

July 2026 Report

Kathryn Wasserman Davis Collaborative in Conflict Transformation

Public Version

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INTRODUCTION

Building upon our first four years of robust collective engagement and ongoing innovation, the Conflict Transformation Collaborative (CTC) has become a compelling model of multi-stakeholder and multi-sector partnership for change at local and global scales. Throughout the academic year 2025-2026, we have focused on a range of critical priorities, namely *community, connection, communication, capacity, consistency, and clarity*. The CTC has become an integrated hub for CT education, through impactful programming, project development, critical research, resource creation, and communities of practice for educators, students, and partners. The CTC provides unique perspectives on and meaningful engagement across diverse contexts, highlighting the relevance of Conflict Transformation (CT) approaches to conflict and change at interpersonal, relational, structural, and global scales. Students, faculty, staff, and leaders are recognizing the central role of productive conflict in actions that are both responsive to and proactive for sustainable change.

Overview

The CTC is a clear demonstration of the *what, how, and why* of liberal learning, deepened through internal partner engagement and external partnership cultivation. We have strengthened our integrated leadership team by sharing about our programs and projects – embodied by humility, curiosity, and co-learning. We have focused on articulating a clear theory of change (at individual, relational, institutional, and social scales) that shapes our refreshed learning goals, new website and logo, and robust, integrated assessment mechanisms. We have crafted compelling stories about our work to share with a wide range of audiences interested in topics including civic dialogue, interdisciplinary research, global education, and advocacy for pressing social issues of our time.

During this phase of the work, we have continued to deepen our individual, relational, and institutional capacity building while simultaneously engaging externally with broader audiences. Interestingly, these two projects are not distinct, but are meaningfully mutually informing. Through partnering with national and international consortia, we recognize what we can learn and gain through mutual engagement with colleagues across institutions. For example, through curating, facilitating, and assessing convenings, Middlebury colleagues have crystallized models for CT education and what may be distinctive about our approaches. These forms of peer engagement, communities of practice, and convenings that bring together educators allow us to build collective networks across higher education, diverse disciplines, and multiple sectors.

We have created more opportunities to engage with media and resources for pedagogical purposes (e.g., research grant reports, case studies, toolkits, readings, videos, podcasts, Fellows' projects). We have streamlined processes for program applications, surveys, MOU's, co-sponsorship forms, award letters, honoraria, and more – helping us to take stock of where we have been with an eye towards our collective next steps. We have hired interns focused on critical aspects of our work, including assessment, communication, curricular innovation, and external partnerships. We have also clarified several signature components of CT education, which manifest in diverse ways across pillars and programs: cohorts, communities of practice, leadership development, CT in the disciplines, university-community partnerships, and integration across the Middlebury ecosystem. These components then shape how we communicate about the work across modalities .

In 2026 and beyond, we are focused on several interconnected priorities, complementing our ongoing work engaging with internal stakeholders, critically assessing the impact of our programs, and deepening external partnerships:

1. Exploring new avenues and modalities for non-Middlebury students, faculty, and staff to engage with Middlebury's distinctive approach to CT education
2. Identifying novel ways to share our work with broader audiences (e.g., CT online badging, tracking use of resources on our website, creating infographics and visual representations, hosting a CT education journal)
3. Taking advantage of Middlebury networks and facilities to reach new partners and sectors (e.g., Middlebury in DC office)
4. Connecting to Middlebury's local and global footprints - foregrounding the cultural, linguistic, and intercultural components of conflict and change across contexts
5. Further exploring CT across disciplines (e.g., anthropology, environmental studies, arts, global security) and themes (e.g., migration, food systems, healthcare) through curricular, pedagogical, and research innovation

Lastly, we are focused on questions of institutionalization of CT approaches (e.g., across disciplines, in campus life, with community-based partnerships, through research grant impact). This priority is closely connected to the ongoing Strategic Planning process of Middlebury President Ian Baucom, and his explicit call for the institutional community to articulate "what Middlebury is for". There are a range of robust connections between the CTC's diverse forms of engagement and the Strategic Planning work (each with their own frames and vocabulary), including addressing urgent issues, higher education and democracy, critical dialogue and debate, civic engagement, plurality, intercultural and global topics, the role of the liberal arts, academic freedom, and more. We look forward to continued discussions about CT in relation to these topics, and creative ways to frame this diverse body of work for different audiences – deepening Middlebury's commitment to embodying principles of ethics, compassion, and mutual understanding with communities locally and around the globe.

Workshops, Events, and Presentations

We have partnered with a range of internal stakeholders, including Student Life, Student Affairs, Digital Learning and Inquiry (DLINQ), Center for Teaching, Learning, and Research (CTLR), and multiple departments/programs. The CTC presented at a range of events at the start of the academic year, such as the CTLR Teaching & Writing Retreat, Fall Faculty Forum, and MIIS Welcome Week to acquaint colleagues and students with our offerings. Among many others, additional notable events targeting the broader Middlebury community include our participation in President Ian Baucom's Inauguration poster fair; our 2025-2026 Social Change series of residencies and workshops; and the continuation of professional development training opportunities for a cohort of faculty and staff. See the "Outreach and Engagement" section near the end of this document for additional information about our externally-facing offerings.

