Prepare to Lead

MiddCORE is a mentor-driven, experiential-learning program that builds skills, creates impact, and expands networks for the next generation of leaders and innovators.

Through its four-week flagship immersion course, its eight-week academic internship program, and its fall and spring workshop series, mentors, students and faculty talk, listen, imagine, discuss and act around the themes of creativity, innovation, and enterprise. It is a rare opportunity for the leaders of today to share their experiences and expertise with the change makers of tomorrow.

Core Strengths
- Leadership
- Collaboration
- Strategic Thinking
- Persuasive Communication
- Financial Literacy
- Negotiation
- Crisis Management
- Media Interaction
- Idea Creation
- Design Thinking
- Aesthetics and Visual Communication
- Networking
- Empathy
- Ethical Decision Making
- Failing Forward
- Self-Reflection
Meet the Director

MiddCORE director Jessica Holmes is an associate professor at Middlebury College and has been a member of its economics department since 2001. She teaches courses in microeconomics, health economics, the economics of social issues, and the economics of sin. Prior to joining the Middlebury faculty, she worked as a litigation consultant for National Economic Research Associates, conducting economic analyses for companies facing lawsuits involving securities fraud, product liability, and intellectual property. She earned a PhD in economics at Yale University in 1999.

The Role of Mentors

The key to MiddCORE is mentorship—the dynamic interaction between students and experienced professionals. Mentors bring a wealth of experience and a passion for engagement and teaching. This is an unparalleled opportunity to connect with the College and to provide students with feedback, constructive criticism, and advice.

The program carefully solicits dynamic and engaging mentors who can develop challenges that force students to deal with ambiguity and operate out of their comfort zones. They act as guides, as students build skills, identify opportunities, and collaborate to create solutions with partner organizations. Conversations with mentors open up possibilities for students to map their futures, explore new directions, and build lifelong networks.

What the Mentors Say

“MiddCORE is an exceptionally powerful course for students and incredibly satisfying for mentors. By sharing their life experiences, mentors not only transfer important knowledge, but also help to defuse some of the anxiety that naturally comes with thinking beyond college. The students I have met at MiddCORE are talented, motivated, and creative. Their energy is infectious, and I always leave Middlebury inspired.”

—Ennis Purpura ’97
Adjunct Professor, Bates and Ohio Colleges

“I know of no other program at a small liberal arts college that so thoroughly mixes students with visiting alumni and other professionals for a total immersion experience. The program’s students will have a leg up in both varsity athletes who suffered concussions and brain injuries. "The most challenging part of the injury was trying to convince ourselves that we were not alone in the experience. We wish we had been able to speak with athletes who had been through a similar recovery.”

Leadership and Innovation Institute

MiddCORE’s Leadership and Innovation Institute is a four-week, immersive, experiential-learning course offered at Middlebury College and the Monterey Institute of International Studies.

Students spend more than 40 hours each week attending skill-building workshops and collaborating on challenges. These challenges take them out of the classroom and into the community.

The first two weeks of the program build skills in teamwork, leadership, persuasive speaking, crisis management, strategic thinking, networking, design thinking, negotiation, and idea creation. The third week explores social entrepreneurship and develops skills in empathy, listening, movement building, stakeholder identification, and persuasive communication. The fourth week focuses on self-reflection and goal setting and encourages students to market themselves and their own innovative ideas.

Both inside the classroom and out, at roundtable conversations and networking dinners, mentors facilitate hands-on experiences that help students to discover their potential and empower them to pursue their passions.

Ideas Into Action: Some Recent Challenges

The challenge: How does a small independent book shop remain relevant in today’s digital age?

• Posed by: Vermont Book Shop, Middlebury, Vermont
• Mentors: Chandler Koglmeier ’08, product associate, Trip Advisor; Becky Dayton, owner of the Vermont Book Shop
• How it worked: Students reached out to readers, trade organizations, and other bookseller owners to identify why, where, and how consumers buy books. At the end of week one, students presented their field data, market research and strategic plans to the owner of Vermont Book Shop.
• Key skills developed: Consumer insight, information gathering, collaboration, strategic thinking, idea creation, and persuasive communication.

The challenge: How do you mobilize a campus movement that facilitates recycling waste that would otherwise go into landfills?

• How it worked: Students were challenged to isolate easy-to-recycle waste, identify campus stakeholders, create eye-catching collection sites, and mobilize a movement. Groups identified waste ranging from solo cups and paper towels to printer cartridges and plastic bags and developed creative ways to encourage buy-in from the campus community.

• Mentors: Jo Opot ’05, global vice president of business development, TerraCycle; Freeman White ’03, CEO, Launch.
• Key Skills: Idea creation, strategic planning and implementation, stakeholder identification, building a movement, persuasive communication.

