

Kathryn Wasserman Davis Collaborative in Conflict Transformation

Midyear Report 2025

This report was compiled in July 2025 by CT Collaborative staff, in consultation with the CT Pillar Heads and the Grants and Sponsored Programs office. The narrative below focuses on January-June 2025. Information on earlier programs can be found in the twice-yearly reports posted on our website. Please send questions to conflicttransformation@middlebury.edu.

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Introduction

At the halfway point of our grant-funded initiative, the Kathryn Wasserman Davis Collaborative in Conflict Transformation (“the CT Collaborative”) has built a solid foundation of programs, people, and partners across the global Middlebury institution and beyond. In this report, we describe our work from January-June 2025.

At a time of great uncertainty for higher education and high conflict around the globe, the foundational work we have done in conflict transformation has offered essential tools for addressing our local, national, and global challenges. There is greater awareness throughout our student populations - from K-12 teachers to graduate students to faculty and staff - about the need for conflict transformation and various approaches to harnessing conflict for productive change.

In prior reports, we described the three core learning goals of the CT Collaborative and our focused list of knowledge, skills, and dispositions that constitute Middlebury’s flexible model of conflict transformation. We are recognizing how faculty, staff, and students are engaging in the what, how, and why of CT in their courses, curricula, programming, experiential activities, and partnerships. We are discovering new threads that connect this work, including the central role of communication and storytelling. In our assessment work, we are seeing substantial progress on all three learning goals: a new understanding of conflict, skills to understand self and others, and a commitment to act.

That work continues through times of institutional transition. On July 1, Middlebury welcomed a new president, Dr. Ian Baucom. At the same time, Dr. Netta Avineri became executive director of the CT Collaborative as Sarah Stroup steps down as executive director. In addition, Middlebury Institute of International Studies (the Institute) associate professor David Wick will take up the position of graduate pillar lead, while Middlebury College associate professor Sebnem Gumuscu will oversee the CT Academic Cluster at the College.

We are confident that the changes ahead offer opportunities for growth. The close partnership between Stroup and Avineri will enable a smooth transition in administration; they have been working together since August 2024 to plan for this leadership change. Avineri’s expertise in applied linguistic anthropology, storytelling for impact, mutually beneficial community partnerships, and intercultural communication will expand and deepen the collective work of the Collaborative. Avineri is particularly interested in the CT Collaborative’s role as an incubator for conflict transformation education. We are excited to engage with Middlebury’s new president, who has long championed the role of colleges and universities as civic institutions. We believe the skills and dispositions necessary for thriving cultures and communities are essentially equal to those that foster constructive conflict - the ability to listen to understand and speak to be understood, a capacity for creative collaboration, and an understanding that positive engagement across differences can enrich relationships and create more responsive institutions.

We use multiple communications streams to reach internal and external audiences. Our Instagram is steadily growing at 431 followers. We share announcements and invitations to campus events to engage students. Our podcast has been active for two academic years, and has been a platform for longer conversations with collaborators, guest speakers, and faculty grant recipients. We have released thirty-two episodes, including six new episodes this Spring. In 2025, we had 649 additional downloads, bringing our total downloads to more than 2,000. In the future we plan to mobilize the podcasts more intentionally for pedagogical purposes. We distribute our newsletter three times a year (Fall, Winter, Spring). On April 28, we announced the director transition and offered program summaries and invitations ([link](#)). We have 10,738 recipients on our mailing list, with an open rate of 32% and a click rate of 2%. We have updated components of the website throughout the year (e.g., video library, Engaged Listening Project content).

We are excited to see how these shifts in leadership create more opportunities to share and disseminate our approach to conflict transformation education across a range of communities and networks.

Laying the Foundation for CT in K-12 Schools

Change Curriculum

In Summer 2025, BLSE's core "Change" curriculum will include four courses. Using pedagogical, rhetorical, archival, and theatrical approaches, together they demonstrate what literary and historical storytelling can add to the experience and navigation of conflict.

- "Teaching Literacies Across Difference"
- "Race, Rhetoric, and the Literature of Protest"
- "Zora Neale Hurston: Anthropologist, Folklorist, Novelist, Change Agent"
- "Solo Performance"

Winter Institute

In February 2025, BLSE offered its second Winter Institute, supported by the grant. Housed at the BLSE Vermont campus and themed around "Reading Across Differences," the Institute attracted 24 teachers and school administrators, including a small cohort of returnees from the 2024 Institute. Central to the Institute work this year were performance-based learning exercises that involved participants in using their own and others' stories to recognize and confront differences within communities.

We are planning for a 2026 Winter Institute at the Bread Loaf campus. We are also exploring the possibility of running the Institute in 2027 at a new site in the South, where we can reach a new population of teachers and access historical and cultural resources essential to black history.

Workshops

This summer we are building on the "Belonging" workshops we instituted at the Vermont campus last year, theming the workshops around "Togetherness." The workshops will include a two-day kickoff for the full community, as well as follow-up sessions for faculty and for students. The workshops are designed not only to build community across differences at BLSE but also to model strategies for community-building that our students and faculty can then use in their own schools/communities.

Change Action Grants

The work for most of the nine Change Action Grants we funded for the 2024-25 school year is just now coming to completion. A [summary of those grants, with examples of student work](#), is available in the Spring/Summer 2025 issue of *BLTN Journal*. Two of our awardees wrote feature articles for the issue. See Mackensi Crenshaw's account of studying Louisville oral history and publishing podcasts in "[Podcasting in Louisville to Honor Orality](#)" and Rabiah Kahlil's "[Refuturing Dystopia: A Collaboration Between Beyond the Page and the Canadian International School of Singapore](#)." Both projects utilized Middlebury College's Beyond the Page actors to support student and teacher growth in imaginative investment and confidence in their work. We will award our next round of BLTN Change Action Grants in September.

