



# Middlebury College Divests from War in Honor of Dalai Lama Visit

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Middlebury, VT— Amidst excitement surrounding the visit of His Holiness the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, Middlebury College has chosen to demonstrate ethical leadership in fully divesting its endowment from war. The spiritual leader of Tibet, who won the 1989 Nobel Peace Prize for opposing the use of violence, is speaking at Middlebury this weekend on the topic of “Cultivating Hope, Wisdom and Compassion.” The college finds this divestment to be the most fitting way to welcome the Dalai Lama and to align its money with its mission.

According to Middlebury College President Ron Liebowitz, the purpose of the talks is to help people explore resources for hope, optimism, and cooperation, while challenging them to lead lives of courage and engagement. “We are deeply honored that the Dalai Lama, a man of peace who embodies these qualities, is coming to Middlebury,” said Liebowitz.

Middlebury, in living up to these qualities, is able to welcome the Dalai Lama with one of the boldest actions for peace of any college in the nation. “The Dalai Lama is very impressed with Middlebury,” said Ellen McKay, administrative program coordinator of the college’s Charles P. Scott Center for Religious Life.

While this move by Middlebury comes during the Dalai Lama’s visit, it is the culmination of dedicated efforts spearheaded by students at the college. After pressure from a student club supporting socially responsible investing, Middlebury established the Sustainable Investments Initiative in 2010, into which it moved a portion of its endowment. Liebowitz applauded the Sustainable Investments Initiative as an avenue to “further our educational mission while providing social and environmental value.”

Since 2010, students have continued to advocate for increased transparency in regards to the endowment. Last year, a public forum with Investure, the firm that manages Middlebury’s endowment, confirmed that the school was invested in arms manufacturing. Students took this information to Bill McKibben, the world renowned activist and Schumann Distinguished Scholar at Middlebury College. McKibben agreed with students that it was time for the college to fully live up to its values. He eagerly joined in the efforts that ultimately led the college to act on principle over profit.

This fall, [350.org](http://350.org), the grassroots climate organization that McKibben founded, will be launching a coal divestment campaign targeting colleges throughout the country. As he hits the road for his tour, he has an extra sense of clean energy in his step: knowing that Middlebury College’s endowment of \$883 million no longer funds war or fossil fuel industries. With this move for peace, Middlebury teaches that school is not just for studying ideals, such as those espoused by the Dalai Lama, but also acting upon them.