Middlebury education.

Chapter Four: Middlebury's Graduate and Specialized Programs

Middlebury's unique breadth is exemplified by the specialized programs, including the Language Schools, Schools Abroad, the Bread Loaf School of English, the Bread Loaf Writer's Conference, and the newly affiliated Monterey Institute of International Studies, that complement the undergraduate college. Distinguished ventures in their own right, these programs collectively demonstrate an institutional commitment to education that extends beyond the college years and beyond the borders of the Vermont campus. This chapter lays out the strategic issues and challenges relating to these programs, and makes specific recommendations designed to bring these programs into a more cohesive relationship with one another and with the undergraduate program.

Chapter Five: Campus, Infrastructure, and Environment

This chapter focuses on three closely related topics. One is the College infrastructure as it relates to the Commons system. Middlebury has made a major commitment to a system of five Commons with contiguous living and social spaces, and the Planning Steering Committee reaffirms this direction. The continued development and eventual completion of the Commons is one of three chief priorities of this report. The completion of the Commons physical infrastructure will necessarily proceed in phases over many years. In the meantime, we will give priority to the continued development of programmatic aspects of the Commons, with a goal of fostering more vibrant communities and a more seamless connection with our academic programs. Over the next few years, we should plan with students how best to provide upgraded senior housing opportunities for those Commons whose facilities are not yet completed.

A closely related consideration is the relationship between the campus and the new buildings needed not only by the Commons system but also for additional classroom and office space to accommodate an improved student-faculty ratio. Finally, we looked at the larger environment of the College and at the way in which our management of lands and

natural resources may reinforce the prominent place of environmental stewardship at Middlebury.

Chapter Six: Finances and Strategic Planning Priorities

We have been guided at every stage by detailed financial projections that helped inform our discussion of resource allocation and prioritization. This chapter presents the implications of the most ambitious recommendations for the College budget and for future fund raising. It also provides the financial assumptions we will use to guide our thinking and planning for the next five to ten years. We recognize that the recommendations set forth in this plan are ambitious and some of them are expensive; we have therefore suggested a carefully timed phasing of the implementation of some initiatives in order to take into account both the College's financial capacity and its plans for an equally ambitious fund raising campaign.

Appendices: Supporting Information and Data

The appendices provide background information and data that relate to many of the areas addressed by the major recommendations of this plan. As we monitor progress in implementing the recommendations of the plan, we will update this information periodically and report our findings to the community. A table included in the appendices lists all numbered recommendations and identifies the senior administrative officer who is responsible for each recommendation; it also indicates those offices, departments, and committees that will participate most directly in the implementation, and it provides projected dates for implementation.

An Overview of Middlebury's Planning Process

Soon after becoming Middlebury's sixteenth president on July 1, 2004, President Ronald D. Liebowitz and his senior staff began laying the framework for a new strategic plan, the first since 1992. A primary goal of the process was to involve many people from throughout the campus, and another was to be transparent for interested individuals in all parts of Middlebury's several constituencies.

During the fall term, Dean of Planning John Emerson worked with President Liebowitz and his staff to assemble many teams of individuals who would serve on planning task forces; these groups typically included students, faculty, administrators, and staff in their membership. A few existing committees also were given revised charges that meant they would function much as the planning task forces. By January 1, 2005, fifteen planning task forces and other planning groups had been appointed and were ready to undertake their ambitious assignments over the next four and one-half months. Among the subjects assigned to these task forces were the composition of the student body, the curriculum, staff and faculty development, and institutional change and culture. The planning task forces and the Steering Committee met regularly, from January through mid-May, when

fifteen reports from the task forces and other committees were submitted to the Planning Steering Committee.

Throughout the process, the President hosted a series of open meetings for the College community to consider key themes as they emerged. In addition, the Planning Steering Committee surveyed students, faculty, staff, alumni, and parents to solicit views on several subjects of interest in planning and to learn what the respondents most cherished about the Middlebury experience. Altogether we received responses to the surveys from 394 students, 126 faculty members, 210 staff members, and more than 3,500 alumni and parents.

We designed the planning process to encourage the generation of new ideas and imaginative contributions to our planning. The many open meetings, faculty meeting deliberations, intensive staff interviews, town meetings for students, e-mail exchanges with alumni, readings, and discussions resulted in an intense community-based dialogue engaging hundreds of people. The task forces and planning committees had members drawn from diverse areas of the College with the hope that they would challenge many assumptions and provide fresh views about familiar campus issues. In short, we sought to engage planning as a community of learners—with ample opportunity to teach each other, learn, challenge ourselves, and engage in lively debate.

A Plan With Vision and Flexibility

This plan offers a broad vision for the coming decade of Middlebury's evolution, and it also provides many specific proposals for change. It captures much of what the Middlebury College community values about our College, and it embodies many of the aspirations we share for Middlebury's future.

Although "Knowledge Without Boundaries" is more detailed and specific than many strategic plans, we believe that its focused recommendations improve the likelihood of our achieving the ambitious goals it sets out. At the same time, we expect that this plan will be amended and strengthened as time passes and circumstances change. The plan is a dynamic document that can be adapted to new contexts as necessary. Circumstances will change with the passage of time. What will not change is the commitment of the Middlebury community to making the College ever stronger and more effective in serving its students and its global society.

Chapter One

Shaping the Student Body

At the core of Middlebury’s mission is educating an intellectually committed, multi-talented, and increasingly diverse student body. The recommendations in this chapter focus on ways to achieve this goal.

A Superior Student Community

The quality, talents, and motivation of the people who constitute the Middlebury community define Middlebury’s past, its accomplishments and standing today among liberal arts colleges, and its future promise as a national and international leader in collegiate education. Our surveys of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and parents reveal a strongly shared belief that the quality of the student body and the excellence of the faculty and staff are the critical determinants of Middlebury’s success as an institution. They especially underscore the community’s belief that the College should continue to attract an intellectually committed, multi-talented, and diverse student body. The survey results also indicate widespread support for Middlebury’s “need blind” admissions policy and its commitment to providing access to all qualified applicants, regardless of their ability to finance a Middlebury education.

By almost any measure Middlebury’s student body has historically been strong, and it has become even stronger over the past several decades. In 2006, a record number of nearly 6,200 students applied for admission to an entering class of around 660 that includes the February 2007 matriculates. The strength and depth of Middlebury’s current applicant pool enable us to ask every year what the “shape” of the Middlebury student body should be. What qualities and characteristics of our applicants should inform those decisions that enable us to admit fewer than 25 percent of the students who apply? What assumptions and principles should guide this important selection process?

- **The intellectual quality of our students.** The College should seek to admit those students who are most intellectually gifted, best able to gain from a Middlebury education, excel in our academic programs, and contribute to the education of their peers both in the classroom and beyond.
- **A campus environment that maximizes intellectual benefits both within and beyond the formal curriculum.** The College should nurture the unique intellectual passions and diverse interests that students bring to campus, whether within specific academic programs or beyond the classroom. We should further strengthen the opportunities for student leadership through the creative use of College resources for innovative purposes, opportunities for experiencing and participating in the arts, and the availability of a rich program of lectures, panel discussions, and symposia. The prospective student best able to take advantage of these resources should have the passion and energy to pursue initiatives that sometimes fall outside established structures, and be distinguished as much by his

or her entrepreneurial spirit as by a willingness to participate in a wide range of activities.

- **A diverse student population.** Each matriculating class should be diverse in several important respects—racial, ethnic, socio-economic, religious, intellectual, geographic, and cultural—in order to enhance the educational experiences of, and learning by, all students. In placing academic potential and intellectual commitment at the center of our admissions process, we need not sacrifice a diverse and multi-talented student body.
- **Expanded access to a Middlebury education.** Access to a Middlebury education should continue to be available to applicants talented enough to be admitted, regardless of their financial circumstances. To that end, offering supportive and competitive financial aid packages must remain one of our highest priorities in order to increase the socio-economic diversity in our student body.

With all that Middlebury has achieved over the past decades, we are poised to become an even stronger educational institution. A large number of those who contributed input for planning identified academic excellence and academic reputation as key goals for the institution, and the continued strengthening of our student body should therefore rank among our foremost objectives.

Undergraduate Admissions

Each student at Middlebury can benefit from encountering a diversity of strengths, backgrounds, and interests in his or her peers. Our talented young people should have varied strengths, whether in academics, artistic performance, creativity, community service, athletics, debate, potential for leadership, or political involvement. A diverse student body benefits the entire community through the variety of their cultures and backgrounds. The admissions process should consider such factors as “one among many” in the language of federal courts with regard to minority status. In other words, no single external factor should dominate the selection decision. Every applicant should compete with every other applicant for admission, with intellectual potential and the capacity of a prospective student to contribute to the educational mission of the College as the primary criteria in determining admission. The academic experiences of all students, who together represent all of these talents and more, will be further strengthened by the diversity that surrounds them.

We have looked closely at demographic projections for the coming years that indicate a decline in the college-age population in New England. The growth in numbers of U.S. college-age students will occur primarily in the south and west. Among the fastest growing populations will be high school graduates who are Hispanic/Latino, and many of these students are potential first-generation college students. Even the brightest among these students may not be predisposed to travel far from their communities to New England to attend college. Demographic projections also indicate a growing imbalance

between men and women applying to four-year colleges, with fewer young men than women considering a liberal arts education. The imbalance is especially pronounced in minority communities. Middlebury must recognize and meet the challenges of trends like these as we aspire to enroll a more socio-economically diverse and racially diverse student body.

With these broad goals in mind, we present our recommendations for further enhancing the quality of our student body:

Recommendation #2: Seek more applicants with special academic talents.

