

**PROPOSAL FOR  
A SOCIAL ACTION REQUIREMENT  
AT MILTON ACADEMY**

**TARA VENKATRAMAN AND KATE LOVELY  
JUNE 2007  
SENIOR PROJECT**

## Reasons for a Social Action Requirement

### **A Social Action Requirement Defined Through The Mission Statement**

*Milton Academy cultivates in its students a passion for learning and a respect for others. Embracing diversity and the pursuit of excellence, we create a community in which individuals develop competence, confidence, and character. Our active learning environment, in and out of the classroom, develops creative and critical thinkers, unafraid to express their ideas, prepared to seek meaningful lifetime success and to live by our motto "Dare to be True."*

#### "Creating community"

The Social Action Requirement would ask to students to help build community by investing their time and energies into enriching the Milton community or a home, religious or other local community.

#### "Active learning environment . . . out of the classroom"

The Social Action Requirement provides students with a concrete way to develop as citizens and as critical thinkers outside the classroom.

#### "Developing Character"

Taking initiative in some type of social action will deepen students' understanding of the communities that surround them and will expand their world view, helping them to grow in character and preparing them for a diverse and increasingly interconnected world.

### **Other Reasons to Implement the Social Action Requirement:**

To deepen the impact of the Affective Education curriculum for Classes I and II

Social Awareness: Understanding privilege and gaining real-world experience with the ideas discussed in the classroom.

Transitions: Expanding the meaning of leadership by asking students to create and lead their own projects, encourages students to lead by example

To provide broad institutional support for the work being done by students

To recognize and make an institutional commitment to the importance of each student's serving the community in a concrete and tangible way, given the Milton community's privilege

To recognize those students doing service work outside of Milton

To build on community organizations and structures that already exist in order to minimize additional bureaucracy, efforts and spending

To encourage those students not involved in community service or social action to become involved and to catch those students who are slipping through the cracks in terms of their involvement

To ensure that all students interested in taking action have access to the skills and resources they need to realize their goals

To foster the flexibility and creativity that will permit each students to fulfill the requirement based on his or her own interests and strengths

To concretely engage students in the ideals of Affective Education outside of the classroom and to allow them to have experiences that they can bring into the classroom to enrich dialogue and discussion

## Personal Testimonials About Social Action Requirement

### **Emily Rider-Longmaid and Jonathan Tsang (both '08) Co-Heads for Community Service Board, 2007-8**

As responsible Milton students, we feel that creating a community service requirement is extremely beneficial to the student body. After we heard about Tara and Kate's project, we agreed with all of their suggestions, especially their proposal to train next year's seniors to be Social Action counselors. We feel that it is part of the senior class's responsibility to help out with the underclassmen's problems because of our experience gained in Milton Academy, and also because this is a wonderful way for the senior class to bond with people they might not otherwise know from daily interactions. As the co-heads for Community Service Board next year, we have received a lot of suggestions about expanding and publicizing service opportunities both inside and outside school. Through making community service a requirement, students will be exposed to community service and will be able to relate their positive experiences to their friends and peers, thus fulfilling our ambition of introducing *all* students to service. Therefore, please approve Tara and Kate's awesome proposal! We're sure that everybody will see the benefits that their plans will bring.

### **Zach Schwab ('07) Member of Community Service Board, 2006-7**

I especially like this idea because it is so in keeping with what Milton stands for, and how it is different from the regular elite New England prep schools. One thing I've liked about Milton so much is that the students here are so much more than smart – they have lives too. I think it would be great to have essentially “being social” as part of the curriculum. While pursuing those activities you listed (service trips, heading clubs etc.) people learn how to interact with others, how to be a leader and how to be part of a group, how to envision themselves as part of a society, and just how to be fun to be around. I think it would be really helpful in making sure our graduates are not just smart or knowledgeable, but interesting and dynamic as well.

