Overview:

The Middle Earth Peer Assistance Program was founded in 1970 as CRISIS 5300 and was staffed by a small group of student volunteers. These students created CRISIS 5300 to help their fellow students who were challenged by the drug culture and other issues during the 1960's. Today, Middle Earth contains one of the country's oldest student run hotlines. The volunteer staff of 10 students has grown to over 150, and students now receive course credit for their work. In a typical year, the Middle Earth Hotline receives over 1,600 contacts. The program's early focus on drug related issues and education has expanded to also encompass peer support, peer education through peer theater, peer career advising, workshops, and campus media, and providing information and referral services. A focus of the program is to train student staff in peer helping skills. In addition, peer assistants, peer career advisors and peer educators receive instruction from professionals from the community about a variety of issues such as eating disorders, sexual assault, alcohol and other drugs, gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered issues, disabilities, contraception, HIV/AIDS and other STD's, and diversity issues.

Middle Earth is the peer assistance arm of the University Counseling Center and Career Services, within the Division of Student Success. The program is sponsored and funded by the Student Association and Division of Student Success of the University at Albany and is one of the largest student organizations at the University. Middle Earth has also been recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and Center for Substance Abuse Prevention as a Model Program in the area of Alcohol and Drug Prevention. Middle Earth consists of four major components: the Hotline Service, Peer Education Service, Peer Career Advisor Service, and Staff Development/Training Component:

- **The Hotline Services** functions as the campus peer assistance agency, especially after hours when other campus support services are closed. Trained student volunteers staff the hotline. A self-help Info-Line service is also provided. The Hotline is staffed from 1:00pm to midnight Monday through Thursday and 24 hours a day on weekends throughout the academic year.

- **The Peer Education Service** has the primary responsibility for the coordination of agency-wide programming efforts, consultation, seasonal preventative theme weeks, and resource development. We also have a peer theater group, the Middle Earth Players. Trained peer educators on campus do presentations, workshops and peer theater performances for sororities, fraternities, athletic teams, residence halls, and other campus groups. Topics include drugs and alcohol, dating and relationships, study skills, eating disorders, diversity, and other issues.

- **The Peer Career Advisor Service** focuses on helping students with their career development needs. Peer Career Advisors are sophomores, juniors and seniors who help with the transition from college life to the professional world. They are trained by Career Services to offer information on jobs and internships and to help other students with their resumes, cover letters, interviewing skills, and other important career tasks.

- **The Staff Development/Training Component** is responsible for ensuring the smooth functioning and continued growth of the Middle Earth organization. As part of our staff development component, we offer several credit-bearing courses through the University. We provide hands-on training for all of our undergraduate members and offer advanced training opportunities for graduate students in programs such as clinical psychology, counseling psychology, and social welfare.
### General Requirements of Middle Earth Trainees (ECPY 400):

Middle Earth Trainees must enroll in ECPY 400, a once a week (traditionally on Tuesday evenings) credit-bearing course. In addition, all trainees are required to:

- Participate in a training weekend during one of the first weekends of the semester. (Training weekend takes place Friday evening, and during the day on both Saturday and Sunday).
- **Hotline Trainees** participate in a three-hour training shift with an experienced hotline trainer on a weekly basis. During this time, trainees learn the logistical tasks associated with working on the hotline and participate in role-plays designed to incorporate information learned in class.
- **Peer Education Trainees** participate in a weekly lab class (traditionally Monday late afternoon) that provides education on basic communication and workshop presentation theory as well as other topics related to their respective specialty areas. The lab allows trainees to gain experience in researching, constructing, and presenting peer education and peer career programs. Peer education trainees gain hands-on experience throughout the semester staffing informational tables and exhibits at various sites on campus (often at the Campus Center). This work involves educating peers and providing informative materials, videos and posters, or brochures.
- **Peer Career Advisor Trainees** participate in a weekly lab class (traditionally Monday late afternoon) that provides training and education on fundamentals for helping undergraduate students with their career development. In addition to providing trainees with the opportunity to learn how to review a resume and cover letter, this lab also allows trainees to learn about advising their peers in a variety of areas including choosing a college major, finding a job or internship, and preparing for an interview. Peer Career Advisor Trainees also learn about creating strong graduate school applications and gain valuable skills in effectively enhancing their own professional network, and utilizing social media professionally. Once they have completed a training semester, PCAs perform Drop In resume and cover letter critiques at Career Services.

Middle Earth returning students may enroll in the following courses after the training semester: ECPY 403, 404, 405, 406 and 497. All are credit-bearing courses that involve the following expectations:

#### Requirements of a Hotline Peer Assistant (after the training semester):

- Participate in a weekly shift on the hotline (3 hours).
- Participate in two (2) 4.5-hour weekend day shifts and at least one (1) overnight weekend shift during the semester.
- Participate in at least one (1) temporary shift during the beginning and end of the semester.
- Participate in a one-hour weekly supervision group led by one of the Coordinators.
- Participate in agency retreats and in-services as assigned.