Our applicant pool continues to have an excellent academic profile. We should seek applicants with strengths in specific academic disciplines such as comparative religions, art history, the classics, problem solving in mathematics, experimentation in physics, or philosophy. We continue to desire an overall balanced student community; this community can and should be comprised of students with specialized and well-developed talents and skills, as well as well-rounded students with abilities and strengths in a variety of areas. All students admitted to Middlebury College should share a passion for learning.

We should consider new approaches to identifying talented students with special academic strengths and interests, including those in disciplines that would benefit from having more students. For example, the classrooms, laboratories, and other facilities in McCardell Bicentennial Hall, along with our superb faculty resources in the sciences, invite us to expand our numbers of students with science interests. A recent study found that students who take Advanced Placement tests in the sciences are more likely to complete majors in that area, particularly in the less commonly elected science majors. When supplemented by this and other data such as International Baccalaureate scores, we have strong predictors of academic talent for much of our applicant pool. By considering AP and other honors-level courses a student has elected in the context of the courses offered at a particular high school, we can identify talented applicants without penalizing promising students whose schools don't offer these courses.

We should take advantage of our summer programs to make sure that the College's summer students, many of whom are high-school teachers, are educated about our undergraduate programs so they will be prepared to spread the word about these programs to their students. In particular, the College might replicate in the sciences its success in graduate-level foreign languages and writing by bringing high school science teachers, and perhaps some of their students, to campus during the summer for contact with our science faculty, students, and facilities.

Recommendation #3: Implement an academic rating system for all applicants.

The Admissions Office should develop an academic rating system for all applicants. Each applicant should be rated on his/her academic qualities and potential to contribute to, and benefit from, the invigorating intellectual life at Middlebury. In making these ratings, professional judgment should be exercised that takes into account more than standardized

test scores—for example, rigor of high school curriculum, unique intellectual intensity and talent, and willingness to engage in intellectual discourse going beyond that expected by one’s course work. Studies at other colleges suggest that experienced admissions personnel can do considerably better in identifying intellectual promise using a range of factors than can be done using only standardized tests and/or high school grades.

In recommending the development of an academic rating, we do not suggest that Middlebury discontinue the use of other ratings of applicants—ratings that reflect special nonacademic talents and attractive personal qualities. We believe, however, that the development of an academic rating can help us keep in focus the guiding values that we have set forth above as we make difficult choices in admitting our future students. It can also serve us well as we work with peer colleges to support the common elements of our academic and educational missions.

We should monitor the relationship, both quantitatively and qualitatively, between academic ratings and other admissions variables with outcomes measured at the end of the college experience (e.g., GPA, admission to graduate programs, competition for employment, fellowships, and indicators of leadership). We should also attempt to learn from the experiences of our alumni, for example, through surveys conducted five years after graduation.

Recommendation #4: Identify and recruit more top-rated academic applicants.

We should expand our long-standing policy of attracting, identifying, and admitting the most academically gifted applicants, and we should seek to improve our admissions yield of these students through faculty and student outreach to them. Whenever possible, faculty should be involved in meeting with these top-rated applicants during their visits to campus or in contacting them early in the admissions process. We should also take advantage of our current students and young alumni and ask them to identify prospective applicants with special strengths in such areas as the sciences and the arts.

We should expand opportunities in the spring for admitted students to experience the academic life of the College and to see our faculty and students in action—for example, by encouraging more admitted students to visit the campus to attend classes and to meet with faculty. Care should also be taken to introduce prospective students to the distinctive rural character of our campus and surrounding community.

Recommendation #5: Move gradually toward a voluntary February admission program.

For the past five years Middlebury has typically enrolled at least 115 first-year students in February. The February admission program was originally used to balance fall and spring enrollments when there was a greater imbalance in study abroad semesters than now exists. It seems clear that the Feb program no longer offers a structural benefit to the College, though it may offer personal benefit to individual students. February admission can be academically and personally advantageous for some students by encouraging them

to step back from their educational pursuits for a period of time. The bonding that takes place among the smaller “Feb” classes has made being a Feb a special experience for many Middlebury students.

Incoming Febs, however, face some academic and social disadvantages. We note that the responders to our annual parent surveys, who are generally positive about the Middlebury experiences of their sons and daughters, regularly cite some problems inherent in the February program—for example, the non-availability of courses needed to begin a particular academic sequence in the spring, or the challenge of integrating into the Commons System. Over the last few years, current Feb students have commented frequently on the special difficulties they face in registering for certain classes, or plans to study abroad. We suggest that the College gradually lower the size of the Feb group so that student participation in the program becomes entirely voluntary, and entering in February is a choice students make when they apply to Middlebury. We should continue to permit admitted students who prefer to begin their studies in February to do that, and we should encourage some admitted students to delay their matriculation for a full year to the following September. As we make this transition, the College should periodically assess the impact of the changes to ensure that we are meeting the needs of all of our students, including those who do begin their studies midyear.

Access for a Diverse Student Body

A diverse student community contributes to the educational experience of all students. It also contributes to fundamental needs of the society served by privileged institutions like Middlebury. Attention to racial and ethnic diversity in our student community is at least equally as important, and perhaps even more important, than our consideration of factors like artistic or athletic talent.

Closely allied with this issue and equally vital to Middlebury’s strength as a liberal arts college is the matter of financial access. In order to build an intellectually and culturally vibrant community, the College must matriculate a student body that is economically diverse. Middlebury has made progress in expanding need-based aid programs in the last two decades. However, financial aid is a highly competitive area; we continue to face challenges and the financial costs of meeting them will be high. Middlebury is trailing much of its competition in the packaging of financial aid, especially in terms of the amount of borrowing we expect of aided students. We also have fewer students (currently around 40 percent) who qualify for aid than do most other peer colleges. One group that merits our special attention is first-generation college students who show exceptional promise and talent.

Recommendation #6: Increase the grant component in our aid packages.

We recommend an income-based differential aid package that provides a reduction of \$500 to \$2,500 per year in the loan portion of the self-help expectation, with a commensurate increase in the grant portion of the package, for all students who qualify for need-based aid. Although this reduction could be used to replace part or all of the job portion of the self-help expectation, we are especially concerned that student debt not has an undue impact on our students' post-graduate plans. We also believe that there is value in encouraging students to hold academic year jobs, by providing employment experiences as well as opportunities for close interaction with staff members.

The reduction in the anticipated debt would be greatest for students from families with the lowest levels of income and other financial resources, so that a student from a family with an income below \$40,000 would have a loan reduced to \$1,500 per year, those from families with incomes between \$40,000 and \$80,000 would be expected to borrow \$2,500 each year, and those from families with incomes higher than \$80,000 would be expected to borrow \$3,500 instead of the current \$4,000 annually. These changes would be phased in over four years, ideally beginning in the 2007-2008 academic year.

Recommendation #7: Increase the socio-economic diversity of the student body.

We recommend that the College gradually increase the percentage of students who are eligible for need-based grant assistance above the current level of around 40 percent. Although we do not specify a target percentage, we note that the proposed differential aid packaging is likely to increase the yield rate among students with financial need who are offered admission. Thus we can expect a gradual increase in the aided student population, and we should welcome that. This change will be expensive, but access to a Middlebury education for the most qualified students should continue to be our number one priority. Note that the changes in financial aid we have proposed would especially benefit our international student population. Strengthening financial access to a Middlebury education should be at the top of the College's priorities.

Recommendation #8: Enhance recruitment and retention of students of color.

A diverse student community contributes to the educational experiences of all students and thus to our core educational mission. Middlebury should continue to actively recruit and admit students of color to Middlebury who can benefit from a Middlebury education and contribute to the College's core educational mission. The shifting demographics of high school students make it essential that Middlebury continue its gains in attracting a strong minority student population, so that our student body will resemble a microcosm of the greater society. A group that continues to require special efforts and imaginative approaches to student recruiting will be African-American students. To ensure that our focus is on educational outcomes and not simply admissions statistics, we suggest a goal of annually increasing the percentage of U.S. students of color in the graduating class.

Since the mid 1960s, the College has developed innovative programs and outreach efforts to matriculate underrepresented students of color. Programs like YOU in the 1960s, the Middlebury Urban Task Forces and the Dewitt Clinton Partnership of the 1980s, and our current Posse program are important examples of special programs that have supported student of color enrollment gains. They have also enhanced College visibility in educational communities and schools where Middlebury is less well known. The sustained efforts of members of our admissions staff have, for example, increased the percentage of U.S. students of color in the Middlebury student body from 11 percent in 1994 to 18 percent in 2004.

Middlebury's Posse Program has helped us in attracting and supporting a more diverse student community, and we should continue to strengthen our efforts in other venues as well. One possible approach to expanding racial diversity is to develop a partnership with an urban school system in the South or Southwest from which few students currently apply. Middlebury would provide this school system with special opportunities for counselors and students to visit the campus, and it would emphasize that adequate financial aid is available to make it possible for students admitted to Middlebury under this program to attend. In this way, we would hope to get many strong applicants from the school, and this process could lead to our accepting other academically gifted students in the future. Using carefully targeted approaches, we would attract students from diverse backgrounds having high economic need. We note that the Admissions Office is already developing such a model with the Atlanta Public School System—the Atlanta Underground Railroad Project.

Recommendation #9: Maintain our strong international enrollment.

Our long-standing commitment to attracting and supporting a student body with 10 percent international students distinguishes Middlebury from other liberal arts colleges in the United States. These students contribute a great deal to the College and to the experiences of all students. Moreover, our commitment to international students reflects the College's determination—emphasized in its mission statement—to educate leaders for a global society. Building on the successes made possible through the Davis United World College Scholars Program, our prospects for continued progress in this important area are bright. Through aggressive recruiting efforts and competitive financial aid packages, we should continue to attract an outstanding group of international students from a broad range of countries and socio-economic backgrounds.