BLTN NextGen Sites

So far this calendar year, the nine sites of BLTN NextGen have held two online events and two in-person events. (These events, along with a youth-created set of slides detailing local site work for the school year, are covered in [the current issue of BLTN Journal](#).) While focal issues for the individual sites vary (including gun violence, poverty, homelessness, drug and alcohol abuse, food insecurity, discrimination, racism, and aspects of school reform), the network's Youth Advisory Board continues to initiate network wide-events that combine literacy and social action.

Online writing events

- 25 attendees participated in the February 2nd online writing event, "Faces of Janus," which featured a NextGen alum from Lawrence, MA as the guest artist.
- "The Home We Make" (April 12) featured author Maham Khwaja and drew 31 participants (17 associated with The School of Writing in Karachi, Pakistan, and 14 from NextGen).

In-person events

Cross-site meetings continue to be drivers of cultural understanding and learning across difference in the network.

- In March (14-16), the Atlanta site, anchored by Shaleisa Brewer's (MA '22) "[These Halls Can Talk](#)" oral history initiative, hosted youth and mentors from Aiken (SC), Navajo Nation, and Santa Fe Indian School. In a culminating gathering called "Past Forward: An Intergenerational Community Event" the Atlanta site convened These Halls Can Talk youth and Booker T. Washington alumni for conversations with the visiting NextGen cohort on contemporary issues and technologies. In the process, they offered a replicable structure for future NextGen events.
- Youth from Santa Fe Indian School (SFIS) with mentors (Susan Miera, 'MA '97) hosted youth from Sharon, Vermont (plus mentors [Hailey Elles, current BLSE student / BLSE Fellow, and What's the Story? Director, Tm O'Leary BLSE MA '07]). While the primary objective of the May 9-12 visit was to learn from peers about documentary filmmaking techniques and topics, Vermont student reflections suggest the trip was an enlightening cultural exchange. ([Read Tim O'Leary's account of the exchange in the most recent What's the Story? newsletter.](#))

BLTN and Critical Issues Forum

Youth from three BLTN schools (Aiken High School [South Carolina], Atherton High School [Louisville], and Santa Fe Indian School) participated in the Institute's James Martin Center for Nuclear Non-Proliferation Critical Issues Forum in Monterey, CA on March 28-29. They gave presentations on local nuclear energy issues and engaged in small group discussions and cultural activities with peers from the U.S., Japan, India, and Pakistan. Read [Masako Toki's conference report](#) for more detail on the event.

Conflict Transformation Fellowships

We awarded 12 Change Fellowships to support the summer study at BLSE of teachers committed to engaging in CT explorations. We also awarded three Global Change Fellowships to California teachers, who will be attending our Summer Institute for Global Humanities in CA this summer and who will form a new BLTN cohort and work together year-round on globally-oriented Change projects. Finally, we award five What's the Story? Fellowships for BLSE students interested in becoming leaders within the "What's the Story?" project of the BLTN Next Generation Leadership Network: an exceptional student-led model of using documentary filmmaking to advocate for social change.

Conflict Transformation in Undergraduate Life

This July marks a full year since this pillar of Conflict Transformation has been under the leadership of Lida Winfield, Assistant Professor of Dance. A robust network of faculty, staff, and students at the College have been reflecting on the successes of the first three years of the Collaborative and identifying specific initiatives in which to deepen and expand skills in constructive conflict.

Restorative Practices (RP)

We use RP training to equip students with the skills to better support each other in navigating low-level conflicts and foster a sense of community. By building this foundation of mutual understanding, students are better prepared to address challenges when conflicts arise. The RP team reaches these students through ongoing training under the leadership of Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs Brian Lind, and with the partnership of Outreach and Education Specialist Noreen Pecsok, Assistant Director of Education for Equity & Inclusion Crystal Jones, Assistant Vice President for Equity & Inclusion Kristin Hocker, and Assistant Professor of Dance and CT Undergraduate Pillar Head Lida Winfield.

Community Building

- *Spring 2025 Orientation:* We led workshops for leaders to equip them in welcoming incoming first-year students. These leaders then used RP in small groups with approximately 100 incoming students. At Orientation for Febs, Brian Lind facilitated a workshop on unlearning shame.
- *Residential Life (Res Life):* This Spring, ~50 new Resident Assistants began their training for next Fall. Our focus was on community-building RP circles and preparing student employees to respond to low-level community harms that arise between students.

Responding to Harm

- *Process Circles:* We supported student organization leaders and members through moderated restorative work.
- *Adaptable Resolution Processes:* We continue to integrate RP approaches into student processes for deepened interpersonal engagement.

Work with Faculty and Staff

The RP team uses restorative approaches with faculty and staff, building community and responding to harm. Examples of our work this Spring include:

- Joe Russell, Dean of Students, joined us in delivering a workshop on the Social Discipline Window, a key tenet of Restorative Practices, for ~70 staff in Student Affairs.
- We offer community building circles to faculty and staff, providing a space to build RP skills.
- We are working with HR to integrate RP into engaging around staff conflicts.

Peer Facilitators

In March, we launched a new Peer Facilitator program, set to begin in Fall 2025. Our goal is to equip students to respond to conflicts among their peers. These paid positions include an initial two-day training, followed by up to six hours per week during the Fall semester for each facilitator. Responsibilities include weekly team meetings, ongoing training, office hours, and program outreach. We targeted invitations for students already connected to CT through workshops, courses, or events. We selected 11 for this coming year's cohort. We continue to develop programs and training over the summer.

Beyond the Page (BtP)

This semester marks the last months of a fruitful collaboration with Beyond the Page (BtP). Their work in and out of classrooms has highlighted the importance of creativity, collaboration, and the arts for storytelling for constructive engagement. Going forward, BtP will build on its existing relationships to continue offering its programming to the campus. Engagement with the goals of the Collaborative will continue, but without formal affiliation to the CT Collaborative.

