

A BLUEPRINT FOR EXCELLENCE: COMMITTEE REPORTS

"Where do we want the College to be in the year 2004? I believe that we should seek to be nothing less than the college of choice for the very strongest students—the college of choice. . . . To go here is not be coddled or catered to. To have gone here is to have a lifetime of opportunities, made possible by the very best liberal arts education, opened to you. To have gone here is ultimately what should matter most."

John M. McCardell, Jr.

These words were at the core of the annual opening address to the College community in September 1994 in Mead Chapel. In that address, we put forth "A Vision for Middlebury College," challenging faculty, students, staff, alumni, and friends of the College to set their sights high, and envision a college 10 years from now that would join the ranks of the very best liberal arts colleges in the country. We included a blueprint, which identified specific areas of the academic and co-curricular program in which the College would strive to earn national prominence. Those areas, built upon the College's longtime commitment to general excellence in the liberal arts, are cutting-edge leadership in language study and pedagogy, the study of literature, teaching global understanding that radiates from a core linguistic and cultural competency, developing the environmentally aware campus, and creating opportunities for students to apply what they learn about the liberal arts to real-world situations.

This message, and the specific areas cited metaphorically as "peaks" among Vermont's mountain ranges, was rooted in the College's history. The commitment to general excellence extends back nearly two centuries, and identifies many of the characteristics that Middlebury students of so many generations have experienced and hold dear—small classes; a faculty truly committed to teach-

ing excellence; the superb physical setting of the campus and its facilities; and, perhaps most important, the close student-faculty relationships that bridge the classroom and students' personal lives—relationships that retain their meaning for a lifetime. The carefully chosen strengths for which the College seeks national prominence reflect areas for which Middlebury has already gained considerable national recognition, or holds a comparative advantage to become the leader.

This past year, in response to that address, and as part of the three-year review and update of the Ten-Year Planning Document, prepared in 1992, five special committees of faculty, students, staff, and administrators dedicated hours of hard work. Each committee met through the spring semester and submitted draft reports with specific recommendations on how each "peak" area could meet its challenge within the next decade. What follows are some of the many recommendations made in the draft reports.

On general excellence in the liberal arts

- Establish more clearly the role of faculty on campus—what should we expect from faculty at different times in their lives and careers?
- Designate certain faculty as "College Professors" for specified periods whose teaching and research exemplify the type of intellectual breadth and depth we hope to inspire in our students.
- Offer "intellectual discussion" tables in dining halls, focusing on rotating discussion topics with different professors.
- Set aside a time at least once or twice a month that is designated as "colloquium time" to facilitate integrating educational experiences.
- Find better ways to promote continuity within the academic program so students do not feel abandoned when an adviser goes on leave or stops working for Middlebury.
- Improve the quality of residential space to enable the elimination of first-year dorms in favor of mixed-class dorms.
- Establish forums for discussing the "need" for intoxication; healthy and desirable alternatives need to be promoted.
- Establish a peer mentoring program/buddy system for first-year students and seniors who share similar interests.



*"... a commitment to
general excellence ..."*

Alexander Lucius Twilight, a member of Middlebury's Class of 1823, was the first African American citizen to graduate from an American college. This year Middlebury is celebrating the bicentennial of this native Vermonter's birth. Twilight served as a minister, educator, and member of the Vermont state legislature.

- Draw upon staff expertise in such areas as technology development, facilities management, health and counseling services, library resources, and residential life.

On internships

- Prepare a database on the World Wide Web for selected internships from the alumni network and Career Counseling and Placement's (CC&P) resource library.
- Establish a professional staff position that will aggressively seek internship opportunities, coordinate internship programs, and develop and maintain computer database services within CC&P.
- Improve awareness of and accessibility to internship opportunities through internship grants; the establishment of an endowment for subsidizing designated internships; and an annual conference on campus involving internship sponsors, participating faculty, and past student interns.

On language study and pedagogy

- Increase faculty expertise in foreign language acquisition, and develop a more flexible faculty reward system that would encourage faculty to pursue new approaches to foreign language teaching and materials development.
- Increase staffing support for technology, and provide more intensive training opportunities for faculty.
- Provide opportunities for major project development, especially in computer-managed learning and hypermedia, involving undergraduates and recent graduates.
- Explore more fully the possibilities for teaching foreign languages across the curriculum (e.g., providing discussion sections of disciplinary courses—such as Latin American politics—in foreign languages).

On global learning and international studies

- Require that all programs with an international focus/specialization have a common core of courses to promote shared common learning experiences among our students.
- Ensure that students in all international-related programs develop sufficient competency in a foreign language to enable them to study abroad in that language.
- Integrate study abroad curricula into all College programs with an international focus/specialization.
- Increase study abroad opportunities for students who study in disciplines that are currently underrepresented in our programs abroad (e.g., the natural sciences).

On the environment

- Adopt a set of policies that relates to energy and materials efficiency for future construction projects.
- Develop mechanisms to ensure that the latest environmental technology is incorporated into the operations of the College.
- Enrich the curriculum with course offerings, such as in environmental ethics, environmental history, anthropology, sociology, art, geology, and environmental law.
- Establish a summer program in environmental studies and an off-campus site for academic-year programs that include an environmental curriculum.

This fall, the Educational Council, along with selected faculty, staff, and students, will begin follow-up work on the draft reports prepared by the original five committees. In addition, a sixth committee will meet in the coming year to address the study of literature at Middlebury. Members of the council will form small committees that will prepare recommendations and legislation for the appropriate committees and/or administrative offices to consider sometime next spring. While not all of the recommendations made by the original committees or the follow-up teams are likely to win universal support on campus, it is clear that many in the College community have taken seriously the challenges set forth in the vision we have articulated. The draft reports all offer compelling proposals that, if implemented successfully, would indeed improve significantly the education we now offer our students, and would move us closer to becoming the college of choice for the very best students, while preserving those aspects of Middlebury that have endured for generations.



President John Martin Thomas, who ranked first in Middlebury's Class of 1890, provided leadership throughout one of the College's major periods of growth. From 1908 to 1921, during his presidency, the student body grew from 203 to 433; the faculty from 11 to 38; and six major buildings were added, tripling the value of the College's facilities.