The 2012 winner: A project called The Sin Bin, which addressed solo cups, candy wrappers, and condom wrappers.

The Next Big Idea

Embedded within the curriculum is the Idea Competition, a four-week challenge to develop a new product or service, a way to deliver an existing product or service, or an innovative solution to a social problem. The program culminates with students pitching their ideas to peers, mentors, and invited entrepreneurs and venture capitalists. Along the way, dozens of mentors provide consultation and advice. By the end, students have learned how to identify an opportunity, cultivate an idea, and successfully market their vision to a group of stakeholders and potential funders.

Winning Project

The project winner this past year was Concussionsspeak.com, developed by Emma Kitchen ‘14.5.

Concussionsspeak.com provides a forum and support network in which athletes share their stories about sports-related concussions and brain injuries. The website includes video and audio interviews with individuals who have had concussions.

Kitchen and her project partner, Kait Sandoval ‘12, were both varsity athletes who suffered concussions that forced them to switch sports. “We hope that sharing stories through our website will help open a dialogue about concussions,” Kitchen says.

By the Numbers

2007 year MiddCORE was founded
2008 First course offered
95 Students who have participated since then
18 Students who participated in 2008
30 Participants in 2011–12
131 Mentors since 2008
19 Different career fields represented by mentors
27 Different student majors
8 MiddCOREplus summer internships in 2012

August 2013

www.MiddCORE.com
Enthusiastic about the “authentic” vibe of the town, Luke Dauner makes an ideal spokesman for the Better Middlebury Partnership (BMP), an organization that fosters the prosperity of local businesses through advocacy, promotion initiatives, and events that bring commerce into Middlebury. Following a “united we stand” model, Dauner tackled the challenge of spreading the word and increasing the number of businesses participating in the BMP during his eight weeks with MiddCOREplus.

Dauner attests that the internship broadened his understanding of marketing and creative ways to advertise. However, he particularly values his experience in direct person-to-person communication.

“Knowing how to approach someone—that’s probably one of the most important skills you can learn for a job,” he maintains. In many instances, this tactic boiled down to Dauner convincing each potential member that “helping the community means you’re helping your business.”

Not only did Dauner contribute to the present success of the BMP by helping to plan large-scale events, but the strategy he devised also blazed a path for the group’s future. According to mentor Elizabeth Bartlett, “His handwork will last beyond his internship, as he has provided a working plan for the organization to move forward with.” Luke has opted to continue to work with BMP and has been invited to join the organization’s board of directors.

MiddCOREplus Summer Program

Launched this summer, MiddCOREplus combines project-based internships with weekly skill-building workshops. Program leaders develop projects with local organizations that provide value and meaning to both the organization and the students.

As with all MiddCORE programs, mentorship is essential, so internship sponsors are elected for their willingness and ability to work collaboratively with our students. MiddCOREplus interns commit 30 hours a week to their organizations and return to campus for an additional day each week for skill-building workshops in social media, financial literacy, communication, and design. Trips to innovative Boston organizations and exploration of the local landscape through hiking, biking, swimming, and fly-fishing round out the eight-week program. MiddCOREplus enables students to develop skills, contacts, and confidence to innovate, connect, and create impact.

MiddCORE Matters

For more than 200 years, Middlebury’s mission has been to educate the country’s most promising minds with an eye toward the world that awaits beyond its gates. It is not enough to be an island of higher learning and inquiry; we must ensure that our students leave with the tools to be passionate innovators and conscientious entrepreneurs. According to President Ronald D. Liebowitz, “Students who take MiddCORE learn how to solve problems, to communicate orally, to think on their feet. They know how to connect things on their own. It makes them far better students within the traditional curriculum. We understand that there is simply no substitute for practical learning. MiddCORE offers precisely that kind of hands-on, collaborative, and demanding experience—giving students confidence for the road ahead.”

Learn More

For more information, contact Catherine Collins ’10.5, associate director, MiddCORE, at 802.443.5404 cmcollin@middlebury.edu | 20 Old Chaple Road, Middlebury, VT 05753.
MiddCORE’s CORE Strengths

MiddCORE
Mike’s workshop really helped us focus not only on being a good speaker, but also being a good listener. He helped us understand how it’s more of a give and take and that there are different roles that both people have to fulfill.”

Alec MacMillen
MiddCORE Graduate

By frequently reworking and reframing the challenge question in different ways and from different perspectives, our group learned how to integrate many diverging stakeholder needs in a way that could help everyone involved.”

Grant Nishioka
MiddCORE Graduate

“Never thought introspection could be a collaborative process. In MiddCORE we were really helping each other find out about ourselves.”