BtP led multiple engagements in two courses - “Conflict Transformation: Mindfulness Skills as Educational Praxis” with Prof. Melissa Hammerle, and “Hispanic Performance Studies” with Prof. Miguel Fernandez. It led workshops with MAlt Leaders on embodied practices for addressing conflict and inclusive leadership; a training for our office of diversity, equity and inclusion; and a workshop for the Privilege & Poverty Cohort on the relational nature of poverty and privilege to prepare students for internships. BtP led a training with Human Resources’ Leadership Alliance. BtP undergraduate Fellows led workshops on community building, leadership, and creativity, utilizing their emerging skills as teaching artists and facilitators.

CT Academic Cluster

This is the end of the first year of the [CT Academic Cluster](#). The cluster is a flexible program of study that integrates conflict analysis, conflict skill-building, and experiential learning. At least thirty-five faculty have agreed to have their courses listed as part of the cluster. As of May 2025, 52 students have completed at least three of the five cluster requirements. Five students completed the full sequence of courses and experiences and earned a CT Certificate at Middlebury.

In the past six months, 116 students enrolled in CT courses. This includes INTD 1259, “Conflict Transformation Skills,” which was taught by Lida Winfield, Sarah Stroup and international mediator Julian Portilla in Winter 2025. We hosted restorative justice leader sujatha baliga as a guest instructor for INTD 1018. This Spring, we again offered EDST 132 - “Mindfulness and Conflict Transformation” - and SOCI 228 - “Interdisciplinary Conflict Analysis.”

Engaged Listening Project (ELP)

This year, an interdisciplinary group of faculty and staff - Lida Winfield (Dance), Dima Ayoub (Arabic), Brian Lind (Student Engagement), and Jonathan Miller-Lane (Education Studies) - facilitated our main professional development program: the [Engaged Listening Project](#) (ELP). In the Spring of 2025, we selected 23 Fellows from departments and offices across the College.

We continue to utilize structured dialogue and restorative practices as our primary tools and methodology. Within the CT framework, our focus areas include: critical self-awareness, structured dialogue and restorative practices, and fostering dispositions of curiosity, creativity, risk-taking, and a relational focus. The ELP also advances the three core learning goals of CT: (1) a new understanding of conflict, (2) skills to understand self and others, and (3) a commitment to act.

Looking ahead, the ELP continues to grow and evolve. We are happy to welcome two new ELP facilitators in Fall 2025: Suzanne Gurland (Psychology) and Matt Lawrence (Sociology). They will work alongside Lida Winfield and Brian Lind over the summer to plan for the two-day opening workshop in August. With additional training, we plan to expand ELP to include mediation skills.

Mediation Training

For the second year in a row, we brought together a cohort of faculty and staff to participate in an intensive mediation training led by mediator and facilitator Jen Knauer. This May and June, 16 participants from the College and Institute met for 28 hours of learning and practice, assisted by a cadre of coaches drawn from the Woodbury Institute’s network of practitioners. We now have over 30 faculty and staff who have engaged in basic mediation training, and will integrate their work into Human Resources, Student Life, Administration, teaching and advising. While we recruited participants who could immediately apply mediation skills to their work, our ambition has also been to build a community of practice to support more skill building and proactive responses to conflict.

Experiential Learning and Community Engagement

The educators involved in developing these programs across Middlebury College's Experiential Learning Centers (Center for Community Engagement, Innovation Hub, and Center for Careers and Internships) continually meet to connect program-specific learning outcomes with CT learning goals, collaborate on assessment processes and tools, and design Convenings for the participants of these diverse programs.

Community Engagement Programs

- The **Privilege & Poverty Academic Cluster** integrates coursework with experiential learning to critically examine the causes and consequences of economic inequality. For Summer 2025, 16 Middlebury students participated in internship placements with 15 partner organizations. P&P placed nine students with organizations local to Middlebury College, and six students in the [Shepherd Higher Education Consortium on Poverty](#).
- Four **Middlebury College Alternative Break Programs** ran in February 2025, with 45 student participants. MAlt engages Middlebury students with communities across the Americas to share an experience, provide service, and learn about complex systems. Trips are developed by student leaders with support from staff. Themes of listening and dialogue were a hallmark across trips, and reflection topics included: ethical storytelling, social identity awareness and development.
- The **Middlebury Social Impact Corps** program ran this summer in Monterey, California. This program brings undergraduate and graduate students to work deeply with a community partner and surrounding communities. This summer's cohort worked with the Civil Rights Office of Monterey County and multiple community organizations. The cohort promoted "local government as a force for good" by examining and promoting the role of government, data transparency, and the role of citizens in civic engagement.
- **Service Translation** is an international translation collaborative between International Christian University students (Japan) and Middlebury students to translate oral histories and primary sources on the mass incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. The Spring/Summer 2025 project has been the translation of haiku (Japanese to English) written by incarcerated, with primary materials housed at the Hoover Institute of Stanford University.
- A Middlebury student Fellow joined the **National Torchbearers program** conference in Los Angeles this Spring. This event brings together young adults diverse in identity, geography, and experience to consider what it means to fulfill the American Dream in today's polarized context.
- In Winter and Spring 2025, we funded internships for two students who worked with the **Vermont Restorative Approaches Collaborative (VTRAC)**, located at Up with Learning, a youth engagement organization focused on education. The interns helped to build tools and resources to articulate practices that support effective whole-school implementation of restorative approaches.

Convenings

We continue our event series for all participants in Summer 2025 CT experiential learning programs.

- The first gathering was an in-person, pre-departure meeting focused on interpersonal conflict styles using the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument. We worked with Andrew Duffy, an experienced conflict transformation scholar and facilitator.
- We have developed a Conflict Analysis workshop as the mid-experience gathering, facilitated this summer by a Conflict Analysis Peer Facilitator—four student leaders we selected and trained to support this work, each of whom brings past experience in a CT opportunity.
- We will offer a post-program opportunity to reflect on lessons of the summer and how they might inform further action and learning (academically, co-curricularly, professionally, and civically).

