April 27, 1987

To: The Faculty
From: Educational Council
Subj: Revisions in the Freshman Seminar Program

The faculty approved a Freshman Core Curriculum, including a Freshman Seminar Program and an expanded Writing Program, at its meeting of March 2, 1987. Proposals to make substantial revisions in this core curriculum were circulated by a group of faculty independent of the Educational Council prior to the April 6, 1987 faculty meeting. Over the last month, the Educational Council has met twice with the proponents of those revisions. We have agreed on two changes in the March 2 document, one dealing with Freshman Seminars and major requirements, the other dealing with Freshman Seminars and Foundations Courses. The Educational Council plans to offer these changes as motions at the May 4 faculty meeting. We will request that the faculty vote to suspend the rules to permit debate on these motions, since a point of order could be made against the motions on the grounds that they involve an attempt to reconsider actions already taken by the faculty.

We are including in the packet for the May faculty meeting a copy of the March 2 document as approved by the faculty. Our proposed changes involve deleting the bracketed language and inserting the underlined language.

The March 2 document did not allow Freshman Seminars to be counted toward departmental major requirements. Our proposed change would continue this limitation as the normal policy, but would allow a department to seek permission from the Curriculum Committee to have a Freshman Seminar counted as an elective course in a major. The Educational Council supports this change as providing an opportunity for departments, particularly small departments, to be flexible in developing their majors while also being able to participate in the Freshman Seminar Program.

The March 2 document was intended to classify Freshman Seminars as Foundations Courses in one of the existing four divisions, or in a new interdivisional category. Students would be required to take one Foundations Course in three of the five categories, with the Freshman Seminar counting as a Foundations Course in a fourth category. Our proposed change is designed to move toward a "decoupling" of the Freshman Seminar and Foundations Course requirements. Although Freshman Seminars would not have to be the types of courses which could qualify for Foundations Course status, the seminars will still be classified by divisions. To encourage faculty to offer interdivisional seminars, a single seminar may be classified in more than one division. Students
would have to take Foundations Courses in three of the four divisional categories, but these three categories could not include the one in which the student chose to count the Freshman Seminar. Thus, students would be required to take at least one course in each of the four divisions before the end of the sophomore year.

The members of the Educational Council believe that the subjects of Foundations Courses, general education, distribution requirements, and their integration with the Freshman Seminar Program should remain on the faculty's agenda for 1987-88. We recommend that a portion of the Breadloaf Faculty Meeting at the beginning of the next academic year be set aside for discussion of these topics.

Finally, a motion to delete the second writing course from the March 2 document may be offered from the floor at the May meeting. The Educational Council strongly opposes this motion, and urges the faculty to reject it. We included the second writing course in our program after several months of careful consideration of the role of writing in the Middlebury curriculum. We believe that all freshmen should be enrolled in courses in which writing has a special place in both semesters of the freshman year. We also call the faculty's attention to the report of the Special Committee to Review Writing Effectiveness and Directions, which spent the Fall and Winter Terms evaluating the state of writing instruction at Middlebury. That committee's first recommendation was that

"The Freshman Writing experience, which is now concentrated in one semester, should be expanded to include the entire Freshman year. Every Freshman should be required to take one Freshman Writing course and one writing-intensive course (such as a Freshman Seminar) during the Freshman year. The two courses should be taken in different terms."

The March 2 document is consistent with that recommendation. The Educational Council remains firm in its conviction that a second writing course is an essential element of a strong freshman curriculum.
March 2, 1987

To: The Faculty

From: Educational Council

Subject: PROPOSALS FOR A FRESHMAN CORE PROGRAM, TO BE COMPLETED IN THE FIRST THREE SEMESTERS

SECTION 1: OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the curricular proposals included in this resolution are as follows:

1. To increase the opportunities for students to enroll in small courses in their first three semesters at Middlebury.

2. To improve academic advising by assigning all freshmen to a faculty adviser who is also the instructor of one of their courses.

3. To increase the opportunities for students to work on the development of their writing skills early in their college careers.

4. To encourage freshmen to make intellectual connections across the traditional academic departments and disciplines.

5. To increase the opportunities for members of the faculty to work together across departmental and divisional lines, and in so doing to move toward greater educational community.

