Standard 11 • Integrity

The institution subscribes to and advocates high ethical standards in the management of its affairs and in all of its dealings with students, faculty, staff, its governing board, external agencies and organizations, and the general public. Through its policies and practices, the institution endeavors to exemplify the values it articulates in its mission and related statements.

Description
Middlebury College and its graduate programs maintain a robust set of policies to ensure fairness, equity, and transparency in institutional procedures that affect the work lives of faculty and staff, the educational experience of its students and the governing practices of its Board of Trustees. Middlebury’s commitment to integrity and stewardship extends beyond the immediate boundaries of our campuses and educational sites, informing our relationships with the local community and with our environment.

The Middlebury College charter was granted by the state of Vermont on November 1, 1800. The most significant recent change to our charter is the acquisition of the Monterey Institute of International Studies as a graduate school of Middlebury College; this substantive change was approved by NEASC in March 2008. With 41 program locations in 15 countries across the globe, it is a difficult task to ensure that our policies and procedures are consistent, that they are appropriate given applicable state and national laws, and that they are known and easily accessible to our faculty, staff, and students. Nonetheless, we have made significant progress toward these goals. Through our institutional policies and procedures, we are committed to maintaining fair, effective, and clear practices that safeguard integrity in all areas of learning, research, communication, and conduct.

In addition to our credit- and degree-granting programs, we are connected to non-credit bearing programs and conferences bearing the Middlebury name. The most recent and notable of these is the creation of a for-profit entity, Middlebury Interactive Languages. Organized as a separate legal entity, this partnership venture with K12, Inc. leverages Middlebury’s long history of leadership in language teaching to create online language learning courses. The Middlebury-Monterey Language Academy, a language immersion summer program for middle and high school students, which had previously been administered by the College, is now part of this new company.

Appraisal

Institutional Policies

Middlebury College policies and procedures are posted online, reviewed annually, and available to all constituents through our staff, faculty, and student handbooks. The Monterey Institute has systematically reviewed and revised its personnel policies to align with Middlebury’s wherever practicable. Separate student and faculty handbooks are maintained for the Monterey Institute, C.V. Starr-Middlebury Schools Abroad, Language Schools, and Bread Loaf School of English because of their different locations, program durations, and faculty, staff, and student
populations. Other policies integral to all our programs include clear grievance procedures for students, faculty, and staff, the academic honor code, employee and student codes of conduct, and the anti-harassment code. Specific policies regarding faculty recruitment, hiring, promotion and tenure, on the other hand, are primarily relevant for the undergraduate program and the Monterey Institute, where faculty are hired and promoted into tenure-track or multi-year contract positions. The College has retained High Street Partners, LLC to review compliance with laws and employment regulations for employment for our programs outside of the U.S. This review includes hiring practices, health benefits, pension plans, and other local benefits. Middlebury College and the Monterey Institute, in consultation with counsel, review institutional policies at our U.S. program locations.

In examining the comprehensive set of policies across programs, however, there are occasions of differing policies or practices based on constituent type (faculty, staff, or student) and/or program type or location. The anti-harassment training that has been required of staff, for example, has not yet extended to undergraduate college or Bread Loaf School of English faculty. Additionally, there are a few policies, such as those maintained by the Controller’s Office, that are online, but not currently centralized with our collective handbook and policy information online. Overall, this is an area that would benefit from further review and standardization as much as possible to support our goals regarding ease of access and fairness and consistency across our different programs and employee and student communities.

Institutional Diversity

We have taken important steps in recent years to support diversity within the community. Because the Monterey Institute is considered a federal contractor under federal regulations, it is required to have an Affirmative Action Plan, and as a result, Middlebury College is also required to have a formal plan. As part of this effort, Human Resources surveyed faculty and staff in spring 2010 regarding ethnic and racial identity. The C.V. Starr-Middlebury Schools Abroad, Language Schools, and the Monterey Institute are all diverse, drawing teachers and students from a wide variety of cultures and countries. The Bread Loaf School of English is less so, although the directors have made efforts to increase the number of faculty of color teaching in the summer and have selected new campus sites in large part to diversify the curricular focus as well as the student body.

The recent hiring of the dean of the College and chief diversity officer provides renewed oversight for the development and implementation of diversity goals and initiatives on the undergraduate campus. As a member of the Staff Resources Committee, the dean of the College and chief diversity officer also influences the staff planning and development process. Other campus committee work, such as the 2007-08 Task Force on the Status of Women, has helped the College examine issues of parity in hiring, compensation, and promotion for women faculty and staff. Core recommendations from that committee have been integrated into an annual review process to assess progress. One recent change that resulted from that review was the extension of the parental leave benefit for staff to provide greater parity with the benefit provided faculty. That progress is shared with faculty and staff through their respective councils, as well as the Board of Trustees, and reflects our administrative commitment to accountability and transparency.


Communication and Decision-Making

A noteworthy strength of the current College administration is its commitment to transparency and frequent communication about institutional issues and challenges. At the College and at the Monterey Institute, the presidents hold institution-wide meetings and open office hours during the year. Strategic goals, financial updates, trustee meeting outcomes, and policy information are shared and discussed with the entire community, and transcripts or video are promptly posted on our websites. The College president also meets regularly with directors and managers to foster open communication and promote institutional alignment.