The second annual convening of Projects for Peace campus liaisons was held June 4-6, 2025 at the Institute in Monterey. The theme was "Place, Connection, Reflection. Faculty and staff from 26 different partner institutions attended." We invited affiliate schools with strong experiential and CT programs to send an additional representative to discuss strengthening their work through inter-institutional efforts.

Projects for Peace Alumni Award

The 2024 Projects for Peace Alumni Award winner, Mr. Bienfait Mugenza, has concluded his year-long term. In the midst of escalating conflict in eastern Congo, Mugenza remains dedicated to conflict transformation, human rights, and catalyzing a movement of “peace entrepreneurs” as an alternative to profiteering from war and violence.

Application and nomination instructions for the third annual Projects for Peace Alumni Award were delivered in September 2024 to 100+ partner institutions. For the 2025 cycle, institutions could nominate or renominate up to two candidates for consideration. This change in policy will allow previous applicants with strong proposals to be reconsidered. A winner will be announced in August 2025.

Break Programs

- *Spring Break DC Career Trek in Global Affairs and Conflict Transformation:* The Center for Careers and Internships and Middlebury in DC provided 10 Rohatyn Global Scholars and Fellows with the opportunity to engage with alumni and professionals tackling some of the world’s most pressing challenges. The trek connected students with a diverse array of employers and alumni working on complex global issues. Students deepened their understanding of conflict at individual, community, and global scales while learning about innovative strategies for addressing societal divisions. Site visits and reflection dinners with Middlebury alumni allowed participants to explore potential career opportunities in these fields.
- *History in Translation:* The History in Translation (HT) program brings a diverse group of students as an intercultural cohort to explore an historical experience, topic, or event in service of present-day social justice - and the vision of an equitable and inclusive future. The 2025 HT program is working with [Respond Crisis Translation](#). Focus areas include language access and language justice in immigration, health, and educational settings; responsibilities and strategies of interpreters and translators in high stakes and crisis situations; and learning from and supporting those engaged in language access work, advocacy, and research.

Internships

- We worked with the **Shepherd Higher Education Consortium on Poverty (SHECP)** to support internships for students from multiple institutions. SHECP embarked on a third year of a CT curriculum to equip students, faculty, and practitioners with the theoretical foundations and practical tools needed to navigate the complex interpersonal and systemic conflicts that arise in anti-poverty work. SHECP Summer Interns have explored their relationship to and assumptions about conflict and challenged themselves to see conflict as a powerful force for change. This summer, 82 interns from 15 different schools participated in the updated curriculum.
- Over Winter Term 2025, two students worked with [diiVe](#), an organization in South Africa that provides students with consulting projects in shared value, sustainability, and strategy. They used feedback from the Summer 2024 program to improve a CT curriculum for diiVe’s Summer 2025 program. diiVe is again integrating CT curricula into their training content as a result of this partnership. 15 students interned with diiVe for Summer 2025, 13 traveling to Cape Town and two students participating remotely. For 120 interns working with clients in the public and private sector, diiVe’s CT curriculum will focus on how essential conflict can be for creating
- CT also supported two interns for the Center for Nonproliferation Studies at the Institute, one intern working on CT curriculum for Middlebury’s School Abroad in Japan, and three students working for the Crisis Text Line, the Busungu Community Center in Tanzania and for the Global Environmental Institute in China.

Graduate Training and Research

The CT Fellows program at the Institute has completed its third year. Cohort Fellows learn about CT and develop projects over the course of the year, with guidance and support from Mentor Fellows. Graduate Assistant (GA) Fellows serve various research projects at the Institute. Pedagogy Fellows support CT projects, including CT Annual Seminar planning, event logistics, and resource creation. In July 2025, the leadership of this pillar transitioned to Prof. David Wick, Associate Professor and Program Chair of International Education Management at the Institute; former pillar lead Netta Avineri is now Executive Director of the CT Collaborative.

Cohort and Mentor Fellows

We continued our work with the 40 Cohort Fellows and eight Mentor Fellows for this past academic year. The cohort included Institute students as well as three School in France students. From January through May, the cohort engaged in conflict mapping and analysis and practiced shaping their core messages for a range of different audiences. They provided ongoing peer feedback and prepared strong multimodal presentations for the CT Annual Seminar. They also engaged more deeply in story and ethics as part of the CT framework.

We are finalizing next year's cohort out of over 100 applicants from the Institute's online and in-person degree programs. They will work with six Mentor Fellows, also from a range of degree programs.

The CT Annual Seminar included 85 in-person and online participants. Fellows shared about their projects, followed by four skills-based workshops (ethnography in conflict zones/Azri Amram, restorative practices/Natalie Alfaro Frazier, mediation/Scott Dick, creativity and conflict/[John Wineglass](#)). The skills-based sessions allowed participants to engage with conflict-related scholars and practitioners, and complemented what they gained through learning about student projects.

Pedagogy Fellows and GA Fellows

The Pedagogy Fellows continued to support institutional capacity-building for CT education, including infrastructure for the CT Fellowship and event preparation; Indigenous community relations; and a variety of CT curricular projects. Some also supported the Monterey-based Bread Loaf School of English program, and the Projects for Peace convening, allowing for further engagement and deeper learning around CT.

GA Fellows contributed to research, writing projects, and data analysis in a variety of settings. One has been assisting with editorial work for an anthology on poetry and conflict; another with MetaLab has been synthesizing data sources about MesoAmerican Indigenous language users in the region for the Monterey County Civil Rights Office. This data will be used to advocate for various language access support and resources in the county and beyond.

Language Schools Scholarships

We also supported 14 Language Schools scholarship recipients focused on projects related to conflict, conflict analysis, intercultural engagement, and transformation across a range of contexts. Language Schools colleagues collaborated with Avineri to develop a CT reading and resource list for scholarship recipients, and Avineri met with 10 of the students at the Language Schools in July. The students' target languages include Arabic, Chinese, German, Hebrew, Japanese, Korean, French, Russian, and Spanish.

