



SGA Transition Document 2018-19 → 2019-20

1. What were some responsibilities of your role that are not outlined in the bylaws?

Sexual and relationship respect can mean many things, so most of what we do isn't outlined in the bylaws. At the beginning of the year, we discussed projects we wanted to continue from the year before and new ideas, and as the semester went on, we created many new initiatives based on the conversations we had on our committee. I'll get into more details in the next question, but for now I'll say that you have a lot of flexibility on the kind of projects you work on.

Besides campus initiatives around sexual and relationship respect, another responsibility is responding to events in the world and on campus. For instance, at the beginning of this year the Kavanaugh hearings were challenging for many people at this school, and it was our role to write a statement from SGA and respond publicly on this matter. Similarly, with the Department of Education's Title IX changes this year, we took on the role of distributing information about the changes to the student body, and creating opportunities for students to learn more and to submit comments on the proposed changes.

2. What events or programs did you focus on this year and what should be continued in the following year?

We focused on many different events and programs this year. I'll go through them in more or less chronological order. There are more details and resources about each project in our google drive folder, which I'll share with you!

Early on in the year, we put together a letter of feedback and suggestions related to **Green Dot**. People on the committee were frustrated with a lot of aspects of Green Dot (the assumption that the people in the room would always be bystanders and never survivors or perpetrators, the light hearted approach to sexual violence, the lack of follow up after orientation, etc). We crafted a letter to Health and Wellness and met with Barbara McCall about it, but it didn't seem to go that far. I would recommend not following the Green Dot route at this moment. There are people already working on improving and expanding Green Dot, and we came to see our role as providing alternative approaches to combating sexual violence. (More on this later with the Complicity Project.) Meeting with Barbara did result in us compiling a list of suggestions for **changing orientation**, since we believe there should be more sex ed in

orientation, as well as better violence prevention efforts. Changing orientation is a long process, but I think it's an important one if you want to go farther in that direction.

We continued work on getting **pads, tampons, and condoms** into all first year dorms. This had begun the year before, with a pilot program in Battell, a lot of data collection, and meetings with administrators. We thought it got approved in the spring of 2018, but we returned in the fall and there were no pads, tampons, or condoms. So we had many meetings and proposed and passed a bill in Community Council. Then we worked with Mike Moser from Facilities, who took on the pads/tampons portion, so that now custodial staff distributes pads and tampons to one gender neutral bathroom per hall. We still had no condoms, so we worked with Mark Peluso at Parton, who ended up maxing out their budget for condoms and giving them all to us. We worked with CRDs so that now all the condoms are in Commons offices, and FYCs and RAs can more easily get condoms and distribute them to their halls. We are hoping to gather more data and pass a bill to expand this to all sophomore dorms this spring. I encourage you to keep this project going next year, to continue to expand access to important menstrual and safer sex products. This could expand into better quality products, more dorms, and further institutionalization of the project. For instance, it would be preferable to get it so Parton gives condoms straight to CRDs so this committee doesn't have to be the go between to make it happen. I recommend checking on this initiative early in the year to make sure there actually are pads, tampons, and condoms in all the places they're supposed to be. If we weren't able to expand to sophomore dorms that could be the next step. That would involve passing a bill, going through sophomore dorms to find the best located gender neutral bathroom on each hall, and meeting with Mike Moser again. Also there will be new CRDs, so check in that they're on the same page about condom distribution. Abby Dennis has been doing a lot of this work on our committee so talking with her would be helpful for this.

Another initiative was helping start a **support group for survivors of sexual violence**. We met with a counselor at Parton who was considering starting a group, and gave suggestions and support for getting the group up and running. It was particularly important to get it going at the beginning of the year during the Kavanaugh hearings, and I heard positive things about the group since. I believe the group is now being led by WomenSafe members. This is not something we have that much direct involvement in anymore, but it's a good thing to be aware of and help support when needed.

We have led a number of **black out days** as a committee, often in conjunction with It Happens Here. IHH is a very important event of people sharing stories of sexual violence (either anonymous submissions or their own). We always try to support it in whatever way we can, whether that's through an all campus black out day, distributing black ribbons, advertising through an all school email, and/or putting up a sheet for people to write responses on. I have the sheet and more black ribbon that I can pass on to you.