Advisory Committees for Admissions and Financial Aid

Middlebury differs from many peer colleges in having only limited participation by the wider college community in developing policies and practices in admissions and financial aid. Although we have for many years had a part-time faculty associate in the Admissions Office (and we support its continuation), we have not yet developed systematic ways for people from other areas, including the faculty, to support the development of transparent policies in these two critically important areas. Such participation is needed if our

community is to embrace a shared goal of further strengthening our excellent and diverse student population.

Recommendation #10: Create an admissions advisory committee.

We recommend that the College establish an admissions advisory committee to help identify priorities, to provide advice to the Admissions Office on policies and practices, and to contribute to admissions decision making. The Dean of Admissions would chair this committee and its members, faculty and staff, would be appointed by the President. In particular, the role of this advisory committee would be to

- Participate in shaping goals for the composition of the Middlebury student body.
- Help evaluate the College's success in meeting these goals.
- Work with and advise the Dean of Admissions on the development of policies and procedures (for example, use of standardized test scores, early decision policies).
- Increase the transparency of the admissions process.
- Engage the faculty to help attract and yield the most highly qualified applicants.
- Participate in the decision-making process by helping to evaluate some applicants.

The early decision program is an issue that the committee may want to address. Although this program has been an effective way of evaluating some students who are especially interested in attending Middlebury and informing them earlier of our decision, we propose a general review of our early decision policies. Doing so will help us determine the optimal percentage of matriculating students who should enter through that program so that we do not restrict our ability to admit the most attractive applicants in the regular decision applicant pool.

Recommendation #11: Create a financial aid advisory committee.

We also recommend that the College establish a Financial Aid Advisory Committee to help establish policies and priorities and provide guidance to the Student Financial Services Office on its work. This committee would be chaired by the Director of Student Financial Services and would include faculty and staff representatives appointed by the President.

Intercollegiate Athletics

The College values opportunities for intercollegiate athletic competition because we believe that athletics can contribute to our educational mission: by competing one learns teamwork, "life lessons," discipline, resilience, perseverance, how to "play by the rules," and how to accept outcomes one may not like. Our intercollegiate programs often provide educational opportunities that focus in a self-conscious way on the development of leadership skills. Middlebury has an excellent coaching staff that is dedicated to our students, facilities that are the envy of peer colleges, and a tradition of attracting many excellent students who are also talented athletes. We recognize that Middlebury College

alone, or even all of NESCAC, cannot by itself re-orient the priorities of other colleges, but we should provide an example of maintaining an appropriate balance between academics and athletics that serves our academic mission well.

Assumptions

- Athletic programs should be fully consistent with our core values of academic and intellectual excellence, and should teach students how best to achieve overall good health and well-being.
- Coaches should be systematically invited into dialogue with the rest of the faculty about the place of athletics in the whole education of Middlebury students.
- We should provide competitive athletic opportunities for a wide range of students, including those not recruited for a particular athletic team.
- A strong and varied intramural and club sport program is just as important as a high-quality intercollegiate athletic program.
- Intercollegiate athletes should be representative of their peers in academic strength and intellectual engagement, a principle that was recently reaffirmed by the NESCAC presidents as a core assumption of the eleven NESCAC colleges.
- Intercollegiate athletes should be permitted a level of balance in their lives that allows them to pursue whatever academic directions they choose, and to participate fully in other aspects of college life.

Recommendation #12: Continue to offer leadership in addressing the relationship between intercollegiate athletics and academic mission.

For three years, representatives of the Faculty Council and of the Admissions Office have met with their counterparts from the ten other NESCAC Colleges to examine the academic-athletics interface. These meetings led to recommendations that were forwarded to the NESCAC presidents. We recommend the continuation of these collaborations, which, in part, implement a “sense of the faculty” resolution about intercollegiate athletics adopted by the Middlebury faculty in October 2002.

Since making a decision to participate in NCAA post-season tournaments, colleges in our league have experienced a heightened emphasis on winning and increasing schedule conflicts with classes. These problems are not unique to Middlebury and must therefore be approached vigorously through collaboration with other institutions. In 2004 and 2005 Middlebury helped develop a collaborative national program, the College Sports Project; see www.collegesportsproject.org. This project seeks to focus the attention of institutional leaders and coaches on two fundamental issues—integration of athletics with larger educational purposes, and good educational outcomes for athletes. At the end of 2005, 138 NCAA Division III colleges and universities had agreed to participate in the

project, including all eleven NESCAC colleges. Specific programs for improved athletic integration and for data collection to help better understand representativeness of athletes will begin in 2006.

Recommendation #13: Establish a systematic procedure for consultation between coaches and other faculty members about the balance of athletics and educational mission.

Our coaches are valued mentors to their athletes and they identify strongly with Middlebury's educational mission. In our busy community, though, there is little assurance of serious dialogue between that group and their faculty colleagues about such matters as recruiting, admissions, scheduling of practices and competitions, and general integration of athletes into the life of the College. One noteworthy initiative is the Faculty Affiliate program that links members of the academic faculty with a particular intercollegiate team, and we recommend a strengthening of this program. The current Athletic Policy Committee governs regulations, and we encourage a rethinking of the charge for this committee to include a broader agenda for its work. We also propose a meeting once a semester between three coaches nominated by the Director of Athletics and three faculty members nominated by the Dean of the Faculty. The agenda will be an open one, but with the general concern always being to promote communication and pursue the ideal of scholar-athletes at Middlebury. NESCAC in general and Middlebury in particular have a responsibility, and an opportunity, to offer leadership to the nation in this regard.

Chapter Two Enhancing Community

Just as the shape and quality of the student body are essential to the mission of Middlebury College, so too is the quality of human interaction in the College community. Relationships on our campus are generally positive, strong, and mutually supportive, but we believe that they can be further improved by several measures identified below. We believe that these steps will support a community characterized by responsibility, commitment, integrity, encouragement, and trust.

The Role of the Commons

The Commons system was initiated in 1992-93 and articulated more fully through a 1998 Board resolution, with the purpose of creating a closer community of students, faculty, and staff, and to enrich the cultural and intellectual environment on campus. There are five Commons or groups of residence halls. Each Commons has a Commons “team” that includes a Commons Head(s), a Dean, a Coordinator, and several residential advisors. The Commons Head is a faculty member who works with students to develop a social and intellectual program for their Commons. Students generally appreciate the frequent access to, and personal interaction with, their Deans, Coordinators, and Commons Heads that the decentralized organization has provided.

The major goal of the Commons is to create a more seamless educational environment for our students—a residential system that supports more completely the academic, social, and intellectual development of students. The Commons strive to create more intimate communities within the larger College campus—communities in which students assume greater responsibility for their social and residential experiences on campus, and in which they receive more guidance from on-site deans and from faculty and staff who participate in the life of the Commons in a variety of ways.

The Commons system is based on three governing principles: continuing student membership, decentralized dining, and proximate faculty residence. In developing a decentralized residential and dining system, our goal has been to establish five Commons communities that complement and reinforce the traditions and values that have long distinguished Middlebury College. Further, the Commons provide an ideal setting in which members of the College community can explore questions about values and about issues that challenge the larger society.

The Commons is still a work in progress, and at this stage in the system’s evolution, the pressing question is how best to combine the values of curricular enrichment and social coherence in deepening the Commons’ role at Middlebury. Our committee has four main recommendations in this regard, which are described below. In advancing these proposals, we also underscore the importance of all-campus events like the Clifford Symposium picnic that was held last fall. These gatherings promote collegiality and pride in the institution, and make being part of the College community fun and enjoyable. We

encourage the College to sustain and develop these all-campus traditions even as it works to develop the smaller communities represented by the Commons.

Recommendation #14: Cultivate leadership qualities that address societal needs.

The Commons system provides a variety of opportunities for student leadership, mobilizing interests that are social, academic, cultural, and political in nature. Commons Councils and Commons-initiated events offer occasions for taking initiative and responsibility that students would not otherwise have. The Student Government Association now elects many of its representatives through the Commons, and members of the Middlebury College Activities Board are also exploring ways of collaborating more fully with Commons leaders. Students likewise have the chance to mentor peers and set the tone of Commons life by serving as Junior Counselors and Residential Advisors. These opportunities are consistent with one of the Commons' founding tenets, which is to give students a greater role in governing their residential lives.

Looking ahead to the Commons' continued growth—as the central organizing principle of student life—we urge the Commons to expand their view of leadership to include qualities that will be especially important to students after they leave Middlebury. National and international events of the past few years point to a special need for cultivating the ethical dimensions of leadership, while the College's tradition of volunteer service and the emergence of service learning as a pedagogical model dramatize the social benefits achieved through local action. We see the Commons as natural gathering places for the entire Middlebury community, and later in this section we describe their role in supporting a College-wide convocation program that would bring together students, faculty, and staff for discussion and reflection. But we also see the Commons as a gateway for civic engagement, communities where students have the opportunity to turn their liberal arts education to larger purposes. We encourage the Commons leadership to keep these aspirations in mind as we continue the system's development.

Recommendation #15: Clarify and enhance the status of the Commons Heads.

As outlined in their letters of appointment, the faculty members serving as Commons Heads are meant to provide “primary leadership for fostering the intellectual and cultural development of [their] Commons.” This charge speaks to one of the Commons' most important goals, which is to reinforce the educational mission of the College and provide additional opportunities outside the classroom for students to learn. The cultivation of intellectual life in the Commons is inevitably complicated by the encompassing nature of residential life, which can be marked by a variety of personal, social, cultural, and intellectual dramas. It is precisely because of this welter of activity that we need to underscore the status of Commons Heads as the principal leaders of the Commons and grant them the authority to develop the intellectual, cultural, and civic dimensions of residential life. To this end, we recommend that they serve as the leaders of the Commons community and as the final administrative authority within the Commons. This recommendation assumes that the Commons Dean would work closely with both the Dean of the College—who would continue to oversee the sensitive, specialized work that

Commons Deans undertake with individual students—and the Commons Head, who would supervise/direct/guide the Dean’s work within the Commons as a whole. We likewise support the idea of providing the Commons Deans more time for meaningful contact with students and other residential staff—a goal that could be accomplished by reconfiguring some of the Commons Deans’ current tasks and/or reconfiguring the overall staffing within the Commons (JCs, CRAs, Coordinators, etc.).

