

**Report of the Task Force on
the Status of Women at Middlebury College**

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Task Force on the Status of Women Members

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I. Methods

The 2007 Task Force on the Status of Women (hereafter abbreviated as TSW), charged in April 2007, agreed early on to engage the campus community through open meetings, small focus groups and one-on-one interviews. Task Force members conducted more than 30 sessions during the fall of 2007, varying from large open meetings to focus group sessions. A partial listing appears in the appendices. In addition, we devised and distributed an electronic survey (a paper form was, however, available for those without online access). The survey generated nearly 900 respondents, with approximately 500 students, 125 faculty, and 275 staff participating. Summary data appears in the appendices. The Task Force reviewed previous reports and assessed progress on the 1997 TSW recommendations. The Task Force thanks the College community for its willing, open, and honest participation in our research.

II. The Status of Women at Middlebury 2007-08

Middlebury College should be proud of its efforts to enhance the status of women since the 1997 TSW report. The status of women has clearly changed in many ways in the past decade, but there is still much to be done. In reviewing changes since 1997, we draw attention to:

Parental Leave

In 1997 there was no formal program for either faculty or staff. Since that time we have established programs. Many people expressed satisfaction with leave policies for faculty, but also insisted that the staff program should be expanded and made more equitable with policies for faculty.

Child Care

In 1997 local child care options were scarce. In 2000 the College provided a facility and financial backing to bring the College Street Child Care Center into being. In addition the College provided financial support to other centers in the area. At the time, it was suggested that 25 new child care 'slots' would be coming on-line as a result of this investment by the College. Of those, 16 slots would give preference to Middlebury College faculty and staff. The College continues to contribute to local child care providers to assure continued access. Today, the Task Force notes that while availability may be substantially improved, affordability of child care is a national concern, and Middlebury is no exception. In addition, care for school-aged children is now a particularly pressing need as well.

Women's & Gender Studies

The TSW notes two particular successes since 1997; the creation of one regular faculty appointment in WAGS as well as the decision to make the Chellis House Director position regular, albeit not full time. These decisions have allowed for a number of positive developments in WAGS and at Chellis. As you will read later, some challenges still remain. As a program with only one full-time appointment, and two joint appointments, the interdisciplinary WAGS program is heavily reliant on other departments for curricular offerings. Also, newer areas of study beneath the WAGS umbrella have been difficult to bring into Middlebury's offerings in any regular way as well for largely the same reason. The TSW hopes the next

academic departmental review, which is due to occur in the next 3 years, will provide deeper insights into WAGS for the College's consideration.

Women and Leadership

The TSW notes the great success the College has had in: bringing effective women into the College's administration since 1997, the equity we find in the percent of women holding committee appointments, female students serving as club leaders, and female staff in leadership roles. In addition, the number of women who have joined the College's faculty and received tenure has also improved substantially. While concerns have been raised about whether compensation for female faculty and staff is equitable, you will find in our report that we could find no evidence of bias in salaries. However, there are still areas in which the College should improve. In particular, our successes in recruiting staff and faculty women of color, the number of women who have reached the full professor level, the number holding endowed professorships, career advancement for women over the age of 50, and the number chairing departments all continue to be areas where we lag behind despite the efforts made in the past decade.

Student Life

Student life is the most troubling and daunting aspect of our study's findings. Many of the challenges noted in 1990 and 1997 TSW reports remain. While some of the infrastructural issues (e.g., lighting, residential space configuration, ride and escort programs, etc.) have been addressed, many fundamental problems of sexism persist. Our evidence shows that students' classroom experience and day-to-day social interactions are equitable and "safe," but the social scene in the evenings and on weekends remains a formidable challenge for women. Alcohol lies near the center of this pattern. However, we cannot simply attribute our community's problems to alcohol alone because that means abdicating our collective responsibility for this social dynamic. The ways that students experience stress at Middlebury varies by gender. The students' experiences of the academic workload, pressure to conform, body image issues, sexual relationships, and limited recreational options remain gendered problems in 2008. As was the case in 1997, eating disorders continue to be a top concern for many students and the stories they shared with us are very troubling.

Diversity

The College continues to attract an increasingly diverse student body. This has brought both new opportunities and new challenges. Numerous diversity-focused initiatives are underway under the leadership of the new Vice President for Institutional Planning & Diversity, Shirley Ramirez. We applaud these efforts. The College's efforts to attract a more diverse faculty and staff are also commendable, but have been less successful. Accepting a job in a relatively rural and socially homogeneous area like Middlebury entails particular challenges, which our research suggests affects women more than men. We note improvements in our strategies to attract candidates. We note our successes with students. We note some successes attracting Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender & Queer (GLBTQ) students, faculty and staff, even without formal programs to accomplish all of this. However, attracting and retaining faculty and staff women of color continues to be a significant problem for the College. It is an area that needs serious attention in the overall vision for diversity at the College. Furthermore, establishing and maintaining a vibrant, welcoming, and inclusive community remains challenging.

No more Task Forces on the Status of Women?

Soon after the Task Force was appointed, members were repeatedly asked why the College was undertaking this study. Why women? Is this relevant? Is this exclusive? We discussed this at great length. We found the issues brought to us were often not easily characterized as “women’s” issues, or even if they once were, that no longer seemed to be the contemporary interpretation of them. For example, child care is not considered a women’s issue today as it might have been in the past. We noted some issues impact women often to a degree beyond which they might impact men, even if they are no longer solely women’s issues. We found in general that what was brought to us was perhaps more aptly characterized as concerns for gender relations, health and well-being, family, and matters of general diversity and equity. Again and again, we found that the opportunities we had created for dialogue prompted the sharing of experiences far beyond the scope of our charge to examine the status of women. And indeed, we often found ourselves talking beyond that scope as well, because issues of gender and equity are relationships, not the characteristics of women as a category.

We do not recommend abandonment of this work in the future. However, we believe the College should consider characterizing any such future study as an examination of Gender, Gender Relations, or perhaps even Community Health and Well-Being. We are reluctant to simply put all of these issues within the context of “diversity” as we know that the term’s semantic “space” is already very full, and adding a full range of gender-related and community well-being topics would likely result in some issue not receiving adequate attention. The concept of a “healthy community,” on the other hand, maintains a focus on relationships rather than social categories. We believe there is still much work to be done, so future reviews of gender relations are absolutely necessary. In short, however, a new name for this work is definitely needed to keep it relevant and focused on the interpersonal connections that constitute experience.

III. Significant Recommendations, 2007 Task Force

As the Task Force neared completion of its nearly year-long effort, we reflected upon the more than 70 recommendations, big and small, that we outline. Collectively, we identified those we felt most strongly about, and that we would place on a short list of what we believe should receive the greatest focus and attention. Each represents the potential for the greatest possible step forward on an issue of particular concern that the Middlebury community encouraged us to address. Each of these appears and is described in greater detail within the report, but we note here:

- **Recommendation #1: The College needs a consistent policy for periodic review of factors that strongly affect women on the campus. We suggest that this occur at five year intervals.**
- **Recommendation #2: The College should commit itself to fostering a “healthy community” in order to address issues ranging from the alcohol-fueled student social scene to work-life issues and eating disorders.**
- **Recommendation #3: The College should strive for gender balance in leadership positions at the College at every level (see Recommendation #10).**

- **Recommendation #4:** The College should work harder to socialize new students into mature, responsible, and respectful behavior. We suggest that a mentoring program can do this by building relationships between seniors and first-year students (see Recommendation #37).
- **Recommendation #5:** The College should revitalize and promote the existing College Ombudsperson program so that it becomes an additional formal outlet for staff concerns and advocacy. This program needs a formal relationship with the Office for Institutional Planning and Diversity in addition to its existing relationship with Staff Council and Human Resources.
- **Recommendation #6:** The College should strengthen a variety of policies and programs that help faculty and staff to maintain a healthy work–life balance (see Recommendations # 14, 17-26, and 62-63).
- **Recommendation #7:** The College should continue its strategies for recruiting and retaining female faculty and staff at all levels (see Recommendations #27-28).
- **Recommendation #8:** The College should be proactive, rather than reactive, on a variety of issues ranging from homophobia to sexism and eating disorders (see Recommendations #39, 48-56).
- **Recommendation #9:** The College should enhance its strategies for recruiting, retaining and developing women of color on the faculty and staff while it also enhances the experiences of student women of color (see Recommendations #29 and 59).

IV. Representation

A. Women in Leadership Positions at Middlebury

The number of women holding leadership positions at Middlebury College has dramatically increased since the first TSW report in 1990. For example, in the 1997 TSW report, the authors note that the College Board of Trustees had recently elected its first female Chair and that there had been a steady increase in the number of female Trustees over the prior 5-year period. Specifically, the report noted that the number of female Trustees had increased from 8 in 1990 (31%) to 11 in 1997 (41%). This gain has held steady such that there are now 13 female Trustees (41%). Given Middlebury Colleges' long-standing leadership as a coeducational institution, it is gratifying to see women sharing in the oversight of the College.

In 1997, there were a number of concerns about the lack of women in the College administration. At that time, *all* of the top nine administrators at the College were men. Over the last 10 years, the College has turned this situation around; women currently hold half of the Academic Administration positions, including Provost and Dean of Faculty. Two of the College's five vice presidents are women, and seven of the seventeen members of President's Staff are currently female (35%) compared to four of twenty-three (17%) in 1997. Clearly, the College has made great strides over this period within the administration.

Among the numerous faculty leadership positions on campus, the numbers are less encouraging. Currently, women chair only 35% of the College's departments and programs. While this is an increase from the 23% female chairs in 1996-1997, progress is still needed to achieve a gender

balance in these important roles. In addition, female colleagues hold only 7 of the 45 endowed professorship positions. This imbalance is not found in the elected leadership positions (i.e., Council on Reviews, Education Affairs Committee, Faculty Council and the Appeals Council). Of the 22 elected leadership positions on campus for faculty, female colleagues currently hold half.