As I mentioned earlier, we did a lot at the end of fall semester and J term about the proposed **Title IX** regulations. We wanted to clarify to the student body what was happening nationally, and what these changes would mean for Middlebury. We met with the Title IX director and had a comment writing event with members of our committee there to answer questions, along with our all school email on the subject. Although the comment writing period is over, the Title IX changes could come up again during your time as co-director. We don't know whether/when the regulations will be adopted, but there will be large changes to Middlebury's Title IX policies if they are. I recommend meeting a few times a semester with the

Title IX director to be on the same page about these things. There may also be ongoing conversations about the potential of developing restorative practices approaches to Title IX violations. I have a lot of thoughts on the subject, and would be happy to talk about it more in depth if it comes up.

Another role of our committee that I hope continues is **bringing sex educators** to campus. There is far too little sex education on this campus, in my opinion. I'm very glad that SPECS now exists, though it's still in its early stages. Ideally we could get sex ed into orientation, but also it should permeate more of campus culture in general. In bringing sex educators, I encourage you to consider a few things: many people have not had much (if any) sex ed coming in to Midd, so starting with the basics/not assuming too much knowledge can be good; consider what identities are being centered (for instance, prioritize bringing queer and trans people and people of color, and not always getting sex ed from straight white women); bringing a speaker is a lot of work and a long process, so make sure you have a dedicated team working on it, and you start far enough in advance to do all the detailed planning; so much of the success of an event has to do with advertising, so make sure you don't work really hard to bring an educator and then fail to advertise; don't leave it all to April because way too much happens in April.

We also worked with a number of different groups on planning a series of events for **World AIDS Day**. This was spearheaded by Globe Med, in collaboration with the Health and Wellness Committee, SRR, FAM, and Chellis House. It mostly ended up just being one person from each group working on this. We put together a movie screening, a safer sex workshop (this was by Johnny Chagnon from Pride VT who came for free and did HIV testing which was awesome), and a panel of faculty and staff. This will probably happen again this year, so I recommend having at least one person from the committee involved!

Another ongoing project is trying to get a curriculum around interrogating **masculinity** and sexual violence into **sports teams**, based on programs like Man Up and Coaching Boys Into Men. Jess Cohen has been the lead on this project, and is planning to continue with this next year, so reach out to him to continue this work. I think it's a great idea and an area that we could definitely expand on.

We help out with **Consent Fest** every year in late April. The Health and Wellness office plans this event and we run one of the booths. Not too much to know about this except to be in touch with Barbara McCall.

And now for our main initiative, the **Complicity Project**! This project continued our work from #MiddToo the year before, aiming to further the conversations around sexual violence at Middlebury. It focused on the complicity of our Middlebury community as a whole in perpetuating sexual violence. To us, *complicity* means reinforcing a culture that perpetuates sexual violence, whether through our actions, our inaction, or in our associations. While we clearly did many projects this year, this was the main focus of spring semester. We'd been discussing the idea of complicity and of doing a library display since October, but it became the focus beginning in January. We planned out each week: three weeks of postering with different types of posters each week, the week before spring break off, a week of tabling, a week of our library display, and a workshop about combating a culture of sexual violence the next week. We had a go link going the whole time, go/complicity, where people could submit thoughts and answers to our questions on ways they'd been complicit/see complicity/can challenge their complicity. The posters we created, the student responses, the interviews with faculty and staff,

the photos from tabling, and all our planning notes are available in the google drive. The cleaned up version is all on our website, go/complicityproject. I think it would be fantastic if this project continued next year. It was a lot of work, but now you'd have all of our raw material to work with and build off of. It was also not without controversy--not all members of the administration liked it, for instance. But we got lots of positive feedback, and I think it started some really important conversations. Additionally, one of the sex educators we brought to campus, Cindy Pierce, loved the project and sent us a bunch of feedback of other directions we can go in with the project, and contacts she has that could be helpful. It's totally up to you what you continue next year, but I believe there's a lot more potential with this project. I also still have the main posters, so you could put them up again in the library or other spaces around campus at the beginning of the year. As with everything, I'd love to meet about this project if you're interested, and support next year's committee in any way I can.

