Middlebury aspires to help its students become thoughtful and ethical leaders, able to meet the challenges of informed citizenship both in their communities and as world citizens.

Community Engagement plays a key role in advancing this mission. We connect our students’ learning in the liberal arts to hands-on, direct involvement in local and more distant communities, where students can help address 21st-century challenges. These very human, personal experiences bring theoretical frameworks to life. They challenge students to apply their classroom learning in practical ways and to develop and hone skills that allow them to participate fully in our increasingly complex world.

The common threads woven throughout our programs and initiatives are community service, citizenship, and integrating academic courses with real-world experience. Our programs are developed in collaboration with College departments and community partners.

From the time Middlebury College students arrive on campus until the day they graduate and beyond, Community Engagement provides many opportunities for students to engage with the community through their passions.

PROGRAMS

Our programs are designed to foster the understanding that a Middlebury education is more complete when students recognize their role in community, national, and world affairs. They help students develop the skills, awareness, and partnerships needed to make a positive impact. Community Engagement offers several programs year-round:

- **Privilege & Poverty** is a curricular initiative that brings together faculty, students, and staff interested in studying economic inequality—its causes, its effects on human communities and the environment, and even the language with which we talk about the “privileged” and the “poor.” Middlebury is a charter member of the Shepherd Higher Education Consortium on Poverty (SHECP), a national movement of 22 member colleges and universities dedicated to expanding the study of poverty and its alleviation. Each member institution pledges to establish a program for poverty studies, with a foundational course, capstone seminars, electives, and an integrated internship opportunity. The Shepherd Internship Program (SIP) involves member institution-sponsored students in a collaborative eight-week summer program with opening and closing student conferences. Other joint activities...
of the consortium include an annual symposium on teaching about poverty in undergraduate and professional education, and meetings about promising practices for staff and faculty of consortium schools. Midd’s Privilege & Poverty initiative includes issue-based learning in a dynamic and interdisciplinary format that combines resources from many traditional departments and programs with internships in agencies working to alleviate poverty. It complements any other major course of study.

Middlebury Alternative Break Trips are meaningful volunteer service alternatives to the traditional break experience. Groups of 12 students, including two well-qualified and trained leaders, visit communities where they provide service, share a little of themselves, and learn about the systems that shape community realities around the world.

Past destinations have included Boston, New York City, El Paso, San Francisco, Miami, New Mexico, Cherokee Nation, New Orleans, Washington, D.C., Mexico, Costa Rica, Haiti, Dominica, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Jamaica, and the Dominican Republic.

Community Friends brings Middlebury students together with Addison County children, ages six to 12. Founded in 1960, it is the oldest among our many youth and mentoring programs. Mentors offer their mentees a critical resource for healthy development: weekly one-to-one time with role models other than teachers and parents. Xiao Pengyou, an offshoot of Community Friends, pairs Asian and Asian American students with Asian American youth to increase their cultural opportunities. Additional youth and mentoring programs focus on college access, literacy, group-based mentoring, and other classroom connections.

Language in Motion connects Middlebury’s international, study abroad, and upper-level language students with local high school and middle school teachers, students, and classrooms. With support and training, Middlebury College students prepare and deliver lessons that meet the objectives and interests of teachers and their students. The collaboration offers school-age children the chance to meet college students, to learn about the opportunities that college can offer, and to gain new exposure to diverse cultures, languages, and experience. Middlebury College students benefit as they deepen their international and intercultural experience through personal and shared reflection. Local teachers may also apply for professional development grants and take part in educational workshops hosted by Middlebury College.

Orientation—MiddView Entering first-year students begin their Middlebury experience with a MiddView trip, designed to help them explore their new home away from home and become better acquainted with classmates. The trips are taken with a small group of fellow students and trained student leaders. Community Engagement supports 10 trips and these introduce new students to the local community and to the range of

“I learned that youth outreach is most potent when it creates a safe and personal environment to nurture the population it serves.”

