Innovating for the Greater Good

The Center for Social Entrepreneurship (CSE) builds on Middlebury’s commitment to educating students in the tradition of the liberal arts. Our students learn to be effective agents of social change by reflecting on who they are, connecting with others, analyzing systemic challenges, and engaging the world around them. The center is Middlebury’s hub for a growing global network of schools, NGOs, government agencies, businesses, and foundations that share our commitment to social change.

Our Programs

Students often begin their relationship with the CSE—and their awareness of their potential in social entrepreneurship—through our Friday Speaker Series. At this weekly lunchtime event, students meet and listen to alumni and other guest entrepreneurs and share insights on social change, lessons from the field, and potential career paths.

Following each speaker session, students and young alumni gather for MLab at the center. In this forum participants continue the discussion from the speaker series, explore and develop ideas, and consult with peers and mentors about resources that can help expand their ideas into projects.

In the 2012–13 academic year, the CSE hosted 16 lunchtime lectures, with an average of 30 attendees per talk. The popularity of the program continues to increase.

Social Entrepreneurship in the Curriculum

Each January term, Professor Jon Isham teaches Social Entrepreneurship in the Liberal Arts. This interdisciplinary course orients students in the ancient roots and traditional goals of a liberal arts education and connects those traditions with the field of social entrepreneurship. As part of the course, students conduct their own research with help from the center. Completion of this course is a prerequisite for becoming a CSE Fellow.

Professor Isham has also led a First-Year

“The CSE is a community where ideas and innovation flourish because nothing gets shot down. There is hope and positivity in every situation. If I am ever feeling depressed about injustice in the world, I go to the CSE to get re-inspired. Thank you to the CSE!”

—Jeannie Bartlett ’15
CSE Fellow
Seminar entitled Social Entrepreneurship and Social Justice. This course introduces students to models of social change, theories of justice, and the promises and challenges of social entrepreneurship. For more advanced students, Professor Isham teaches an independent study, Social Entrepreneurship 2.0.

In 2014–15, Professor of Economics David Colander will offer a new course on the history of entrepreneurship, which will involve local professionals and emphasize the power of the social entrepreneurship model.

Research into What Works
Lauren Kelly ’13, a CSE alumna, is working with Professor Isham while researching social entrepreneurs in India. Her research on what is effective in that region will inform the center’s programs.

Professor Isham, with assistance from CSE interns, has researched the performance of the Davis Projects for Peace grants to identify elements that enhance success. (For example, a fellow’s first-hand knowledge of the project site’s language and community is an important factor; forming an NGO can boost a program’s sustainability over time.)

Summer Grants
Each spring, the CSE accepts grant applications from students who have identified social problems and wish to create projects to address them. The CSE selects up to five grantees and awards each up to $3,000.

Among the completed projects so far: developing a composting system in a Vermont high school, training youth changemakers in Mexico, initiating GIS mapping in Rwanda to aid a grassroots health organization, creating job training for underprivileged deaf women in Pakistan, and producing laptop desks for poor schools in Swaziland.

In the course of these summer projects, grantees often discover the challenges and rewards of negotiating on-the-ground bureaucratic, political, and cultural issues. They also experience many of the personal growth thresholds that can confront changemakers. They maintain access with their CSE advisers and, on their return to campus, they work with CSE staff and mentors to measure and evaluate results and build their next level of skills.

CSE Fellows
The CSE fellowship program selects a cohort of six sophomores for a three-year period of study and mentored training that integrates with their college studies. The goals of the program are to extend the cohort’s exposure to opportunity, to encourage humility and awareness of the complexities of trying to effect social change, and to help students avoid isolated experiences as they learn from failures and successes. The students receive $8,000 grants and are expected to blend social entrepreneurship into academic work, pursue relevant summer experiences, lead social entrepreneurship activities on campus and beyond, and design and implement their own projects before their senior years. Fellows are selected based
on their record of commitment or orientation to community, empathy, humility, and social change.

Each cohort participates in Professor Jon Isham’s January term class, Social Entrepreneurship and the Liberal Arts (see above). During the following spring semester, individual and group advising and skill-building sessions prepare fellows for summer internships with a social enterprise or a similarly involved organization.

Throughout their junior years, fellows are mentored in skills such as budgeting, interviewing and listening, public speaking, and project design. Each fellow designs his or her own project for the fellowship’s second summer. Those wishing to study abroad at one of Middlebury’s 36 sites in 17 countries can arrange internships with social change businesses and organizations.

Some students also use their fellowship funding to attend conferences such as the Clinton Global Initiative University, of which Middlebury is a member. Without encouragement and support from the CSE, I may have followed a much more conventional path post-graduation. My mentors at the CSE taught me to love learning outside of the classroom, to push boundaries, to embrace failure, and to give myself permission.”

—Lauren Kelly ’13
CSE Alumna, Research Intern

with and keynote addresses by our Vision Award recipients, workshops with leading social entrepreneurs, and explorations of the field through such lenses as social justice and education.

**MCSE Vision Award Recipients**

At the center’s annual January Symposium on Social Entrepreneurship, Middlebury honors leaders who share the center’s goal of preparing individuals to lead a life of social change.

**2012**

**Bill Drayton**, founder of Ashoka, the world’s largest social entrepreneur network, which proposes that everyone is a changemaker.

**Jacqueline Novogratz**, founder and CEO of the Acumen Fund, a nonprofit global venture fund that uses entrepreneurial approaches to solve the problems of poverty.

**2013**

**Billy Parish**, climate activist and founder of Mosaic, a company that uses crowdsourcing to enable individuals to finance solar energy projects and receive a return on their investment.

**Majora Carter**, founder of Sustainable South Bronx green-collar job training, and head of the Majora Carter Group, which focuses on climate adaptation and urban revitalization.

**Annual Public Symposium**

Our annual January Symposium on Social Entrepreneurship brings together members of the College community, interested area residents, and leaders from around the world in social entrepreneurship. The symposium includes events
2014
Shabana Basij-Rasikh ’11, cofounder and president of SOLA, School of Leadership Afghanistan, which educates Afghan girls.

David Bornstein, journalist and author of the New York Times column “Fixes” and cofounder of Solutions Journalism Network.

Engaging With Other Learning Institutions
Bread Loaf Forum
Each June, the CSE hosts a four-day forum at Middlebury’s scenic Bread Loaf mountain campus. Staff and faculty from dozens of colleges and universities attend to discuss social entrepreneurship in their liberal arts programs and on their campuses. They share insights about their activities, lessons learned, and goals for transforming their institutions.

Some of the CSE’s Partners Worldwide
Ashoka
Since 1980, Ashoka has led the field of social innovation. With offices and fellows worldwide, Ashoka provides a global network of active programs, professional advice, and funding to create a world where “Everyone is a Changemaker.”

Ashoka U connects 150 college campuses worldwide, fostering cultures and skills of social innovation. Middlebury is one of 30 Ashoka Changemaker Campuses—those recognized as especially committed to solving social problems through innovative enterprise.

Clinton Global Initiative University Network
The CSE is a member of this growing network of institutions committed to supporting and mentoring student innovators and entrepreneurs.

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