Middlebury Center for SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Innovating for the Greater Good

The Center for Social Entrepreneurship (CSE) builds on Middlebury’s commitment to educating students in the tradition of the liberal arts. Our students learn to be effective agents of social change by reflecting on who they are, connecting with others, analyzing systemic challenges, and engaging the world around them. The center is Middlebury’s hub for a growing global network of schools, NGOs, government agencies, businesses, and foundations that share our commitment to social change.

Our Programs

Students often begin their relationship with the CSE—and their awareness of their potential in social entrepreneurship—through our Friday Speaker Series. At this weekly lunchtime event, students meet and listen to alumni and other guest entrepreneurs and share insights on social change, lessons from the field, and potential career paths.

Following each speaker session, students and young alumni gather for MLab at the center. In this forum participants continue the discussion from the speaker series, explore and develop ideas, and consult with peers and mentors about resources that can help expand their ideas into projects.

In the 2012–13 academic year, the CSE hosted 16 lunchtime lectures, with an average of 30 attendees per talk. The popularity of the program continues to increase.

Social Entrepreneurship in the Curriculum

Each January term, Professor Jon Isham teaches Social Entrepreneurship in the Liberal Arts. This interdisciplinary course orients students in the ancient roots and traditional goals of a liberal arts education and connects those traditions with the field of social entrepreneurship. As part of the course, students conduct their own research with help from the center. Completion of this course is a prerequisite for becoming a CSE Fellow.

Professor Isham has also led a First-Year
Seminar entitled Social Entrepreneurship and Social Justice. This course introduces students to models of social change, theories of justice, and the promises and challenges of social entrepreneurship. For more advanced students, Professor Isham teaches an independent study, Social Entrepreneurship 2.0.

In 2014–15, Professor of Economics David Colander will offer a new course on the history of entrepreneurship, which will involve local professionals and emphasize the power of the social entrepreneurship model.

Research into What Works

Lauren Kelly ’13, a CSE alumna, is working with Professor Isham while researching social entrepreneurs in India. Her research on what is effective in that region will inform the center’s programs.

Professor Isham, with assistance from CSE interns, has researched the performance of the Davis Projects for Peace grants to identify elements that enhance success. (For example, a fellow’s first-hand knowledge of the project site’s language and community is an important factor; forming an NGO can boost a program’s sustainability over time.)

Summer Grants

Each spring, the CSE accepts grant applications from students who have identified social problems and wish to create projects to address them. The CSE selects up to five grantees and awards each up to $3,000.

Among the completed projects so far: developing a composting system in a Vermont high school, training youth changemakers in Mexico, initiating GIS mapping in Rwanda to aid a grass-roots health organization, creating job training for underprivileged deaf women in Pakistan, and producing lap desks for poor schools in Swaziland.

In the course of these summer projects, grantees often discover the challenges and rewards of negotiating on-the-ground bureaucratic, political, and cultural issues. They also experience many of the personal growth thresholds that can confront changemakers. They maintain access with their CSE advisers and, on their return to campus, they work with CSE staff and mentors to measure and evaluate results and build their next level of skills.

CSE Fellows

The CSE fellowship program selects a cohort of six sophomores for a three-year period of study and mentored training that integrates with their college studies. The goals of the program are to extend the cohort’s exposure to opportunity, to encourage humility and awareness of the complexities of trying to effect social change, and to help students avoid isolated experiences as they learn from failures and successes. The students receive $8,000 grants and are expected to blend social entrepreneurship into academic work, pursue relevant summer experiences, lead social entrepreneurship activities on campus and beyond, and design and implement their own projects before their senior years. Fellows are selected based...
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.

The Center for Social Entrepreneurship was established thanks to the generosity of Alan Hassenfeld and the Hassenfeld Family Foundation. The center is funded solely by the generous support of Middlebury alumni, parents, and friends. To each and every one, we extend a hearty “Thank you!”
“Interning at the CSE was one of my most rewarding and defining experiences at Middlebury. I have learned an unquantifiable amount from all of the incredible social entrepreneurs that the CSE has brought to campus. Without encouragement and support from the CSE, I may have followed a much more conventional path post-graduation. My mentors at the CSE taught me to love learning outside of the classroom, to push boundaries, to embrace failure, and to give myself permission.”

