February 4, 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 during 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 their freshman seminar.

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 provide the freshman class with a shared and rigorous Winter Term experience.

6. 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.

Freshman Seminars will be classified either in one of the four divisions (Foreign Languages, Humanities, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences) or in a new inter-divisional category.

Freshman Seminars may not satisfy departmental major requirements.

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 attached 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 normally have an enrollment of between 15 and 20 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: "TEXTS AND CONTEXTS": A COMMON WINTER TERM FRESHMAN SEMINAR

All freshmen (except those enrolled in continuing language courses) will take a winter term seminar which will include a core of major authors and works to be studied in common. The seminar will be called "Texts and Contexts."

Approximately 25-30 sections of this seminar will be offered each winter term. Each section will enroll between 15 and 20 students. The faculty members teaching the seminar will choose three major figures whose works will form the intellectual core of the seminar. Each section of the seminar will include in its syllabus some of the same works by these authors (the "texts"), and, in addition, a set of collateral works (the "contexts"), based on the interests and specializations of the instructors of the individual sections. In this way, each section of the seminar will have an individual aspect as well as a common one. The contextual emphasis of the different sections would be made known in the winter term catalog so that students could register for a section of the seminar which meets their preferences.

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Each section of the seminar will meet for six hours a week. Students enrolled in the seminar will also be required to attend three public lectures a week on the major authors. These lectures will be given by members of the Middlebury faculty and by guest experts who specialize in these particular authors.

Students enrolled in the seminar will complete three writing assignments. Student papers will be criticized for clarity of expression and organization as well as for their ideas. Each section of the seminar will conclude with a final examination, covering both material covered in the individual section and material presented in the public lectures.

Freshmen enrolled in continuing language courses and freshmen entering in February will register for "Texts and Contexts" during their sophomore year.

A faculty seminar will be offered for those instructors participating in the course for the first time. All the instructors will meet periodically during the fall and winter terms to discuss the major authors and to inform each other about what they plan to do in their own sections.

SECTION 5: 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 6: 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. The Winter Term Seminar "Texts and Contexts," to be taken during the first Winter Term at Middlebury (with the exception of freshmen enrolled in continuing language courses, who will take "Texts and Contexts" in their second Winter Term at Middlebury).

4. Foundations Courses in three of the five divisional categories (Foreign Languages, Humanities, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Interdivisional), but not including the division 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 7: 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 8: 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.
Guidelines for Freshman Writing Courses

The instructor of Freshman Writing courses should be primarily concerned with developing students' ability to examine and present data critically and to construct and present coherent arguments. To this end, the instructor should provide frequent opportunities for students to discuss their written work, both with him/her and with peers. To achieve such goals, the Freshman Writing Committee suggests the following guidelines for Freshman Writing courses:

1. Students in Freshman Writing courses will write the equivalent of at least 6-8 papers per semester, for a total of approximately 20-25 pages.

2. The writing will be of a kind that encourages development of students' analytical, persuasive, and creative powers. Particular attention will be paid to teaching students to revise their drafts to achieve this kind of writing.

3. Students will receive detailed criticism on their writing, not only in the form of written comments on drafts and papers, but in in-class discussions and in individual conferences.

4. The primary responsibility of the instructor in Freshman Writing Program courses is not the teaching of the conventions of Standard English usage (grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc.). The instructor must identify difficulties with these conventions where they occur, and to that end, the use of a required handbook of English is helpful (a supply will be made available in the College Store, but instructors are encouraged to order and require copies for their own courses). Serious problems in the conventions of writing should be referred to a professional tutor for remedial work.

5. Upon recommendation of his or her Freshman Writing instructor, a student may be advised to take a second Freshman Writing course in the ensuing term.