New Course in Conflict Transformation Principles and Practices

Avineri has developed a course called "Conflict Transformation Principles and Practices" which will be offered for the first time in Fall 2025. The course has undergone the application process for Intercultural Competence designation, and will be cross-listed with the Global Governance, Policy, and Development and Nonproliferation, Terrorism, and Threat Intelligence programs. The course will integrate a range of CT approaches to conflict analysis, tools/skills, storytelling, and approaches to change.

Experiential Education

- *Czech Republic Nuclear Research Reactor program*: In January, 12 students visited Prague and Vienna to explore the political, technical, and societal dimensions of nuclear science. A major focus was understanding how different societies view nuclear fission technology, noting that different cultures have very different perspectives on whether nuclear is a good or responsible source of energy. Another focus was understanding how international organizations can be actors for conflict transformation in the international system, especially as neutral actors in politically turbulent times. Students appreciated the opportunities to engage with complexity in organizational conflict and a range of conflict dynamics at different scales.
- *UN Sustainable Development Goals in Action: Costa Rica*: “The UN Sustainable Development Goals in Action” course was led by Professors [William Arrocha](#) and [Marie Butcher](#) in partnership with the University for Peace Executive Education Center in Costa Rica. 18 Institute students learned how different organizations address challenges related to specific SDGs during on-site visits and from professional speakers from NGOs and agencies. Students examined issues pertaining to conflict transformation, peace, security, sustainability, and climate change within an immersive language and inter-cultural context.
- *Nationalism and the Formation of New States in the Balkans practicum*: 11 students visited the former state of Yugoslavia with Dr. Phil Murphy. The “Balkan Immersive Learning” course allowed students to engage with real-time developments in peace, conflict, and reconciliation across Serbia, Kosovo, and North Macedonia. Students explored how these developments were likely to change these countries, and the work of individuals they were meeting. Student research projects included the role of language in peace and reconciliation in the region; the role of China’s One Belt One Road initiative in building peace; and Russia’s influence. Students learned to recognize the role of national narratives alongside institutional systems and micro-level engagement.
- *Spring 2025 internships*: Four student internships were supported, each of which integrated conflict transformation themes in local and global engagement: a Translation and Interpretation student working with Parenting Connection of Monterey County, an MPA student engaging with Hmong Innovating Politics, and an IPD student and an MPA/IPD student working with UNICEF Social Policy Social Protection.
- The Middlebury Social Impact Corps program ran this summer in Monterey, California. This program brings undergraduate and graduate students together, to work deeply with a community partner and surrounding communities. This summer’s cohort worked with the [Civil Rights Office of Monterey County](#) in addition to multiple community organizations, county offices and programs, and community members. The cohort worked to promote “local government as a force for good” by examining the role of government, data transparency, and citizens in civic engagement.

Critical Issues Forum

The Critical Issues Forum (CIF) focuses on engaging, educating, and empowering high school students, who will become the leaders of tomorrow working toward a nuclear weapons-free world. CIF also aims to help students develop critical thinking skills through disarmament education. On March 28 and 29, 2025, high school students and educators from 20 participating schools in the United States, Japan, India, and Pakistan gathered in Monterey, California, for the Spring CIF Student Conference (see the full [Conference Report here](#)). Entitled “80 Years of Struggle: Revitalizing Nuclear Disarmament and Nonproliferation Through Cross-Cultural Youth Engagement,” the Conference was organized by the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies (CNS) at the Institute. With Nihon Hidankyo awarded the 2024 Nobel Peace Prize, the timing inspired students to explore how they could carry forward Hibakusha’s legacy.

A distinguishing feature of this year’s Conference was CIF’s partnership with the Seeds of Peace, which facilitated the participation of Indian and Pakistani high schools. This year also marked the second time CIF partnered with [Middlebury’s Bread Loaf Teacher Network](#).

Global Literacy

The Middlebury-C.V. Starr Schools Abroad and our Global Courses faculty continue to develop CT programming in countries and languages around the world. Projects this past semester have included courses on political conflict and intercultural communication, research assistantships and partnerships with local organizations, cross-cultural internship orientations, and CT-informed cross cultural reflections.

In July, Directors convened to discuss best practices in CT abroad. We continue to see CT as a path for building students' resilience, compassion, language skills, and curiosity.

School in France: In the course "The EU: An Unprecedented Experiment in the Socialization of Conflicts," students studied the European Union's history and role in resolving conflict among member states. They explored how internal conflicts test shared sovereignty and European integration, analyzing actors, interests, and institutional mechanisms for navigating conflict. Students observed a plenary session of the EU Parliament. *Number of students: Midd: 5 Non-Midd: 6*

In "Taking to the Streets: Conflicts, Revolts, and Social Movements in France," students examined socio-political conflicts through French history. They analyzed how conflict shaped French governance and instances of transformative conflict. Field trips included an agency of conflict resolution and the National Museum of the History of Immigration. *Number of students: Midd: 4 Non-Midd: 11*

School in Spain: Historical memory activists and the relative of a World War II concentration camp deportee spoke about historical memory through the "Stolpersteine" memory project with 20 students. Each "Stolpersteine" is a small block and plaque memorializing a Nazi terror victim. Leaders overviewed fascist violence and the role of memorial projects in Spanish history. Students visited a nearby Stolpersteine and engaged in group reflection discussions. *Number of students: Midd: 15 Non-Midd: 5*

M-CMRS: In April, the Middlebury-CMRS program hosted its third annual Conflict Transformation Lecture, with the former Permanent Secretary of the Northern Ireland Office for the UK government, Sir Jonathan Phillips. Sir Phillips spoke to the Troubles in Northern Ireland, how the conflict was addressed, and its transformative implications. *Number of students: Midd: 16 Non-Midd: 12*

School in Taiwan: Middlebury in Taiwan held a CT retreat in April, for eight students to explore the complexities of cross-cultural communication and internal conflict. It focused on tensions that often emerge from differing cultural values. Through mindfulness activities, they examined how their internal responses shape interactions across cultures. *Number of students: Midd: 4 Non-Midd: 4*

