CSE Students and Alumni

Rana Abdelhamid ’15
CSE Fellow, International Politics and Economics Major
Rana grew up in Queens, New York, the daughter of Egyptian parents who enrolled her in karate classes when she was six to counter schoolyard bullying. While in high school, she volunteered as a translator in a women’s center. There, and in her own female classmates, she recognized a need for girls and women to defend themselves against intimidation and abuse and to realize their own abilities. She took action by founding the Women’s Initiative for Self-Empowerment (WISE), which she continues to direct from Middlebury. WISE teaches Muslim girls self-defense, leadership, and confidence-building skills.

At Middlebury, Rana was selected a CSE fellow. She has used her growing skills and contacts to expand WISE’s reach to more young women. During her fellowship, Rana has participated in the Clinton Global Initiative University and spent her sophomore summer with an NGO leadership training program in Turkey.

During the final phase of her CSE fellowship this summer, Rana is mounting a WISE conference in New York, recruiting eight new facilitators and offering five different self-defense programs. She plans to expand WISE to other countries. Rana says, “Women—not only in America, but also in the Dominican Republic, Mexico and Turkey—have shared with me their struggles and successes in dealing with various forms of violence. Together, we have become determined to spark a WISE movement.”

Fernando Sandoval Jimenez ’15
Special Projects Intern, Environmental Studies/Geography Joint Major and Arabic Minor
Fernando led a team of four Middlebury students in creating a curriculum for ¡Integrando a Mexico! The program brings together indigenous and nonindigenous youth in Fernando’s native Mexico and identifies and encourages potential young changemakers.

Last summer’s program hosted 50 participants from varied socioeconomic and regional backgrounds. The CSE grant enabled Fernando’s group to invite workshop participants on a need-blind basis and from different regions. The four Middlebury students worked alongside thirteen other United World Colleges students and alumni to lead the participants through workshops on conflict resolution, creativity, social issues, and civic engagement. Each participant received guidance in developing a personal project to address an identified need in his or her respective community.
Emily Núñez ’12
CSE Alumna
Emily launched Sword & Plough, which produces stylish, veteran-made bags from military surplus material; profits support veteran initiatives. Emily, who comes from a military family, conceived this idea at the 2012 CSE symposium after returning from U.S. Army paratrooper training. Sword & Plough won both the Harvard Pitch for Change Competition and Audience Choice Award at the Harvard Innovation Conference; was featured at a June 2013 event at the White House; and was written up in Businessweek, among other publications. Through Kickstarter, Sword & Plough raised over $310,000 in 2013. Most recently, Sword & Plough was the 2013 Mass Challenge Gold Winner and recipient of $50,000.

Mutothori Mugo ’12.5
Alumnus Intern
Mugo (front row center) and his team of fellow students built a library for the New Dawn School in the Huruma slums of Mugo’s native Nairobi, Kenya. Mugo cofounded the school in 2006 and taught there before arriving at Middlebury. The Build a Library to Secure a Future project was also sponsored by Middlebury College, and during his CSE internship, Mugo continued raising funds to equip the new building, which is a quiet refuge in which students can learn. Mugo is now attending UC Berkeley’s Master of Development Practice program.

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