Alex MacMillen
MiddCORE Graduate

A basic understanding of the tools of accounting and finance is important to those who want to lead an enterprise or obtain funding for a new venture. Familiarity with financial statements and business modeling will serve commercial and social entrepreneurs alike.

We never thought introspection could be a collaborative process. In MiddCORE we were really helping each other find out about ourselves.”

Grant Nishioka
MiddCORE Graduate

Executive leadership coaches guide students to a deeper understanding of their own leadership styles through a series of team challenges, behavioral assessments, discussions, and problem-solving exercises. You become a leader by practicing leadership.

What is your communication style? How can you effectively communicate with others on your team? How do you approach and resolve conflict?

Students take communication and conflict resolution assessments to gain a deeper understanding of their own communication style. Through various workshops, they learn how communication style influences leadership, problem solving, conflict resolution, and team dynamics. They also appreciate the importance of building diverse teams to enhance idea development and implementation.

Adaptive leaders need to develop their capacity to think strategically. Through challenges posed by mentors and partner organizations, students learn to identify and reframe problems, challenge the status quo and think critically.

Students spend several sessions training the most important instrument they have: their voice. Through improvisation exercises, idea pitches, and storytelling workshops, students learn to deliver a compelling speech, and storymaking workshops, students learn to deliver a compelling speech, and storymaking workshops, students learn to deliver a compelling speech, and storymaking workshops, students learn to deliver a compelling speech, and storymaking workshops, students learn to deliver a compelling speech, and storymaking workshops, students learn to deliver a compelling speech, and storymaking workshops, students learn to deliver a compelling speech, and storymaking workshops, students learn to deliver a compelling speech, and storymaking workshops, students learn to deliver a compelling speech, and storymaking workshops, students learn to deliver a compelling speech, and storymaking workshops, students learn to deliver a compelling speech, and storymaking workshops, students learn to deliver a compelling speech, and storymaking workshops, students learn to deliver a compelling speech, and storymaking workshops, students learn to deliver a compelling speech, and storymaking workshops, students learn to deliver a compelling speech, and storymaking workshops, students learn to deliver a compelling speech, and...
AESTHETICS AND VISUAL COMMUNICATION

“Once we started going, Ricardo inspired us that we were all creative designers. It was a really great workshop that helped everyone realize that you can use tools you wouldn’t ordinarily think of to be creative.”
Kathryn Benson
MiddCORE Graduate

EMPATHY

“People tend to believe that you are either born with empathy or not, but empathy can be taught and you can improve.”
Mentor Helen Riess
Quoted in The New York Times (6/21/2012)

MiddCORE’s CORE Strengths

AESTHETICS AND VISUAL COMMUNICATION

“Good design, now more accessible and affordable than ever, offers us a chance to bring pleasure, meaning, and beauty to our lives.” – Daniel Pink

Daniel Pink, the author of A Whole New Mind, advances six high-concept aptitudes necessary for the next generation of leaders. Design is one of the six. Students learn about typography, color, texture, and weight, and create design boards, product prototypes, and other visual communication tools that inspire their own sense of design. Working with artists and graphic designers, students also develop visual prototypes to enhance their final Innovation Challenge presentations.

FAILING FORWARD

Innovations emerge from an iterative process, rippled with failures that lead to stronger insights and more finely-tuned ideas. Leaders and innovators need to celebrate both successes and (well-intentioned) failures. They need to learn to fail forward. MiddCORE immersion celebrates failure with a Failure Wall where students and mentors are encouraged to “state a time in your life when you failed and what you learned from that failure.”

SELF-AWARENESS

Unfamiliar and challenging circumstances create opportunities for insight and self-realization. MiddCORE graduates invariably speak of the many valuable takeaways: the bonds that formed with their peers and mentors, the personal insights gained, and the growth in confidence for the years ahead.

NETWORKING

How do you enter a lively conversation at a party? How do you politely excuse yourself from a dull conversation? How do you make a meaningful connection? Students practice their conversational and interpersonal skills, as well as their pitch delivery, during a special networking event with invited members of the local community.

EMPATHY

Leadership and innovation require you to make connections with other people. To lead you must align your own ideas with the interests of others. To innovate, you must gain a deep understanding of the unmet needs of others. Both require empathy. Working with experts, students practice activating empathy through exercises in listening, eye contact, posture, and responsiveness.

ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

Imagine you are an executive at the American Red Cross and learn of a potential threat to the blood supply. At what point does your obligation to protect the public from potential harm supersede the lives that blood transfusions save? Students role-play ethical dilemmas faced by organizations and leadership teams. They are challenged to assess their own moral compass and consider best responses to ethical challenges.
MiddCORE's Summer Program
Located at Sierra Nevada College
Middlebury’s MiddCORE invites over twenty-five dynamic, experienced leading professionals to develop challenges that force students to operate outside their comfort zones and deal with ambiguity. Mentors act as guides to help students build capacities and collaborate to create innovative solutions with partner organizations. Through formal and informal interactions with successful social entrepreneurs, political leaders, CEOs, CFOs, artists, inventors, venture capitalists, psychologists, entertainers, media specialists, authors, etc., participants benefit from the collective wisdom and experience of mentors.

