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Pierre C. Fraley Scholarship Beneficiary

I'm so grateful for the experience I had at Middlebury Language Schools this Summer 2024. When I received my acceptance email to the Betty Ashbury Jones '86 School of French, I knew I was in for an intense, deep-dive into the French language. Middlebury Language Schools are notorious for their language pledge, which students sign within the first two days of arrival, and their fast-paced and in-depth coursework. Students promise to speak and communicate in nothing but the language of your school for the entire seven week immersion program. It's even recommended we limit our communication with family and friends to a minimum. I signed it knowing that this experience, the first ever immersive program I've ever participated in, would help prepare me for teaching French to high school students when I returned in the Fall. Since I placed into level 4, I was already speaking French with other level 4 students when we arrived, but the pledge helped to eliminate the occasional explanations we would give in English if we forgot a French word or time frame. Right after the ceremony we met with the professors at our level. The chair explained the rules for the workload, our participation, and attendance. This really was intense. I met the professors of my four courses: Advanced Grammar, Oral Production and Pronunciation, both of which every level 4 student took, and my two electives, Health and Societies in Africa and Francophone World: Culture, Identity, and Literature in Africa. In sum, over this time I read multiple books and essays and wrote over 50 pages for all my classes. But Middlebury offers more than just classes.

Middlebury also offered over fifteen ateliers to choose from over the course of each week. For instance, I loved broderie, where I sat with my grammar professor and other French school friends and talked while stitching a decorative scene of the chateau on campus (ambitious, I know). I also attended ballet, pétanque, randonnée, l'art, yoga, ciné club, astronomie, and soccer. There were events like: a wine-tasting at a local Vermont winery led by one of the professors who published books on wine; concerts; theater performances; art exhibits; a *francophilie* talent show; and all many conferences led by the professors of the language school and graduate program, as well as visiting lecturers. It also offered normal college residential life activities. For instance, I lived in a dorm with hall mates in French language-only housing. In

total there were over 160 of us language school and graduate students and over 40 professors and administrators; we were each other's community. There was a cohesion and connection between us. We ate our meals together, lived together, played together, and went to the local bar together on Friday nights. Even with all this language immersion, it wasn't until the end of my fifth week that I felt that all the vocabulary and grammar clicked in my mind as I spoke. The final day, I was sad when we could speak English again! At the end of the summer, I left with friends, which I still keep in contact with via text and the app Marco Polo where we send video messages back and forth.