

Gender Council Executive Summary

What is the primary purpose of the Gender Council?

The Council would integrate gender consciously in all policies and college efforts, thereby ensuring that concerns pertaining to gender are always incorporated in a central fashion. This would be achieved through three modes:

- 1) *Prevention*: The GC would work on an on-going basis to use policy formation and community outreach programs to prevent problems related to gender before crises occur. The Council would not simply be a reactionary organization that fixes problems after they arise, but rather a permanent, proactive coalition that would address the needs of all community members.
- 2) *Guidance*: The GC would encourage more projects that foreground gender-related concerns by providing resources and guidance to students, staff, and faculty looking to make this campus safer and more inclusive for people of all identities.
- 3) *Education*: The GC would serve as a resource for other organizations and policymakers to ensure that gender is understood as something that affects everybody. The GC would function as a clearinghouse for ideas from other community members interested in improving our campus.

Who would sit on the Gender Council?

The GC would be composed of students, staff, and faculty who have a strong background in gender studies and/or social justice, and who can serve as advisers to Administrators. This varied composition will ensure that there is continuity and historical consciousness of the efforts the College has enacted in the past to address these concerns.

Why is the Gender Council necessary?

Gender is something that affects all of us, yet there is currently no permanent, centralized organization on campus that addresses issues of gender. Several college documents including the 2008 Report of the Task Force on the Status of Women, the 2006 Human Relations Committee Report, the 2010 Review of Potential Student Life Issues Facing Transgender Students, and the 2010 Gender Exclusivity Report have all alluded to a need for such an organization. The GC would guide the implementation of the recommendations these reports make, and address the changing needs of the college community. Just as the Environmental Council has helped the College honor its commitment to sustainability, the GC would help the College honor its commitments to diversity, gender equality, and social justice.

Does this work already fall under the purview of any other campus organization?

Technically, yes: gender is part of the work of several campus institutions devoted to improving diversity. However, no single person or organization can be expected to cover all the necessary work that needs to be done related to gender. Just as Middlebury is proud to have several organizations devoted to sustainability and the environment, multiple avenues for gender and social justice advocates are necessary for effecting long-term changes in campus culture and policies.

Would the creation of this Council imply that gender is more important than other identities?

No. Gender simply cannot be studied in isolation from race, class, disability, ethnicity, religion, age, and sexuality; it is always understood in conjunction with these various categories. While this Council foregrounds gender, other aspects of identity would be addressed simultaneously. In addition, the GC would regularly cooperate with other campus organizations working on issues related to other areas of social justice and diversity.

What authority would the Gender Council have?

The authority of the GC would derive from its members' individual expertise. Just as the Environmental Council advises the Administration on policy formation that impacts the environment, members of the GC would ideally be respected as valued authorities on matters related to gender. When significant policy change is sought, the GC would seek approval from appropriate administrative bodies.