One of the goals of a Middlebury education is to encourage students to think independently and creatively. The Project on Creativity and Innovation in the Liberal Arts (PCI) fosters creativity and innovation by helping students to pursue challenging independent projects of their own design.

Launched by President Ronald D. Liebowitz in the spring of 2007, PCI aims to make intellectual risk-taking and creative problem solving second nature to Middlebury students and part of a portfolio of critical skills that will serve them throughout their lives.

The range of student interests and projects is extraordinary—artistic work like the “Brain in Lights” that married science and art; creation of Brighter Planet, which has become the largest “green” credit card program in the country; a micro-hydroelectricity project that brought electricity to a village in Nepal for the first time; and the creation of a garden in the Bronx in partnership with elementary school students.

Over the past five years, more than 800 students have taken advantage of the opportunities available to them through the 11 programs that make up PCI.

Where does the inspiration for the creative work that students do come from? First of all, it comes from the students themselves—from their passion to find out something they don’t know about a subject that interests them. Every project begins with a few simple ingredients—an interest, a question, an idea—often a deceptively simple one—and the commitment, imagination, and energy required to search for an answer.

—President Ronald D. Liebowitz
Programs Supported Through PCI

MiddCORE

Through daily, weekly, and month-long challenges, students gain experience in leadership, strategic thinking, idea creation, collaboration, persuasive communications, ethical decision-making, conflict resolution, and crisis management.

Students leave MiddCORE prepared to pursue their passions and for success in their personal and professional lives. As one participant noted, “MiddCORE is an incredibly empowering program, which gives you the skills, contacts, and confidence to innovate, create, connect, and go.”

Learn more at www.middcore.com

Projects and Presentations at Old Stone Mill, the Annex, and 51 Main
The Old Stone Mill (OSM) sits on the banks of Otter Creek in downtown Middlebury. In 2008, the OSM and the Annex were transformed into laboratories for student creativity. The spaces are available to students—individuals or groups—who want to launch a new organization, do artistic work, develop a business plan, or pursue any other kind of creative initiative. A six-member student advisory board runs the OSM with three objectives: (1) engage the student body as a whole to help identify and encourage tenant applications; (2) coordinate the use and management of the OSM and OSM Annex to serve the creative objectives of the tenants; and (3) foster a student culture that appreciates the challenges of supporting innovation. 51 Main at the Bridge is also used for student presentations and shows.

Middlebury Entrepreneurs
Middlebury Entrepreneurs was launched as a club in 2005 and became a student-led winter-term course in 2007. Its raison d’être is to provide student entrepreneurs with a vehicle for developing their ideas for a new business or social organization. Through a series of assignments, class discussion, and mentoring from experienced local professionals, the students are introduced to valuable resources that will form a strong platform for launching their businesses.

New Millennium Fund
The New Millennium Fund forges connections between Vermont-based organizations and Middlebury College students. Funding is available to support internships for students interested in businesses, non-profits, and NGO startups in Vermont as they progress from conceptual to operational stages.

Midd Venture Community
The Midd Venture Community was launched in the Fall of 2011 to provide opportunities for students and alumni to connect and discuss entrepreneurship and venture opportunities. The club’s activities include a speaker series, demo days, workshops, and networking events.

Davis Projects for Peace
In its fifth year, this program honors Kathryn Wasserman Davis, a 105 year-old philanthropist who is interested in finding
Corinne Prevot ’13 – All-Star Entrepreneur

Corinne Prevot was an entrepreneur even before she arrived at Middlebury in 2009. She started her own business making ski hats when she was a 16-year-old junior in high school. At first she just made hats for friends and members of her school’s Nordic ski team, but soon she was getting orders from other skiers. “I realized it was a business when I started seeing my hats on people I didn’t know,” she says. Prevot’s business, called Skida (Swedish for ski), really took off after she came to Middlebury. PCI gave her studio space in the Old Mill, and Middlebury Entrepreneurs helped her to refine her business plan and think about how she wanted Skida to develop in the future. Last year her colorful hats were sold in more than 50 retail outlets in a dozen states, and Forbes magazine named her as one of nine All-Star Student Entrepreneurs for 2011.

new ways to advance world peace. Undergraduate students at more than 90 college campuses across the United States are eligible to design and submit proposals that address the goal of improving the prospects for peace in the 21st century. The top submissions from the participating campuses, including at least one from Middlebury, receive funding of $10,000 from Mrs. Davis with which to initiate summer projects anywhere in the world.

The Hunt
A student-run competition, the Hunt is a weeklong competition/scavenger hunt that takes place during Middlebury’s winter term. Teams of students have to answer questions, solve problems, and accomplish tasks to score points in the competition. The challenges call on historical, theoretical, mathematical, and practical knowledge; creative thinking; strong organizational skills; boundless energy and enthusiasm; and an appreciation of the absurd. Particularly imaginative solutions often win extra points.

MiddChallenge
MiddChallenge gives students an opportunity to pursue an idea for a business or a project or idea in the area of education, outreach and policy, or the arts. Students compete for funding that will allow them to spend the summer incubating their idea. Applicants submit their ideas to a student-run committee, and proposals are chosen in each area to present to a selection panel made up of College alumni, faculty, and friends.

TEDxMiddlebury
TED (Technology, Entertainment, and Design) conducts conferences around the world to disseminate “ideas worth spreading.” TED grants licenses to organizations or institutions like Middlebury to organize their own TEDx events. Middlebury students hosted the first TEDx-Middlebury Conference in October of 2010. The theme was “How We Started: From Idea to Impact—A Creativity and Innovation Conference.” Last year TEDxMiddlebury was held in November with the theme “Embracing Risk.” The events have sold out both years.
The mission of the new Middlebury Center for Social Entrepreneurship is to make the world more peaceful and equitable for all by offering opportunities to youth and young adults.

The center aspires to be a world leader in social change. It is designed to be a dynamic hub within a growing global network of schools, colleges, NGOs, government agencies, businesses, and foundations committed to building 21st-century solutions. The Center employs a combination of training, symposia, lectures, grants, and fellowship opportunities to help young people to address some of the greatest social challenges of our time.

Each year, the MCSE mounts a January symposium and a weekly lecture series that engage people on topics related to social entrepreneurship. A fellowship program identifies and supports Middlebury students with potential to become change-makers. Through a summer grants program, the center awards funding to college students to help these young leaders implement their ideas for addressing societal problems. In 2013, the MCSE will provide funding to high-school students to identify problems in their communities and to develop and implement solutions.

Ryan Kim ’14
Job Creation Vermont Style

Ryan Kim, a second-year economics major, is doing everything he can to get practical business experience while he is still in college. He’s a member of the student government finance committee, vice chair of the student investment committee that controls a portion of the College’s endowment, and treasurer and marketing director for Middlebury Quidditch. So when he was offered an opportunity to do a study on business development for the Town of Middlebury last summer, he jumped at it.

The purpose of the study was to find out if it would make sense for the town to create a business development fund and hire a full-time director to attract new businesses, expand the tax base, and create jobs. Working out of the PCI office, Kim spent the summer interviewing the town’s business owners and community leaders, talking to residents and visitors, and observing commercial activity.

In March, his study persuaded voters at Middlebury’s Town Meeting to set aside money to create the fund and start actively pursuing new business development.

Learn More

For more information, contact Elizabeth H. Robinson ’84, director, Project on Creativity and Innovation in the Liberal Arts and operations director, Middlebury Center for Social Entrepreneurship at 802.443.5265, robinson@middlebury.edu, or at 152 Maple Street, Marble Works, Middlebury, VT 05753.