

# Community Dinner on Sexual & Relationship Respect

By Maddie Orcutt

Dear Editors,

I'm writing today to discuss the role that the Student Government Association (SGA) plays in addressing sexual and relationship respect. Last year, after a series of conversations with other institutions in the Northeast, the SGA decided to increase its commitment to promoting sexual & relationship respect here at Middlebury. This Thursday, January 28th, the SGA will co-host an Atwater dinner on these issues alongside It Happens Here and JusTalks. Over the past several months, President Gratch and others have met with a number of stakeholders on these topics, and have developed three guiding questions for students to explore alongside one another as we move forward: (1) What is our current culture surrounding sex and relationships at Middlebury, (2) What is the culture that we want, and (3) How do we get there?

We want to emphasize that these three questions are merely starting points for this dialogue, and that asking these questions will demand sustained follow up from administrators, the SGA, and students alike. We are not looking to tell one synchronized story about sex and relationships at Midd; as students with different identities and life experiences, we all bring different perspectives and lenses to the table on these issues. We are, however, interested in learning from one another, in deepening our sense of commitment to this community, and in beginning the process of establishing sexual and relationship norms on this campus.

Following in the footsteps of President Patton's recent comments, including her thoughts on restorative justice as well as the value of having difficult conversations, the SGA wants to continue to host campus dialogues on sexual & relationship respect beyond the Atwater dinner. We are of the belief that envisioning a healthier, safer Middlebury requires not only looking forward, but also having frank discussions about where we are at today.

Whether you were able to RSVP for the upcoming Atwater dinner or not, we want you to know that the SGA is committed to continuing these conversations. Please feel free to reach out to myself, your Senators, or President Gratch in the coming months with any input or initiatives that you may have.

Respectfully Submitted,

Maddie Orcutt, Class of 2016  
Relationships & Respect