Dear Colleague:

I look forward to welcoming you to Middlebury at Mills this summer.

Your School has prepared information to help you make your plans. We ask that you read all materials, paying particular attention to the summer Handbooks available online: http://www.middlebury.edu/ls/mills_facstaff_prearrival, which describe campus services and facilities and outline the policies and regulations that govern the summer session. The student and faculty handbooks should answer most of your questions about the coming summer.

The Language Schools ask a great deal of our students, and subject them to a very intensive educational experience. In particular, they must pledge not to speak any language other than one they are studying here, both in and out of the classroom. As you know, the Language Pledge® is the cornerstone of our approach to language learning. We appreciate your cooperation in helping students to observe it, and we ask that you discuss with your Director any violations of which you become aware.

The Language Schools will surely prove to be as intensive for you as it is for our students. You will be living in close proximity to colleagues and students in quarters that will no doubt seem quite spartan. Please be assured that we recognize your need for privacy. On the other hand, our students value the close personal contact with faculty above all else, so we ask you to please participate as fully as possible in the co-curricular activities of your School, to take most of your meals with students rather than with colleagues, and to remain on campus during the weekends as much as possible. We trust that this should not be too much of an imposition.

The extensive contact between students and faculty facilitates the development of a strong sense of community within each School and contributes to the success of the Language Schools; it can also create situations that need to be handled with a great deal of sensitivity appropriate to teacher-student relationships, both inside and outside the classroom. These relationships can be ambiguous in the Language Schools setting where an individual may be part student, part colleague, and part friend. In some cases this can lead to awkward or delicate situations. Special factors – linguistic difficulties, cultural expectations, and shared dormitories – add to the need for circumspect and respectful behavior by all participants at the Language Schools.

I hope that you will pay close attention to the information in the Handbook that discuss sexual anti-harassment. Bear in mind that you are in a position of linguistic, cultural, and professional seniority vis-à-vis your students. This is an issue that Middlebury College takes very seriously.

I would also like to draw your attention to the Handbook information on alcohol, smoking, and plagiarism. The alcohol and smoking policies that have been adopted by the Language Schools are designed to confirm to state laws which imposes strict regulations on smoking in the workplace and provides for serious criminal and civil liability for those who drive under the influence of alcohol, or who supply alcohol to underage individuals or to individuals who are already intoxicated. For those
among you who come from more liberal social settings (as I do) some of these rules may seem overly restrictive. Please be assured of my deepest empathy! However, they are the law and we have no choice but to enforce them.

Please also familiarize yourself with Middlebury’s policy on plagiarism, particularly if your academic year teaching appointment is outside the United States where expectations about student collaboration and the attribution of material from other sources may be different.

On behalf of the Language Schools and Middlebury College, I extend to you our warmest regards. I plan to visit each of the Language Schools during the summer and to meet with the faculty as a group. I am available for individual meetings by appointment and during my open office hours, indicated in the Handbook. In the meantime, I hope that you will let us know if you have any questions that remain unanswered or needs that we have not addressed.

We recognize the fact that we ask a great deal of our faculty and staff, and every one of us in the Middlebury Language Schools administration is deeply grateful for your commitment to making the Middlebury intensive immersion environment work. We stand by to help you out in any way that we can and look forward to greeting you in June.

Sincerely,

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