We note that the titles used for those in leadership positions have symbolic meaning, and thus suggest that “Commons Head” or simply “Head of [name] Commons” could help convey that the Heads are central to their leadership and the direction of the Commons.

Recommendation #16: Further integrate the Commons system and the curriculum.

The most important goal of the Commons system, and the reason the College has devoted considerable resources to its development, is to enhance the overall educational experience of our students by focusing on their experiences outside the classroom. This concept was central to the vision of Commons endorsed by the Board of Trustees in 1998. Since the Commons system is the “central organizing principle” of residential life at Middlebury, it should be linked in meaningful ways to the curriculum. The Commons-based first-year seminar program, which houses members of first-year seminars in the same residence hall (and Commons), has been especially successful in integrating residential and academic life. During the fall of 2005, 75 percent of the first-years participated in this program, although in the spring, housing logistics make it very difficult to offer the program to students who matriculate in February. We would like to see the Commons-based first-year seminar program extended to as many entering students as possible. This will bring even more faculty into the Commons and their participation is valued and meaningful.

These two recommendations—the reinforcement of the leadership role of the Commons Heads and the linkage of Commons to curriculum—could also be promoted by the development of a program of courses offered by Commons Heads within their Commons. Faculty members help define and lead the Commons. More faculty participation through Commons-based courses strengthens the Commons. We offer specific recommendations for such a program in Chapter Three.

Recommendation #17: Expand opportunities for staff involvement in the Commons.

The Commons system has the potential to be an important resource for the entire campus, and we want to affirm the educational power of an inclusive residential system that gives staff as well as faculty a place to learn alongside students. In particular, we urge the Commons to create regular opportunities for faculty, staff, and students to meet in small groups to discuss specific readings and issues that are of importance to the larger community. It is especially important that these gatherings take place on a regular basis and become part of the rhythms of campus life. It is also important that the College provide more opportunities for staff members to participate in Commons’ activities, for by doing so we add breadth and depth to our intellectual communities.

A Social Life that Encourages Student Responsibility and Leadership

The College's newly adopted Mission Statement identifies ambitious goals for the education we offer, including our aim "to cultivate the intellectual, creative, physical, ethical, and social qualities essential for leadership in a rapidly changing global community." Middlebury's success in achieving this goal for our students relies in part upon the interactions of faculty and staff with students, but equally on students' own initiatives and leadership.

The Commons system should be enhanced to serve these complementary aims and to support the creation of a learning community that encourages students to act constructively and responsibly. Yet, as important as the Commons can and should be in developing the values of informed citizenship and leadership, every faculty and staff member of the Middlebury College community is engaged in some fashion in the process of cultivating among students a more acute awareness of our shared humanity. Faculty and staff who work closely with students, and who know them as individuals, can influence them in making good choices about how they live their lives and how they serve the needs of their communities.

We must acknowledge that a particular problem in the social life at Middlebury, as at other colleges and universities, is the abuse of alcohol. The College responds firmly to problems of substance abuse when they arise, and it provides educational programming and takes other specific measures to discourage such problems from occurring in the first place. But this institutional role can lead students to view the administration as either an adversary or a hapless denier of the real world. We thus urge students, faculty, and staff to move past these stereotypical positions and to talk frankly about the challenge of fostering a more vibrant social life on campus. We are convinced that students themselves must assume a primary responsibility for identifying and addressing the problems of their own social lives.

As one step in this process, the College recently created a student Task Force on Social Life whose charge is to find ways to improve social life on campus and to address problems that pose threats to good health and to a safe environment. We believe that existing institutions at Middlebury—for example, the Commons, student government, student organizations, and athletic teams—can and should support and encourage student leadership to improve the experiences students have at Middlebury. We look forward to the recommendations generated by this Task Force, not simply because they have the potential to improve student social life but also because they reflect the kind of initiative we want to encourage in our students.

A College-Wide Convocation

Recommendation #18: Initiate a weekly College-wide convocation.

We should reserve an hour each week free from classes and set aside as a shared time of exploration and reflection. Further consideration of the details is necessary, but we offer the following possibilities to illustrate how a College-wide convocation might work.

The convocation would be held on a weekday at the same hour each week. Each month's convocation would introduce a broad theme, to which conversation would return in different formats. In the first week an all-community convocation with a major outside speaker would introduce the theme; in the second week Commons-based discussions would engage the convocation topic; in the third week a faculty, staff, or student speaker, or perhaps a panel, could address the theme in another all-community event; and the fourth week could remain open for reflection on the topic as small groups choose.

Lecture funds already exist to support such a series, but planning the program will require a significant commitment of time. Several members of the community have already expressed a willingness to help organize and plan a convocation program. We envision that an appointed committee of faculty, staff, and students would plan the convocations for the following year and also coordinate them with events of a related nature, such as the Clifford Symposium and the Fulton Lecture.

To encourage staff participation, supervisors will need to be supportive and flexible. In offices where staff work-schedules are harder to rearrange, a rotation might be developed so that those who are interested can still attend some of the presentations. Staff participation will support our intellectual mission and foster shared experiences among all segments of the community.

Staff Contributions to Intellectual Community

Members of the staff of Middlebury College contribute in vital and varied ways to the education of our students. The entire College is enriched by including staff members as full participants in our intellectual community. We endorse the following recommendations that speak to enhancing staff educational opportunities. Staff as well as faculty can model for our students the benefits of lifelong learning and intellectual growth.

Recommendation #19: Enhance educational opportunities for staff.

We recommend that the College increase the level of funding for staff continuing education in order to make this program available to more employees. The Continuing Education Fund currently supports eligible employees by providing tuition reimbursement for courses at accredited, degree- or certificate-granting programs. The

program of study must be related to the individual's professional development. We also recommend that the Office of Human Resources communicate to supervisors the College's support for existing policies that permit staff to take courses at Middlebury if space is available, and that Human Resources work with department supervisors to find ways to accommodate such requests.

Recommendation #20: Support staff matriculation at Middlebury College.

Staff members can currently audit courses or take courses for credit at the College, and then transfer earned credits to other institutions of higher education. We believe that the ability to matriculate at Middlebury and work toward a degree here could be an important opportunity for members of the Middlebury staff. We support the recommendation that qualified staff members have the opportunity to matriculate at Middlebury College.

Recommendation #21: Increase professional development opportunities for staff.

Professional achievements of the Middlebury College staff are valued contributions to the College. Some members of the staff are active at the national level in their respective fields; they are invited to present at conferences, participate in professional networks or organizations, and attend other work-related off-campus events. We should increase the availability and level of support in the Staff Development Fund to enable more staff members to participate in professional organizations and attend work-related programs.

Recommendation #22: Create a staff professional development leave program.

We support the creation of a professional development leave program that would allow staff members to apply for a leave of absence to engage in educational or developmental activities consistent with the mission of the College and beneficial to the employee in his or her professional development. Such a program would provide staff members opportunities to develop further job-related knowledge and skills and return to campus with new ideas and energy.

Recommendation #23: Encourage staff participation in intellectual community.

We support the creation of structures that would allow staff members to participate in more educational events on campus, for example, a flextime or other cooperative arrangement within a department that would allow some individuals to attend an occasional lecture, or work with faculty, other staff, or students on committees or shared projects. Such collaborations can be very rewarding and contribute to our effectiveness and success as an institution. We ask that the Office of Human Resources initiate dialogue with supervisors about how best to encourage the staff to attend public events, affiliate with the Commons, and participate in discussions about important College agendas.

Leadership and Innovation

Recommendation #24: Strengthen supervisory training programs.

Middlebury College aims to support its employees by providing them with the information, tools, and assistance they need to maximize their success in their roles at the College. Managers and supervisors must understand and comply with many different management principles, employment laws, and College policies and procedures. To minimize the unintended application of policies in ways that are inconsistent, and to ensure equitable treatment of our employees, we recommend that the College require every new manager and supervisor to participate in a review of expectations for the new position. The employee should receive training and guidance in areas important to the new role, and this training should be administered in a timely way so that the employee can effectively assume his or her new responsibilities right away. In order to strengthen management practices across the College, each employee who is already in a supervisory or managerial role will also participate in a review and training process specific to his or her position.

Recommendation #25: Promote greater work-life balance.

As programs at Middlebury evolve, greater demands are sometimes placed on faculty and staff members who are deeply committed to the welfare of students—academically, physically, and emotionally. This dedication can lead to over-extension, stress, and diminished morale. A healthy balance between employees' professional and personal commitments, "work-life balance," will contribute to job satisfaction and good performance, improved relationships, and a sense of community. We recommend that the College explore ways to enhance work-life balance and to recognize ever-evolving life roles and responsibilities.

Recommendation #26: Encourage a culture of collaboration.

All employees at Middlebury College share a common goal of meeting the College's needs. For example, when we have a snowstorm, many employees from Facilities Services work together to quickly make buildings and facilities accessible to the College community; these dedicated employees take pride in "getting the job done well." We recommend promoting a team-work approach in all areas of the College, characterized by an ongoing willingness to support our coworkers both within and across departments. To enable this, Human Resources might establish a clearing house of information about areas and times of particular needs, so that willing employees can step in with help when that is needed. Some staff members might be cross-trained in the work of other departments.

A culture of collaboration should also extend to the College's professional staff and faculty. For example, new technologies present great opportunities to further our educational mission and to develop high quality campus resources. In order to benefit from these innovations, new collaborative relationships should be formed among the

various departments and stakeholders—faculty and administration, library, instructional technology, and media services staff, computing and network support staff, museum and visual resources curators, and other collection managers and content providers. All levels of management should embrace an institutional ethos that recognizes and rewards interdepartmental collaboration.