Conflict Curricula:

We are offering four skills-centered courses this year: Teaching Literacies across Difference, Documentary Filmmaking, Photovoice as Rhetorical Practice, and Using Theater in the Classroom. The Change Curriculum also includes three cross-class cohort meetings focused on the particular vocabularies and methodologies literary critics bring to the framework of CT. One will be led by our Beyond the Page partners and will focus on theatrical practice as a powerful CT tool. The Change faculty have also met with Dr. Avineri to discuss those vocabularies and methodologies, with an eye to integrating them more explicitly into Middlebury's framing of CT descriptions and assessments. This is a big step forward for us, something that builds on four years of experience with the CT initiatives.

In January, three students from the Change course on Zora Neale Hurston's ethnographic activism were featured speakers in a panel at the 2026 Hurston Festival. The panel, which was arranged moderated by the course professor, showcased the ways students are integrating their research on Hurston into their own teaching and further scholarship. The event allowed students to engage with a public audience. It was recorded and saved as part of the permanent Hurston archive. The CT grant funding made this otherwise impossible dream possible: it covered the conference expenses of the three students.

Workshop Series:

In February 2026, BLSE ran its third Winter Institute focused on the theme "Expanding the English Classroom." 39 teachers from public and private schools attended – with an unusually high portion (60%) of private school teachers. This was our best ever: one that really nailed the kind of focus that helps catalyze CT work. Participants appreciated the takeaways: tools that they could use immediately in their classrooms to catalyze working and thinking across differences.

Bread Loaf Teacher Network:

BLTN Journal "Composing Together," Spring / Summer 2026 - See the whole issue at <http://sites.middlebury.edu/bltnmag>. Pieces most closely tied to Conflict Transformation work are [here](#).

The **BLTN Faculty Fellow** (supported by the grant) this year will be Sam Swope, a creative writer who is the founder and President Emeritus of the Academy for Teachers in NYC. He will be bringing his expertise in writing about education into weekly BLTN meetings this summer.

BLTN Next Gen

During this period, BLTN NextGen has been energized by three major convenings:

"Passion in Action" Online Event - April 16, 2026. Approximately 100 participants from nine different school systems (all of the nine sites). The NextGen Youth Advisory Board sought to expand participation in network activities by hosting an informational and expressive writing event with in-session classrooms during the school day. "Let's teach more kids who we are, and let them experience how we write together," was the general consensus among the youth leaders. Leading up to the event, advisors reflected on why it is that youth year after year insist

on writing and sharing together in our monthly meetings. Our answers to one another became our message to attendees: “We build trust and tap passion to make positive change in our communities”

Critical Issues Forum in Monterey. Two of the three Louisville groups (four youth, two adults) traveled to Monterey in April 2026 to participate in the Critical Issues Forum, an international gathering of youth focused on nuclear non-proliferation. See the Atherton students’ school news report about the event [here](#).

Read CIF director Maskao Toki’s report on this year’s event [here](#). From the report: “CIF has also collaborated with Middlebury College’s Bread Loaf Teacher Network since 2023, reflecting the ongoing importance of partnership with educators in strengthening global learning and dialogue”.

Henrico Cross-Site Gathering. In May, our Henrico site invited other sites to visit their fabulously diverse J.R. Tucker High School, where visitors (10 youth, and 6 mentors) from Aiken, Navajo Nation, and Vermont were hosted by youth and the mentor from Henrico. The group participated in the school’s culture fair, toured the historically Black Jackson Ward neighborhood, learned about Richmond history, and wrote and shared about the intersections of identity and change-making. See the weekend’s writing, reflection, and discussion prompts [here](#).

What’s the Story Film Showcase (July 9-12, 2026). Seven mentors and 19 students convened from eight sites (Aiken, SC*; Gastonia, NC; Nicolasville, KY; Ontario; Roseburg, OR; Santa Fe, NM*; Sharon, VT*; New York City. (*=NextGen sites) to share their youth documentary filmmaking products. The full set of videos can be found [here](#).

Change Action Grants & Change Fellows:

We awarded 12 Change Action Grants this year, choosing from a highly competitive field of applicants. The grantees include individuals working in nine US states and 2 overseas countries

We have selected [11 Teaching Writing and Acting for Change Fellows](#), from 10 states plus Washington, DC, for Summer 2026. Six of these teachers are new to BLSE. We also awarded three Global Change Fellowships and five What’s the Story? Fellowships.

CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION IN UNDERGRADUATE LIFE (UNDERGRADUATE)

A set of CT training programs spans Residential Life, Orientation, and on-campus Centers and programs. Peer Conflict Coaches participate in a yearlong leadership development program designed to foster knowledge, skills, and dispositions relevant to conflict and change in undergraduate learning spaces. Students participating in the Academic Cluster have sustained opportunities to deepen their knowledge and experiential base to engage productively with conflict and change. This suite of programming is a comprehensive training mechanism for students across years, majors, and areas of interest/impact.

Restorative Practices (RP):

The RP team continues to reach students, support faculty and staff through workshops and ongoing training, and respond to harm on campus.

Training Students:

We use RP training to equip students with the skills to better support each other in navigating low-level conflicts and to foster a sense of community. By building this foundation of mutual understanding, students are better prepared to address challenges when conflicts arise. We offer both introductory training to orientation leaders twice a year, and intensive training to Resident Assistants each Fall.

Responding to Harm:

Through intentional, facilitated processes, the RP team addressed multiple layers of community and individual conflicts throughout the past year, working with student organizations; athletic teams; and restorative accountability, harm support, and other restorative process cases.

Community Building RP:

During the Spring semester, the RP team was invited by various campus groups to craft and facilitate tailored Community Building RP Circles.

Peer Conflict Coaches:

This exciting new initiative officially launched in August 2025 with the goal of equipping students to respond to low-level harms and conflicts directly among their peers.