School in Puerto Rico: The course "Writing for Linguistic and Cultural Competence" compared Lederach's CT framework to Participatory Action Research and Freire's "pedagogy of the oppressed." These frameworks were used to reflect on the history of the US Navy in Ceiba and on Vieques island; community members' resistance to military presence; and local organizations working to improve the conditions of inhabitants and ecosystems. Students undertook a three-day field trip to Ceiba and Vieques. *Number of students: Midd: 2 Non-Midd: 1*

School in Morocco: Two students researched the sociopolitical marginalization of the Amazigh language and culture in Morocco. They examined state policies, educational practices, and societal attitudes toward the Amazigh language. *Number of students: Midd: 0 Non-Midd: 2*

School in Chile: For the first time, the School in Chile integrated CT theory into its Sustainability and Society Track. Four students followed a specialized curriculum involving the analysis of socio-ecological conflicts, including water access, wind energy, land use, presence of invasive species, and the disconnect between local knowledge and public policy. *Number of students: Midd: 2 Non-Midd: 2*

School in Argentina and Uruguay: As part of the “Culture and Writing” course, students from the School in Argentina and the School in Uruguay traveled to Neuquén, Argentina. Through visits to the Aluminé intercultural hospital and the neighboring autonomous Mapuche territories, students investigated conflicts in health care that emerge from different ideologies and concepts of health, science, and community care. *Number of students: Midd: 8 Non Midd: 2*

School in Argentina: Students participated in lectures and site visits related to human rights and political violence. This included sites that demonstrate the role of art in community reparations; a former detention and extermination center; and a meeting with lawyer Valeria Thus to learn from her expertise on litigating genocides. Students also attended a conference on justice, truth, and negationism in modern Argentina. *Number of students: Midd: 6 Non-Midd: 2*

School in Uruguay: Students visited the non-profit Redalco as part of their “Writing and Culture” course. Redalco addresses unequal food distribution, recovering discarded food and redistributing to disadvantaged communities in Montevideo. Students learned about how market-driven criteria privilege product aesthetics over dietary value, and Redalco shared about the impact of food production on environmental sustainability. *Number of students: Midd: 1 Non-Midd: 2*

School in Cameroon: The “Women and CT” course investigated the Cameroonian Anglophone conflict. It paired theoretical exploration of conflict and peace studies through an African lens with engagement with practitioners and internally displaced women. *Number of students: Midd: 1 Non-Midd: 1*

One student joined Prof. Erik Fofack, Director of the Center for Gender, Peace and Security, to record and analyze statistics of women's representation in news content integrated student researchers, as part of a project on women's representation in Cameroonian media. *Number of students: Midd: 1*

School in Japan: A student intern adapted Middlebury's CT framework to the study abroad context in Japan, focusing on proposing minor, practical adjustments rather than structural changes. His work led to the School in Japan's first onsite faculty/staff CT retreat. *Number of students: Midd: 1*

Participants traveled to Iwaki, Fukushima to hear oral histories of the 2011 earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disaster and learn about reconstruction efforts. The community is still wrestling with its relationship to nature, the loss of life and property, and how to move forward. *Number of students: Midd: 8 Non-Midd: 2*

School in Japan participants visited Tenryūmura to learn about cultural preservation. Local resident Mr. Kawakami provided a tour; he has researched the little-known history of Chinese and Korean forced laborers—as well as Allied POWs—and their deaths during the construction of the Hiraoka Dam. The visit highlighted Mr. Kawakami's efforts to preserve these memories despite the risk of being associated with past harm. *Number of students: Midd: 8 Non-Midd: 2*

Global Courses: Two global courses were run at the College and Institute. In Winter Term, “Digitalization and Resilience in Rwanda” immersed 14 Institute students and four Rwandan students in digital tools driving transformation in Rwanda and East Africa. Through meetings with governmental, NGO, IGO, private sector, and civil society organizations, students analyzed digital transformation projects. At the College, the Scott Center for Religious and Spiritual Life offered a Spring half-credit course “Conflict Transformation: An On-The-Ground Case Study of Northern Ireland.” 16 students met weekly to reflect on CT theory; how the conflict has been used comparatively; the history of Ireland, colonialism and partition; and religion and violence/non-violence. This culminated in a study trip to N. Ireland over Spring break.

Faculty Research

The selection process for the 2025 CT research grants concluded in December 2024. 11 projects across both the College and Institute were awarded grants for this year.

The six College projects for 2025 are as follows:

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| Ellery Foutch | From Weapons of War to Emblems of Peace: The Columbian Liberty Bell, Peace Plows, and the Possibilities of Collective Memorials | American Studies |
| Jamie McCallum | A Better Bargain: Transforming Conflict Negotiation Processes Between Workers and Management | Sociology |
| John Schmitt | Optimal Scheduling Under Conflict | Mathematics |
| Marcia L Collaer | Origins of conflict-related personality traits | Psychology |
| Natalie Chwalisz & Sebnem Gumuscu | Populism beyond Borders: Unpacking Erdogan's support among Turkish Migrant Communities | Political Science / Political Science |
| William Pyle | Russian Society, Patriotic Attachment, and the Legacy of the Early 1990s | Economics |

The five Institute projects for 2025 are as follows:

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Isabella Bernardo | Investigating the Intersection Between Accelerationism, Ecofascism, and Climate-Driven Conflict | Center for Terrorism, Extremism, and Counterterrorism (CTEC) |
| Hanna Notte | We Shall Outlast Them: How Russia's Conflict With the West Went Global | Center for Nonproliferation Studies |
| Katharine Petrich | From Conflict Predation to Stable Conservation: Leveraging Satellite Data for Illicit Economy Detection and Environmental Crime Resolution | CTEC and Nonproliferation |
| Moyara Ruehsen & Jay Shapiro | Using Conflict Transformation to Break Down Barriers to Cross-Border Financial Crime Investigations | Financial Crime Intelligence / Nonproliferation & Int'l and Global Studies |
| William Potter; Siegfried Hecker, Yanliang Pan | Conflict Transformation in Sino-US Nuclear Relations | Center for Nonproliferation Studies |

Internal and External Engagement

The multi-sited efforts of the CT Collaborative work best when we invest in meaningful relationships that foster collaboration, communication, and shared learning.