Recommendation #27: Cultivate and support creativity and innovation.

We recommend that College leaders strive to provide for all employees an environment that encourages innovation and creative approaches to working more effectively. The people who know an area best should be encouraged to suggest innovations that can lead to improvement. We suggest that Human Resources include this goal within its program for orienting and training new managers. The area of technology can serve as one illustration; we should value technologies that allow us to do our jobs more efficiently, and such technologies extend beyond the academic realm.

Recommendation #28: Increase recognition of employees' accomplishments.

We recommend developing a mechanism to solicit information about significant staff and faculty accomplishments and milestones, and finding opportunities to publicly acknowledge these achievements. We should foster and encourage a culture in which successes in one area of the College are viewed as successes for the entire community.

Recommendation #29: Expand the ways we engage alumni in the life of the College.

We value the involvement of alumni from all Middlebury College programs. The College should move beyond its traditional methods of engaging alumni, and it must expand its efforts to engage alumni of the Language Schools and Bread Loaf.

The College should

- Expand communications to and programming for alumni of the Language Schools and Bread Loaf. Use both of these tools to help undergraduate alumni view the graduate programs as integral parts of the College.
- Take advantage of the new online community to create a virtual alumni community, providing new ways for the alumni to connect with each other and with Middlebury.
- Tailor communications and programming to target audiences by demographics such as age and special interests. For example, we could take greater advantage of broadcast e-mail and other technologies to provide information that is relevant for particular groups of alumni. Gatherings of alumni with shared experiences as undergraduates—for example, competing on an athletic team or participating in a music ensemble—are events that can lead to friendships across the generations.
- Involve greater numbers of alumni in providing career counseling to students and alumni, increasing the number of advisers in MiddNet, the online career network, creating more opportunities for networking in cities with substantial numbers of

- alumni, bringing more alumni to campus as speakers, and providing other opportunities for alumni to share their knowledge and expertise with one another.
- Broaden our ongoing alumni recruiting efforts through the Alumni Admissions Program (AAP) to strengthen our outreach to underrepresented groups. This could include more focused participation by Middlebury alumni of color. We should consider using recent graduates in early awareness efforts for middle school students in targeted urban areas, perhaps in conjunction with alumni of other colleges. We should also increase the involvement of alumni of the Language Schools and Bread Loaf in identifying strong applicants; many of those alumni are teachers in secondary schools.
 - Provide opportunities for lifelong learning, expanding Alumni College and making faculty interaction the focus of more alumni events. We should continue to increase the numbers of courses offered to our alumni and taught by Middlebury faculty members; a course in Marine Biology offered by a Middlebury scientist in collaboration with colleagues at the Monterey Institute of International Studies is one current model. We should also consider including alumni in off-campus winter term courses, where possible, so that alumni and current students and faculty have common educational experiences.
 - Use emerging technologies to provide lectures and courses to alumni through streaming audio and video and podcasts. We should find ways to provide information to alumni that is relevant to their work; one example that has proven effective over many years is BreadNet, which links Bread Loaf school teachers and their classrooms electronically.

Recommendation #30: Re-examine and strengthen our communications both within and beyond our campuses.

All institutions take steps to build and manage their reputation, so that prospective students, other academic institutions, potential supporters, and the general public are aware of the institution's achievements and aspirations. Middlebury should remain committed to an active, deliberate communications program with a goal of conveying to the world: the excellence of our faculty, staff, students, and alumni; the outstanding quality of our academic programs; and the vibrancy of our residential learning community. To this end, Middlebury should

- Strengthen its reputation for institutional leadership through outreach at the state and national level.
- Demonstrate the school's unique differences, and societal relevance, and take an active role in placing stories about faculty research and expertise to support those points.
- Increase alumni and parent engagement through targeted communications. This effort should not only include the undergraduate college, but all schools in the Middlebury family.
- Strengthen internal communication, and make sure that all constituents within the Middlebury community feel connected and aware of the matters that affect them.

- Continue concerted efforts to raise Middlebury’s visibility externally and develop an approach to its own publications and communications tools that consistently reflect the objectives of its various constituencies.

Supporting Diversity

Recommendation #31: Expand and support diversity in the staff and faculty.

Middlebury’s success in attracting an increasingly diverse student body points to a need for greater racial and ethnic diversity in the faculty and staff. A more diverse workforce at Middlebury will not only support our student population but will also bring a richer variety of experiences and perspectives into the conversations that help define the core of our intellectual community. The College should identify strategies for increasing the diversity in the groups of new employees that we bring to the faculty and staff. The 2005-2006 Human Relations Committee released its report this spring, and the recommendations in the report will guide Middlebury’s continuing efforts to strengthen and support diversity in our community.

As illustration, we identify some steps that the College should consider in its efforts to recruit and retain a more diverse staff and faculty:

- Advertise and recruit applicants for staff positions from a wider geographic area.
- Consider carefully the application materials from the strongest minority applicants along with the materials from other finalists in a search.
- Continue to identify the recruiting and retention of diverse faculty members as an important part of the portfolio of a senior administrator.
- Ensure that the administrative responsibility for supporting efforts to attract a more diverse staff and faculty is clearly understood by all managers who recruit.
- Include diversity as an even stronger focus in our expanded training programs for all managers.

Diversity is not limited to race and ethnicity, and Middlebury College should continue to embrace diversity of many kinds. We should assist all members of the community in understanding what it means to be welcoming and inclusive. We recommend the incorporation of both role-modeling and diversity training in management strategies at all levels. We also recommend that the College identify opportunities through which all in our community can learn more about each other’s diverse experiences and backgrounds.

The College and the Town

Recommendation #32: Recognize “Community Partners.”

We have many friends in the community who contribute in various venues to the College, our students, and our faculty and staff. We recommend that the College acknowledge our long-term community partners with annual recognition, which could be in the form of a

letter, announcement, or public event. This initiative would not replace the Citizens' Medals; rather it would acknowledge the organizations and individuals who year after year make significant contributions to College programs. We believe that such recognition would help the College strengthen its positive and productive relations with individuals and businesses in the local community.

Chapter Three

Curriculum and Faculty

At the heart of our mission as an institution of higher learning is encouraging Middlebury students to explore the full range of the liberal arts and sciences and at the same time to pursue a deep understanding of the specific areas they choose as majors. Two other goals are implicit in this one: fostering an ambitious, coherent curriculum and cultivating a superb faculty, who provide a model for students of the intellectual engagement offered by in-depth exploration of a field.

Enhancing Student-Faculty Interaction

We begin this chapter with a proposal to increase the size of the faculty. In moving swiftly from that point to a discussion of curricular recommendations, we want to affirm that the most compelling justification for seeking additional faculty resources is the potential they offer for deepening and refining the program of study that Middlebury offers its students. In addition to enabling specific curricular changes as outlined below, a more competitive student-faculty ratio would ensure that faculty are able to continue to devote a great deal of time to individual students while also enhancing Middlebury's academic reputation through their scholarly and creative accomplishments.

The additional resources will give our members of our faculty more time to teach, advise students, and do research. They will enable the College to become even more competitive in appointing faculty whose highest priority is superb teaching, yet whose scholarly credentials would also make them especially attractive to top-tier universities.

Recommendation #33: Increase faculty resources and enhance student-faculty interaction.

Intensive interaction between faculty and students is at the core of Middlebury's mission as a liberal arts college. For students, the opportunity to work closely with faculty, so that their intellectual development can be guided by professors who come to know them well, is a defining feature of a Middlebury education. For faculty, the rewards of providing mentorship and developing ongoing relationships with excellent students are the reason they choose to teach at a liberal arts college rather than a university. Preserving and enhancing this unique relationship is critical to maintaining Middlebury's position among the hundreds of educational institutions in America, and to ensuring that Middlebury continues to be the school its alumni love.

While the dynamics of student-faculty interaction cannot be precisely quantified, the "student-faculty ratio," as a standard indicator of faculty resources available to each student, is one point of comparison between institutions. Prospective students, parents, faculty job candidates, and the creators of college rankings all use student-faculty ratio as a measure of an institution's commitment to making faculty as available as possible to students. Middlebury's ratio is now approximately 9 to 1 when calculated using standard

methodology, as compared with an 8 to 1 ratio found at some of our peer colleges. This difference translates to a heavier teaching load than at such other institutions and to a greater number of large-enrollment classes. We have been very fortunate in having a hard-working faculty that stretches to meet student demands, but it will be difficult to sustain this high level of faculty availability without both using our faculty resources more efficiently, and expanding them in the years to come. We therefore recommend 8 to 1 as the new standard we intend to achieve.

Enhanced faculty resources could be used to further many specific curricular and educational goals. Reducing class sizes would be a primary objective. Additional faculty FTE's could be used to reduce the number of lecture classes in the 50 to 75 student range, and to bring medium-sized classes down from 45 to 50 students to 35 to 40 students. Freed from the staffing constraints that prevent the awarding of teaching credit for the substantial work of advising student theses and research projects, we could allow for a more equitable distribution of thesis advising to serve a wide range of student interests. This would be necessary in order to institute a common senior work requirement, as is recommended below. Finally, additional faculty members would allow us to build in staffing redundancies that would ensure that our complex curriculum can be well supported by departments and programs, and that no individual faculty member's contribution would be "irreplaceable" when they are on leave.

Ten curricular recommendations follow. The first seven of these address the overall structure of the curriculum; the next three deal with the pathway by which an individual student experiences that curriculum.

Curriculum and Advising

Recommendation #34: Consolidate the College's distribution requirements.