Over the summer, the team prepared a three-day intensive training for our 11 selected Peer Conflict Coaches (PCCs). This is a paid leadership position requiring up to six hours per week, which includes a 90-minute weekly cohort meeting, ongoing training, dedicated office hours, and program outreach. To set the PCCs up for success, the Fall and Winter semesters focused heavily on cohort and individual training.

Our full-group meetings focused on developing core capacities:

- Questions of curiosity
- De-centering oneself
- Holding complexity
- Deep self-awareness
- Reflective listening

- Presence and empathy

This curriculum was delivered through RP circles, hands-on activities, role play, and collaborative discussions. Additionally, the team co-created foundational programmatic materials, including outreach posters, informational blurbs, and logistics frameworks.

In the Spring, the PCCs transitioned into active campus leadership by:

- Facilitating community circles.
- Hosting informational tables to increase program visibility (which occurred throughout the Winter and Spring Term).
- Conducting outreach to faculty and staff to present in classes, utilizing a five-minute introductory presentation.
- Open office hours where peers could stop by to seek coaching in response to low-level conflicts.

Reflecting on this first year, we are incredibly proud of the PCCs. Their thoughtfulness and engagement exceeded our expectations, and we are excited to expand their impact.

Lastly, the recipient of the 2026 Laurie L. Patton Leadership Award in Conflict Transformation was PCC and CT Cluster Certificate Recipient, Charlie Fisch '26.

Academic Cluster:

In 2025-2026, Middlebury offered 90 Academic Cluster courses and experiential learning programs, taught by 67 instructors across 42 departments. Eight students successfully completed the CT cluster curriculum and received official certificates. Throughout the Winter and Spring semesters, we closely tracked the progress of interested students and supported them as they navigated the cluster requirements.

For the Fall 2026 registration cycle, we expanded our academic footprint by adding new courses to the college curriculum and conducting proactive outreach to prospective cluster students. We also engaged with students at the Academic Forum at the start of the Spring semester, giving us a direct opportunity to introduce incoming first-years to the CT cluster.

The Engaged Listening Project:

The Engaged Listening Project (ELP) continues to serve as Middlebury's professional development program for building institutional capacity around structured dialogue and restorative practices. Over the 2025–2026 academic year, the program brought together 44 total Fellows across four cohorts.

In the summer of 2025, Lida Winfield collaborated with Sarah Stroup, Netta Avineri, and several colleagues to develop a comprehensive toolkit for the Engaged Listening Project. The toolkit has proven invaluable for grounding the applied practice of ELP directly in student-facing environments.

In the Fall of 2025, Suzanne Gurland (Psychology) and Matt Lawrence (Sociology) joined Lida Winfield and Brian Lind as program facilitators. Together, they led two cohorts totaling 20 ELP Fellows, representing a diverse mix of faculty and staff from across the institution.

In the Spring of 2026, Miguel Fernández (Luso-Hispanic Studies) and Amit Prakash (International and Global Studies) joined Lida and Brian as co-facilitators for 24 new ELP Fellows. This cohort represented the full breadth of the Middlebury experience, spanning departments from Biology and Music to staff in Health Services and Civil Rights & Title IX.

Responding to participant feedback expressing a desire for cross-cohort connection beyond the opening workshop, the facilitators hosted a closing workshop at the end of the semester, allowing all 24 Fellows to gather back together again and reflect on their shared learning.

Supporting Staff and Faculty in Student-Facing Work:

We continue to offer bi-weekly community-building circles to faculty and staff, providing a dedicated space to share, connect, and build RP skills. We continue to offer customized, Community Building RP Circles by request.

Seeking to extend these frameworks beyond the formal ELP cohorts, Amit Prakash and Lida Winfield expanded their collaboration to pilot an open-access Community Conversation for all faculty, staff, and students. Themed *"Navigating Home and the World,"* this event utilized structured dialogue to help community members explore how to balance day-to-day academic and operational responsibilities while absorbing the weight of global conflicts.

Community Engagement Projects:

For the **Privilege & Poverty (P&P) Academic Cluster** in summer 2026, Middlebury students participated in internship placements with 13 partner organizations.

Middlebury College Alternative Break Programs (MAIt) Student leaders of the Feb '26 Alternative Break trips began their trip planning process in the summer and completed the Fall, ½ credit course, *INTD 0226 Experiential Learning Gateway*. The four trip themes were: *Environmental Justice* with host partners in Los Angeles, *Economic Justice* with host partners in New York City, *Housing Security* and *Climate Impacts* in St. Petersburg, Florida, and *Youth Empowerment* with the Mariposa Foundation in the Dominican Republic. Re-orientation back to campus included a trip leader reflection meeting and an all-participant, participatory reflection evening, facilitated by CCE's Alternative Break Civic Fellows.

Middlebury Social Impact Corps (MSIC) In summer 2026, a cohort of Middlebury undergraduate students participated in MSIC in Burlington, Vermont. Some students worked with Nuwave Equity Corporation, an interdisciplinary, people science consulting and technology firm, to conduct a workplace conflict needs assessment process and resource curation for Nuwave's client network. Another worked with the Vermont Truth & Reconciliation Commission, contributing to the ongoing work of data collection, historical archive research and policy analysis related to the commission's work of addressing the impacts of discriminatory state laws and policies.