—Ella Sorscher ’14, Shepherd Intern, Camp Interactive, New York City
service opportunities available during their time at Middlebury. Recent MiddView trips have involved becoming immersed for three days in the life of a local elementary school; visiting a community that is actively creating an inclusive environment for people with disabilities; providing hands-on volunteer work in local food programs; visiting Vermont migrant communities to learn about the social, legal, and political challenges they face; and helping with a Habitat for Humanity project.

COMMUNITY-CONNECTED COURSES

Many Middlebury courses are integrated with some form of community action, thus giving students direct experience with issues they are studying in the classroom while advancing the work and goals of the partner organizations. A recent example is the environmental studies senior seminar Innovation in Rutland, taught by Professor of Economics Jon Isham.

The class was divided into four groups, and each worked on a different project. One collaborated with the Rutland Area Food and Farm Link to reach a wider audience with its message about the benefits of local food. Another worked with Green Mountain Power to look at the area’s future demand for electricity and what steps the city can take to increase its focus on renewable energy.

A third group worked with the mayor’s office to help build a community-asset map that can identify gaps and strengths in responding to severe-weather events, a project started by a previous Middlebury College environmental studies class in 2013. And the fourth group of students worked with Rutland’s Creative Economy initiative and the Carving Studio and Sculpture Center to gather stories about Rutland’s growing creative economy from civic leaders and studio members.

Funding for Community-Connected Learning

The Academic Outreach Endowment (AOE) was created by the generosity of a Middlebury alumna from the 1970s. This endowment, inspired by the very meaningful experience of her thesis project, is used to provide support to students and faculty who wish to pursue community-connected opportunities and integrate real-world issues with academic course work. AOE grants are administered by Community Engagement and provide financial support to both faculty and students for pursuits that involve community-connected teaching, learning, and research.

Other funds that support community-connected learning and service include Community Engagement Mini-Grants for student initiatives involving community action; Cross-Cultural Community Service Grants for international service-learning and community-building internships and/or related volunteer service opportunities; and Flex Fund grants through the student-led Service Cluster Board for volunteer initiatives.

“As much as I hated to admit it, I had subconsciously accepted many of the stereotypes and biases that surround homelessness in the United States.

The residents at the John Graham Shelter, and the thousands of other temporary and permanent homeless individuals across the country are, like all of us, simply trying to deal as best they can with what life has dealt them.”

—Sophie Kligler ’15, Addison County Shepherd Intern, John Graham Emergency Homeless Shelter, Vermont
Sampling of Faculty Projects ’13–14
Exploring the Unfinished Business of the Poor People’s Campaign
A Middlebury faculty member partnered with the Addison County Parent/Child Center to teach a cross-disciplinary course—an examination of literature and history about the struggles of low-income people for civil rights to learn how grassroots movements led by the poor make a difference.

Linking Middlebury Geography Students and the Bhutanese Refugee Community of Vermont
Together with two students, a faculty member conducted research on the history of the Bhutanese refugee community in Vermont and is working to build a lasting connection with that community.

Sampling of Student Projects ’13–14
Portraits [in]Justice
Four students worked with youth in restorative justice programs on a narrative-journalism project, creating multimedia portraits of young people working to develop alternatives to retributive justice.

Revitalizing the Robert Frost Cabin
A senior partnered with a community member and two professors to research converting the Robert Frost Cabin into a house museum to serve the College, local, and greater public community.

Community Engagement prepares students for lives of meaning and impact through service, scholarship, and citizenship. Our programs work to strengthen communities and contribute to the public good.

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“Four days on the farm, and then four days in the kitchen cooking and serving lunch and processing vegetables was a dream job. The firsthand look into how the local food movement could really be made accessible to an underprivileged population was the most exciting. It gave me a taste of community in a way that I had never experienced.”

—Molly Rose-Williams ’13.5, Addison County Shepherd Intern, Charter House Coalition, Vermont

From left:
From the field to the Statehouse, students work with community partners to pursue water quality.

While studying abroad in Tokyo, Tangut Degfay ’15 participated in a spring break service trip in Podokoyo, Indonesia.

From the field to the Statehouse, students work with community partners to pursue water quality.