Another thing that came up was resources for students who've realized that they perpetrated sexual or relationship violence. After our complicity project, a student approached us saying that their former partner had told them they'd been abusive, and that they were looking for resources and ways to move forward and learn and not cause more harm in the future. We reached out to Barbara and Renee and got some resources in Rutland and Burlington, which will be up on the complicity project website, but there isn't much in the way of resources here. Counseling is the only option, because other usual resources around sexual violence are either mandatory reporters or do not put their resources towards helping perpetrators. This is an area we were not able to follow up on much, but there could be potential here (a counselor led group for people to come to terms with the harm they did and work on repairing that/moving forward? a possibility for restorative practices?). Jess Garner is working on this moving forward if you're interested in going in this direction.

3. What resources helped you most in your position? Who were the most important people who helped you and what are their titles?

There are a number of staff and administrators who helped us with different things related to SRR. The Title IX Director has not yet been hired, but will be an important person to meet with for this role. Barbara McCall, the Director of Health and Wellness is someone you'll end up working with a lot. Renee Wells, the Director of Education for Equity and Inclusion, was very helpful in planning complicity project things (she and Barbara ran the workshop). Karin Hanta, Director of the Chellis House, is a great person to collaborate with on events. As I mentioned before, if you end up working on pads/tampons/condoms you should meet with Mike Moser from Facilities and Mark Peluso from Parson, who were both super supportive of this project.

There are also a lot of student groups who are great to work with, either in supporting their events, or in asking them to cosponsor our events (especially sex educators). These groups include SPECS, Q&A, FAM, It Happens Here, and the Health and Wellness Committee.

4. What was the largest challenge of the position you faced during your term? What did you do/are doing to manage this issue?

I think the largest challenge was lack of commitment/attendance/follow through from some members of the committee. I think it's important to stress to applicants that this committee requires a time commitment and willingness to put in the work to make things happen. When choosing members, try to choose people who seem like they'll follow through on their commitments. I also think I could have started out with a stricter attendance policy. It has helped

to assign each person tasks and send out action items after each meeting, so people know what they're expected to work on before the next week's meeting.

Another challenge has been navigating being on SGA but not always being on the same page as the administration. Many of us are more radical than the school's administration is. This is a tricky balance, since we have to take into account that there are certain boundaries on what's appropriate to get involved in as an SGA committee, while still moving forward on valuable initiatives and not compromising our values.

5. What is one thing you wish you could have improved upon during your time in this position?

Committee wise, I wish we'd gotten to more of the work around changing orientation. I think it'll take years but it's important work that I wish we'd been able to focus on more.

Personally, I wish I'd had clearer communication with my committee and held people more accountable for doing the work they said they would do. I had trouble with either micromanaging or realizing I wasn't managing enough and people were getting away with not pulling their weight.

6. List three important pieces of advice you would like to give the incoming officers.

Sometimes take a step back and evaluate what you want to do and why--do this at the beginning between the co-directors, early on with the whole committee, and at other points throughout the year. Sometimes we'd get lost in the logistics and I think it's valuable to step back and make sure you're focusing your energy where it'll matter most. For instance, early on we got pretty stuck on Green Dot reform, but after a while it seemed like that wasn't a place our committee could have much impact, and there are other people dedicated to that topic. We decided to shift to focus on places we see gaps and where our efforts could make more of a difference.

Delegate!! There are so many things this committee can focus on, and real change that we can make. But it is not possible alone, and delegating is a super important part of your position. So much more is possible when each person is working on at least one project at a given time.

Consider who you're picking for the committee carefully. You want to make sure they'll be invested in this work. Also, consider trying to get different perspectives in the room and people who you know will push each other's thinking in positive ways. In many ways, we served as each others' moral compasses on some difficult decisions, so think about who you want in that role.

7. List anything else you would have liked to know before starting this role.

Consider the other things you're taking on for the semester. This position is a time commitment if you're going to do it right. Make sure it's going to be something you're able to prioritize, though again, it's totally manageable if you have a good co-director, a solid committee, and delegate well.

I won't be on the committee next year since I'll be student teaching, but I'll still be around and am always happy to talk about SRR and support this work in any way I can. I really believe in this committee, and think it has so much potential for improving Middlebury. My phone number is [REDACTED] and my email is calter@middlebury.edu. Reach out anytime!

-Cece Alter