Service Translation participants, students from International Christian University (ICU/Japan) and Middlebury, initiated a new partnership with Densho this spring (SP26), transcribing and translating handwritten newsletters produced by Japanese Americans held at the Lordsburg Internment Camp in New Mexico during World War II. We continued our five-year partnership with the **National Torchbearers program**, with Middlebury student fellows joining the spring National Torchbearers conference in Los Angeles this past April. These national convening bring together young adults diverse in identity, geography, and experience to consider what it means to fulfill the "American Promise" in today's polarized context.

Immersive Fora on CT & Community Engagement:

We continued offering a three-part event series for all students participating in summer 2026 CT-funded experiential learning programs. The first student gathering focused on interpersonal conflict styles using the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) in May. For the first time, this was facilitated by student leaders-- the cohort of Conflict Analysis Peer Facilitators. To prepare for these facilitation roles, Kristen Mullins [CCE Assistant Director, Intercultural and Global Programs] led more than 15 hours of training and materials review. In the fall, we hosted our third annual reflection gathering for students to reflect on/share their experiences.

Projects for Peace Alumni Award:

The 2025 Projects for Peace Alumni Award winner, Dr. April Edwell, has completed her 2025-26 award cycle. Dr. Edwell attended the Experiential Learning and Conflict Transformation convening in November 2025 and participated in a plenary session. Edwell also visited Middlebury College in January 2026 for a weeklong residency. During her visit, Dr. Edwell guest taught a "Conflict Transformation Skills" course and met with students, faculty, staff, and

community members with a shared interest in healthcare, access, and conflict de-escalation in clinical settings.

Application and nomination instructions for the fourth annual Projects for Peace Alumni Award were delivered in September 2025 to 100+ institutions that have partnered with Projects for Peace since 2007. The selected winner for 2026 is Anoush Baghdassarian:

[Projects for Peace Names Anoush Baghdassarian 2026 Alumni Award Recipient | Midd Stories](#)

Shepherd Higher Education Consortium on Poverty (SHECP) & CT:

SHECP continued to develop their Conflict Transformation Curriculum, designed 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. The 2026 curriculum includes a new assignment focused on community collaborations between groups with common goals but different values. Students who complete the entire curriculum will receive the SHECP Conflict Transformation Certificate. This summer, students from 17 different schools are participating in the updated curriculum.

This funding also supported SHECP's expanded Policy & Nonprofit Leadership (PNPL) Internship. This program is for students who have finished a prior SHECP internship. Interns obtain a greater understanding of the dynamics of organizational leadership and the creation of successful anti-poverty policies by drawing on their direct experiences, relationships, and academic work.

Break Programs:

We supported a **Spring Break New York Career Trek in Global Affairs and Conflict Transformation** and implemented our fifth annual **History in Translation** summer program.

Over spring break 2026, students embarked on the Global Affairs and Conflict Transformation Student Trek to New York, NY. Organized by the Center for Careers and Internships (CCI) this fully funded experience provided Rohatyn Global Scholars and Fellows with the opportunity to engage with alumni and professionals tackling some of the world's most pressing global challenges. The group met with alumni representing organizations including the US Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York, Council on Foreign Relations, American Museum of Natural History, Center for Justice Innovation, Columbia University Center for Justice, and Human Rights Watch.

History in Translation: Our summer 2026 program again focused on Language Access in high stakes settings (i.e. immigration, health, and education). New partners for 2026 included the Boston Public Schools Office of Language Access, the NYC Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, the New York State Office of Language Access, Deaf Refugee Advocacy, and the Vermont Language Justice Project.

Internships:

diiVe is again integrating CT curricula into their training content as a result of this partnership. Program highlights include Janine Carlse (University of Cape Town, Conflict Transformation and Equity Speaker) facilitating a session on "navigating difference", and a coaching session for exploring one's purpose through deep reflection and dialogue with Peter Willis (University of

Cambridge Institute for Sustainable Leadership). Students worked with clients in the public and private sector, focusing on how essential conflict can be for creating change and building skills to embrace that potential.

Projects for Peace Convenings:

The Experiential Learning and Conflict Transformation convening brought together educators and student participants from 17 institutions in Alexandria, VA in early November 2025. The agenda featured a series of concurrent sessions, 16 in total, led primarily by students, on topics related to civic identity development, reflective practices, and conflict transformation skills. We welcomed four guest speakers, including the 2025 Projects for Peace Alumni Award winner.

In June 2026, Vassar co-hosted the Projects for Peace Campus Liaison convening, entitled “the Ecology of Peacebuilding.” Participants from 28 institutions attended. Objectives continued from the 2025 convening; the agenda included new plenary and peer-led sessions on such topics as youth peacebuilding and program management amidst national and global uncertainties, special topics related to community engagement (e.g., responsibilities to vulnerable populations; and systems approaches to project design); campus eco-systems for peacebuilding. In total 16 concurrent sessions were offered. The convening featured a panel of four program alumni; typically we invite these alumni as guest speakers, but this year two of the panelists represented their institutions as campus liaisons/educators themselves.

Graduate Fellowships:

We designed this year's engagement with **CT Cohort Fellows** to emphasize a community of practice. CT Cohort Fellows participated in training sessions in the fall and spring to work collectively to build knowledge, skills, and dispositions for their CT projects.

CT Fellow projects demonstrated a wide range of disciplinary perspectives and formats. To see all of them visit this of [all 2025-26 Cohort Fellow Projects](#) with links to those that are digitally available.

CT Mentor Fellows worked as a community of practice from September 2025 through May 2026 to support the CT Cohort Fellows. Our intention with the approach to CT Mentor Fellow work this year was to emphasize building a community of practice between the Mentor Fellows and their groups of five CT Cohort Fellows.

