Dear Middlebury Community,

I am excited to announce my candidacy for Student Co-Chair of Community Council for the 2018-2019 academic year. I have served on Community Council for two years, first as a correspondent for The Campus and then as a voting member. In that time, Community Council has faced systemic problems which handicap its ability to perform its main function: to serve “as a forum in which all segments of the College community have a voice on nonacademic issues on campus.”

The fundamental issue is a lack of a sense of purpose within the institution. Many members have stopped attending meetings, making it difficult to organize effectively and discuss proposals. Everyone recognizes specific problems every day that Community Council, in theory, should be able to address. I will create an effective structure for addressing them, because one does not exist now.

I propose the following structural reforms: Community Council should convene earlier in the year, require its members to attend meetings, meet in a more accessible place at a more accessible time, require its members to give weekly updates, and create a formal template for recommendations. These changes will allow Community Council to deliberate more efficiently, making it a more effective forum for discourse. I will also create a proposal for the establishment of standing community advisory committees for administrative departments, a step that will ensure the effective transmission of information between the community and the administration.

First, Community Council usually begins its meetings in the middle of October, which postpones the meetings of many subsidiary committees, including the Residential Life Committee, Parton Student Advisory Committee, and both the Academic and Community Judicial Boards. Since Community Council is charged with ratifying the membership of these committees, it is crucial that we meet to discuss these appointments as early as possible. The most productive discussions occur in these smaller committees and they create the best proposals.

Second, Community Council does not have a reliable mechanism to compel its members to attend meetings, resulting in situations where we do not have enough members present to vote on recommendations or take minutes. It is critical, then, to make the meetings worth it to the participants. It is my sincere hope that members of Community Council will also participate or run the community advisory committees.

Third, Community Council should experiment with meeting in different places on campus. I propose that Community Council try meeting in places like Crossroads or the Ross Fireplace lounge to increase our visibility with the broader community. Currently, we meet in Axinn 104, which is a comfortable room for giving presentations, but I would rather that we find a place where it is likely that people will walk by and maybe stop to listen to what we are saying.

Fourth, we should create a formal template for our recommendations and make that template public. Members of Community Council have been unable to propose ideas they have because they do not know if they are following an acceptable format. The SGA has a wonderful format for bills which makes them easy to read and consider. We should adopt this format.

Thank you for your consideration.
Sincerely, John Gosselin
Middlebury ‘20
SGA Atwater Senator ’17-’18, Community Council Member ’16-’18