### **Andrea Geyling (History) Director of Community Service**

I am writing in support of a schoolwide community service requirement if it is modest (in terms of hours) and defines service in a broad way. I believe that a requirement would make a statement that Milton Academy values service and the character it builds in its students as they become aware of and interact with the world beyond themselves. It would create educational experiences for our students that, in combination with their academic work, could lead them on life paths toward truly meaningful lifetime success. A service requirement would hark back to the historical notion of Milton being a school that "faces the street." For students who participate in Milton Academy's CS program, the community served can be on our own campus, in the town of Milton, or in several surrounding town communities.

We currently have an average of 200 students involved in weekly service commitments at any given time during the school year. With current staffing and student leadership structures, this number could be increased by about 50 more students doing

weekly service through placements that take place all 7 days of the week. The challenge is always transportation, but our vehicles were not full this year during all weekly trips. Most of our sites could absorb more volunteers if spread out across the 7 week days. I also believe we can find some adult volunteers to help drive a few more one time/weekend trips during the year, so that would offer students further options for service projects. The student [Community Service] board is very enthusiastic about creating ongoing special projects and service opportunities to fit a range of volunteer interests and availability.

**Kate Lovely ('07)**

**Co-Head of Common Ground and President of Habitat for Humanity, 2007**

I believe that Affective Education as a whole needs enrichment. In this spirit, I hope that both Affective Education and the Milton community as a whole will agree to adopt a Social Action Requirement. The adoption of such a requirement will be crucial in securing the school's role as leaders in social change and in infusing Affective Education with the real-world experiences it is so desperately lacking. Without experiences outside the classroom to reinforce and connect the concepts learned during Affective Education, the course will offer little more to students than frustration and boredom. Similarly, the requirement will rely on the course's class time as a forum for discussion and service learning, so that work beyond Milton will have application and meaning in the lives of Milton students. Ultimately, I feel that the goals of our project are aimed at revolutionizing Milton by making it a place committed to service and action. In many ways, I believe this is the duty of a school that provides its students with seemingly unlimited opportunity and privilege. We should not be asking that students give back, we should be demanding that they give back. Milton, as an institution, ought to confidently accept the responsibilities of an ethical role model, for it easily plays so important a part in the lives of students who have been here since kindergarten, or who have called it home for four years.

### Social Action Survey Results

As part of our proposal, we created a survey (see back of packet) which was distributed to eighty-six Class II students through their Affective Education Classes. Though the results aren't highly scientific, they nonetheless reveal a few interesting ideas. Fifty-two of the students surveyed participated in community service of some kind, while thirty-two did not. However, when asked what changes to the way that community service happens at Milton would cause them to be more involved, fifty-nine students said they would be more likely to be more involved in community service if they could integrate their activities/interests/passions with service and thirty-seven said they would be more involved if there were more one-time opportunities for service, such as Food Bank trips. As Ms. Geyling notes in her Personal Statement, the Community Service Board and Office are very ready and capable of facilitating more one-time trips, should a requirement be put in place. The Social Action Requirement would also allow for students to create their own action projects and pursue their own interests through service. Consequently, two key student concerns with service would be eliminated with the implementation of a requirement.

## The Logistics of the Social Action Requirement

**Overview:** We propose a social action requirement to be integrated into the Affective Education curriculum in Class III, II and I. This requirement would fully respect the current involvement and participation of students who are already engaged in social activism or related projects, but would establish an institutional commitment behind each student's participation in social action and help encourage those students who are not already involved. This requirement can be fulfilled in a variety different ways: through participation in weekly community service with the Milton Community Service Office, through participation in another Milton activity that relates to service and social action, through a service trip, through the creation and implementation of a social action project, or through the fulfillment of a twenty hour-a-year community service requirement.

**Definitions:** Social action: A broader definition of community service, including social justice work; work relating to discussion and action on issues of race, class, sexual orientation, gender and religion; work that aims to make the community more fair and equal or groups within it more supported and represented; work that aims to share privilege and resources beyond the Milton community.