Pedagogy Fellows supported the Pillar Lead with resource creation and other projects to support the graduate component of the CT Collaborative.

Graduate Assistant (GA) Fellows working with the Center for Terrorism, Extremism, and Counterterrorism Director Jason Blazakis engaged in research on militant accelerationist ideologies and ecofascist movements; gendered hate, and the role of AI and Large Language Models in facilitating terrorism and criminal organizations financing.

The Middlebury **Language Schools Conflict Transformation fellowship** integrates language learning with CT principles, equipping fellows with the linguistic and intercultural tools needed to navigate complex social, political, and historical divides. Fellows are studying in the French, German, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Spanish, Arabic, and Portuguese Schools.

Annual Seminar:

Over 100 individuals attended the seminar in person or online on Friday, May 1st 2026. The theme for the 2026 Annual Seminar was *"Navigating Conflict and Change: Sharing Models and Building Skills."* In 2025-26 we emphasized communities of practice across all pillars. For this reason we emphasized the relationship between Mentor Fellows and their groups in the design, development, and facilitation of the Annual Seminar.

Dr. Netta Avineri presented the plenary session "Language, Conflict, and (Social) Change: Processes of Becoming." Then, in two synchronous sessions participants selected CT Fellow Panels to attend that were facilitated by the CT Mentor Fellows. Finally, Fellows and participants from the community had the opportunity to participate in one of four CT skills-building training sessions. The training sessions were taught by community members and included poetry and creativity, mediation skills, restorative practices, and tools from confronting institutional racism for change. The [full program](#) for participants with links to most 2025-26 CT Fellow final projects is [available here](#).

Critical Issues Forum (CIF):

High school students and educators from around the world came together in Monterey, California for the [2026 Critical Issues Forum Spring Conference](#). From nuclear disarmament to

global security, this year's conference advanced critical conversations and elevated the role of youth in building a more peaceful future.

Organized by the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies (CNS) at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey, CIF continues its long-standing mission of equipping the next generation with the knowledge, skills, and perspective to engage with today's most pressing global challenges.

One of the BLTN schools, Atherton High School in Louisville, Kentucky, shared a video clip from their school's YouTube channel, "Atherton High School Media." In [the clip](#), two students and a teacher who participated in CIF talk about their CIF experience.

Community Engagement Opportunities:

Across the experiential learning programs, students and alumni have engaged meaningfully in a range of global contexts.

Czech Republic and Austria Nuclear Research Reactor

This two-week course allowed students to attend lectures at the Department of Nuclear Reactors at the Czech Technical University (CTU) and conduct experiments on the research reactor. Students also met with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna, Austria. (Prague, Czech Republic and Vienna, Austria)

Bhutan's Development Journey: Exploring the Convergence of Gross National Happiness (GNH) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

This 10-day immersive program, developed in partnership with Royal Thimphu College (RTC), offers a deep dive into Bhutan's unique approach to sustainable development. You'll explore how the country's guiding philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH) influences its progress toward the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). (Bhutan)

East Asia Conflict Transformation: Security, Development, and Cultural Understanding

This immersive course and field experience prepares students with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate the complex dynamics of East Asia. The program is designed to equip students with a deep understanding of security issues, development challenges, and cultural nuances through a combination of academic study, policy-focused research, and an immersive field trip. (China and Japan)

A delegation of MIIS students and alumni attended COP30 in Belém, Brazil focused on climate finance and ocean solutions. The team participated in negotiations and shared real-time insights via the Global Climate Policy Network to demystify international policy. This experiential learning initiative provided participants with firsthand exposure to global climate leadership and equitable engagement.

CT Practicum Fellows. We developed this new CT Fellowship in Fall 2025 in partnership with the Director of Experiential Learning at MIIS to create an opportunity for deep applied practice of CT with external partners. With the first cohort of CT Practicum Fellows we designed a community of practice process and resource exchange structure that included pre-practicum engagement; ongoing opportunities for gathering and reflection; and public presentation of final practicum deliverables at a roundtable event.

GLOBAL LITERACY AND CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION (ALL LEVELS)

Administrators and faculty based in Vermont, Monterey and at Middlebury-C.V. Starr Schools Abroad continue to build and expand Conflict Transformation programming in countries around the world. Projects this past academic year (2025-2026) have included new CT community engagement in Morocco, research assistantships and partnerships with local students in Chile, and an intercontinental Global Course that took students from Germany to Namibia. Projects continue to center the Conflict Transformation Collaborative's learning goals as they address both the macro (geopolitical) and micro (interpersonal) level conflicts that shape international experiential learning. The 2025-2026 academic year was a year of international collaboration, best practice sharing, and professional community building around the theme of conflict transformation.

New/Expanded Schools Abroad Projects:

Chile

In Spring 2026, the Middlebury School in Chile launched a new CT initiative within its Sustainability and Society Track. Working alongside local Chilean university students in bi-cultural research pairs, students completed fieldwork investigating socio-ecological conflicts and tensions between scientific and ancestral knowledge systems on Chiloé island, in Valdivia, and in Alerce Costero National Park.

Morocco

The School in Morocco also launched a new CT project in Spring 2026 as six Morocco-based students were joined by seven students relocated to Rabat from Middlebury's School in Jordan. Students participated in several CT experiential learning activities designed to promote intercultural understanding through engagement with local partners. Near the end of the semester, students participated in a local intercultural exchange where they presented elements of their own cultures through traditional clothing, music, and food while hearing from other Moroccan and international participants. Students practiced CT approaches needed for generative engagement with conflict – better understanding yourself to better understand the world, getting comfortable with being uncomfortable, and community-building through sharing and storytelling.

