January 15, 2012

From: Faculty Chairman, NAFAC 2012

To: Senior Advisors

Subj: ON BEING A SENIOR ADVISOR

1. Thank you for being willing to serve as a senior advisor with NAFAC this year. The conference is greatly enriched by the expertise, energy and generosity of persons like yourself who volunteer time out of very full schedules to spend with the midshipmen and students.

2. The round table sessions in which you will take part are the heart of the conference. Although the speeches, panels and other parts of the program are important, it is in their round table sessions that the midshipmen and students will experience their insights, develop their understandings and articulate their thoughts. Your role is to assist in creating an productive setting for their exchanges.

3. We put the task of leading the round table discussions in the hands of the midshipman moderators. We back each moderator up, however, with a senior advisor who supports the moderator in guiding the discussion. Experience has shown that the best senior advisors practice gentle, hidden-hand leadership, subtly assisting their round tables by the answers they give to questions, by the questions they raise, by the advice they offer to the moderators and by the relationships they establish with the groups of which they are a part.

4. Each round table will consist of a midshipman moderator, two senior advisors (typically one from the US Naval Academy faculty and one from outside) and a dozen or more delegates including two midshipmen, one or two Fulbright students from abroad, one or two representatives of other military institutions, and a number of students from colleges and universities in the United States and Canada.

5. Your moderator should be in touch with you soon. The midshipmen moderators have been meeting weekly this semester to prepare for this role, reading and presenting their topics and learning methods of round table management.

6. A successful round table senior advisor should undertake to do the following:

Commit to attending the round table sessions during the conference.

Take part in the other events on the NAFAC schedule as you feel inclined. The speeches and panels are also entirely optional, but you may find them interesting and enjoyable and of course they may be discussed by your round table group.

Sketch out in advance some thoughts of where you think the discussions might lead. If possible, go over these with your moderator who will in any case be calling to introduce himself or herself. As you envision the sessions, please consider ways to draw out and enhance the understanding of young people who are new to subjects you know very well, and to reflect on differences between running a class, running a meeting and supporting a discussion group. Experience has shown that the most successful senior advisors are open and flexible and light-handed in their leadership.

7. If you have any questions, please call me at (443) 254-5271.

8. Thank you again for taking time to spend with the midshipmen and delegates. I am confident they will make it a rewarding experience for you.

 Stephen Wrage