Recommendation #10: The College should continue to identify and appoint women to leadership roles.

1. Staff Leadership

We looked at two different groups to assess the extent to which female staff currently occupy leadership positions at the institution. First, we looked at the number of females elected to Staff Council. As with the faculty-elected committees, there was an even gender split on Staff Council. Second, we examined the number of female staff who have been invited to join the President's Leadership Group. Of the 92 staff members in the Leadership Group, 53% are women. Thus, it appears that staff females are in leadership roles across the College.

2. Student Leadership

The Student Life section of the 1997 TSW report noted that the College needed to do "more to foster women student's leadership skills." Given 57% of the current student clubs and organizations' officer positions are held by women, it appears that the College has successfully met this challenge.

B. Gender Balance in the Faculty

1. Academic Faculty

At the time of the last report, only 26 of the Middlebury College's 122 tenured faculty (21%) were women. At that point in our history, the main goals for the College were to recruit and hire more females, particularly in those departments in which they had been consistently underrepresented. Over the last ten years, the College has done an admirable job in both hiring and mentoring female colleagues through the tenure process. As of 2006-2007, 52 of the College's 174 tenured faculty were women (32%). In addition, these women were teaching across the many departments and disciplines, even in those fields that were traditionally male dominated, though there are still departments in the sciences and social sciences where the proportion of women is substantially lower.

Over the last year and half, there has been a concern that male and female faculty are not equally compensated at the institution. However, looking closely at the data and taking into account numbers of years of teaching experience (both here and at other institutions), it is clear that male and female faculty are similarly compensated at Middlebury College.

Thus, the College has much to celebrate with regard to our improvement over the last ten years on the number of female faculty we have at the institution and with regard to our treatment of all

faculty. That said, we still face challenges in a number of areas. Currently, only 24% of Full Professors and 39 % of Associate Professors are female. Given the length of time it takes to earn the Full Professor rank and the fact that there were so few tenured women in 1997, it is not surprising to see this difference in this rank. However, given that we have been attempting explicitly to rectify the gender imbalance from 1997, it is unclear why this disparity currently exists at the Associate Professor rank. There are a number of potential explanations for this discrepancy. First, although the overall Assistant Professor rank was 49% female in 2006-2007, closer examination of the last eight years indicates that we have hired more males in five of those years, an equal number of male and females in two of the years, and one more female than male in one year. Thus, although on average 46% of the hires over the last eight years were female, it appears that in any given year, we were slightly more likely to hire male colleagues. In addition, we may be losing more females between the Assistant and Associate rank. There continues to be a feeling on campus that this is because women are less likely than men to pass our review processes. Fortunately, this belief is not supported by the data. Since the 1997-1998 academic year there have been 13 failed tenure reviews and only 38% of these were women. A more likely explanation for the difference in the number of female faculty at the Associate Professor level is that female colleagues may be more likely than their male counterparts to leave Middlebury College because their partners have difficulty securing employment in the area. Our exit interview data supports this explanation. Since the 1997-1998 academic year, 31 colleagues have resigned from the College; 21 men and 10 women. While reasons for accepting a job elsewhere are usually multiple, involving a variety of personal and professional factors, fewer than 10% of the men reported spousal employment as the main determinant of their resignation, while 60% of the women suggested this was the main reason for their departure.

The College currently offers some assistance to faculty spouses/partners who are seeking employment through its membership in the Academic Career Network, an organization that offers job networking and support to academic partners of faculty at its member institutions. The College has also extended the support of the Career Services Office to assist faculty spouses/partners. However, spousal/partner employment remains a central challenge in faculty recruitment and retention, and one that may have a disproportionate effect on our ability to attract and retain female faculty at all levels.

- **Recommendation #11: The College should enhance its strategies for retaining female faculty (see Recommendation #27).**

2. Coaching Faculty

Athletics is an important co-curricular activity for Middlebury College students. The College currently has 31 varsity programs, 16 of which are women's. One concern over the years has been the extent to which women serve as head coaches for these programs. At the time of the last report, there were 5 female head coaches, which meant that only 31.25% of the head-coaching faculty were women. The situation is actually slightly worse today. Currently, 25% of the head coaches are women. While we recognize that it is difficult to recruit highly skilled female coaches, we also note that, of our NESCAC peer institutions, only one school has fewer female head coaches than Middlebury and the other nine schools have more female head coaches.

- **Recommendation #12: The College should focus on increasing the number of female head coaches to meet the average number for the NESCAC group.**

Descriptive information about Staff

In general, the staff at Middlebury is 53% female. This ratio is similar for full time staff, part time staff with benefits, and part time staff without benefits. Forty-six percent of managers and supervisors are female.

Descriptive information about students

The Admissions Office continues to accept an incredibly talented group of men and women for matriculation, while creating a gender balanced student body. Last year 50.7% of the incoming class was female. Middlebury has been very careful to maintain this gender balance over the years and the Task Force believes this is an important goal and encourages the institution to continue to strive for this annually.

Although we have gender parity overall, there are still a number of programs that are heavily gendered. For example, the French, Italian and Spanish programs' majors are significantly more than 50% female. This is also true for Literature (AMLT and ENGL in the past and more recently ENAM), ART, ENGL, HARC and THEA, all of which have more female than male majors. Similarly, PSYC and SOAN have significantly more female than male majors. Conversely, FMMC, MUSC and PHIL are consistently less than 50% female, as are ECON, GEOG, HIST, IPEC, and PL. Within the sciences, while there has been great improvement with regard to gender balance over the last few years, CSCI and Physics still have, proportionally, many more male than female majors.

Departmental culture

To investigate how the predominance of men or women in an academic department shapes attitudes, the TSW compared how people from departments with a strong gender imbalance (arbitrarily defined as 70% or more male or female majors as of 2004). People in male dominated departments have a slightly more favorable impression of the campus climate for women than people in female dominated departments – but bear in mind that most academic departments fall under the 70% mark. A comparison of survey comments for people in these departments did not reveal any qualitative trends. Based on the comments heard in our focus group discussions, the TSW compared survey responses from two departments noted for gender imbalance, Economics (= 24% female majors in 2004) and Psychology (= 78% female majors in 2004). We did not find a dramatic difference in attitudes between survey respondents from these two departments. We conclude that the preponderance of a particular sex in a department does not significantly skew those people's perceptions of broader cultural patterns. That is, they share the same campus culture.

C. Recruitment and retention of women from underrepresented groups

Although we now have a new Vice President for Institutional Planning and Diversity who is creating a vision and plan for the College to achieve its goals in the areas of diversity, inclusion and community, there is no formal policy for the recruitment and retention of underrepresented categories of people among the faculty and staff. The Office for Institutional Planning and Diversity is now working across the institution to improve our efforts and work in this area. The challenges are significant and we will need a comprehensive approach that goes beyond simply increasing the numbers of faculty and staff of color. Approximately 10% of our faculty are American and international people of color. Our staff is less diverse, with only 3% self-identifying as being a person of color. Both faculty and staff women of color are notable by their absence on campus. Their voices are few and far between, so our insight into their experiences is based on information gleaned from a handful of women of color.

- **Recommendation #13: We endorse the Strategic Plan’s recommendation #31 “Expand and support diversity in the staff and faculty” and urge the College to continue its efforts to recruit and hire women of color as staff and faculty and actively focus on their retention and professional development.**

V. Staff and Faculty Life

A. Working Conditions and Work/Life Balance

The workload (even for single faculty at Middlebury) is completely consuming--this is difficult to balance. I can only imagine the struggles for those with families in tow. – Survey comment

I think work-life balance needs the most attention. I feel that women have to do more at work in order to succeed at the same level as men. If women make compromises for their family, it seems to come off as being weak or not professional. – Survey comment

I think the idea of the 'super woman' continues to pervade campus and that there needs to be consideration about the dangers about perpetuating these myths. – Survey comment

Workload issues for staff and faculty have been addressed repeatedly by Middlebury College, including in the 1990 Task Force on Gender, the 1997 Task Force on the Status of Women, and the 2006 Strategic Plan. This Task Force revisited these issues, given that job satisfaction affects such important issues as hiring, retention, productivity, and employee health. While we recognize that many of these issues are not unique to academic institutions, and that many of these issues affect both male and female staff and faculty, we felt that their inclusion in prior reports warranted us taking a fresh look at them. In doing so, we identified additional issues of concern for female staff and faculty at the College. Below we describe our findings on how these issues constitute challenges for making Middlebury College a healthy community.

B. Barriers to Job Satisfaction

1. Workload Issues

Although there was not a statistically significant difference in men and women's satisfaction with their jobs at Middlebury College, we did notice that people often mentioned in the open-ended responses to our survey that the workload negatively affected their job satisfaction. It has been a common assumption on campus that work-life balance concerns are greater for females compared to males. At the national level, it seems to be the case that female faculty report a significantly lower satisfaction with the balance between home and work than their male peers (COACHE 2007 Tenure-Track Faculty Job Satisfaction Survey <http://gseacademic.harvard.edu/~coache/> accessed Jan 23, 2008.). We believe it is likely that this trend is similar at Middlebury.

We sought to understand the extent to which the workload differs for male and female faculty but did not locate any objective measures to quantify these differences. For example, while we often heard that women carry a disproportionate service load compared to men at the institution, we did not find this to be true with regard to faculty committee assignments in general. In fact, men and women faculty seem equally likely to be elected to committees and only 36% of the appointed committee members are women. We recognize that this does not address the questions of who does the bulk of the work in these committees or whether female colleagues are disproportionately engaged in service within their departments or programs. Although we found no practical method of gathering these data we believe the consistent impression of an unequal work load is problematic and requires further attention.