- *External Advisory Board:* In February, we hosted a meeting with our eight-member external advisory board. We introduced Dr. Netta Avineri as the incoming director, and asked for insights on balancing internal engagement with external-facing engagement.
- *Pillar Head retreat:* In addition to regular meetings throughout the year, we gathered at the Institute in June for an end-of-year retreat. Pillar heads shared resources that helped them understand CT, brainstormed around the priorities and tensions that arise when turning towards more external partnerships. We mapped CT programs onto our learning goals and list of knowledge, skills, and dispositions, and then Avineri led a closing session to set the agenda for the coming year.

Stakeholder Engagement and Outreach: We continue to host events and conversations on our campuses to raise awareness about the CT Collaborative and create learning and skill-building opportunities.

At the Institute campus:

- Avineri presented about CT themes to the Institute Board of Advisors; at New Student Orientation; and at a Rohatyn Global Scholars information session. She lectured on “Negotiation and Intercultural Communication” for Robert Rogowsky’s “Strategic Negotiation” course at the Institute. Avineri facilitated workshops about “The Role of ‘Wondering More’ in Conflict Transformation” for the Middlebury School of the Environment’s Environmental Leadership course.
- DLINQ created the Sharing Conflict Stories Online workshop for CT Fellows and other students.
- “Conflict Transformation Lunches” are offered every semester to foster connection among Institute faculty and staff engaging in CT-related courses, partnerships, and community engagement.
- We were joined by several guest experts throughout the semester. Alana DeJoseph, director of the award-winning documentary *A Towering Task: The Story of the Peace Corps*, delved into the rich legacy of the Peace Corps and its profound impact on international development. Elayne Whyte Gomez (experienced diplomat and Professor of Practice at SAIS) shared about her professional experiences in international relations, diplomacy, and negotiations.
- Poetry Week 2025’s theme was “Tending Earth & Each Other,” and offered healing words for the Institute community through guest poets.

The Vermont campus also hosted community dialogues, guest experts, and training opportunities.

- Shortly after the presidential inauguration, 25-30 community participants gathered for small group discussions about the future of US politics in our final Good Talks 2024 session, with opening remarks from Prof. Bert Johnson and restorative justice leader sujatha baliga. We later met with community groups interested in hosting similar events. In February, we hosted a lunch discussion at the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Research for faculty and staff on “teaching politics,” with comments from Michole Biancosino (Theater) and Matt Lawrence (Sociology).
- Dr. Sarah Federman, author of *Transformative Negotiation* and Language School alum led a session of the CT Skills class and hosted a workshop for mediation training participants. We partnered with MiddCORE to host a discussion with Federman and Accenture negotiator Morgan Gaskin Thomas.
- In April, we hosted a week-long mini-residency for Emily Welty and Matthew Breay Bolton, 2024 Middlebury Honorary Degree recipients and members of ICAN, a Nobel Prize-winning campaign for nuclear disarmament. They engaged with a variety of student, faculty, and leadership stakeholders across the campus.

- Our Lunch Lab series focused on skill-building opportunities accessible to staff. Eight faculty and staff took turns leading one-hour workshops over lunch. Attendees represented a wide variety of offices – from the locksmith to public safety officers to the finance office and writing center faculty.

External Partnerships: This Spring, we substantially increased our work with external constituents.

- Frank Sesno (Middlebury alum and board member emeritus) featured conflict transformation as the annual theme of Planet Forward, a major climate journalism initiative. [The Summit in April](#) was framed around conflict transformation; Netta Avineri and Sarah Stroup helped design the two-day engagement, opened with an introduction to constructive conflict, and moderated panels with students and journalists.
- Nuwave consultancy (an equity consulting group) invited us to contribute educational content in constructive conflict skills. CT interns co-developed a video series, introducing the idea of constructive conflict and offering exercises in four areas: listening to understand, assessing one's conflict style, moving from positions to interests, and asking curious questions. These went [live on our website](#) in early May.
- Through nuwave consultancy, a national credit union approached Stroup for help in addressing internal conflicts. As we turn from building our internal foundation to taking our approach into other organizations and communities, we decided that a short consultancy would be a useful pilot for understanding our bandwidth and added value. This project is evidence of the demand for more education and skill-building in constructive conflict.
- We continue to share resources with those wanting to learn more about our work, including organizations like Continuity (a Bay Area group specializing in helping families manage conflict to improve their business and relationships); Emerson College; Hillel Ontario; Duke University's School of Civic Life and Leadership; Project Harmony (a cultural exchange program); Constructive Dialogue Institute; Campus Compact; the Office of University Engagement and Enrichment at the University of Rochester; the Monterey Nonprofit Alliance of Monterey County; and more.

Media Coverage and Presentations:

- In April, the CT Collaborative was featured [in an essay](#) in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* by former undersecretary of education James Kvaal. Kvaal argued for the need to articulate our values in the face of attacks on higher ed, while recognizing that we must expand our ability to teach disagreement across difference.
- In April, the CT Collaborative was featured in MiddMatters, a newsletter sent to high level donors.
- Sarah Stroup presented from her own research on divisions among liberal activists and lessons from the conflict transformation framework for the Eastview retirement community. She offered reflections on the collaborative approach to conflict transformation at Middlebury through the Carol Rifelj Faculty Lecture Series. She was invited to give the Gary King Lecture in Applied Social Sciences at SUNY New Paltz, titled "Conflict Transformation: from local to global." She ran an hour-long workshop for a Women's Giving Circle, hosted by alum and trustee Caroline Portny Beshara '98.
- In May, Netta Avineri presented the keynote for the York School Global Scholars Program Showcase, where she focused on "Transforming Conflict: Curiosity, Dialogue, and Story."
- At the Conflict Transformation Annual Seminar held at the Institute in May, 20 students and 4 faculty from Santa Catalina School participated and engaged with Fellows and Middlebury stakeholders.