**Existing Examples of Ways to Fulfill This Requirement:**

Student Support: ISS, SECS, Peer Group Leadership, peer tutoring

Diversity and Affinity Group Work: Heading a culture club, being a transition counselor

Advocacy Club Work: Heading groups like Lorax, F.L.A.G, Y.R., Public Issues, Gender Equity, Amnesty International

Weekly community service of any kind

Summer service trips or Milton March Break service trips

Senior projects that relate to social action

*Note:* Attending a conference relating to these issues does not count as a social action.

**Oversight for Completion of Project or Fulfillment of Requirement:**

For their method of fulfilling the requirement, each student will need a signature from the person below who fits their project and also from their advisor.

For one-time vacation service trips: Faculty chaperone on trip will provide a signature and phone number.

For one-time trip to a site such as the Food Bank: Adult chaperone or driver will provide signature.

For community service through a religious community: Adult in charge must provide signature and phone number

For heading a Culture Club: The faculty sponsor of the Culture Club or Ms. Flewelling will provide signature.

For being a counselor at Transition Program: Ms. Flewelling will provide a signature.

For weekly community service: The student will log the number of hours and the volunteer coordinator or site overseer will provide a signature.

For student support: Dr. McBrian, Ms. Griffin or Mr. Skinner (for ISS/SECS) will provide signature.

For student tutoring: Teacher responsible for arranging tutoring will provide signature.

For social action projects: An individual sponsor whom the student selects will provide signature.

For summer project: A preliminary proposal must be submitted to Ms. Geyling before the end of the first semester. By the end of the year, the student must submit a detailed proposal. They must also secure a signature and phone number from the adult chaperone on their summer trip as a point of contact and verifiability.

### **Oversight of the Entire Program**

We have four possible suggestions to minimize and make most realistic the oversight of this program:

1. Incorporate it into the role of either the Assistant Dean of Students or Director of Diversity Planning.
2. Create an online program into which advisors can enter the information and then Ms. Flaherty or Ms. Davis in the Dean's Office can follow up with those students who have not fulfilled.
3. Have a student board, comprised of seniors on Common Ground, Community Service Board and SGA, divide the work of oversight.
4. Hire a part-time employee.

**Note:** Community Service Board and Common Ground Board seniors will be available to support action projects and help develop them according to their needs and interests. They will have the role of a "social action counselor," in order to alleviate pressure on faculty who are already strained. Students who are stuck for a way to fulfill the requirement can be directed to these students for help. Ms. Flewelling or Ms. Geyling could hold a meeting at the beginning of the year for these seniors to "train" them by supplying them the resource list and examples.

### **Timeline for Students' Fulfilling the Social Action Requirement**

By Thanksgiving Break: Students should fill out their initial sheet to propose how they will fulfill the requirement.

By May 1: Students should fill out their final sheet to confirm that they did, in fact, fulfill the requirement. Exceptions will be made for those students who are completing action projects during the month of May and community service projects over the summer, who will have to fill out a form detailing that this is the case.

## Social Action Components of Peer Schools

### **Phillips Andover Academy**

- No community service requirement
- Combination sports-service offering to fulfill athletic requirement: This program means that students do community service for three evenings a week and work out for the other two evenings.
- Multidisciplinary Service Learning Program: French, Science, Literature, and English classes participate in service as part of the course.
- Joint student-alumni community service day
- Leadership training for students involved in community service coordination

### **St. Paul's School**

- Ten hour/year requirement (new as of 2006) for freshmen through seniors
- Requirement and programs budgeted through chaplain office
- Chaplain meets with groups of students during lunch/ frees to discuss service and encourage service learning

### **Concord Academy**

- No community service requirement in terms of number of hours
- Requirement of service to the community: required student duty in the kitchens twice a year and required school clean-up at the beginning and end of each year

### **The Cambridge School of Weston**

- Day and boarding community
- Fifteen hour/year requirement for freshmen through seniors
- Fulfilled in a variety of ways, including environmental action and advocacy, student drug and alcohol counseling, etc.
- Handled through the Community Service Office