- **Recommendation #14: We endorse recommendation #25 from the 2006 Strategic Plan to promote a greater work-life balance for faculty, staff and students. Specific suggestions for this appear throughout this report.**

2. Gender-Neutral Pay for Work of Equal Value

My SMALL disappointment is being convinced that if a man was in my exact same job, he would ask for and receive the title I've always sought (as do most of my colleagues at other colleges) and possibly additional pay to go with it. – Survey comment

Historically, there have been concerns among both staff and faculty females that they are paid less than their male peers. With regard to staff, based on the recommendations in the 1997 report as well as a federal law that mandates periodic checks for salary inequity based upon gender, the College instituted a regular review conducted by Human Resources to ensure that there is no pay inequity. Also, as the current Staff Compensation Plan was laid out, Human Resources worked with Mercer Corporation to design wage and compensation tools that were free of gender bias. Ellen Usilton, Human Resources Compensation Manager, indicated that current annual reviews of salary data show no gender-based bias for staff.

However, the situation with regard to faculty has been less clear, particularly due to a 2006 AAUP report suggesting differences between male and female compensation in American higher education. It is not easy to evaluate this concern, given the small number of faculty hired each

year at Middlebury College. To assess this, we decided to statically evaluate the extent to which faculty gender predicted salary when the number of years since gaining the Ph.D. and rank were considered. We found no significant effect of gender on compensation at Middlebury College.

In terms of salary, Middlebury College is a healthy community – even though many of its members may be unaware of this.

- **Recommendation #15: Continue annual reviews of staff salaries and implement regular review for faculty salaries to assess gender equity.**
- **Recommendation #16: Communicate to the College community the results of these reviews.**

3. Maintaining a Family-Friendly Campus

I would like to have the ability to use flex time. I would like to not feel guilty when I have to leave for a medical or personal appt. I would prefer not to be 'micro-managed' by my supervisor. – Survey Comment

Many of the comments received by the Task Force reflected that staff and faculty find it difficult to balance their working life with their non-work life. In particular, females were more likely than males to report that females who had children are seen as less committed to their careers. This may be due to the fact that women still carry the bulk of family responsibilities. One way to reduce this perceived, or real, challenge is for the College to explore ways to promote a healthier work-life balance as per Recommendation #25 of the 2006 strategic plan.

On the positive side, the College has already committed to, and is enacting, policies that enhance the extent to which we are a family-friendly campus. For example, we already meet eight of Working Women magazine's top 13 criteria for a family-friendly workplace. (see <http://www.workingmothermediainc.com/web;jsessionid=93142520428C473FCCF0CDAAE35949E6.tomcat1?service=direct/1/ViewArticlePage/dlinkFullArticle&sp=107&sp=29>).

- **Recommendation #17: The College should be more proactive and creative in making the campus a welcoming place for families. For example, we do not provide a private lactation area for faculty and staff mothers. Nor are there changing tables in many of the public restrooms. Similarly, although we have flex-time available for some employees it is not as widely available as it could and should be.**

4. Dependent Care

Childcare was identified as one of the critical problems facing both faculty and staff in both of the prior reports. In particular, both reports recommended the College address how to provide safe, reliable, and affordable child care for the families of staff and faculty. The current Task Force wants to commend the College for acting on these prior recommendations through the development, continued support, and funding of College Street Child Care Center as well as its support of other child care centers in Middlebury.

Nevertheless, the staff and faculty continue to state that the availability of reliable, affordable, and flexible childcare is a problem. Respondents to our survey and those who attended our open meetings noted that current childcare was too expensive, that slots were still difficult to obtain, and that weekend or evening care are needed. In addition, people mentioned that the lack of after school and summer care for school age children was an impediment to achieving work-life balance and reduced their productivity. Respondents repeatedly suggested that the College find a way to offer after school programs and summer programs for school aged children on-site. The summer organic gardening camp was mentioned as a model. Clearly, something more developed would be needed. Some of our comparison schools currently offer this type of program. For example, Williams College has just built a new facility to offer both younger childcare as well as after school and summer programs for older children.

In addition to availability, cost of childcare was reported as a barrier, particularly to staff. Finally, staff and faculty both report an increasing need for elder care assistance as our population ages.

Some of the best ways to implement recommendation #25 of the 2006 Strategic Plan would be to:

- **Recommendation #18: Follow the lead of Bates, Pomona and Wesleyan Colleges and offer a sliding scale subsidy to help lower-paid staff pay for childcare.**
- **Recommendation #19: Follow the lead of Williams, Smith, Trinity (CT), and Wellesley and offer on-campus or close-to-campus after school and summer programs.**
- **Recommendation #20: Work with existing childcare centers to provide childcare outside the “normal” workday to those staff and faculty who have such a need.**
- **Recommendation #21: Establish a section on the HR web pages with information about local eldercare programs and providers similar to what is available for childcare options.**

5. Parental Leave Policies

I'm generally happy with Middlebury's parental leave policy for faculty, but I get the impression that some colleagues regard it as an extra research sabbatical. – Survey comment

This survey comment indicates both how well the College's parental leave policies work for faculty and the degree to which attitudes remain unsupportive, dismissive, or jealous of new parents in our community. As a result of the 1997 TSW recommendations, the College established a parental leave policy for faculty that provides the primary care giver with one-semester relief from teaching duties with pay after the birth or adoption of a child. The 1997 Task Force also recommended a similar policy for staff, a recommendation which was not implemented. The current policy for staff provides just 3 weeks of paid leave for the birth or adoption of a child with the 9 additional weeks allowed under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) to be taken from Combined Time Off (CTO) or unpaid.

This Task Force believes that 3 weeks paid parental leave for staff is simply inadequate and note that it is less than that offered by 11 of the 18 comparison schools we examined. A healthy community does not expect its women to be at work shortly after giving birth.

- **Recommendation #22:** After a year's employment, staff who are primary caregivers should be allowed 10 weeks of paid leave, with up to 2 more weeks allowed using CTO time, to start after birth or adoption.
- **Recommendation #23:** We also recommend 4 weeks paid leave for the secondary staff caregiver, which can be taken at any time during the first 6 months after birth or adoption.

6. Staff Working Hours

Because of the work-life balance issues mentioned above, we believe that flexibility with regard to work hours is particularly important for women at the institution. While the current flex-time system seems to be working well, for some departments it is perceived as being unequally available. This may be due to the nature of the work of specific departments or to the lack of awareness on the part of some managers about this option for the employees they supervise. In addition, several staff indicated that the College seemed reluctant to explore creative ways to schedule their time, such as job sharing or telecommuting.

- **Recommendation #24:** We recommend that Human Resources establish an expectation that flex-time be allowed whenever possible.
- **Recommendation #25:** In addition, in line with Recommendation # 24 of the 2006 Strategic Plan for strengthening supervisory training, we recommend that managers receive training on the benefits of flex-time for employee satisfaction and productivity, as well as support in implementing such procedures.
- **Recommendation #26:** Finally, we recommend that Human Resources audit the extent to which departments allow and encourage flex-time use.

C. Proactive Retention Strategies and Partner Employment

One challenge that female staff and faculty who move to Middlebury from other locations repeatedly reported is the difficulty of finding suitable partner employment. While our male colleagues also struggle with this, we believe that, because of societal norms, partner employment poses a much greater challenge for women – particularly professional women whose partners are often also professionals. We recognize that the College has, on a case-by-case basis, offered such support; for example there are examples of both the Career Services Office and Human Resources reaching out to assist partners. However, because this has been done case by case, such support has not been widely available. Given we are located in an isolated rural area, we believe that as we move forward in our efforts to hire and retain the strongest candidates, particularly more female colleagues of color, the College must take a more proactive role with regard to partner employment. This is an important area of focus as the College commits to becoming more diverse and welcoming for women, partners and families of all backgrounds.

- **Recommendation #27:** The College should address partner employment concerns with a formal program to aid partners looking to obtain employment in the region (see Recommendation #11).

D. Unique Challenges for Female Faculty Members

I feel that women professors are not treated with the same respect--by colleagues or students--that men receive. I am a 'beneficiary' of this sexism, and I do not like it. Why should students and fellow faculty defer to me because I'm male? – Survey comment

For the most part MC offers fair and equal opportunities for women. I do think there is a certain 'good ole boy' network that operates in certain (predominantly male) departments and to some extent the upper level administration. – Survey comment

In certain disciplines, the students at Middlebury do not hold female faculty in as high regard as their male professors. Speaking as a female professor, it is clear that the students have very stereotypical presumptions about the characteristics faculty should possess to be 'professorial'---especially for certain disciplines... Many of my female colleagues feel that we have to work extra hard to prove ourselves in class. – Survey comment

While admittedly difficult to examine in any broad way, we used the survey, focus groups, and individual interviews with colleagues to identify the challenges unique to female faculty members. Our survey indicates there were no significant differences in men and women's perceptions of how students treat them in the classroom. Nonetheless, in focus groups and in the open-ended section of the survey, a number of female faculty indicated they felt that they received less respect from students than their male peers did. These women reported that they find it difficult to assert their authority in the classroom or that students expect them to be more mothering and nurturing than their male colleagues (e.g., by giving them longer extensions for papers). We were particularly disturbed by the fact that a number of women reported encountering aggressive behavior from male students in response to grading.

Similarly, in these more qualitative formats, a number of women noted that when co-teaching with male colleagues, they felt as if students consider the male professor a higher authority than the female professor. They specifically noted that they have not encountered this situation when they co-taught with female colleagues.

Some faculty members have expressed an interest in examining course evaluation data in light of current research on how gender perceptions subtly influence student responses. However, in imagining this as a possible recommendation, we collectively felt this examination would be impossible to conduct without an electronic course response process.

Junior female faculty members noted a lack of space to talk about their research with other junior faculty members. In their view, the dominant value of the College is "you must take care of students," yet when it comes to promotion decisions, what faculty really need is publications. They feel that the space and time of female faculty members should be better protected so they may dedicate themselves to their scholarly production.

On a positive note, the 1997 report recommended an increase in non-monetary support for women in the sciences, a recommendation which was enacted. It appears that this support has been useful, insofar as our investigation found women scientists reporting satisfaction with the state of their career progress. It is notable that these women did not have anything negative to report.