Assessment and Evaluation

We continue to collect and analyze participant survey data across our pillars. (Please see the appendix for more information.) At the Institute, we collect both pre-Fellowship survey responses from students as well as post-program surveys. We received 33 responses to the pre-Fellowship survey, which gave us a clear sense of students' interests and goals going into the academic year. In their post-Fellowship surveys (20 responses), students noted their continued interest in engaging with conflict transformation in their courses. They also highlighted their ability to engage in rigorous conflict analysis as part of the program and recognized the role of culture in conflict-related engagement.

At the College, the major assessment pilot of the CT Collaborative has been to design, implement, and then analyze data from a pre-/post- survey that tracks progress on our first learning goal, “a new understanding of conflict.” Between January 2024 and February 2025, students in six new courses and eight summer experiences were asked pre- and post- questions about their understanding of conflict. We continue to administer the survey and plan to analyze results from Spring and Summer later this year with assistance of a CT intern. In total, we collected 176 responses to the pre-survey and 186 responses to the post-survey required at the end of the experience. Our analysis shows a statistically significant and positive shift in how students see conflict.

20 Engaged Listening Project participants completed a feedback form for Spring 2025. When asked “on a scale of 1-5, how likely are you to recommend the ELP to a colleague?” all of the respondents offered a 4-5 (likely/highly likely), with 60% saying highly likely.

For students in CT courses and experiences, we administered a pre-/post- survey that tracks progress on our first learning goal, “a new understanding of conflict.” The data below captures participants from January 2024-February 2025.

Figure 1 shows the average valence scores of all pre- and post- survey responses.

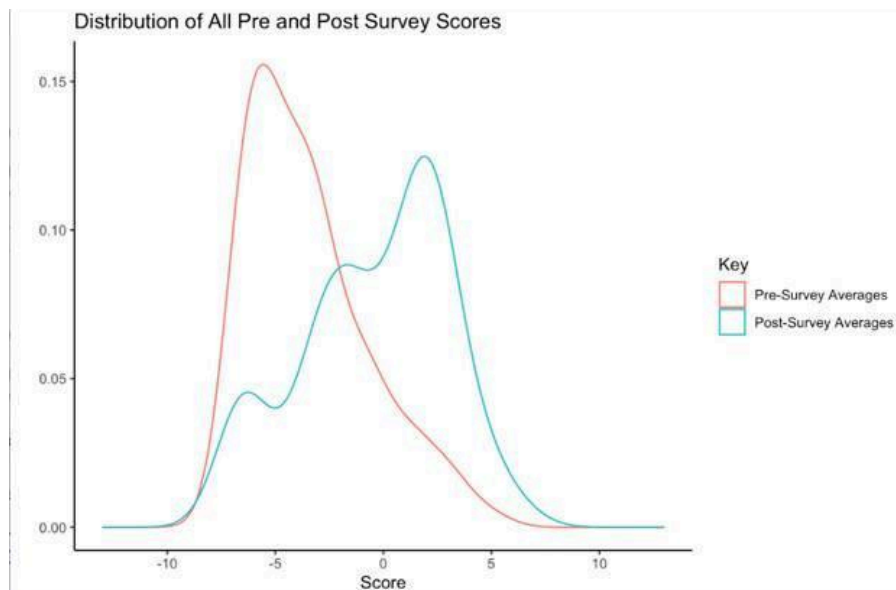


Figure 2 separates these findings into students enrolled in CT classes and students enrolled in summer experiential learning programs. While the courses have a greater positive effect on students' understandings of conflict, both effects are positive and statistically significant.

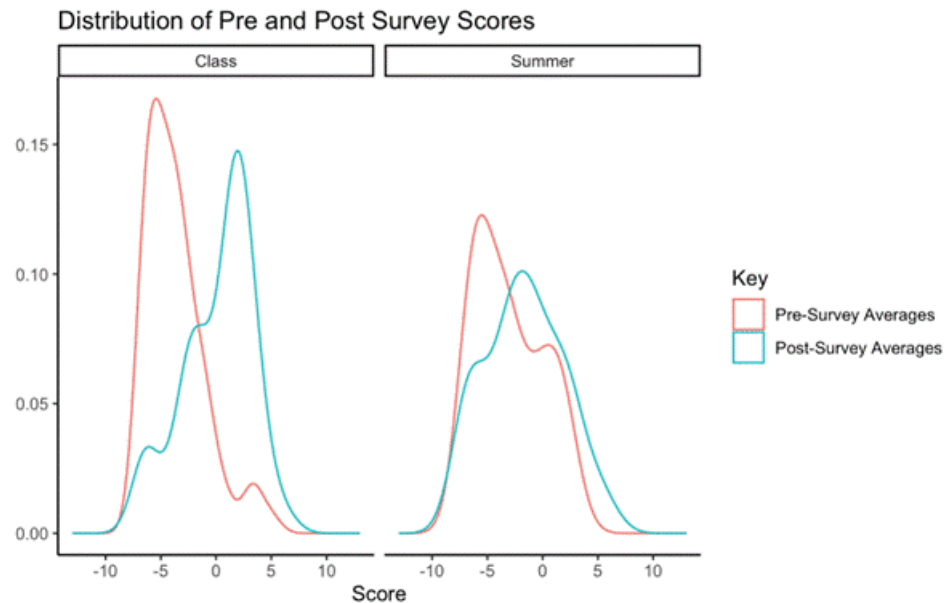


Figure 3 shows the distribution of the changes in valence scores by individual. Of 104 students, 78 (75%) of respondents' understanding of conflict moved in a positive direction (that is, above zero).