Students from top liberal arts colleges and universities arrive on the shores of Lake Tahoe with energy, curiosity and ambition. They leave with a unique set of skills, a vast network of mentors and a newfound confidence. In short, they leave prepared to lead.

MiddCORE’s challenges ensure that students gain experience in...
- Leadership
- Collaboration
- Strategic Thinking
- Persuasive Communication
- Financial Literacy
- Negotiation
- Crisis Management
- Media Interaction
- Idea Creation
- Design Thinking
- Aesthetics and Visual Communication
- Networking
- Empathy
- Ethical Decision Making
- Failing Forward
- Self-Reflection

Middlebury’s MiddCORE is a mentor-driven, experiential learning program that builds skills, creates opportunities and expands networks for tomorrow’s leaders and innovators. Join motivated students from leading universities and colleges for a monthlong MiddCORE experience at the Sierra Nevada College campus.
ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY HOURS of class
time; 50 mentors including former gover-
nors, CEOs, COOs, executive leadership
coaches, writers, artists, social entrepreneurs, a
comedian, a psychologist, and a former CIA officer;
30 students representing almost 20 different majors;
four weeks of collaborative, mentor-driven experi-
mental learning.

MiddCORE, Middlebury’s intensive Winter Term
program in creativity, innovation, and enterprise,
was a great success this year. Two sections of
MiddCORE students spent more than 40 hours
a week attending mentoring sessions and dinners,
working on various challenges that took them
around campus and into town, and learning about
leadership, collaboration, strategic thinking, nego-
tiation, crisis management, persuasive communica-
tion, risk management, and many other topics.

By week four students should have been ex-
hausted, but they were alive with energy. One
section spent part of the last week working
with Middlebury alum Alex Benepe ’09, now
the CEO, Commissioner and President of the
International Quidditch Association. They learned
how Middlebury students turned the Harry Potter
fantasy game into a real-live sport, and they were
challenged to break out in groups to invent their
own games. The other section was put in a room
surrounded by art supplies and found objects (junk
like broken telephones, keyboards, cardboard,
plastic toy parts, wire, egg cartons, and scrap wood).
Jean Masseau P’14, an accomplished illustrator,
challenged them to use these materials to create an
artistic piece that represented who they are, reflect-
ing on what they learned about themselves through
their MiddCORE experience. The energy and
excitement in both sections was palpable, even as
they entered their 150th MiddCORE hour.

“By week four students should have been exhausted, but they were alive with energy.”
MiddCORE is exhausting, demanding, exhilarating, and transformative. Every day, students are challenged to apply their liberal arts passions and knowledge to new situations. How do you handle a crisis? They worked on a simulation with a retired CIA officer. How do you successfully resolve conflict? They prepared for and engaged in an elaborate negotiation under the guidance of an expert in the field. How do you give a persuasive presentation? MiddCORE mentors helped them develop skills in oratory, crafting a presentation, making a pitch, and feeling confident in front of an audience.

This year the students worked as consultants to develop strategic plans for local organizations such as the Vermont Book Shop, Vermont Coffee Company and Vermont Biking and Walking Tours. They learned about marketing and applied what they learned to create innovative proposals for promoting tourism in the town of Middlebury. The Better Middlebury Partnership was so impressed by their creative ideas that they created a MiddTerracycle club, submitted a grant application to the College, and identified plastic Solo Cups and ink cartridges as their first waste streams to collect and upcycle.

There were challenges in leadership and teamwork, opportunities to hone their networking skills, explorations of risk and how to manage it, assessments of behavior and communication style, and lessons in how each person’s personality affects how they approach and solve problems. The students performed with a Somalian music ensemble and applied what they learned to help the group better promote their music in Vermont. A mock news conference was coached by former Vermont Governor Jim Douglas and former Burlington Free Press Editor Steve Kiernan, both Middlebury alums. And they summed up all that they learned by making a pitch for their own Next Big Idea. Several students plan to implement their social innovations and new product ideas in the coming months.

MiddCORE taps into the strengths of Middlebury students: their unlimited energy, their ability to collaborate, their appetite for competition, and their deep desire to have an impact on the world. MiddCORE helps students redefine for themselves what a 21st century liberal arts education means, provides them a unique set of skills, challenges them to take risks and explore opportunities, and gives them the confidence they need to be our next generation of leaders and change-makers.