- **Recommendation #28: The College should implement a systemic annual data collection process regarding faculty accomplishments which would allow us to compare the career progress of male and female faculty. One way would be to collect the annual salary review information electronically.**

E. Unique Challenges for Female Staff and Faculty Women of Color

Do we have a single African American female professor? Please correct me if I'm wrong. But the fact that I don't know means that it's not good. – Survey Comment

I don't think I've ever had a class with either a black female teacher or classmate, which is really too bad. – Survey Comment

I am not a woman of color. However, I know from discussions with other faculty, that women of color... have more challenges than white faculty in the classroom. – Survey Comment

The low numbers of the women of color at Middlebury make it difficult to evaluate the challenges that they face. Our survey results reflect the campus's view of the challenges facing women of color: Only 17.6% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that "The campus climate for women of color is good." In general it appears that the challenges for women of color occur not in the classroom (in our survey only 6.3% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that "Women of color are treated equally in the classroom") but rather they come from outside the classroom. While instances of overt racism are rare on campus they have been reported from outside campus; for example one staff woman of color reported to the Task Force that she was overtly discriminated against while trying to rent housing. All of these challenges make it difficult for the College to recruit and retain staff and faculty women of color.

The voices of women of color on our faculty and staff are rather inaudible because the numbers are so small and their experiences are complicated in this community. Female faculty members of color (domestic and international) feel both the burden of representation and invisibility. They report feeling they have to work twice as hard to prove their authority with students, colleagues, and the administration. Some of these women reported being misunderstood by colleagues. For example, one faculty woman of color stated that she is often misperceived as "angry" when she expresses herself openly. Other women of color expressed the complicated aspects of having a dual identity connected to gender and race/ethnicity. They lacked a sense of having a cohort or critical mass to support them. It is evident that this population needs a strong commitment and focus from the College.

- **Recommendation #29: We endorse the 2006 Strategic Plan's recommendation #31 "Expand and support diversity in the staff and faculty" and urge the College to continue its efforts to not only recruit but to retain women of color as staff and faculty.**

F. Opportunities for Staff Career Advancement, Women over age 50

For myself, personally, it's still the old men's club. – Survey comment

The sexism here is very present, albeit hidden from most people's view much of the time - there is a very real glass ceiling for many women, esp. staff - gender discrimination with pay, promotions, etc. – Survey comment

I've worked here since 1992; there are far more women in upper levels of admin than there used to be - which is definitely a good thing. I think the aspect that needs attention now is career ladders for mid- and lower-level staff, particularly those occupied predominantly by women. – Survey comment

The Task Force conducted one focus group with women over 50 and found that a number of those who participated believe that as they have gotten older they have been “set aside” in favor of younger, and less experienced people. They believe that these were not isolated incidents, but represent a recent pattern, particularly with regard to older female administrators who were in mid-to-senior level positions. The group also suggested that this does not occur in the case of older male administrators. In addition, these women expressed concern that there was no good way to bring their observations about this issue to those who could make changes. They felt that HR was not responsive to their complaints. Although the focus group was comprised of a small number of individuals, their candor and clear discomfort is of concern. Unfortunately, our survey did not ask about age so we cannot address whether these feelings hold across the broader campus community. That said, the fact that the focus group members strongly expressed these feelings suggests that the College should investigate whether women are treated differently than men as they age.

- **Recommendation #30: Age needs to be highlighted as an important aspect of diversity.**
- **Recommendation #31: The College’s Ombudsperson program should be revitalized, promoted significantly, provided with necessary resources to assure proper training and support of Ombudspersons, and be provided with a formal relationship with the Office for Institutional Planning and Diversity in addition to the relationship with Staff Council and Human Resources.**
- **Recommendation #32: The College and Human Resources should develop better career development tracks “exit plans” for staff as they approach the latter part of their careers.**
- **Recommendation #33: The College should investigate whether female staff are treated differently than male staff as they age.**

G. Unique Challenges for GLBTQ Women

The view of the gay man has greatly been enhanced, but I haven't seen much to promote the idea of lesbians who are "normal" members of society. – Survey comment

I don't think this is an easy place to be different. Gay and lesbian members of the community, I imagine, do not feel that they will be respected and/or treated equally if they are open about their lives and identities. This is changing a bit--last few years. – Survey comment

The TSW survey shows that GLBTQ faculty and staff have similar levels of satisfaction with their career progress and decision making at the College as their heterosexual peers. However, the items of concern for GLBTQ people indicate how the campus climate remains challenging.

The portrait of our campus that emerged in our interviews is that of an open and welcoming community – where there is still a palpable fear that speaking up or being “out” is not entirely risk-free. While this may be idiosyncratic, this concern was raised in conversations with a variety of people and in different contexts so it is a broader social pattern. There is a fear of being seen as “too out” or “too outspoken.” In their advocacy about any aspect of diversity, they fear being labeled as incapable of neutrality. In short, there is a perception that being open about one’s GLBTQ status may not be a wise career move at Middlebury. This is not a characteristic of a healthy community, and the College should work to change this.

There is a desire among GLBTQ women for more GLBTQ role models among the faculty and staff – especially more women who are comfortable being “out” on campus and who can avoid being stereotyped because of that decision. Unfortunately, the number of GLBTQ people who have left or been fired (after an unfavorable review, etc.) is very palpable to the community. They are a relatively small group in comparison to the campus whole, so even the loss of a few people is devastating. To its members, there seems to be a systemic problem of recruiting, retaining, supporting, and advancing GLBTQ community members. They worry about being forced to represent all GLBTQ people, and that they will find work solely in departments and roles that are stereotypically perceived as appropriate for GLBTQ people. The Task Force notes that similar to issues raised by women over 50, the recommendation to bolster the College Ombuds Program could help with GLBTQ issues as well.

There is still a lingering sense that concerns of GLBTQ people have been downplayed recently in favor of concerns about racial and ethnic diversity. There seems to be at times a sense that social justice is a limited good at Middlebury, and social subgroups often find themselves rivals for scarce resources and attention.

- **Recommendation #34: Formally engage the question of hidden biases in review and promotion for GLBTQ faculty and staff. At a minimum, assure appeals processes are in place that consider inherent bias. This might be done best by the same Ombudsperson Program mentioned above.**
- **Recommendation #35: Create a signature GLBTQ event each year, formally sponsored by Office of Institutional Diversity or others that brings the GLBTQ community together around an intellectual topic. Do not make this the sole responsibility of a student organization or staff/faculty volunteers.**
- **Recommendation #36: Host a voluntary roundtable, Commons dinner, or other gathering for GLBTQ people and allies to talk about topics of concern for GLBTQ people, possibly with Office of Institutional Diversity staff or others once or twice annually.**

VI. Student Life: Academic, Social & Extracurricular

A. Introduction

My experience is that women's status is better at Middlebury than anywhere else I've lived. – Survey comment

From my experience, women are treated equally by the school in terms of athletics and academics. It is more in the social experiences where women are being discriminated against. – Survey comment

In comparison to the situations described in the 1990 and 1997 TSW reports, gender relations on campus have clearly improved in the past two decades. Many of the issues outlined in the 1997 report remain, however. The TSW 2007 survey indicates an overwhelming majority of students (95%) report that faculty treat them with respect in the classroom, and 93% say that their peers treat them with respect in the classroom. The College is doing a fine job creating an equitable and healthy climate in the classroom. The vast majority of students report that they “feel safe” on campus. This is excellent news, and the Middlebury College community is clearly healthy in the classroom. Gender relations are still problematic, however, in students’ extracurricular lives, and it is here that sexism continues to be experienced and debated. We found students in our focus groups eager to discuss these issues, and they asked for more open, “safe” events for discussions of the student social scene.

Alcohol and sexism lie at the heart of most problems in the student social scene. While Middlebury is not unique among its peers in facing these challenges, we urge our community to identify strategies to foster leaders who can battle sexism and alcohol abuse on campus. As a Task Force we struggled to find truly constructive recommendations that do more than address the consequences of these larger society-wide problems. Ultimately, it is the culture and climate fueled by alcohol use that generates the worst aspects of sexism in student life, not the liquid itself.

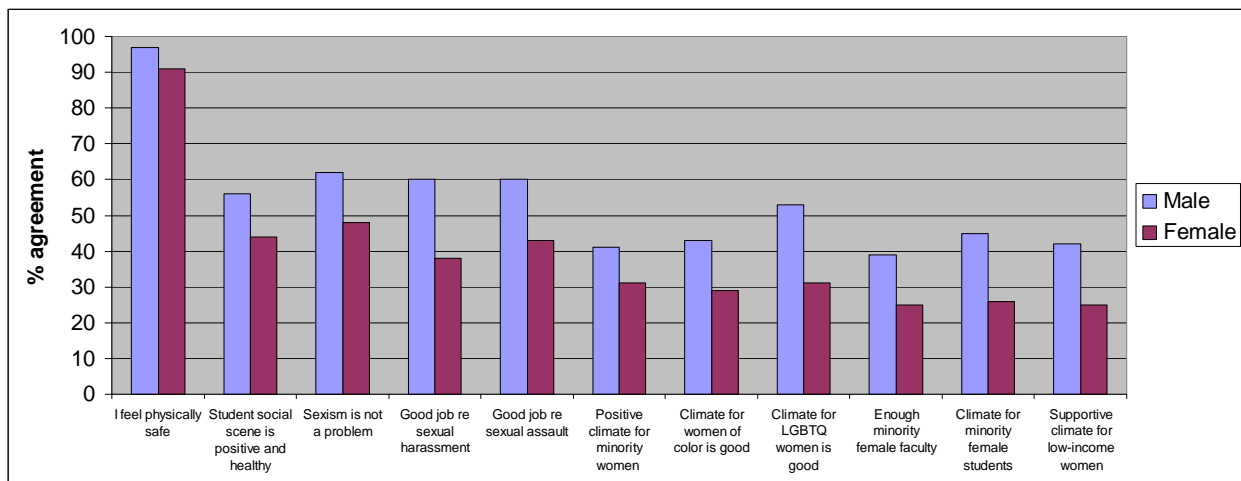


Fig. 1: Student agreement with various statements from 2007 TSW survey. N=170 men, 330 women

While admittedly twice as many females completed the TSW survey as males, the sample is still reasonably high. This chart shows that male and female students have quite different perceptions of the status of women on campus. Note that for each question, a majority of male students agreed with the survey prompts. Female students’ responses were much less consistent, and lacked clear majorities on many issues. The following sections explore the contexts of these differences and perceptions.