#### Requirements of an Outreach Peer Educator (after the training semester):

- Participate in a weekly 2-hour supervision/training group led by one of the Coordinators.
- Conduct thirty (30) hours of presentations, exhibits, or other peer education service during the semester.
- Research and construct a peer education presentation on a topic jointly determined by the student and supervisor.
- Participate in agency retreats and in-services as assigned.

#### Requirements of a Peer Career Advisor (after the training semester):

- Provide forty (40) hours of resume and cover letter critiques throughout the semester during Career Services Drop In hours.
- Participate in a weekly 2-hour supervision/training group led by one of Coordinators.
- Research a relevant topic of interest related to career development and write a ten (10) page paper (ECPY 403).
- Develop, market and present a workshop on a career-related topic for the campus community (ECPY 404, 405, 406).

Gaining experience at Middle Earth can prepare you for a career in psychology, medicine, social work, education, communication, business and a variety of other fields. If you have an interest in helping people and a willingness to learn from your volunteer work, make a commitment and apply to join the Middle Earth Peer Assistance Program. Middle Earth welcomes applications from all segments of our diverse campus community.

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR APPLICANTS:

Please print or type and be sure to mark clearly whether you wish to apply to the Hotline, Peer Education, Peer Career Advisor tracks. Return the application to Middle Earth between 1 and 5 PM Monday through Friday when classes are in session. Unless otherwise advertised, the application deadline for spring semester training is **November 15**, and the deadline for fall semester training is **April 15**. You will be contacted after the application deadline for an interview.

**For further information, please contact:**

M. Dolores Cimini, Ph.D., Director, Middle Earth Peer Assistance Program

University Counseling Center  •  B005 (Basement Level, Seneca Hall, Indian Quad)  •  University at Albany  •  Albany, NY 12222

**Phone:** (518) 442-5800  **Fax:** (518) 442-3096  **E-mail:** dcimini@albany.edu

www.albany.edu/counseling_center/middle_earth/
MIDDLE EARTH PEER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
APPLICATION FOR ADMISSION TO HOTLINE, PEER EDUCATION, OR PEER CAREER ADVISOR TRAINING PROGRAM

Unless otherwise advertised, applications for fall semester training are due no later than April 15, and applications for spring semester training are due no later than November 15 at Middle Earth (B005), Basement Level, Seneca Hall, Indian Quad. Please print or type.

NAME
CLASS YEAR MAJOR G.P.A.
STUDENT I.D. NUMBER LOCAL PHONE NUMBER
LOCAL ADDRESS
EMAIL ADDRESS
PERMANENT ADDRESS

I AM VOLUNTEERING FOR FALL 20 SPRING 20

CONSIDER MY APPLICATION FOR (Check all areas you want to be considered for):

- [ ] Hotline
- [ ] Peer Education
- [ ] Peer Career Advisor

What do you have to offer Middle Earth?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

What do you expect Middle Earth to offer you?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

What kind of job and/or life experiences have you had that would help you in your work with Middle Earth?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Briefly describe what constitutes a helping relationship.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

What kinds of interests and/or involvement do you have other than classes? (hobbies, extra-curricular activities, etc.)

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Describe what it means to be a role model for other students.

How would you address issues of alcohol and other drug abuse on campus?

Do you have any particular interests or projects that you would like to pursue under the auspices of Middle Earth?

Other Comments:

- Please answer “Yes” or “No” to all of the following questions. If you answer “Yes” to any of the questions, you must explain your answer on a separate sheet of paper.

  - Yes  □ No  □ Have you ever been placed on academic probation in college?
  - Yes  □ No  □ Have you ever been suspended or expelled from school?
  - Yes  □ No  □ Have you ever been referred to the Office of Conflict Resolution and Civic Responsibility or mediation program at the University at Albany or at any other college or university?
  - Yes  □ No  □ Have you ever been fired from a job?
  - Yes  □ No  □ Have you ever had any problems with the law?

REFERENCES: Please provide us with the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of three individuals who know you. At least one of these references should be from a faculty member.

1. ___________________________________________ ___________________________________________
2. __________________________________________________________________________________
3. __________________________________________________________________________________

I verify that, to the best of my knowledge, the information I have provided in this application is accurate. Furthermore, I understand that any position offered to me by the Middle Earth program is on a semester-to-semester basis and that continued participation in Middle Earth will be determined based upon an evaluation of my performance in Middle Earth and academic and judicial standing. I hereby authorize the Middle Earth Director to verify my student status, academic performance and judicial standing and to randomly check collateral sources, such as social networking sites, for additional information as needed.

Applicant Signature ___________________________ Date ______________

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY
Date contacted to schedule interview ________________
Date and time of interview ________________
Interviewer ____________________________________________
Disposition: _____ Accept for hotline   _____ Wait list for hotline (#___)   _____ Reject - encourage to reapply
               _____ Accept for outreach  _____ Wait list for outreach (#___)  _____ Reject - encourage to reapply
               _____ Reject                         _____ Reject