The College administration’s response to the recent financial crisis provides an illustration of how issues of integrity weigh in the decision-making process. This has been a challenging and difficult time for the College and for its employees. In addressing the fiscal situation, the administration sought to trim budgets in a way that included solicitation of community concerns. The administration provided the community with an online “suggestion box” and surveyed College trustees, faculty, students, and staff regarding their perception of institutional priorities, including that information in discussions at the senior administrative and trustee level. As a result, staff reductions were accomplished through early retirement and voluntary separation incentives for qualified employees. While this path allowed individuals to make their own decisions regarding continued service at the College, we now face challenges in determining how to best reallocate staff resources, given the disproportionate departure from some areas. This is an issue that the president, senior staff, and human resources continue to address.

Institution-wide communications can be accessed online via the College website and various blogs. Regular publications such as “MiddPoints,” “Communique,” and “The Campus” keep constituents at Middlebury and the Monterey Institute abreast of important current events. Information and updates about committees that represent student, staff, or faculty members can also be found online. Our summer programs face unique communication challenges. Although there is regular communication between staff, faculty, and students through meetings and informal interactions during the summer, students and faculty return to their home institutions for the academic year and may or may not return the following summer; it is therefore paramount that essential information is conveyed through online handbooks, appointment letters, orientation programs, and meetings. Program directors review the summer programs after their completion and collect student and faculty feedback to identify changes needed for the subsequent year. The vice president for Language Schools, Schools Abroad, and special programs also meets once each summer with the entire faculty of each of the ten schools in a separate meeting to hear concerns and discuss new initiatives. The directors of the C.V. Starr-Middlebury Schools Abroad meet twice annually with the dean of international programs to review the programs, address issues, and provide updates and contacts with relevant College staff.

Environmental Stewardship

The College is also mindful of its role in the greater community and its impact on the broader environment. The College is proud of its close working relationship with the town of Middlebury
and partnerships all throughout Vermont and its support of local projects, farms, businesses, agencies, and organizations that benefit all who reside in the area. The Monterey Institute also enjoys a relationship of constructive engagement with the city of Monterey. In collaboration with these community partners, Middlebury has taken a strong position on environmental responsibility. In 2004, the College’s board of trustees resolved to lower College greenhouse gas emissions to 8% below 1990 levels by 2012; in 2007 the board responded to a proposal by a group of students, faculty, and staff by setting a goal of carbon neutrality by 2016 for the College’s Vermont campus. In January of 2010, the Monterey Institute Board of Trustees passed a similar resolution. Chief among the College’s accomplishments thus far is the construction and use of a biomass gasification plant that cuts our use of #6 fuel oil by approximately 40%. Local foods are served in the dining halls. Addressing sustainability through social justice, the Organic Garden gleans tons of produce for Addison County food shelf. The Middlebury has also become a leader in higher education in addressing these issues and has joined efforts with broader initiatives, such as the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education.

The College also incorporates environmental planning into its governance structure. The dean of environmental affairs is charged with advancing Middlebury’s leadership by working with the academic environmental studies program and promoting sustainability in College planning and operations. The sustainability integration office supports academic and practical projects and conducts an annual greenhouse gas inventory to assess progress toward carbon neutrality. The Environmental Council evaluates policy and practices in areas related to sustainability, including transportation, food, printing, purchasing, design and construction, energy and land management making its recommendations to the president. The Council also distributes small grants for student, faculty, or staff projects that promote sustainability both on the Vermont campus and at Middlebury’s Language Schools in other countries. Additionally, students benefit from Sustainability Study Abroad grants that support self designed, student research project while studying away. The Monterey Institute has committed itself publicly to forging a sustainable campus through the work of its Sustainability Council, which includes faculty, staff, and students. While Middlebury and the Monterey Institute have forged a successful working relationship in the academic sector, collaboration in the area of campus sustainability is steadily growing.

Projections

• The office of human resources will initiate a review of practices related to summer programs and C.V. Starr-Middlebury Schools Abroad to identify best practices in hiring, compensation, and the use of assessment for program improvement. This process will begin in July 2012.

• The office of human resources will work with appropriate offices to ensure that new faculty and staff at Middlebury College and the Monterey Institute go through a common employee orientation process by September 2012.

• The human relations officer will ensure that anti-harassment training for current faculty and staff is in place by March 2012.

• The human relations officer will ensure that counsel review the anti-harassment policies in New Mexico, North Carolina to affirm compliance with state law by July 2011.

• The office of sustainability integration will develop a sustainability master plan in 2012.
Institutional Effectiveness

The practice of regular reviews improves our various policies. In general, Middlebury policies are reviewed annually and are updated by the appropriate office as warranted by either external changes in law or analysis of internal needs, which is a regular ongoing process within different divisional areas of the institution. Policies are also reviewed when specific issues arise or data suggest a change that may benefit the institution.