As one over-arching recommendation with the potential to address these larger concerns, the Task Force suggests a mentoring program for seniors and first-year students. This would

complement and expand the existing efforts to socialize first-year students through their relationships with First-Year Counselors – who students report are more monitors than mentors. Ideally, such a program would lead the way in providing first-year students a broader perspective on social life, which would then set a precedent for their subsequent years. Upper-class men and women would serve as role models and first-years would feel more integrated into the community and less pressured to resort to extreme partying in order to “fit in.” Moreover, having a mentoring program could be used to address gender dynamic issues such as sexism and sexual assault. Such a program could be built into the curriculum as one way to satisfy a service learning requirement. This program fits within the College’s larger goals cultivating leadership qualities and fostering a more healthy community, as outlined in Strategic Plan recommendations #14 (“Cultivate leadership qualities that address societal needs”), #25 (“Promote greater work-life balance”), and #26 (“Encourage a culture of collaboration”). By building links across the classes, it may also expand the ways we engage alumni in the life of the College (Strategic Plan recommendation #29) because well-mentored students are likely to remain in contact with their mentors after those seniors have graduated.

- **Recommendation #37: The College should create a mentoring program that can build relationships between seniors and first-year students, with the aim of socializing new students into mature, responsible, and respectful behavior. This program should be integrated into the College’s curriculum, for example having it as part of the First-year seminar program or by creating a service learning requirement for all students, with being a mentor in this program as one way to fulfill this requirement.**

B. Alcohol, Social Life, Sex and Sexuality

The party scene at Middlebury College is wholly unhealthy and disgustingly unsafe. I am never unaccompanied at parties and even then the alcohol consumption makes it problematic that I may be left alone by a drunk friend. – Survey comment

The social scene on campus is disgusting- the sexual climate is aggressive, violent, and very dangerous. – Survey comment

Both males and females at Middlebury are working to maintain a dominant social environment in which women are expected to dress and behave very sexually in order to fit in and gain attention from men. And I think that this tends to give men the idea that they have permission to feel a girl up when she agrees to dance with him, and if she refuses to go home with him she is a tease. I have been in situations when I felt pressured to engage in sexual behavior with men simply because he took what I was wearing, and my attempts to be polite, to mean that I wanted to hook up with him. I was made to feel like I had been lying, or acting deceitful, and leading him on when I said no. – Survey comment

One of the themes that we heard repeatedly in focus group discussions and in the TSW survey results is that Middlebury students summarize their campus culture with the slogan, “work hard, play hard.” In practice this means that our campus has a high standard of excellence, our students devote themselves to their coursework, and what they achieve is remarkable. It also means that when Middlebury students “play” they do it to the same extremes. Students report that they are driven to be high-achievers academically, athletically, socially, and even sexually. Yet few achieve such perfection, and therefore many are frustrated and unhappy. In brief, there seems to be no “middle” in Middlebury, and this leads to unhealthy social interactions.

Students report that binge drinking is common and often competitive and that the organization of access to alcohol is largely shaped by gender, age, and class. There is a sharp divide between students who drink to excess and those who do not. They tend to belong to very different social circles, and those who go to extremes are perceived as having higher social status. The students who organize the parties tend to be male, upper-class, and athletic. Students of color and international students tend to have more barriers for access to these events, unless they organize parties themselves. Some students reported that alcohol consumption can be highly gendered. Women are generally expected to drink hard liquor with a mixer (such as vodka with cranberry juice) which typically leads to women becoming intoxicated all the more quickly than men. Female students also reported that in their first year at Middlebury, they were invited to parties by older classmen who they felt specifically targeted them for their inexperience with alcohol so they could make inappropriate advances. Surveillance of student alcohol consumption has increased in recent years. Unfortunately students report that one effect of this monitoring is that they try to get drunk as quickly as possible before the party shuts down.

Task Force members interviewed members of the International Student Organization in order to learn how the international female student experience differs from the student norm. Female international students describe themselves as “coming from educated, liberal backgrounds and being more outgoing, assertive and risk-taking” than students in their countries who attend a domestic college or university. This assertive and outgoing behavior usually does not equal sexual promiscuity, even though some American men interpret their demeanor this way. On the whole, they are not happy with the alcohol-fueled social scene at Middlebury College. “We came to college to date, not to have indiscriminate sex” was a common complaint.

While we recommend more social outlets, as we believe this is a tangible step that can and should be taken, as well as continued programming, it is necessary to socialize students into more responsible drinking behavior. We hope that our recommended mentoring program will help to foster a redefinition of “blackout” and “binge” drinking as “uncool,” immature, and unhealthy.

As already suggested, alcohol tends to foster behavior that is uncommon in the classroom, but puts women into particularly vulnerable situations after hours. Our focus group participants suggested that students typically arrive at the College needing to learn how to fit in. The students agreed that “I don’t want to be a prude” summarizes much of the Middlebury student culture regarding sexuality. It means that many women want to establish clear boundaries, but that they engage in risky sexual behavior because of the general expectation that college students are promiscuous (which, in part, comes from broader patterns in American culture – films, music, and online media regularly socialize Middlebury students into this idea). Part of the reason they do not set boundaries is that they need to fit into a social scene dominated by men, who are also often unaware or dismissive of safe sex and sexual assault issues. The general consensus was that the stressful weekday workload triggers a proportionately extreme party atmosphere on the nights students choose to go out. Students report that they work so hard during the week that they try to squeeze 5 days’ worth of social interaction into a 2-day weekend – thus they compress social relationships in a way that foreshortens relationship-building to one-time casual sex. Students desire more opportunities to meet people casually, and consider the classroom as an

ideal place to engage with peers. Students suggested that if the College supports the growth of their minds, it should care about their social development as well. College can be an important time to learn about safe sex and healthy relationships and the institution should give greater consideration to educating students on these issues.

Student parties are often highly sexualized. Some are organized around sexual themes (such as the fall 2007 “Surrender your Booty” pirate-themed party and the reportedly annual “Naughty Schoolgirl, Dirty Professor” party). Many parties have limited guest lists so some female students are overtly sexual in their dress and behavior in order to ensure access. Students report that the first and second years at Middlebury are a particularly socially insecure time for female students, and that female students use sexual display cues (makeup, hair, clothing, dancing style, etc.) as ways to get male attention. The major reason for this is that there are three major states of sexuality for Middlebury students. One is either “married” (in a committed long-term relationship), “hooking up” (having sex opportunistically without building lasting relationships), and being “asexual” (which is, especially for men, stigmatized). Dating is uncommon at Middlebury. These behavior-shaping categories (which are, again, extremes) often lead to miscommunication, because men often interpret women’s behavior at parties as inviting a “hook-up.”

The Task Force noted the recent arrival of Jyoti Daniere as Director of Health and Wellness Education. In communications with Daniere, she described some of her current programming efforts. These seem to be entirely appropriate efforts to offer workshops and events of interest around topics of sex, sexuality and alcohol. As always, the remaining challenge is how to get people to participate and to be aware of available services and programs. The College should make Health and Wellness Education a central plank of its efforts to foster a healthy community. Some students noted a lack of easy access to free condoms as an area needing improvement. Daniere noted that the Global AIDS student group has petitioned President Liebowitz for funding to place condom dispensers in all dormitory bathrooms. We fully support this proposal.

- **Recommendation #38: Students are eager for more social outlets. We support the College’s efforts to expand campus weekend social venues such as proposals for the Xanadu/Bunker space in FIC and the as-yet-unnamed 51 Main Street location downtown. The College should work with student groups, the SGA, the Commons, and MCAB (etc.) to broaden students’ social options. More alternatives to alcoholic entertainment would help men and women forge healthier relationships and narrow the divide between people who do and do not drink.**
- **Recommendation #39: All students should attend educational workshops on issues of drug and alcohol abuse, sexual assault and harassment. These workshops should not just be a part of orientation programming in the first year but should be provided throughout the student’s career at Middlebury.**
- **Recommendation #40: Offer gatherings each semester at Commons faculty head houses to talk about social life and relationship issues. The TSW focus groups were wonderful forums that all participants enjoyed and felt provided a healthy environment for discussing pertinent social issues. Participants consistently said that “we need to have these discussions about student social life more often.”**

- **Recommendation #41:** The College’s Director of Health and Wellness Education should review the College’s condom distribution program, and make recommendations about possible new strategies for making them available (in particular if the student effort noted above is not successful).
- **Recommendation #42:** The College should organize occasional panel discussions as creative ways to weave relevant topics (e.g., sexism, stereotyping, and discrimination in the workplace) into existing programming at which alumni speak about careers, the workplace, and what students may find beyond Middlebury. Given contemporary workplace norms, awareness of sexism should be a desired asset in students’ skill portfolio. The College is likely to get better results from offering the “carrot” of enhanced skill sets than by using the “stick” of punitive regulations.

C. Sexual Assault and Safety

Many have been the cases when my women friends have been afraid to speak up regarding sexual assault – Survey comment

“Regretted Sex” should NEVER be used to describe any occurrence of sexual assault. No sexual assault occurring on Middlebury campus? Don't disrespect those that have suffered sexual harassment by pretending it never happened. – Survey comment

2000	1	2004	2
2001	2	2005	4
2002	7	2006	2
2003	1	2007	<i>Not yet available</i>

Fig. 2 Number of sexual offences reported to Public Safety by year

The number of reported offenses, as the table suggests, are typically relatively low in a given year. Also, responses to survey questions show that most students feel physically safe at the College. However, the level of dissatisfaction with the College’s response to issues of sexual assault and harassment, as well as many survey comments, suggest that there is much work to be done. According to our survey results, sexual assault is an under-reported crime and a major concern for female students. The most typical reasons suggested for why the crimes go unreported are a belief that little will be done, a feeling of shame, and/or fear of being stigmatized. This is not entirely surprising, as these are common reasons why such crimes are typically not reported even beyond Middlebury.