France

The School in France incorporated two new elements into their Spring semester CT content courses: CT course charters and mid-semester CT reflection worksheets. CT course charters are given to students alongside syllabi at the beginning of the semester. The course charters establish an agreement between students and professor to use the analytical framework of CT throughout the course. The mid-semester check-in worksheet asks students to explain the role of CT theory in course content, provide definitions of CT and suggest modifications for clearer CT instruction.

Already established and ongoing projects in Argentina, Uruguay, Morocco, Cameroon, Spain, Taiwan, and the UK continue to provide CT opportunities to students in our Schools Abroad, including research assistantships, courses, excursions, and orientation activities.

Conflict Transformation Global Courses:

Two global courses in January 2026 took students to Germany, Namibia (Middlebury undergraduates) and South Africa (MIIS graduate students). *Colonial Legacies: Namibia &*

Germany explored Germany's colonial history in East Africa and the role of memory, resistance, and language in modern day Namibia. *Dismantling Apartheid, Confronting Violence: South Africa as a Case Study in Conflict Transformation* brought MIIS graduate students and two local students from the University of Zululand on a two-week immersion into the country's ongoing efforts to address the legacies of apartheid through conflict transformation and transitional justice.

Convenings:

We hosted our first CT convening on the Vermont campus over two days in July 2025. Close to 70 participants engaged in activities and learned more about our diverse CT projects. Across three days of programming, Middlebury Schools Abroad Directors and visiting Study Abroad Advisors from institutions across the country shared best practices for making the most of transformative intercultural conflict, learned tools for productive dialogue, and practiced embodied conflict exercises. Following this conference, our School in Cameroon director Christiane Magnido was invited to present on CT to about 70 students, staff, and faculty at Grinnell College's Institute for Global Engagement (IGE) and its Office of DEI.

Also in July, colleagues from Middlebury attended The Forum on Education Abroad's Beyond Polarization Residency. This three-day immersive professional development experience hosted at the University of Denver and co-sponsored by Middlebury's CT Collaborative brought together roughly 30 international education professionals from institutions across the US. Through expert-led sessions with scholars and practitioners, participants explored generative conflict in international education from a variety of lenses: neuroscience, identity, peacebuilding, and more. CTC External Advisory Board Member John Paul Lederach was the keynote speaker.

In December, 22 people who attended the Beyond Polarization Residency met on Zoom to discuss what actions we had taken since the July residency. Activities that were shared included staff professional development meetings focused on conflict and change, presenting on conflict and change at regional conferences, and sharing the dialogue vs debate tool in a civil discourse class.

In October, we partnered with two European regional professional organizations, the Association of American University Programs in France (APUAF) and Study Abroad Programs in Spain (APUNE), to engage close to 80 international education leaders across the two countries. In Paris, Dr. David Wick (MIIS Professor and CT Pillar 4 lead), Phyllis Stinson (CT Pillar 5 Co-Lead), and Agnes Roche (School in France CT Program Assistant), facilitated two workshops in partnership with EUSA Internships, a key Schools Abroad partner in Europe, and the Middlebury School in France. In Madrid, Gabriel Guillén (MIIS Spanish Professor and director of the Middlebury School of Spanish) and Wick led 25 participants in an afternoon workshop featuring Middlebury School in Spain Director Patricia Rodríguez and a MIIS IEM student working in Madrid. In both countries, participants developed their dialogue skills, explored their own conflict styles, and practiced conflict analysis skills using an adapted Conflict Analysis Tool previously developed by Middlebury colleagues in Pillar 3.

Our engagement with the Forum on Education Abroad and APUAF this year directly led to several more collaborations: in November, David Wick and Phyllis Stinson delivered a CT training session for 20 people as part of EUSA Internships' regular staff professional development. The training introduced general CT theory, discussed conflict and learning, and invited participants to learn more about conflict styles and dialogue. David Wick led a similar webinar for CEA CAPA's enrollment team in April 2026. Finally, our partnership with The Forum

was deepened over 2026 as we worked together to host a second Beyond Polarization Residency. Throughout this academic year, we have been preparing for 47 participants to come together in Prague to discuss polarization today and share approaches to transforming conflict in international education. Over 20 Middlebury Schools Abroad directors and staff will be joined by education abroad professionals from Barcelona, Prague, Madrid, Galway, Dublin, London, Florence, Ukraine and the US.

In addition to the collaborative work we have taken on with The Forum this past year, three CT-focused sessions were selected for their annual conference in March 2026. This annual conference brought together over 1,100 people to learn and share on international education. Two of these sessions were led by MIIS faculty or Middlebury Schools Abroad staff, while a third was a presentation given by education abroad leaders who attended the Beyond Polarization Residency in July. A selection of participants then gathered for a social hour co-sponsored by the CT Collaborative.

Similar to our international education partners who took their learning and shared it with others at the Forum Annual Conference in March, EUSA Internships included CT theory and shared more about the CT work they do with us in their presentation at the International Internship Network Conference in Madrid in June 2026.

At two international education conferences in Morocco, Middlebury's School in Morocco staff helped advance the application of CT principles to student programming. At the Arabic Language Institute in Fez (ALIF) symposium and at The Forum's Regional Seminar in Tangier, they presented student projects supported through CT funding, highlighting how experiential learning and community engagement can foster dialogue, address local challenges, and promote sustainable change. After these engagements, a local group of Moroccan study abroad programs created a CT-focused network where they trade ideas and approaches.

CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION RESEARCH GRANTS

In November 2025, the CT Research Grants Selection Committee completed its review of applications for the 2026 cycle. The committee includes faculty from Middlebury College and MIIS who previously received research grants and represents a wide range of disciplines and areas of interest/expertise. They reviewed 21 applications for this round.

The College's five awardees for 2026 are:

- Kristin Bright, "Kuaka Pedagogies: Long-Haul Strategies for Relational Learning, Leadership, and Exchange" (Anthropology)
- Matt Lawrence, "How Campus Norms of Conflict Transformation Shape Students' Beliefs about the Purpose of College" (Sociology)
- Jonathan Miller-Lane, "Case Studies in Conflict Transformation: Learning From Educators on the Front Lines of the Book Banning Battles" (Education Studies)
- Shawna Shapiro, "Sticks and Stones: Using Language to Build Hope and Bridge Difference (A Resource Guide for Teachers, Parents, and Other Leaders)" (Writing and Rhetoric; Linguistics)
- Catharine Wright, "Shepherding Change in Vermont Farms and Fiber" (Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies; Writing and Rhetoric)

he Institute's five awardees for 2026 are:

- Isabela Bernardo, "Deplatforming as Displacement: A Conflict Transformation Analysis of Platform Moderation" (Center on Terrorism, Extremism, and Counterterrorism)
- Stephen Herzog, "Transforming the Narrative: Activism, Public Imagination, and Nuclear Disarmament" (James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies)
- Chen Kane and Hanna Notte, "Defining Inclusive Regional Security for the Middle East" (James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies)
- Xiaoyan Shen and Robert Rogowsky, "Cross-Disciplinary Approaches: Interpreters as Mediators for Conflict Transformation in Negotiation Simulations" (Chinese Translation and Interpretation; International Trade)
- Masako Toki and Federica Dall'Arche, "Transforming Conflict through Nuclear Disarmament Education: Building Peace through Youth Engagement" (James Martin Center for Nonproliferation; Vienna Center for Disarmament and Nonproliferation)

ASSESSMENT & LEARNING GOALS

At this phase of the CTC's engagement, we took a holistic view of the range of projects and programs being undertaken by colleagues and students. In reviewing all of the forms of assessment data previously collected, we recognized that specific pillars and programs had a range of useful information that was informing their ongoing work. We are now interested in identifying common themes across the Collaborative's engagement as a whole, and tracking in different ways how individuals are deepening their knowledge base and skillset over time.

Therefore, we sought to identify novel approaches to providing consistent data across pillars and programs. We also reviewed the CT learning goals, with an eye towards the newer and deeper forms of engagement that many colleagues, students, and partners were focused on. In Summer and Fall 2025, through several discussion, feedback, and consultation sessions with various constituencies, we updated and refined the CTC learning goals.

We are also now undertaking a robust assessment process, designed to elicit consistent data and themes across the collective work. Every CT program is now categorized into one of three 'buckets' (learning, experience, training). We have crafted specific (open ended, Likert Scale) assessment questions relevant to those buckets, and have asked each Pillar Lead to include those questions into their existing and future assessment mechanisms. This approach will provide us with both qualitative and quantitative data across the initiative. A CTC undergraduate intern focusing on data projects is supporting our survey development and results analysis. At the pilot phase of this assessment initiative, we are already seeing that these consistent questions will provide a powerful picture of the impact and institutionalization of CT-related endeavors across contexts.

Two of the CTC interns mapped all of the new CT learning goals onto the Academic Cluster curriculum, building off a similar approach that was previously undertaken with the MIIS graduate curriculum. This process has allowed us to gain some insight into the Cluster curriculum's connections to particular CT knowledge, skills, and/or dispositions - and provide material for discussion with faculty and areas that could be broadened/deepened in courses, disciplines, and the curriculum overall. We have also refreshed the Research Grants guidelines to align with the CTC's current foci, prioritizing proposals that further CT knowledge, embody high impact potential, and demonstrate ethical/reflective practice in relation to the projects and communities in the research. And our co-sponsored speaker events form integrates these current foci and CT learning goals, further shaping a coherent approach to CT across the institution.

In addition, we are currently undertaking a data visualization initiative, focused on capturing grant deliverables and impact across stakeholders - designed for diverse audiences. We are also exploring the potential for partnerships with midd.data, for network analysis as well as statistical consulting. We also envision engaging in other assessment activities, including interviews and focus groups with faculty and staff about the impact of CT engagement on their teaching and professional practice. And we plan to continue evaluations with internal and external partners (e.g., community-based organizations) about their perspectives on the Collaborative's impact.

Moving forward, we envision measuring impact of cultural/institutional change in new ways, including surveying CT-affiliated educators, the many faculty and staff who have participated in the Engaged Listening Project since 2022, and the Schools Abroad directors about the range of ways that their pedagogy and program support has changed since they began engaging with

CT. We imagine that these data will be useful in gaining perspective on the more sustainable components of CT programming.

The CTC has collected survey data and personal reflections across many populations over the years, including participants in professional development programs (e.g., Engaged Listening Project, mediation trainings); undergraduate learning opportunities (e.g., experiential programs, Peer Conflict Coaches, study abroad excursions); and graduate cohorts (e.g., CT Fellows at MIIS, Change Action grantees at BLSE). We continue to evaluate the impact potential of CT reflected by these sources.

OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT

At this phase of the Conflict Transformation Collaborative (CTC), we are focused on deepening our engagement with a range of external partners and audiences, expanding the reach of the CTC's work. Below is a summary list of external activities from 2022 through mid-2026. We are connecting within relevant networks, playing a leadership role, and distinguishing ourselves within the broader landscape.

1. National and International Consortia

Summary:

- 10 consortia
- 492 organizations and institutions
- 1200 publication readers
- 116 students
- 1205 event participants
- (502 total organizations and institutions, 2521 total individuals)

The CTC has engaged to varying degrees with **10 national or international consortia**. These include the American Association of Colleges & Universities (AAC&U); Campus Compact, whose 2026 conference featured Dr. Avineri's contribution to their [Scaling Discourse in Higher Education Project](#); and Planet Forward, with whom Dr. Avineri has regularly partnered during their annual Summits and monthly [Pillar School](#) meetings.

We are also learning from models and engaging with colleagues around civic dialogue in higher education and community-engaged work (via meetings, newsletters, webinars, and resources).

2. Dissemination

Summary:

- 88 organizations/institutions
- 14,763 readers/listeners
- 1061 event participants
- (15,824 total individuals; 88 total organizations)

In terms of dissemination beyond Middlebury, please also see our [newsletters and annual reports](#) and our [Instagram page](#) (527 followers; 85 posts since July 2025). There are approximately 10,000 people on our mailing list. Our "Opening Up" podcast episodes have been downloaded 4,045 times. Our [Conflict Styles Self-Assessment online tool](#) has been completed 293 times. We are in the midst of measuring/assessing reach for a range of other resources on our website, including the [CT video library](#).

We are presenting in a range of spaces about the Conflict Transformation Collaborative and sharing frameworks that are relevant to distinct institutional and organizational contexts. During the coming academic year, we plan to launch a CTC webinar series and add new elements to our website to increase reach (e.g., student testimonials, interactive videos, new resources).

The CTC's work has been showcased through numerous external conferences, workshops, and media outlets in multiple countries. These include the [Chronicle of Higher Education](#); the 2025

European Association of Study Abroad (EUASA) conference in Bologna, Italy; the American Association for Applied Linguistics (AAAL) conference in 2026; and many more.

3. Convenings

We are building sustained communities of practice with educators across institutions and organizations, domestically and globally.

Our pillars focusing on undergraduate experiential learning and global engagement have thus far hosted four convenings, with representatives from 61 institutions, 26 states, and four countries. In total, these institutions enroll over 470,000 undergraduate and graduate students.

4. Local and Regional Partners (Domestic & International)

Middlebury currently maintains partnerships with more than **90 organizations** for experiential learning and community outreach programs.

These domestic and international partnerships include government agencies, nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations, community-based organizations, and grassroots efforts focused on topics including economic justice/initiatives, civil and legal rights, universities/education/research/youth empowerment, housing, environment/agriculture, health/food security/human services, immigration, language access and preservation, legal/government, mediation/peacebuilding/CT skills, volunteer organizing/community building, and history/memorialization. They span seven states (including Washington, DC, and Puerto Rico) and 26 countries. Faculty research grant recipients have engaged with 40 organizations across 12 states and seven countries.

5. External Advisory Board (EAB)

Our External Advisory Board is comprised of six members with a variety of professional affiliations and areas of expertise within and beyond academia. Engaging with the EAB allows the CTC to expand our reach, networks, and influence in a range of ways. Recent engagements include Middlebury President Emerita Laurie L. Patton's joining the EAB, allowing us to deepen our partnerships with the American Academy of Arts & Sciences, where she serves as President. John Paul Lederach was the keynote speaker for The Forum on Education Abroad's Beyond Polarization Residency held in August 2025, which the CTC co-sponsored. David Campt (Founder and Principal of the Dialogue Company) served as a panelist at the November 2025 Experiential Learning and Projects for Peace convening.

We are proud of all that the CT Collaborative has accomplished in terms of internal capacity building and external reach/engagement. We are looking forward to expanding this externally-facing work in the coming years of the grant and beyond.

APPENDIX: PHOTOGRAPHS



Participants in Michael Rohd's workshop, January 9th, 2026



Michael Rohd presentation and panel, January 8th, 2026



Michael Rohd class visit January 9th, 2026



Instagram post for BLTN Winter Institute, Winter 2026



Student and faculty participants at the Shepherd Higher Education Consortium on Poverty convening, Summer 2025



Dr. Andrew Pippenger presents "Migration Between Justice and Democracy," March 2026



David Cortwright presents “Protest and Policy,” October 2025



MIIS Poetry Week participants, April 2026

The Middlebury Dance Department, Conflict Transformation Collaborative, Twilight A.i.R., Education Studies, MiddCORE, Philosophy, Black Studies, CCI, Political Science, Oratory Now, Innovation Hub, Rohaytn, VP of Student Affairs, and Writing and Rhetoric present:

CERTAINTY IS OVERRATED

A workshop for people smart and brave enough to be wrong



April 1, 2026

4:30 PM EST



Wilson Hall

McCollough Student Center



Interactive Workshop

Free and open to the public!



Alzo Slade

Instagram post for April 2026 Alzo Slade event in Middlebury



End of year dinner for Peer Conflict Coaches, May 2026

CONGRATULATIONS



Congratulations to recent Middlebury College graduates
Charlie Fisch, Numi Moreno Calderón, Yahya Rahhawi,
Shealagh Brams, Omar Alghondakly, and Manar AlRikabi

Instagram post for Academic Cluster certificate recipients