SECTION 2: FRESHMAN SEMINARS

Freshman Seminars are thematic courses which approach an area of intellectual inquiry from a perspective which attempts to make connections among a number of the traditional disciplines (departments). The specific format of Freshman Seminars (one instructor? multi-instructor? common reading lists? etc.) will be determined by those faculty members teaching in the program. A Freshman Seminar will have an enrollment of no more than 15 students for each faculty member in the seminar. The Freshman Seminars will have an intensive writing component comparable to the present Freshman Writing courses.

All students shall enroll in a Freshman Seminar during their first term at Middlebury.

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Freshman Seminars will be classified [either] in one or more of the four divisions (Foreign Languages, Humanities, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences). [, or in a new inter-divisional category]. A student may count a Freshman Seminar in one and only one division.

Normally, Freshman Seminars may not satisfy departmental major requirements. A department may request permission from the Curriculum Committee to have a Freshman Seminar count as an elective course in a major.

Instructors proposing new Freshman Seminars may apply for Faculty Development Grants to support their course development work.

SECTION 3: WRITING COURSES

Writing Courses will be defined according to the guidelines distributed by the Freshman Writing Committee on December 19, 1986.

Writing Courses may be either free-standing courses or sections of larger courses.

Writing Courses (or writing sections of larger courses) will have an enrollment of no more than 15 students.

An ongoing faculty support and development program for the teaching of writing should be established. Support and professional tutorial services for students in need of developing basic writing skills should be strengthened.

SECTION 4: FRESHMAN FACULTY ADVISING

A booklet describing all fall term Freshman Seminars will be distributed to entering students in the summer prior to their arrival at Middlebury. (February freshmen will receive a comparable booklet describing spring term Seminars.) All entering students will register in advance for one Seminar. The instructor of this Seminar will be the freshman faculty adviser for all the students enrolled in the course.

SECTION 5: CORE CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS

All students must fulfill the following degree requirements:

1. One Freshman Seminar, to be taken during the first semester at Middlebury.
2. One Writing Course, to be taken during the second or third semester at Middlebury.

3. Foundations Courses in three of the [five] four divisional categories (Foreign Languages, Humanities, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences [,Interdivisional]), but not including the division in which the student counts [of] the Freshman Seminar. This requirement should normally be completed by the end of the third semester at Middlebury. It must be completed by the end of the fourth semester at Middlebury.

Students will declare their major no later than the end of their third semester at Middlebury.

All departments will be expected to contribute to some aspect of the Core Curriculum Program.

SECTION 6: EFFECTIVE DATES

All sections of this resolution will become effective at the beginning of the 1988-89 academic year. They will have the status of graduation requirements for students beginning with the class of 1992. Students in earlier classes will be subject to the existing graduation requirements.

SECTION 7: REVIEW

The Educational Council will undertake a complete review of the Freshman Core Program in the Fall of 1991 and report its findings to the Faculty by December 1991.
TO: THE FACULTY

FROM: Ric Arthur, Ellen Oxfeld Basu, Shank Gilkeson, Ron Liebowitz, Timi Mayer, Paul Monod, Roddey Reid, Burke Rochford, Don Wyatt

The amendments below are designed to remedy difficulties with the proposal for curricular reform passed by the faculty at the March meeting. The most substantive change that the amendments make in the proposal is that Freshman Seminars would serve as Freshman Writing Courses.

The proposal will benefit from the adoption of these amendments in the following ways:

--- the quality of Freshman Writing Courses will be improved because they will all be self-contained courses

--- there will be fewer courses required of the faculty to contribute to the freshman program; hence, there will be less problem maintaining the current number of upper level courses

The amendments are:

--- To SECTION 2 of the original proposal the following language should be added:

"Since Freshman Seminars fulfill the writing guidelines proposed by the Freshman Writing Committee, they will count as the Freshman Writing Course."

--- Paragraph 2 of SECTION 3 of the original proposal should be deleted since it states that "Writing Courses may be either free-standing courses or sections of larger courses."

--- Item 2 of SECTION 6 of the original proposal should be deleted because it specifies a Writing Course distinct from the Freshman Seminar.