It should be noted, that as is the case with many of the other concerns around student social life, the root problem is often alcohol abuse, and until this is addressed some other “symptoms” of an unhealthy community will not go away. One result of this unhealthy social scene is that there is confusion between consensual and non-consensual sex.

A number of students in our focus group interviews expressed skepticism about the existing procedures for responding to sexual assault. There is confusion about how to proceed when a

student has been assaulted and existing information may be outdated (for example, campus signs advising students of what to do are often out of date and missing). Once sexual assault has been reported some feel that the current process is not designed to serve the interests of the victim. They contend that victims' voices are not heard and sexual assault is too easily reduced to a "he said, she said" situation.

Students offered several possible changes to the existing procedures. A primary suggestion was that the person who first processes the report should take a more victim-oriented approach. All who are likely to be involved in handling such cases should receive training on how to distinguish between sexual assault, sexual abuse, and acquaintance rape – as well as interview methods for approaching these sensitive topics. They should be well-informed about who can serve as a witness, what kinds of evidence the survivor needs to produce to prove lack of consent, and which forms of innuendo are unacceptable.

Tied to concerns of sexual assault are often comments about general feelings of safety. Our survey clearly suggests that on the whole our community feels quite safe on campus. Considerable improvements have occurred in the past 10 years with the further spread of general lighting, blue lights and emergency telephones. However a few areas of campus, including Ridgeline Road and the parking area east of the Athletic complex, were noted specifically for further review.

- **Recommendation #43: An informal interest group (currently composed of the Chellis House Director, the Director of Health and Wellness Education, an Associate Dean of Students, and a SANE nurse) has been formed to work towards the prevention of sexual assault. This group should be formally charged to make further recommendations to prevent sexual assault on campus. In addition this group should explore options for establishing an advocate or advocacy program to counsel those involved in sexual assault about their options.**
- **Recommendation #44: The orientation program should continue to include an informational component on distinguishing between consensual and non-consensual sex.**
- **Recommendation #45: There should be a regular program to update informational contact posters and make information about options for those affected by sexual assault more generally available.**
- **Recommendation #46: Investigate and continue to improve lighting across campus and add more blue lights.**
- **Recommendation #47: Continue and strengthen training programs for those who are likely first responders in cases of sexual assault.**

D. Health & Wellness

What girls do to girls, the sort of pressure we put on one another is atrocious. Middlebury has a sports team here where we go out and exercise strenuously for 2 - 2.5 hours. When we all go up to dinner, however, I notice that many of the girls (the non-supermodel size girls in particular) are eating only a small salad or a few pieces of bread. – Survey comment

I see far too many people who are hyper-athletic and who eat nothing but salad, then go out and party extremely hard on Friday and Saturday nights. – Survey comment

I think that the social life is pretty unhealthy... Drinking is a huge part of the life- which is fine, but girls don't eat before they drink (to spare the calories) and then get wasted- wake up the next morning and start work. I think kids exercise, work, and drink too much (although, I think I fit into this category perfectly- which is exactly my point- that everyone is doing it). – Survey comment

Many students commented that eating disorders and distorted body image are “the most serious problems on campus.” Although the health center has resources available for students, many feel they are inaccessible and only for students with diagnosable disorders like anorexia and bulimia. Going to the health center with these issues is stigmatized. The dining hall and gym culture promote an “ideal” body type that makes many women feel marginalized and insecure. The salad bars in the dining halls are frequented by women, and students report that it is common for women to survive on weekend diets of salad and vodka (as the comment above suggests). Students who have already struggled with serious eating disorders have found that recovering at Middlebury is particularly challenging. A healthy community should take better care of its members.

- **Recommendation #48:** The programs being developed by the new Director of Health and Wellness should be expanded, and the College should show strong support for them by making these efforts a centerpiece of its effort to create a healthy community.
- **Recommendation #49:** The College should make access to a nutritionist and/or counselor with expertise in nutrition matters readily available to students. While perhaps not full-time if demand doesn't warrant it, students should have ready access to someone with these skills without leaving campus.
- **Recommendation #50:** The residential life program in consultation with Dining Services, Student Health Center, the Office of Health and Wellness and the Department of Physical Education and Athletics should develop a program on eating disorder awareness. Prevention and education should be incorporated into incoming student orientation.
- **Recommendation #51:** A student health group should be organized to host discussions, mentor peers, and work alongside the health center and counseling service.
- **Recommendation #52:** Athletic teams should identify strategies for more formal mentoring among athletes on these issues. Some athletes face these issues regularly, and should have a health program in place developed in tandem with the Health Center and Sports Medicine.
- **Recommendation #53:** In its consideration of eating disorders, the 1997 TSW report suggested that there “should be more quiet and intimate dining options available for those who need or want them.” Atwater and Ross dining halls are notoriously loud, and "intimate" spaces are hard to find. As the College prepares to renovate Proctor dining hall, it should consider ways to offer more options.

E. Gender Dynamics

More attention needs to be paid to how men treat women on campus. By this I simply mean 'gentlemanly behavior' and just being courteous to women in general and not treating them like slabs of meat. It would make it easier for guys like me to have meaningful friendships and relationships with girls as it is very difficult to do so since girls seem to always be on the defensive. – Survey comment

Survey and focus groups support that student perceptions of feminism as a concept are mostly negative. A common anecdote that we encountered is the story about a professor asking a class, “who here is a feminist?” One or two hands go up. Asking “who here believes that men and women should be treated equally?” raises every hand in the room. Feminists are described as radical, “femi-Nazi” women as opposed to people who support gender equity.

Masculinity on campus is described by students participating in our focus groups as perpetuating sexist “locker-room” behavior. Heterosexual males who do not fulfill this stereotype report having to change their behavior to appear more masculine, at the risk of being “fag-bated,” or socially marginalized in other ways. Men come under particular pressure to prove their masculinity through weekend alcohol consumption, which can put both males and females in difficult situations. Students report that some intoxicated males use offensive speech and engage in destructive behavior, and this is why they attest that homophobic behavior and sexual harassment occur mostly on the weekends.

Comments on the TSW survey, from both men and women, reveal a minority opinion perhaps best described as “gender fatigue.” The general tenor is that gender issues amount to “a bunch of fuss about nothing,” and that people are being “too sensitive.” A positive development in this area during the current academic year was the development of the Men's Advisory Council. This council consists of students, faculty and staff and meets on a regular basis to discuss issues of masculinity. The council has had some encouraging levels of participation; efforts by this group to encourage dialogue in this area are ongoing.

- **Recommendation #54: Recommendation #14 of the 2006 Strategic Plan calls for “cultivating leadership qualities that address societal needs.” We suggest that as part of its effort to foster leadership and a healthy community, College programs should emphasize that attention to gender dynamics is a critical leadership skill. This should encourage some change in these attitudes and achieve the sort of informed gender awareness that could be very positive on campus – and do this without compulsion.**

F. GLBTQ Students

I do know that there really isn't a campus 'climate' for LGBTQ women. I personally have chosen only to come out among a very select group of friends, because it seems like lesbians and bisexual women on campus (the visible ones) aren't really allowed to speak to any other experiences again. They're really on the fringe. I don't want to be defined by that or limited to it. – Survey comment

The 1997 TSW report stated that “Middlebury College is not yet a comfortable place for many gay, lesbian, and bisexual students, faculty, and staff.” Our research suggests some progress in this area, but we have yet to achieve a fully comfortable environment for everyone. Although in many aspects members of the GLBTQ community perceive the campus climate for women less

favorably than members of the self-identified heterosexual group does, these groups have similar distributions of opinions about the campus climate for women in minority groups and GLBTQ women. This does not imply that the campus climate for GLBTQ women is good -- fully 47% of GLBTQ respondents said that the campus climate is not.

Our focus group participants generally felt that the College takes homophobia less seriously than racism. They felt the College's response to a series of homophobic incidents in 2006 and 2007 was inadequate, and that "ad hoc town meetings and closed-door judicial proceedings do not change the problematic culture." They see the College as reacting to the social problems encountered by the GLBTQ community rather than being proactive enough to change social patterns. They also reported that the degree of community support and acceptance is greater for gay men than lesbians, bisexuals, transsexuals, and queer people.