Distribution requirements were established to ensure that each student gains breadth in the study of the liberal arts. Both students and faculty have expressed a sense that our current distribution requirements have become a complex series of hoops to jump through, however, rather than a meaningful structure for shaping an individual student's course of study. We thus propose reducing the number of requirements demanded under the present system—in which students must take courses in seven out of eight groups. A relevant fact is that, as many courses have grown more interdisciplinary over time, assigning appropriate "tags" to them has become more difficult, weakening the clarity and integrity of the academic categories. We would prefer at most four or five distribution requirements. This would require re-designation of the academic categories, perhaps along more conventional "divisional" structures. Such consolidation would both make a stronger statement about the major areas we expect students to balance in their coursework and open up more options for students beyond required courses. In considering whether students would need to take all categories within a new structure, or be able to opt out of some, the EAC and faculty should engage the question of a language requirement. Recognizing that there are many practical and pedagogical reasons why a

language requirement, which involves a multi-semester commitment, has not been supported by many language faculty members, we nevertheless recommend that any discussion of distribution requirements include renewed consideration of the appropriate place of languages within the general Middlebury curriculum.

The “cultures and civilizations” requirements, which were revised by the faculty four years ago, could either be part of this consideration of distribution requirements or could remain as they are, independent of changes in the academic categories. The faculty clearly supports their overall goal of requiring students to explore a variety of cultures. It is important that we continue the advances we have made in adding greater diversity to the curriculum, and strive to represent a wide range of cultures, religions, and ethnicities in the courses that we offer.

Many of our peer institutions have far simpler distribution or general education requirements than we do. For example, at one sister institution students are asked simply to take 10 courses from 10 different departments outside their major; distribution requirements simply mean that they must distribute their studies across the curriculum. Other schools typically have fewer categories than in Middlebury’s requirements, with more options for satisfying each. Our planning group undertook a study of the distribution requirements at 23 similar institutions, including our group of 20 comparison colleges, and found that 19 have a science requirement, 8 have a lab science requirement, and 15 have a language requirement.

By way of example, we offer the following set of simplified distribution requirements that would achieve our objectives: Students would need to take two courses in each of the following four areas: Languages and Arts, Humanities and Literature, Natural Sciences, and Social Sciences. One of the courses in the Natural Sciences or Social Sciences category would be designated a “lab” course, providing a significant opportunity for independent experimental work. These new categories would replace the current eight distribution tags with four new tags.

Recommendation #35: Institute a laboratory science requirement within the new distribution requirements.

The accelerating pace of scientific discovery and the impact of new discoveries on humankind require the well-informed citizen to have a fundamental knowledge of science. Direct contact with the scientific method teaches students the value and meaning of empirically derived knowledge and critical thinking—understanding of great importance in many of life’s domains. It also affords students opportunities to gain experience with varied forms of technology. Our current system gives students the option of avoiding science altogether. The objective of a science requirement would be for all graduating students to have had some course experience with hands-on, experimental science, either in the laboratory or in the field. With our state-of-the-art science facilities and laboratories, Middlebury is in a good position to consider implementing such a requirement. Many peer institutions with equivalent or lesser facilities and faculty complements already successfully mount a lab science requirement. The concern that

many science faculty have expressed about whether science has a sufficiently prominent role at Middlebury might be partially addressed through such a requirement, which would send both students and prospective students a message about the significance of scientific inquiry here. The areas in which we believe that specified courses will be able to introduce students to the scientific method in a hands-on way include Biology, Chemistry and Biochemistry, Computer Science, Geography, Geology, Mathematics (Statistics), Neuroscience, Physics, and Psychology.

Recommendation #36: Enhance academic advising.

Academic advising by members of the faculty helps guide students toward establishing their academic paths. We believe that a simplified structure for distribution requirements would allow for more meaningful advising by faculty, who often feel that advising has become a mechanical exercise in checking requirements rather than an opportunity for substantive dialogue about a student's interests and aspirations. Good advising requires not only that faculty have a solid knowledge of the curriculum, but also that they be prepared to help students understand the nature of a liberal arts education. We recommend that the administration seriously consider ways to reinforce the faculty commitment to general advising and to prepare faculty for their broader and more philosophical advising role.

Recommendation #37: Eliminate triple majors and reduce the number of double majors.

At Middlebury as elsewhere, increasing numbers of students pursue majors in two or more disciplines. While multiple majors can allow students to develop useful strengths in complementary disciplines, multiple majoring also complicates their schedules and often discourages students from exploring the breadth of our curricular offerings. With more active advising in this regard, we can make students aware of the philosophical and practical compromises that may occur as a result of double majoring.

Middlebury's large percentage of double majors also places a heavy burden on the curriculum and on the faculty. A student with two majors needs a place in two senior seminars, meets with two advisors, and charts two pathways to completion that must be carefully integrated. Some departments with high enrollment pressures could relieve large lecture courses by adding more sections, but lack the staffing to do so because many senior seminars are offered to guarantee spots to the majors and double majors who need them to graduate.

We propose that the EAC consider legislation that would completely eliminate the option of a triple major, and that would allow double majors to be declared only through the end of the fifth semester. Many students now return from junior year abroad, discover that they are just a course or two away from a double major, and collect that credential by declaring a second major in their senior year. Invariably, such late registrations become a problem for departments in the scheduling of senior seminars and advising of theses. (Joint majors, as planned integrations of related fields, do not pose the same problems as double majors.) This proposal would demand that students plan to devote focused

attention to their major discipline, and would allow for greater emphasis on independent senior work. Similarly, we recommend not approving “special student” part-time status for students who simply want to fulfill an extra requirement or two and thus complete a double major.

Recommendation #38: Streamline departmental major requirements.

Even students who major in only one field often end up devoting a substantial portion of their courses to major requirements. While many of our top competitors offer majors requiring 8-10 courses, at Middlebury majors are generally between 12 and 16 courses. This not only reduces the breadth of students’ experience, it places a heavy burden on faculty who must offer a rich array of specific courses on a consistent basis in order to permit students to satisfy major requirements. We recommend that the EAC work with departments and programs to streamline the requirements for majors to reduce these pressures on departmental curricula and enrich the liberal arts experience for students.

Recommendation #39: Highlight the strengths of the sciences and arts at Middlebury.

As we refine and enhance our curriculum we want to express our commitment to the excellence of all our programs. While continuing to celebrate recognized strengths like environmental studies, international studies, languages, and literature, we should no longer use the language of “peaks” to distinguish these areas. At this moment in Middlebury’s history, we particularly want to enhance recognition of the sciences and the arts, and to convey the distinctive qualities of these programs in our descriptions of the College.

As we have found with the Bread Loaf School of English, secondary school teachers who are familiar with our academic programs can serve as wonderful ambassadors of these programs. We therefore support the creation of a small summer program that would bring a number of high school science teachers to campus each summer to study some area in depth together with one or more of our own faculty members. Such summer mini-courses could rotate among interested individuals and departments in the sciences, including biology, chemistry and biochemistry, computer science, geology, mathematics, and physics.

In addition, we strongly endorse the recommendations of the Committee on the Arts that support a more structural integration of arts into the curriculum and campus life. Arts events should be more fully incorporated into the curriculum, and we should devote greater emphasis to interdisciplinary courses and team-teaching that connect the arts to other, non-art disciplines. We also recommend raising the level of support for the College orchestra and choir in order to involve and retain more of the talented musicians in our student body in these flagship organizations. In particular, we propose that the EAC consult with the Chair of Music about whether the current level of academic credit for participation in these groups is adequate to sustain student commitment. There is a complementary need to develop a wider range of performance opportunities for students. The College should also consider funding national and international tours that would

increase the visibility of our music programs and serve as incentives for student involvement. We feel that the Committee on the Arts has already made significant progress in increasing the integration and visibility of the arts on campus, and we support continued efforts to establish dialogue between the arts departments and other departments and groups on campus. We encourage continued discussion of whether a Director of the Arts position at Middlebury would help foster these goals, or whether there are other means by which they might be achieved.

Recommendation #40: Strengthen Winter Term.

A prominent theme in comments from students, faculty, and staff was a desire for students to have more “quality time” for thinking, and a less frenzied schedule of commitments and obligations. Winter Term can be an excellent time for innovative courses that provide more opportunity for reflection and independent work. While the mixed feelings many faculty have about Winter Term were apparent in the extended debate on the issue two years ago, the strong majority of faculty who voted to retain Winter Term recognized that its unique schedule and configuration offers opportunities as well as challenges, and we recommend that those opportunities be used to serve the goals of this report. The Curriculum Committee and administration should encourage faculty to develop proposals for Winter Term courses that create a more intensive and independent experience for students.

In particular, off-campus Winter Term courses have provided some of the most rewarding educational experiences, as described by students and faculty alike. The planning committee proposes the immediate restoration of this program, which was eliminated several years ago for budgetary reasons, and recommends that there should be the opportunity for up to three off-campus courses per year. The major expense involved in off-campus courses is the high cost of the extra financial aid needed, so support of this program may be a goal for advancement staff to pursue as they seek contributions for financial aid.

Off-campus internships during January also provide students a unique learning experience that should be fostered within our curriculum. We address the related topic of experiential learning below.

Shaping the Student Career at Middlebury

Recommendation #41: Reinforce the first-year seminar program.

The FYS program is already a jewel of the curriculum, supported by an outstanding Writing Program. The EAC and the Dean of the Faculty need to look closely at departments’ level of participation, however, to make sure that it becomes a truly cross-curricular commitment. The EAC should work with departments and programs to establish a regular rotation of FYS teaching for full-time faculty. Further, all faculty should take advantage of the excellent preparation offered by the Writing Program in

order to ensure consistency of FYS courses in advising, requiring an adequate number of writing assignments, providing full response to students' written work, and creating regular time to discuss writing in class.

Recommendation #42: Explore possibilities for Commons-based courses.

