Proposal to Create a Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Submitted by Gloria Estela González, David Miranda Hardy, Jason Mittell, Shawna Shapiro, Michael Sheridan, and Daniel Silva

Rationale
A Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion will be a platform for faculty engagement and governance on issues pertaining to diversity, inclusivity, and equity. This committee’s immediate focus will be issues of race and racism, but because ‘diversity’ is an ever-changing and intersectional process of social transformation, the CDEI’s writ will change as Middlebury changes, and will include gender, class, and other forms of difference. The initial focus on race is a response to both Middlebury’s experience of national discussions of racial issues, but also the basic fact that racial issues are particularly acute at a historically white institution in a historically white state.

In terms of institutional organization, diversity efforts at the College currently consist of the Office of Institutional Diversity Equity and Inclusion and the Alliance for an Inclusive Middlebury. The former is oriented toward the central administration; the latter is a Presidential committee that is oriented toward student life and event planning. The CDEI proposed here fills a gap in faculty governance by creating an institutional niche for faculty voices on diversity issues.

While we have settled on a placeholder name for the purpose of handbook language, we are open to discussing other possibilities.

Functions
The Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is the primary faculty governance body addressing institutional and social diversity in the broadest sense, serving as an independent advocacy group, advisory body, and faculty network for exchange and support of ideas and policies. The committee consults and meets, at least once per academic year, with different entities such as the Senior Leadership Group, the Office of Institutional Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, the Strategy and Resources Committees, the Alliance for an Inclusive Middlebury, the Admissions Office, the Educational Affairs Committee and its subcommittees (in particular, the Curriculum Committee and Administration Committee). Its activities take two forms: reaching out to the relevant parts of the College to address issues raised among the faculty, and being a resource for various parts of the College to consult for a faculty perspective on diversity. It works to strengthen Middlebury’s commitment to the ideals, practices, and policies with which we collectively seek equity and inclusion across the institution by working with and through other institutional governance structures to provide recommendations that support students, staff and faculty work toward these goals. The committee's areas of attention may include but are not limited to the following:

1) Faculty Leadership
The CDEI represents faculty perspectives on diversity policies and practices, and serves as the institutional connection between the administration and the faculty on issues of diversity, inclusion, and equity. It advocates for opportunities for all faculty members to
learn more strategies to address these issues in their teaching, promote a culture of inclusivity, and enhance our potential for institutional transformation. The CDEI meets with the Provost at least once each semester, and with other members of the Senior Leadership Group as necessary. The CDEI also works with the Student Government Association and other relevant student groups (such as the Black Student Union, Women of Color, and Distinguished Men of Color) to ensure open and productive communication between students and faculty around issues pertaining to diversity at Middlebury.

2) Policy Brokerage
   The CDEI compiles and expresses faculty concerns and suggestions for transforming Middlebury’s status quo. It serves both as a sounding board for the administration to workshop its ideas for policy changes, and as a loudspeaker for faculty ideas. This brokerage function is particularly important for junior faculty with concerns and good ideas, who may be cautious about asserting themselves while working their way toward tenure.

3) Communication and Reporting
   The CDEI occasionally reports on its activities at faculty meetings, in addition to setting an agenda of targets and goals at the beginning of each academic year. It also responds to faculty questions and initiatives relating to issues of racism, diversity, and inclusion as these emerge from these meetings and the other mechanisms of faculty governance. At the end of each academic year, the CDEI will submit a brief report to the faculty on its deliberations and actions, and identify issues for consideration the following year. This report will be included in the minutes of the last plenary session of the faculty.

4) Outreach
   The CDEI annually engages the College faculty in a discussion of issues of race, diversity, and inclusion, especially as they relate to the College, and solicit faculty input regarding them. Pragmatically, this may take the form of an annual Summit on Diversity and Inclusion. The committee may also sponsor reading groups or lectures on topics related to issues in higher education that warrant consideration by the faculty. It can also keep records, numbers, and data about diversity issues in a centralized and public space, open to all faculty. This resource will solidify our institutional memory and support curricular and institutional innovations.

Composition
The CDEI will consist of six faculty members, with the Chief Diversity Officer serving as an ex officio member and attending its meetings at the committee’s invitation. The committee should reflect the diversity that Middlebury seeks to achieve. No more than two CDEI members shall be junior faculty. Faculty Council will be responsible for inviting and appointing some members of this committee, with the expectation that the procedure would maintain the CDEI’s autonomy in relation to rest of the College’s administration and governance structure. It will meet at least once per month, and more often as necessary.

Membership on the CDEI is open to all tenured faculty members, all pre-tenure faculty members on regular appointment, and all faculty members on special appointment who have contracts
extending for at least one year beyond the date of start of the term to which they would be elected or appointed. A member of the CDEI must have completed two years of full-time faculty status at Middlebury before their term begins. A member of the CDEI may not simultaneously serve on the Council on Reviews, the Faculty Council, the Educational Affairs Committee, the Resources Committee, Strategy Committee, or the Appeals Council. No more than two members of the CDEI may be from one division and no more than one member may be from one department. The departmental affiliation of the Chief Diversity Officer will not figure into the distribution of members.

The term for members of the CDEI is three years. Two of the positions will be elected by the faculty. The remaining four positions will be appointed by the Faculty Council in its role as the Committee on Committees. Faculty Council should consider ways to ensure that the CDEI membership includes interest in, expertise about, and community support on diversity issues. It could, for example, require that one of the Faculty Council-appointed positions be from an academic department that directly addresses diversity issues. It could create a student nomination process for another of these positions.

Elections and appointments will normally be for three-year terms. Positions that become vacant due to leaves, retirements, or for other reasons will be filled in the same way that the departing member was first selected for the committee: vacancies in elected positions will be filled by election, and vacancies in appointed positions will be filled by appointment.

The CDEI will elect one of its own tenured members as chair. The chair will run meetings, set meeting agendas, write reports, report to the faculty at plenary meetings, and coordinate work with other committee chairs as needed.

Balloting to fill the elected positions of the CDEI will be conducted online and coordinated by the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Faculty.

**Procedures**

In carrying out its functions, the CDEI may create *ad hoc* committees comprised of other faculty (and, as necessary, staff members and students) as needed. The procedures for seeking approval of CDEI initiatives will be dictated by the nature of the initiative, but will follow existing channels for review as appropriate, including but not limited to the SGA, Community Council, Faculty Council, Educational Affairs Committee, and full faculty vote.