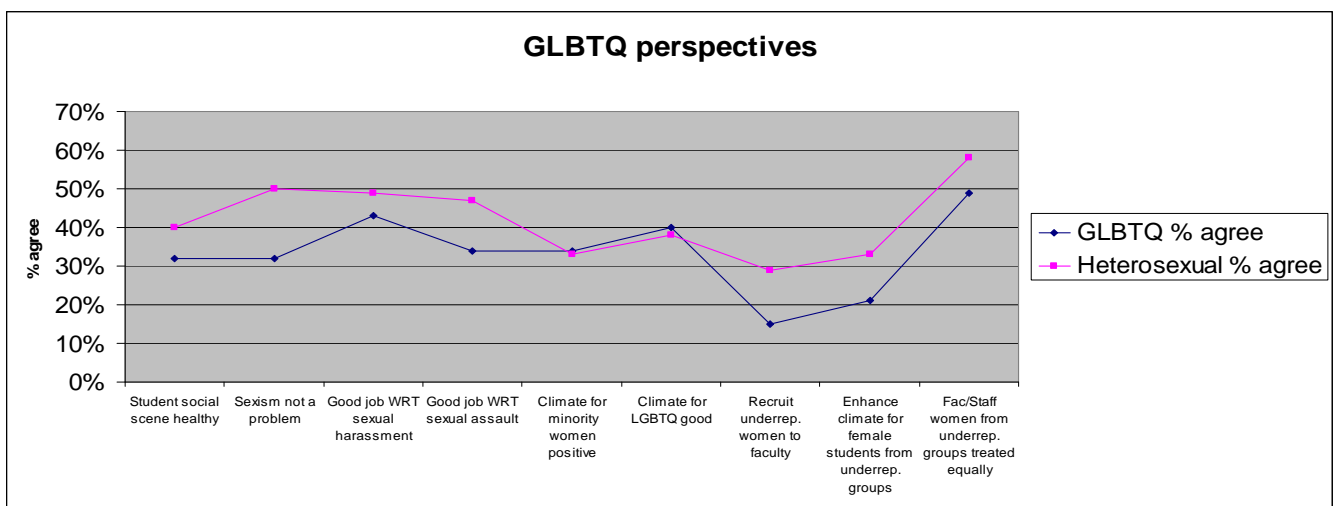


Fig. 3: Comparison of degree of agreement, self-identified GLBTQ vs. heterosexual survey respondents. GLBTQ n=53, Heterosexual n=747

- **Recommendation #55: The TSW supports the recent proposal for the establishment of a Queer Studies house.**
- **Recommendation #56: The College should take a more proactive stance on homophobia and intolerant behavior. As outlined in the previous section, awareness and tolerance are key leadership skills.**

G. Student Women of Color

We are hand picked from several places in this country (domestic students that is) given a bunch of seductive reasons as to why we should come here, we are dropped in what often feel like a war zone and we are left to figure it out. Most of us have no idea what we are getting ourselves into when we come here, and we are shocked that in Middlebury, we are expected to conform or commit academic and/or social suicide. No one is listening to us. Our staff often does not reflect our experiences. They can listen intently but they cannot offer help that come from a place of having lived our issues. I don't mind that this is a challenging place, but there is very little tools to help me navigate it. – Survey comment

I know students from some backgrounds who find the social scene at Midd very intimidating. I think there needs to be a common ground for those types of students. If there's a range of social life here, instead of the far extremes, it might help. – Survey comment

In focus groups with student women of color, we heard that the issues they face are more typically linked to race, not gender. A few noted they felt some professors do not “make an effort to understand where [they] are coming from,” and they sometimes feel patronized by faculty. In the classroom, they resent being made to feel that they represent an entire group. However, these are not experiences unique to them as women.

A common characteristic of African-American women on campus, especially those of middle and lower-income classes, is a feeling of profound culture shock when they came to Middlebury. They reported having to adapt to campus culture and learn what they perceive as “upper-class white” patterns of speech and social interaction. Some felt they could never completely adapt, and so would probably spend four years at the College in a constant struggle to both “fit in” and not “lose themselves.” These students find the distinct lack of faculty women of color, particularly African-American women, especially troublesome because they are looking for role models of successful and authentic adaptation.

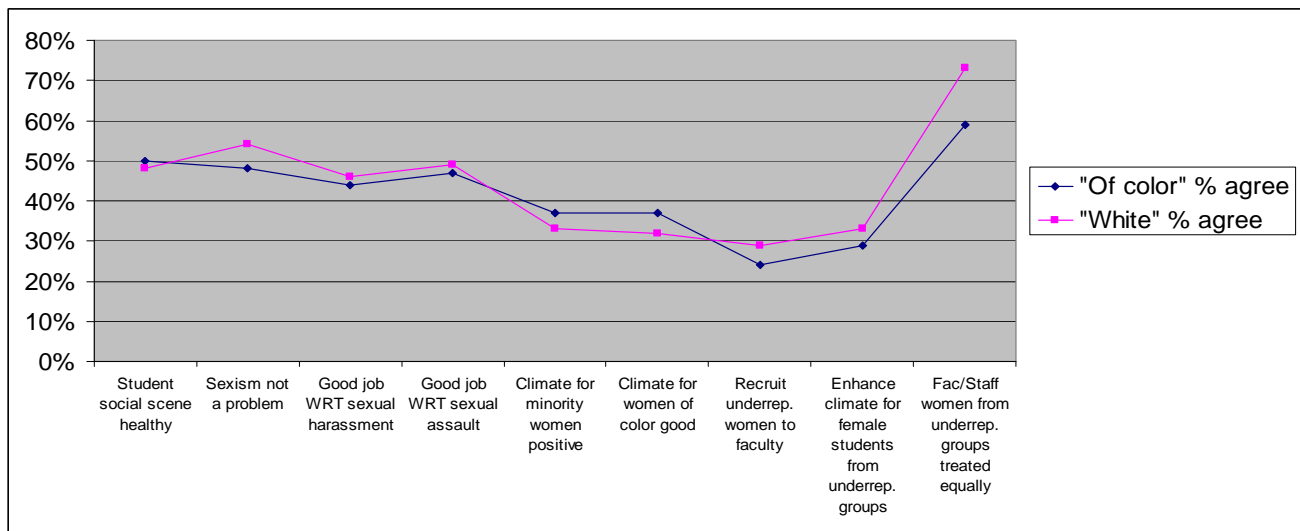


Fig. 4: Comparison of self-identified “white” students vs. students “of color.” “White” n=373, “of color” n=99

This chart demonstrates that different social identities do not lead to different perceptions of the status of women. Yet clearly we want students to have 100% agreement with these indicators of a healthy community, so there is much work to be done.

We endorse the Strategic Plan’s recommendation #8 to “Enhance recruitment and retention of students of color” but feel we need to go beyond recruitment to enhancing their experience while on campus. In order to do this we recommend at a minimum:

- **Recommendation #57: Continue our efforts to create a diverse campus which is welcoming and accepting for students of color.**

- **Recommendation #58: Continue our efforts to hire faculty and staff of color who can act as role models for our students of color.**
- **Recommendation #59: Provide opportunities for students of color to be involved with our mentoring program in a significant way.**

H. Low-income Students

One of my best friends had a very difficult time adjusting to the wealth on campus. Especially the feminine display through designer clothes etc. She felt alienated and unsure of whether she envied or despised the kind of expendable wealth all over campus that is seen prominently on many women's bodies.
– Survey comment

I think it's harder on economically disadvantaged women because wealthier students, though many are trained as political liberals, do not really understand the struggle for equality, which has always been a harder struggle for women than men. – Survey comment

With respect to low-income women, the situation is similar; nobody professes to have any kind of bias, but there is a culture of higher-class consumerism and wealth that is nearly impossible to avoid here. - Survey comment

Students report that class structures much of their social interaction. At the same time, class and wealth are taboo topics which are assiduously NOT talked about but closely observed. As is often the case in the United States, matters of class at Middlebury intersect and overlap with race and gender so much that economic inequality is difficult to isolate as a causal factor. It is likely that female students experience wealth inequality differently from their male peers because of the gendered focus on the status signals of hair, makeup, jewelry, and clothing.

Changing the College's financial aid policies may help to alter these class tensions, but the core issue is the students' disposable income, not how their tuition is paid. We endorse recommendation #7 of the 2006 Strategic Plan to "Increase the socio-economic diversity of the student body." The College should focus not only on recruitment, but also on enhancing the experience of low-income students after they arrive on campus. We understand that the administration is currently considering the creation of a Student Aid Fund that would consolidate existing funds that support the purchase of items such as books and laptops, and also add small grants and loan packages to help students to meet expenses relating to coursework and campus activities. In addition, the College should investigate innovative strategies, such as a student-run micro-credit program, to complement this financial program.

- **Recommendation #60: The College should design creative ways to help low-income students. The Task Force endorses the College's efforts to explore creative ideas such as the Student Aid Fund.**

I. Social honor code

While mentioned in our charge letter, our investigations indicate that the social honor code effort of a year or more ago seems to have cooled. In general, the Task Force believes the idea of having a social honor code is a good and valuable one. However, to be successful it does need to come from students, so we hope it will re-emerge.

- **Recommendation #61: The Student Government Association and Community Council should re-visit this issue.**

J. Work overload for students

It's hard to exercise here... who has time for that? I have so much work to do. People are so unhealthy because the college induces so much unnecessary stress. Homework is really ridiculous. Let people have a vacation—it would cut down on ridiculous behavior, I'm sure. - Survey comment

The majority of campus has unhealthy sleeping patterns in order to make up for the academic load. If one begins to get physically sick it's not uncommon to hear someone say: "I don't have the time to take care of myself." And frankly those posters in the gym that warns us to get 8 hours of sleep enrage me! My first reaction is always: "I DON'T HAVE TIME...don't you think I would if I could!!!" – Survey comment

Rather than having midnight breakfasts, why don't we have a system where people don't have to pull all-nighters for an entire week, in order to succeed? ...I see people all around me sacrificing their physical health just to live up to these insane expectations. – Survey comment

Students regularly complain about being overworked. Much of this may be griping-as-usual, and of course college is supposed to be hard work. The TSW did hear from many students that their workload is overwhelming, and that this forms part of the “work hard, play hard” pattern described above. We did not investigate to what degree this perceived academic work overload is a gendered phenomenon, but the TSW considers it likely that women experience stress differently than men do – and that this may relate to clearly gendered dietary and sexual behavior.

- **Recommendation #62: The Director of Health and Wellness Education should gather data on student sleep patterns and develop appropriate programming to encourage a healthy balance between work and life.**
- **Recommendation #63: The College should also consider ways to “tone down” the general sense of “busyness” on campus. Indeed, the prospect of adding new programming to an already full-to-bursting schedule of events gave the TSW some pause in making these recommendations.**

VII. Athletics and Title IX

Both men and women have overwhelming positive experiences participating in athletics. That is part of what makes Midd great. – Survey comment

Sometimes I think that there is a group of students and sometimes faculty who are against athletes. People assume that they aren't just as hard working and intelligent as any other student just because they play a sport. – Survey comment

The TSW survey tested the hypothesis that men and women experience the Athletics program differently by asking for responses to the prompt, “I feel that women have a more positive experience on athletic teams than men do.” 43% of survey respondents chose not to answer this question, and 34% were neutral on the issue. The fact that only 23% expressed an opinion on the matter – and that only 7% had strong opinions – suggests that in general the College has created an equitable environment in its Athletics program.