—Lauren Kelly ’13
CSE Alumna, Research Intern

“...on their record of commitment or orientation to community, empathy, humility, and social change. Each cohort participates in Professor Jon Isham’s January term class, Social Entrepreneurship and the Liberal Arts (see above). During the following spring semester, individual and group advising and skill-building sessions prepare fellows for summer internships with a social enterprise or a similarly involved organization.

Throughout their junior years, fellows are mentored in skills such as budgeting, interviewing and listening, public speaking, and project design. Each fellow designs his or her own project for the fellowship’s second summer. Those wishing to study abroad at one of Middlebury’s 36 sites in 17 countries can arrange internships with social change businesses and organizations.

Some students also use their fellowship funding to attend conferences such as the Clinton Global Initiative University, of which Middlebury is a member. There they share their own “commitment to action,” receive additional training, and widen their networks by meeting with experienced social entrepreneurs and with other engaged students from colleges and universities in the U.S. and abroad.

Annual Public Symposium
Our annual January Symposium on Social Entrepreneurship brings together members of the College community, interested area residents, and leaders from around the world in social entrepreneurship. The symposium includes events with and keynote addresses by our Vision Award recipients, workshops with leading social entrepreneurs, and explorations of the field through such lenses as social justice and education.

MCSE Vision Award Recipients
At the center’s annual January Symposium on Social Entrepreneurship, Middlebury honors leaders who share the center’s goal of preparing individuals to lead a life of social change.

2012
Bill Drayton, founder of Ashoka, the world’s largest social entrepreneur network, which proposes that everyone is a changemaker.

Jacqueline Novogratz, founder and CEO of the Acumen Fund, a nonprofit global venture fund that uses entrepreneurial approaches to solve the problems of poverty.

2013
Billy Parish, climate activist and founder of Mosaic, a company that uses crowdsourcing to enable individuals to finance solar energy projects and receive a return on their investment.

Majora Carter, founder of Sustainable South Bronx green-collar job training, and head of the Majora Carter Group, which focuses on climate adaptation and urban revitalization.

...
From left: Rabeya Jawaid ’16 with some of the young deaf women she trains in sewing and sign language in Karachi, Pakistan.

Kenny Williams ’12 returned to the CSE to share ideas on better food systems.

“I have been constantly amazed and inspired by the enthusiasm you have shown for all the different projects that come through the center. I guess the biggest lesson has been really appreciating other people’s work and truly understanding what’s so cool about what the next person is passionate about. I’ve seen this quality with you all, and it has left a great impression on me and on how I now choose to connect with people.”

—Mzwakithi Mthokozisi “Prestige” Shongwe ’16
CSE Fellow

2014

Shabana Basij-Rasik ’11, cofounder and president of SOLA, School of Leadership Afghanistan, which educates Afghan girls.

David Bornstein, journalist and author of the New York Times column “Fixes” and cofounder of Solutions Journalism Network.

Engaging With Other Learning Institutions
Bread Loaf Forum

Each June, the CSE hosts a four-day forum at Middlebury’s scenic Bread Loaf mountain campus. Staff and faculty from dozens of colleges and universities attend to discuss social entrepreneurship in their liberal arts programs and on their campuses. They share insights about their activities, lessons learned, and goals for transforming their institutions.

Some of the CSE’s Partners Worldwide
Ashoka

Since 1980, Ashoka has led the field of social innovation. With offices and fellows worldwide, Ashoka provides a global network of active programs, professional advice, and funding to create a world where “Everyone is a Changemaker.”

Ashoka U connects 150 college campuses worldwide, fostering cultures and skills of social innovation. Middlebury is one of 30 Ashoka Changemaker Campuses—those recognized as especially committed to solving social problems through innovative enterprise.

Clinton Global Initiative University Network

The CSE is a member of this growing network of institutions committed to supporting and mentoring student innovators and entrepreneurs.

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