MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE POSITION DESCRIPTION

Position Title: First Year Counselor ("FYC")
Department Name: Commons Offices / Office of the Dean of Students
Reports To: Commons Head, Commons Dean

Primary Purpose:

First Year Counselors (FYC) at Middlebury College serve as mentors to the First-Year students in their Commons. Specifically, they are expected to foster the intellectual and personal development of first-year students and to serve as the bridge that connects these first-year students to other support services on campus. FYCs are expected to forge personal connections with the residents on their hall, to be in regular contact with the CRA, who coordinates the routine work of FYCs, and to communicate with the Head and Dean about student issues. FYCs should be prepared to direct students to either the Head or the Dean for specific support as needed. To be successful, each FYC must have a concrete understanding of the network of available resources on campus and a willingness to channel students to those resources.

First Year Counselors have a further responsibility to build community in three important ways: One, by encouraging the growth of a respectful and inclusive community in the residence halls; Two, by fostering through formal and informal conversations and activities the growth of intellectual community there, and three by encouraging student participation in Commons Council. To this end, FYCs will meet regularly with the Faculty Head and Dean in determining the best way to build these dimensions of community.

Responsibilities:

Health, Well-Being, and Safety

The first priority of all FYCs must be the health and safety of the residents of their halls. During their orientation, FYCs will receive extensive training with regard to proper procedures for handling various issues that are likely to arise during the course of the year and how they should best handle and/or refer students who find themselves in crisis. FYCs will meet regularly with their Dean and CRA to continue this kind of training and to discuss issues as they arise.

Mentoring

FYCs serve as mentors to first-year students. To this end, they will lead regular hall meetings and will establish a schedule for meeting with residents one-on-one throughout the semester. FYCs will hold regular hours, and will be ready to support the needs of first-year students on both an academic and a personal level. FYCs will meet regularly with their Head(s) to continue academic resource mentoring and to discuss issues as they arise. Additional ways in which mentoring might take place include:
• Connecting students with academic support resources on campus.
• Encouraging (and modeling) a strong connection to the student’s advisor.
• Learning about each student’s interests (academic and extra-curricular) and making an effort to connect the student to events on campus that may be of special interest.
• Listening carefully to each student and being attuned to any special difficulties a student may encounter in the transition to college.
• Working with their Commons Heads of their first-year student groups to help students understand and meet the academic requirements of the College.

Community Building

As much as possible, FYCs should make an effort to connect their residents to the wealth of opportunities offered on campus (this could be as simple as posting on their hall a weekly list of special events, and as elaborate as contributing to a database of student interests). FYCs should keep abreast of events hosted by their own Commons, and are encouraged to attend events organized by the Commons Head for first-year students. Some specific ways in which FYCs cultivate community include:

• Take a leadership role in Commons traditions.
• Work with residents to plan events of interest.
• Support class, group, or council events.
• Schedule formal and informal meetings/activities for their first-year group throughout the academic year. These activities should at times include the Commons Heads.
• Assist in dorm programming

• Attend Commons Council meetings or otherwise assist the Commons as required by your Commons
• Develop, with fellow FYCs, a monthly program of events for first-year students that arise from the interests of students on the hall. These could include:
  o hosting a special speaker or musician,
  o sponsoring a poetry reading,
  o organizing a forum with students who have just returned from studying abroad,
  o hosting a student or group of students who have completed a particularly meaningful volunteer or service-learning project, etc.
• Participate in on-going staff training and development during the term of appointment.

Residential Life and Orientation

• Return approximately eight days prior to the beginning of the fall semester for staff training and formal Orientation.
• Assist in the dorm the entire day first-year students move in.
• Assist with all aspects of first year orientation as required.
• Attend formal College events such as Convocation.
Residential Standards

- Communicate and uphold residential standards and expectations regarding cleanliness (e.g., dishes, trash and other obstructions in the hallways, etc.), safety (e.g. avoiding and eliminating fire hazards, obstructions, etc.), noise, and behavior (including illegal drinking, drug use, etc.).
- Enforce noise standards: meet residents to establish and articulate clear expectations regarding noise and noise complaints and resolve immediate problems (including intervention on noisy rooms and/or informal parties), and follow up as necessary.
- Educate residents about Sober Friend practices and act as Sober Friend as necessary.
- Enforce party standards: meet with residents to establish and communicate dorm expectations surrounding in-room social gatherings and resolving issues as necessary.
- Work with Dean as necessary on specific issues that may arise in dorm.
- Keep Commons Team (e.g., CRA) informed about important dorm issues.
- Monitor dorms and halls as directed by the Dean and CRA.

Working Relationships

Commons Heads:
Commons Heads work to cultivate a stimulating intellectual environment within the Commons, and to integrate students’ residential and academic lives on campus. Heads support the work of individual professors and classes, and collaborate with students, the Commons Council, and the residential life staff to create a rich array of opportunities for students outside the classroom. First-year counselors are expected to work closely with the Head(s) in pursuit of these goals.

FYCs will meet regularly with their Commons Head(s). These meetings exist to provide support and mentorship to FYCs. In these meetings, the FYCs and the Head(s) will discuss both the personal connections FYCs forge with their hall residents, and issues and activities supportive of an inclusive, respectful intellectual community on the halls.

Deans:
The Dean has oversight of all issues pertaining to the health and safety of students and their academic progress. FYCs are responsible for knowing the range of academic, medical, psychological and other resources that are available, both within the Commons and in the College community. FYCs should be particularly vigilant for students in need or crisis, and communicate with appropriate members of the Commons Staff about such matters.

FYCs are responsible for understanding what kinds of issues and information lie outside the realm of their training, so that they do not act beyond their level of training and competence. The Dean may, in turn, ask FYCs to keep an eye out for a particular student in crisis, and to be in conversation with the Dean about that student as the need arises.
The Dean will meet with FYCs and other members of the Commons’ residential life staff to direct ongoing training. The Dean will hold individual meetings with FYCs throughout the year.

The Heads and Deans will work together to guide and evaluate the performance of FYCs.

The Residential Life Staff Member (FYC, Commons RA, Community RA, CRA) must at all times comport him/herself in ways that support the mission and policies of the College. In addition, Residential Life Staff Members may not engage in any behaviors that act in opposition to the mission of the Commons.

**Commons Coordinator:**
The Commons Coordinator is an important source of information and point of contact for a wide range of matters in the Commons, especially concerning facilities and procedures. FYCs should communicate with the Coordinator as a helpful resource.

**CRA:**
FYCs will work closely with the CRA, who has direct oversight of after-hours and weekend schedules, when FYCs will be on duty to insure safety and respect in the halls, to respond to first-year students in need, etc. FYCs must be prepared to take direction from CRAs at any time when, in the absence of the Dean, timely dispatch of disciplinary or other critical situations is essential.