In order to expand the Commons' connections to our curriculum and enable the Commons Heads to establish ties with students based on their shared experiences in the classroom, we urge the development of academically oriented programming that builds on the success of the Commons-based FYS program. For example, the Commons program could help the College to find imaginative ways to strengthen the sophomore curriculum. We recommend that the Commons Heads explore possibilities for integrating the academic program and the Commons, and that they discuss their ideas with the administration and forward specific proposals to the Curriculum Committee.

We also propose that the College establish clusters of Commons-based Winter Term classes that would give first priority to Commons residents. Joined together by a shared theme or a pedagogical approach (for instance, service learning) and organized by Commons Heads, these courses would take advantage of the Winter Term schedule through a combination of field trips, symposia, and special research projects. By building upon the model of the Commons-based FYS program, this plan would strengthen the intellectual framework of Winter Term.

Recommendation #43: Require senior work in all majors.

Independent senior work teaches students how to ask questions, how to seek answers to them, and how to communicate their discoveries clearly. Middlebury graduates should be more than good students; they should be prepared to function as autonomous learners and "teachers" of what they know. Undertaking a significant research project, creative work, or other independent work during the senior year gives students the opportunity to put into practice what they have learned about their chosen field of study. Sharing these projects with faculty mentors, fellow students, and others tests their ability to articulate and defend their ideas within a larger intellectual community. The new Office for Undergraduate Research can play an important role in supporting senior work and making student research accomplishments more visible.

Members of the Planning Steering Committee believe strongly that all departments should require an independent senior project of their majors. Such senior work can serve both as the capstone of students' work in a particular discipline and as the culminating example of the close faculty-student interaction characterizing the Middlebury experience as a whole. A senior work requirement would represent an ambitious elevation of the quality and shape of an undergraduate career at Middlebury, bringing a more sharply defined contour to a student's entire education and assuring that all our graduates gain the ability to function at a significant level as independent learners.

Such a requirement would only be feasible if the College is committed to an improved student-faculty ratio, as described elsewhere in this report. In many departments, it would in fact be impossible for the current faculty to advise substantial projects by all of the students majoring in that area. Although a reduction in double majors would partially address this problem, additional faculty resources would still be needed.

An Enriched Curricular Context

Recommendation #44: Promote student research through a day-long research symposium.

The planning committee recommends that the College institute a day-long research symposium, of the kind developed successfully at other colleges, which focuses on student work. Activities would include public lectures given by students and poster-presentation sessions that would highlight student work in senior theses, independent projects, or internships. Such a day-long celebration of student work would take place late in the spring semester, and would replace the day off for Winter Carnival that currently takes place early in the semester. It would support, and be supported by, a new expectation for independent senior work in all departments. The Office for Undergraduate Research would be responsible for developing, coordinating, and promoting this event, which would give visibility to student independent work and encourage students to regard their independent work, and that of their peers, as a serious commitment that is highly valued by the College.

The curricular recommendations outlined in this report are intended to produce a certain kind of graduate: a person who has read and thought broadly on a wide range of topics within the liberal arts and sciences; whose close relationship with teachers and advisors has given him or her a sense of participation in a vibrant intellectual community; who has become sufficiently advanced in a specific area of study to have expertise worth sharing with other students and faculty; who can critically analyze and investigate problems using appropriate information resources; and who leaves Middlebury with a capacity for independent thought and analysis that will foster a lifetime of continued learning.

Experiential Learning

Experiential learning opportunities, including service learning courses, internships, and independent projects, all extend learning beyond the classroom in important ways. Summer internships often exemplify the kinds of experiential learning programs that have benefited Middlebury students in recent years. Student employment on campus can also have a valuable educational component. The planning committee supports increasing the opportunities for experiential learning and expanding internship opportunities. Two specific proposals have emerged that we support as part of the strategic plan:

Recommendation #45: Increase funding for student internships.

Internships will be increasingly important in a liberal arts context, and students' financial circumstances should not exclude them from these valuable opportunities. We support augmenting the funding for student internships; this would enable equal access to internship opportunities, regardless of financial resources, and would contribute to our goal of attracting a more diverse student body.

Recommendation #46: Create a database for service learning projects.

We recommend that the College create a "Request for Proposals" database to solicit service-learning project ideas from potential community partners and alumni. This would serve to increase experiential learning opportunities for students, provide a source of meaningful project ideas, and better engage community partners and alumni in the educational process. At least one of our peer colleges has been very successful in using this approach to match community needs with learning opportunities for students.

Enhanced Faculty Support

Recommendation #47: Make better use of current teaching resources with a goal of achieving a more competitive teaching load for faculty.

The growth of our complex, interdisciplinary curriculum has demanded a significant investment of faculty time and attention. The complexities of student schedules often require that a student consult with multiple advisors or department and program chairs. The number of distribution and major requirements to be fulfilled means that students often have very specific curricular needs that must be met in a given term; this is particularly the case because many Middlebury students go abroad their junior year, creating a need for even low-enrollment courses to be taught very frequently. A parallel issue from the faculty side of the equation is that the present teaching load guidelines have sometimes led to departmental offerings being designed in order to satisfy individual instructors' prescribed teaching responsibilities, rather than for the purposes of maximum efficiency and pedagogical effectiveness.

We believe that the review of the curriculum outlined above should be accompanied by a careful assessment of teaching resources in all departments. Streamlining department and program requirements, reducing double majors, and creating equitable teaching loads that do not drive departmental curricula may all yield teaching resources that can be used to implement some of the above recommendations. Moreover, reconsideration of the tasks currently required of department chairs and other administrators might make it possible to reduce the course releases currently given as compensation for administrative work, which would in turn allow us to devote more faculty resources to curricular innovation.

Careful attention to current resources, along with a gradual increase in the number of faculty, should thus make it possible to move in the direction of a standard teaching load that is more comparable to that of the very best liberal arts colleges.

Recommendation #48: Develop a more flexible approach to faculty leaves.

Beyond improving the student-faculty ratio to 8 to 1, as described in the first recommendation of this chapter, the College should also make changes to ensure that faculty research time is used most efficiently. A more flexible approach to faculty leaves would allow us to maximize opportunities for grant funding of faculty research. Specifically, we propose allowing faculty to pursue exceptional opportunities that may fall outside the normal leave sequence. This would not only enhance the academic prestige of the institution, it would also promote the level of research engagement that allows Middlebury faculty to model and mentor meaningful research on the part of students. We also recommend enhanced faculty development funding that would offer better support for faculty and reduce the time spent securing support. Some of the recommendations in this area are already in the process of being implemented.

Recommendation #49: Provide more centralized staff support to reduce administrative burdens on faculty.

Recognizing that faculty time is a valuable resource, we recommend a reduction in the amount of time faculty spend on administrative work that the institution could support in other ways. The increasing demands of technology have meant that many faculty members spend a substantial amount of time on technical or clerical tasks that did not exist ten years ago, or were done by other offices. Providing more centralized and coordinated support for a variety of support tasks—such as creating course web pages, digitizing information, or placing course materials on electronic reserve—would free faculty time that could be better spent working with students, preparing for class, or conducting research.

A Coordinated Approach to Educational Quality

The Planning Committee offers the preceding recommendations as a unified sequence—intended to strengthen the faculty, to clarify the goals of a liberal education and to shape the four years of a student’s career at Middlebury into a more progressive whole. Such an ambitious enhancement of our undergraduate program will of course need to be deliberated with the utmost seriousness by the entire faculty, working through its elected committees. We emphasize, however, that revisiting so many curricular matters in this coordinated fashion holds enormous promise for the College. It can reinforce our mission and provide a meaningful context for academic advising. It can re-affirm the common cause for which faculty and staff, students and administration are all gathered together here.

Over the past several decades, Middlebury has made striking commitments to a new Commons system as well as to the construction of world-class facilities in the arts and sciences, an extraordinary new library, and a residential system second to none. We celebrate the fact that so many achievements have come at a time when interdisciplinary initiatives were also enriching our College so dramatically. The further changes proposed in this report focus primarily on our educational activities *per se*. Our committee's firm conviction is that the present recommendations build upon and consolidate the College's recent gains in a coordinated and strategic fashion. If enacted, they will assure a new degree of curricular coherence, a sense of community that more fully integrates members of the staff, and an intensity of student-faculty interaction equal to or exceeding that at any college in the country. The changes described here do not simply call for new faculty resources or institute new requirements. Rather, they offer a compelling vision of educational quality in which students, faculty, and staff all undertake specific new responsibilities in a cooperative spirit. We contemplate this package of recommendations as a remarkable opportunity to advance in our mission and in the success with which we implement it.

Chapter Four

Middlebury's Graduate and Specialized Programs

Middlebury's undergraduate liberal arts program is, and should remain, at the core of its identity and mission. Radiating outwards from this central point, however, is an array of affiliated programs that enhance the luster of the College as individual and distinctive entities, and also combine to create a network of opportunities that is unique among liberal arts colleges. These programs, situated across the United States and around the world, represent knowledge without boundaries both for undergraduates and for the hundreds of graduate students whom they serve.

Middlebury College is not simply an undergraduate institution of 2,350 students. It also encompasses several graduate and specialized programs that take place during the summer and academic year, in the U.S. and in other countries. It includes nine intensive Language Schools that enroll 1,300 students each summer, taught by 215 faculty; seven Schools Abroad, which enroll more about 140 graduate students and 180 undergraduates yearly; the Bread Loaf School of English, which enrolls 500 students at five sites; and the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, with its 230 attendees each summer at the Bread Loaf campus. In addition, Middlebury College now has an affiliate, the Monterey Institute of International Studies, with whom our relationship is beginning to develop.

