Dear Language Schools Student:

Please allow me to extend an early welcome to the Language Schools.

Your School has prepared information to help you plan your summer. We ask that you read all of the materials, paying particular attention to the Language Schools Student Handbook, which describes campus services and facilities and outlines the policies and regulations that govern the summer session. It should answer most of your questions about the coming summer. It is available online at http://www.middlebury.edu/ls/students/mills_prearrival.

The Language Schools are intensive and demanding by design. You should come prepared to immerse yourself in a highly structured environment where you will devote all of your efforts to the goal of learning a language and living its culture. We expect you to give high priority to your studies, but we also encourage you to participate in the cocurricular activities provided by your School. These activities are an integral part of the language learning process, providing opportunities for the development of language competence and cultural insight. In fact, round-the-clock reinforcement of language learning through formal instruction, informal conversations with fellow students, faculty, and staff outside the classroom, and further informal practice of the language during cocurricular activities is what we refer to as the “Middlebury Method.”

“Intensive” means that students spend up to five hours daily in class, sometimes divided between a larger “lecture” and smaller drill sessions. In addition, students devote a significant amount of time outside of class to preparation, usually between four and six hours daily; this homework can take the form of written assignments, language laboratory sessions, computer assignments, and memorization of vocabulary and grammar patterns. Faculty members are available for consultation during set hours of the day and evening, should students need their assistance. All intensive language courses last either seven weeks (French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish) or eight weeks (Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Russian). Graduate level courses last six weeks. Students are expected to keep up with the intensive demands of their courses on an everyday basis. A student who misses even one day of classes is at a serious disadvantage. For that reason, students are required to attend all classes. “Cutting” or “skipping” classes is a serious mistake, and often results in a student being unable to make significant progress, and in some cases, being dismissed from the School.

Our students represent a broad spectrum of ages, backgrounds, and levels of proficiency, while living and working in very close quarters. We rely on you to respect the privacy and study habits of others to maintain an atmosphere that is collegial, supportive, and considerate. Some of our rules and guidelines may seem artificial or restrictive but they have been designed over the course of many years to help you benefit as fully as possible from your summer at the Middlebury Language Schools.

Above all we expect you to observe the Language Pledge®, which requires that you not speak ANY language other than the one you are studying. In addition, we ask you to keep your use of the telephone and e-mail (in English) to an absolute minimum. As I am sure you know, the Pledge is the
cornerstone of our approach to language learning. You may find that living the Pledge is awkward at first, but in the end, thousands of your predecessors have enthusiastically confirmed its benefits. It may be helpful to think of the Pledge not as a matter of personal discipline for individual gain, but as a collective effort that contributes to the progress of every student. We depend on your active support; we want you to know at the outset that we take all infringements very seriously, and repeat that violations of the Pledge can result in expulsion.

Every year students arrive at the Middlebury Language Schools with special needs related to disabilities. These may include hearing, vision, or mobility impairments, learning disabilities, or other certified conditions. If you have a disability for which you may request an accommodation, please return the Special Needs Identification Form, also found on the Accepted Students Site. Sometimes, students arrive on campus hoping to handle these issues themselves. While you are free to make this choice, I urge you to make the ADA office aware of your situation so they can suggest options based on the experiences of students who have preceded you. Should you decide not to contact the ADA office prior to the start of the session, keep in mind that requests for accommodations made during the course of the summer may be impossible to facilitate. Please be in touch with the ADA office at (802) 443-5936 if you have further questions.

The intensive nature of the programs, adherence to the Language Pledge®, and participation in cultural activities all require dedication and commitment. The summer session may be strenuous and stressful, particularly for students attending for the first time. All students should arrive as physically and mentally rested as possible. Students who have been away from the classroom for some time can expect the course of study to prove particularly difficult, and those under treatment for conditions that may be aggravated by stress are strongly advised to discuss their plans with their physician or therapist before deciding to attend. If you or your health care provider desire more detailed information in order to better prepare for participation at either the Vermont or California sites, you may contact the Director of Counseling and Human Relations, Middlebury College, phone (802) 443-5141.

Please do not hesitate to confer with your School’s Director or staff on any questions or problems you may have during the course of your summer at the Middlebury Language Schools.

Finally, I am also available for individual meetings by appointment and during my open office hours, indicated in the Handbook. You are welcome to come and speak with me (in English.)

We look forward to seeing you in June.

Sincerely,

Michael Geisler
Vice President for Language Schools and Schools Abroad
Chief Risk Officer