Spring, 2015

Dear Middlebury Undergraduate:

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/policies/prearrival.

As you may know from your friends or personal experience, the Middlebury campus takes on a very different character in the summer. The Language Schools are intensive and demanding. You should be prepared to immerse yourself in a high structured living and working environment and to commit all of your efforts to the goal of learning a language and living its culture.

In some ways, the Language Schools experience is more challenging for Middlebury undergraduates than for newcomers to the campus; expectations that emerge from your academic year experience may not be relevant during the summer session. You will find that, while the campus looks the same and you encounter many familiar faces, some of your assumptions about how the college functions as an institution will need to be revisited.

How is Middlebury different during the summer?

First, the population residing on campus is much more diverse. Language Schools students represent a broad spectrum of ages, backgrounds, and levels of proficiency, while living and working in very close quarters. In addition, your teachers, and often their families, will be residing among you. We rely on you to respect the privacy and study habits of others, and to maintain an atmosphere that is collegial, supportive, considerate, and a little quieter than what you are accustomed to during the academic year.

Secondly, the educational objectives of the Language Schools are much more focused. As a liberal arts college, Middlebury’s purpose during the academic year is to provide a balanced and comprehensive education. During the summer, we are concerned solely with your progress towards greater proficiency in the language and a better understanding of the culture you have chosen to study. All co-curricular activities, even school parties, are intended to advance that goal. (That is why attendance at parties sponsored by other Schools or by summer student staff is not permitted.) You will not find the same range of activities and interest groups that is available during the academic year, nor will you have time for them. What you will find is the opportunity to experience many
facets of another culture while interacting intensively with other students and faculty who share your commitment to learning a language.

This leads directly to a third difference in the area of campus services. In order to help our students to remain focused on their language studies and to maintain the Language Pledge®, we have centralized as many services as possible in the offices of the individual Schools. Some specialized functions remain the same (although the hours may be different), but student activities, residential life concerns, and even simple requests for maintenance or custodial services are funneled through a bilingual assistant in your School’s office.

While the Language Schools are integral to the history and mission of Middlebury College, they function in many ways as a separate institution. We expect our students to arrive and depart from campus in accordance with the dates listed in our Handbook to ensure that our programs do not interfere with other College activities that precede and follow the summer session; students are encouraged to store all personal belongings in advance except those which they will need for the summer. Questions about your status on campus before or after the summer session should be referred to the Student Employment Office.

Some of our rules and procedures may seem artificial, restrictive, or cumbersome, because you know how the College community functions without them. The Language Pledge®, which requires that you not speak ANY language other than the one you are studying, can be particularly difficult for Middlebury undergraduates to observe. In addition, we ask you to keep your use of telephones and e-mails (in English) to an absolute minimum. We understand that it may seem unreasonable to put existing relationships “on hold” for the summer, but remember that the Pledge has a long history of demonstrated effectiveness in helping students benefit as fully as possible from a summer at Middlebury. We depend on your active support in maintaining the Pledge, and we want you to know at the outset that we take infringements very seriously. Disciplinary action, if warranted, will be taken within the Language Schools in accordance with the procedure outlined in The Language Schools Handbook, without any recourse to procedures available during the academic year.

Please do not hesitate to confer with your School’s Director or staff about questions or problems you may have during the course of your summer at Middlebury. I am available for individual meetings by appointment and during my open office hours, as indicated in the Handbook. You are welcome to come and speak with me (in English).

We look forward to seeing you this summer.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

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