These programs offer tremendous advantages, both educational and logistical, to the College. The Language Schools and Schools Abroad have solidified Middlebury's dominance in language learning and strength in international studies. The Bread Loaf programs embody a proud tradition in literature that is crucial to the College's traditional liberal arts identity. The affiliation with the Monterey Institute expands Middlebury's commitment to language study to graduate professional programs that demonstrate the importance of language mastery to many careers and forms of public service. While these programs differ from each other in the extent of their connection to the undergraduate curriculum, all of them chart pathways outward from the undergraduate experience that are a model of the kind of expansive, continuing education that Middlebury seeks to cultivate in its students. In addition, many of them offer specific opportunities to Middlebury undergraduates that are available nowhere else.

While many colleges strive to recoup campus operating costs and keep staff employed year-round by hosting miscellaneous meetings or high school sports camps on their campuses when college is not in session, Middlebury offers summer programs that contribute significantly to its reputation and its mission. Many students come to Middlebury on the recommendation of a high school English teacher who attended the Bread Loaf School of English; many faculty interviewing for positions across the College mention that they first heard of Middlebury through its renowned summer Language Schools; many visiting poets and novelists know Middlebury primarily as the host of the country's first extended writers' workshop, the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference. We are very fortunate in claiming programs of such distinction.

Nevertheless, it became clear in the course of the planning process, as well as in discussions leading to the College's recent affiliation with the Monterey Institute of International Studies, that we could do a better job of articulating, and capitalizing on, the synergies created among the separate educational entities that make up Middlebury College. This chapter offers some recommendations about ways to strengthen the links between these programs and the undergraduate college, as well as some recommendations specific to individual programs. We believe that understanding the connections between Middlebury's various components is essential to creating a unified sense of purpose among all areas of the institution.

Recommendation #50: Increase collaboration across Middlebury programs.

Middlebury's specialized programs are a resource that should be more systematically integrated with thinking about the undergraduate curriculum. Our undergraduate program could benefit greatly by increased cooperation of faculty and students at Middlebury College with faculty and students at our partner institutions and C.V. Starr Middlebury Schools Abroad, the Language Schools, the Bread Loaf School of English, and the Monterey Institute of International Studies. The directors and deans of all of these programs should be encouraged to work with the College's academic administration and faculty to seek productive venues for exchange and collaboration. For example, we recommend the creation of a joint position, the Robert Frost Writer-in-Residence, which would serve both the summer and the undergraduate programs. The establishment of such a position should be a fundraising goal for the coming campaign, and other specific points of connection should be developed that would allow for more cross-fertilization among programs. Increased collaboration among programs will maximize the resources of each and enhance the cohesiveness of the College as a whole.

Recommendation #51: Establish a Board of Trustees subcommittee devoted to the summer program, schools abroad, and affiliates.

Currently, issues specific to the Language Schools are discussed by the Board in the Educational Affairs Committee. This committee is also the main venue for discussion of curricular matters, faculty issues, faculty salary goals, admissions updates, and other important matters related to the undergraduate academic program; thus, Language School and Bread Loaf-related issues receive limited attention from the Educational Affairs Committee. While matters specific to facilities, budget and finance, etc. would continue to be discussed by the board committees concerned with these areas, general curricular and strategic issues related to the graduate and auxiliary programs should be given a full airing in a separate board subcommittee. Although the Monterey Institute is governed by its own Board, issues related to collaboration between Middlebury and the Monterey Institute of International Studies would also be within the purview of this committee. Establishing a separate subcommittee would increase the general knowledge about these programs among trustees and ensure that they remain a visible part of Middlebury's strategic direction.

Recommendation #52: Strengthen connections of alumni from the Language Schools and the Bread Loaf School of English with the Middlebury alumni community.

Although they receive Middlebury College diplomas, the alumni of the Language Schools and Bread Loaf School of English tend to consider themselves graduates of those programs first and foremost, and only secondarily graduates of Middlebury College. We recommend developing and enhancing connections with the alumni of these programs. Removing boundaries that may now be present has the potential to create a broader network for all alumni, and to help the College strengthen financial support for the programs these alumni attended as well as for the College as whole. Some initial steps, such as including the Language Schools and Bread Loaf School of English in traditions like the awarding of canes at graduation, have already been taken. In addition, hiring an individual in College Advancement whose work is devoted solely to Language Schools and Bread Loaf fundraising might prove an effective means of directing energy towards that body of alumni. Targeting alumni of these programs in specific mailings, and looking for more opportunities to include them in campus activities sponsored by departments including Career Services, as with undergraduate College alumni, would also help to solidify that relationship. If Middlebury's programs are to function as a coherent whole, graduates of those programs should feel a shared affinity with the College and with each other.

Middlebury Summer Language Schools

The gradual expansion of the Middlebury Summer Language Schools over nearly a century has paralleled the development of an increasingly internationalized undergraduate curriculum. The first Middlebury Summer Language School, the School of German, was established in 1915 as a graduate program. Middlebury now has nine schools—Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish—which offer a range of courses for both undergraduate and graduate students. With approximately 1,300 students, the Language School population is more than half that of the Middlebury undergraduate student body. In 2005, the Middlebury Language Schools awarded 207 graduate degrees: 204 M.A.'s, and 3 D.M.L.'s, Doctor of Modern Languages. Approximately 100 Middlebury undergraduates attend the Language Schools each summer in order to prepare to go abroad or accelerate their language study, and the Language Schools curricula are designed to articulate seamlessly with the Middlebury programs in each language.

The unique—in fact, trademarked—"Language Pledge" refers to the 24/7 immersion method used by the Language Schools. With all of its successes, this approach to language instruction also poses many logistical challenges on the Middlebury campus. The need for rapid reconfiguration of residence halls into language-specific communities that incorporate classrooms, dorm rooms, faculty housing, and dining and program space, places an enormous strain on the Middlebury staff. While staff members have risen magnificently to the challenge, this process could be better integrated with other aspects of College planning.

Recommendation #53: Ensure that the needs of the College’s summer and auxiliary programs are represented in committee and administrative structures that are responsible for operational planning.

Middlebury College benefits from having year-round operations with a variety of schools and programs. It is easy to forget that Middlebury is a 12-month operation that does not enjoy the “downtime” for maintenance and repair that other schools take advantage of during the summer. The consequence is that facilities decisions are often made with the undergraduate program in mind, and without full consideration of the effect on summer programs. We recommend that an automatic second stage of consideration be routinely added to all major campus planning decision-making processes. In particular, facilities planning should be considered incomplete until the question of effect on summer programs has been carefully addressed. Each major facilities planning committee should always have at least one member who represents the College’s summer programs. Administrative decisions on major building maintenance, upgrades, and renovations should be made early enough in the fiscal year that these projects can be factored into enrollment decisions for the summer programs. Better integration of planning for all of Middlebury’s programs will ensure that they are viewed not as competing with each other, but as complementing each other.

Recommendation #54: Strengthen financial aid for the Language Schools.

For the Language Schools, as for the undergraduate program, financial aid is necessary to ensure access by a wide range of students. The Language Schools are in a very strong competitive position. Nevertheless, attending a Language School at Middlebury is in many cases more expensive than studying at a program overseas, and students for whom expense is a factor may choose to go elsewhere. (Current total costs for the 6-week, 7-week, and 9-week programs are \$5,700, \$5,850, and \$7,700 respectively.) We recommend that the College seek to increase the amount of financial aid available to potential applicants to the Language Schools through fundraising efforts directed toward Language School alumni.

Because the burden of paying for graduate study often follows an accumulation of undergraduate loans, Language School students are very sensitive to the level of funding available, and must make decisions about attendance with those considerations in mind. We recommend that the process by which Language Schools financial aid is awarded become as transparent as possible, and that every effort be made to shorten the turn-around time for financial aid applications so that students who travel to the summer programs from all over the United States can make travel arrangements in a timely manner. This will help ensure that qualified students are able to take advantage of these unique programs.

Recommendation #55: Expand the scope of the Language Schools curriculum by integrating broader cultural content in Language School courses.

The Language Schools curriculum has had a longstanding focus on language and literature. Increasingly there is also interest in particular regions and cultures. Expanding the amount of cultural content in summer language courses will provide Language School students with as much of the cultural “reference” or “background” knowledge of the foreign culture as possible. Given the varying levels of difficulty among the Schools, the depth of content coverage will vary, but developing a curriculum that is more consistent across similar levels or groups of languages will allow for the possibility of some common programming in the summer schools. It will also increase the opportunities for participation from non-language undergraduate faculty, further strengthening the ties between the Language Schools and the undergraduate curriculum.

Recommendation #56: Consider adding summer graduate programs in languages that are currently taught only at the undergraduate level.

The Language Schools do not currently offer a comprehensive degree program in every language. Several of the programs offer undergraduate courses only. For the first time in 2006, the Schools of Arabic and Chinese will each run one non-degree graduate-level course with a focus on continuing education for language instructors teaching at the college and high school levels. If these experiments are successful, the Language Schools may seek to add M.A. degrees in Arabic and Chinese to the existing graduate offerings in French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish. In addition, a recent external review of the Doctor of Modern Languages program offered recommendations that would make that degree truly competitive with existing Ph.D. programs by drawing on both the Middlebury Language Schools’ traditional strength in language teaching methodology and the future focus on the teaching of a broad-based cultural studies expertise. All of these developments have the potential to enhance the scholarly credibility of the summer language programs.

Discussions are currently ongoing regarding the possibility of adding or expanding language programs on non-Middlebury sites. Given the space constraints on the Middlebury campus, this seems the only viable way to consider adding programs. The affiliation with the Monterey Institute may offer the possibility of basing some language programs in California rather than Vermont, but any Middlebury Language School would have to replicate the isolation and intensity of the Middlebury environment in order to provide an authentic Language School experience. Any new Language School program would need to generate its own operating revenue, as do the current Language Schools. All of these recommendations for possible expansion are contingent on comprehensive institution-wide planning that considers plans for Language School development in conjunction with developments in the undergraduate curriculum in languages, international studies, and related fields.