Women's Athletics is a vibrant feature of the female experience at Middlebury College. Female athletes report feeling supported in and empowered by their athletic experience. Softball and Golf have been added since the 1997 Task Force report, bringing the number of varsity teams at Middlebury to 16 for women and 15 for men. Coaches' salaries – both male and female – have been studied by Human Resources for internal equity as well as being compared externally to determine a fair market value. Significant strides have been made in recent years in the hiring and pay structure for female assistant coaches. These factors, along with strong participation numbers, suggest a commitment to Title IX compliance as well as a philosophical commitment to the welfare of the women's athletic programs.

There has been substantial growth in opportunities in the highest levels of club competition as well, namely Rugby, Crew and Water Polo; all of which are healthy programs with strong participation. Anecdotal evidence – general survey and interviews with focus groups – suggests that there is satisfaction with the Intramural and Recreational activities available for women at Middlebury as well. Further research is being conducted by an ad hoc Task Force studying IM and Recreational sports, including a survey specifically targeting these issues. This study will determine whether the positive anecdotal evidence is in reality the prevailing experience among the student body.

While many of the trends in women's athletics have been positive, areas of concern and the need for vigilance remain. These issues include:

1. The number of female head coaches still lags well behind the number of male head coaches. While this is a national phenomenon (see *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 4, 2007, "Where Have All the Women Gone?"), steps should be taken to ensure that top female candidates from both within and beyond the United States are identified and given an opportunity when openings arise, while also ensuring that our female athletes are afforded the best possible coaching.
 2. As the student population has shifted to slightly more females than males, care must be given to ensure that participation numbers in Athletics reflect the make-up of the student body; referred to in Title IX compliance as "proportionality."
 3. The recent retirement of a full-time female administrator in Athletics leaves a void in the female leadership, particularly given the imbalance in male to female head coaches.
 4. The health and wellness issues that face all of our female students can be of particular concern to our female student-athletes. The same qualities that lead to a positive, competitive and healthy athletic experience can lead to problematic health concerns without proper education and monitoring by a team of athletes, coaches, sports medicine personnel as well as health and wellness personnel.
- **Recommendation #64: The College should continue the existing policy that the Senior Woman Administrator is directly involved in any search for a full-time head coach.**
 - **Recommendation #65: Human Resources, in conjunction with the Director of Athletics, should annually monitor internal pay equity for female coaches.**

- **Recommendation #66:** The Department of Athletics should respond immediately to any recommendations of the Task Force on Intramurals and Recreational Sports. The Senior Woman Administrator should endorse any recommendations made by this Task Force.
- **Recommendation #67:** The Department of Athletics should work closely with the Director of Health and Wellness to ensure that health and wellness issues specifically related to female athletes are being sufficiently addressed.
- **Recommendation #68:** The Athletic Policy Committee should dedicate one meeting per year to a systematic monitoring of Title IX compliance (note: the Senior Woman Administrator is a standing member of the Athletic Policy Committee).
- **Recommendation #69:** Strong consideration should be given to the hiring of a full-time female administrator when the position becomes available.

VIII. Program in Women's and Gender Studies and Chellis House

Part of the TSW charge asked that we examine the standing of the WAGS program, the role of Chellis House, and how these institutions shape gender issues on campus. The Program in Women and Gender Studies is an academic program and Chellis House is a co-curricular program that operates under its aegis. Chellis House activities are directed at supporting the academic program and promoting the issues that intersect in the study of women and gender. Chellis House fulfills a central tenet of feminist thought, which asserts the need for linking theory and praxis. While WAGS courses may raise awareness of issues, Chellis House offers students the institutional space for taking action. Its scope is, however, currently limited. The Chellis House Director already works on issues ranging from reproductive health to women and finance, but formalizing these responsibilities would enhance Chellis House's role as a resource for students, faculty, and staff.

Our investigation has found positive developments since 1997, such as the creation of a dedicated faculty position in WAGS. To gather information about the current WAGS program, a TSW member interviewed Sujata Moorti, Professor of Women and Gender Studies, who holds this new position. As one might expect, some of the challenges of WAGS still relate to size. It is difficult to ensure regular course offerings, particularly with the dependence upon other departments to make the offerings, which contributes to difficulty in outlining tracks of study for students. While the data suggests the number of courses have gone up from an average of approximately 20 courses a year to 24, the number is higher due to winter term courses rather than fall/spring term courses. Most of these course offerings are framed as "women and X", so that offerings on matters of men, masculinity, gender, and queer studies are limited and inconsistent. Moorti noted a desire for more collaboration between WAGS and the International Studies program to create an "international women's studies" track.

- **Recommendation #70:** The academic administration should work directly with WAGS and related programs to strategize around means for regularizing course offerings.
- **Recommendation #71:** As the College expands its faculty it should make an effort to hire faculty who can contribute to the WAGS program.

- **Recommendation #72:** The College should explore the appropriateness of reframing the Women's Resource Center as a Gender Resource Center.
- **Recommendation #73:** In light of the many recommendations that we have made that would call on the resources of Chellis House for implementation we recommend that the next review of Chellis House and WAGS should address whether the current one-half position of Director of Chellis House is adequate for these responsibilities.
- **Recommendation #74:** Given the last academic program review occurred in 1997, the TSW recommends reviewing this program in 2008-09 or as soon as it can be reasonably planned.

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Appendix A. List of Interviews Conducted

Campus Open Forums (2)

Meetings with:

- International Students Organization

- GLEAM members (and input solicited in writing and individually as well.)

- Female Coaches

- Male Coaches of Female Athletes

- Students Women of Color

- Commons dinners around athletic life (2)

- Eating Disorder Discussions (2)

- Commons dinner around student social life

- Women in Science focus group

- Feminists at Middlebury (FAM) (written comments received)

- Student Women of Color

- International Female Faculty and Faculty Women of Color

- Staff Women of Color

- Gender Dynamics and Identity focus group

Numerous Individual Interviews

Appendix B. Quantitative Survey Results

Sections 1 and 2 were available to students, faculty and staff. MC is an abbreviation for Middlebury College.

Question	Total # responding	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Neutral	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Answer
I am treated with respect by other students, faculty and staff at MC.	864	54%	37%	4%	4%	1%	0%
I feel physically safe at MC.	860	77%	19%	3%	1%	1%	0%
I feel that the student social scene is positive and healthy.	862	7%	32%	21%	24%	7%	10%
I feel that sexism is not a problem at MC.	857	14%	34%	17%	24%	9%	2%
I am treated respectfully in the classroom by faculty.	851	53%	11%	4%	1%	0%	31%
I am treated respectfully in the classroom by students.	858	48%	25%	5%	2%	0%	21%
I feel that MC is doing a good job regarding health issues on campus.	853	22%	40%	17%	11%	3%	7%
I feel that MC is doing a good job regarding eating disorders on campus.	859	6%	14%	27%	18%	10%	25%
I feel that MC is doing a good job addressing all forms of sexual harassment on campus.	859	17%	33%	25%	13%	5%	8%
I feel that MC is doing a good of addressing all forms of sexual assault on campus.	855	18%	28%	23%	10%	5%	15%
I feel that women have a more positive experience on athletic teams than men do.	858	1%	5%	34%	11%	6%	43%
I feel that the campus climate for women in minority groups is positive and supporting.	855	11%	23%	23%	12%	4%	26%

	Total # responding	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Neutral	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Answer
The campus climate for women of color is good.	860	11%	23%	23%	13%	4%	26%
The campus climate for LGBTQ women is good.	859	12%	26%	20%	15%	6%	20%
The College has taken enough steps to recruit women from under-represented groups into the faculty.	859	11%	18%	24%	17%	10%	20%
The College has taken enough steps to enhance the campus climate for female students from under-represented groups.	854	10%	23%	24%	15%	5%	23%
Women of color are treated equally in the classroom.	854	38%	18%	11%	5%	1%	27%
Faculty and staff women from under-represented groups are treated equally by students and colleagues.	854	33%	25%	14%	8%	2%	19%
I feel MC is doing a good job at creating a welcoming environment for women with disabilities.	858	17%	24%	19%	11%	4%	24%
Establishing a positive and healthy social life is more challenging for women from under-represented groups than for women in general.	858	13%	29%	18%	13%	6%	22%
The campus climate for low-income women is supportive and positive.	856	10%	15%	20%	24%	9%	21%

Section 3 questions were answered by faculty and staff only.

	Total # responding	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Neutral	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No answer
I am satisfied with my career progress at Middlebury.	358	31%	43%	8%	12%	4%	1%
I feel like a full and equal participant in the problem-solving and decision-making in my department.	359	42%	31%	8%	13%	7%	1%
Women have an equal level of influence in my department.	361	58%	21%	5%	9%	5%	2%
I feel that men and women are treated the same in my department.	359	45%	26%	6%	13%	6%	3%
I feel that the College equally supports male and female employees.	357	29%	34%	12%	16%	6%	3%
I feel my colleagues are supportive of those who want to balance their personal and career lives.	361	34%	38%	7%	14%	6%	0%
I feel that it is difficult for people in my department to adjust their work schedules to care for dependents.	361	7%	20%	13%	27%	27%	6%
The head of my department understand the existing policies regarding family leave (e.g. FMLA) or flex-time.	358	48%	23%	7%	7%	3%	12%
Male colleagues with children are considered by others to be less committed to their careers than men without children.	360	3%	9%	14%	24%	40%	10%
Female colleagues with children are considered by others to be less committed to their careers than women without children.	361	6%	23%	12%	22%	30%	6%

The answer format for the following questions differed from those above. These questions were answered by faculty and staff only.

	Total # responding	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	No Answer
I have to miss personal activities (e.g., school events, community meetings) because of professional responsibilities.	360	2%	22%	41%	28%	7%
I have to miss professional activities (e.g., meetings, sabbaticals, conferences) because of personal responsibilities.	361	1%	11%	31%	51%	6%