

Olmsted Application Essay  
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It was my first deployment, and as a friend and I jumped in the back of the cab in Shimonoseki, Japan to return to the naval base, I realized it was not going to be that easy. The driver and I stared at each other, confusion quickly becoming bemusement as it dawned on both of us that the language barrier was going to prevent any further easy communication. I excused myself, and the four-mile walk back to the base gave me plenty of time to think about the importance of international communication and its role in my personal and professional life. No one can deny that the world is changing faster than ever before, in large part due to rapidly expanding and new technologies. The Navy must keep pace with the effects of that technology and the increasing need for international relations, global security and cooperation with our allies. More than ever, I believe that the officers of the Surface Navy must be equipped to understand and communicate on an international level as part of its mission. The Olmsted Program provides a unique opportunity for complete immersion in a foreign culture, thereby laying the foundation to use those skills and insights to become a more effective war fighter and diplomat.

During my three years in the Surface Navy I have had multiple opportunities to interact with people from 15 countries speaking over 10 different languages. As the Public Affairs Officer during two deployments, I was responsible for coordinating ship tours and receptions for foreign navies and dignitaries. I learned that advance research to acquaint myself with different customs and social mores was critical to making our visitors feel welcome in our unique Navy culture. Actions as simple as a greeting in a foreign language or posting signs describing different areas on the ship made everyone feel at ease. I have learned how to quickly find common ground without a shared language, from giving piggyback rides and playing games with Japanese children at orphanages, to a friendly game of soccer in Thailand. Now on my third deployment, my enthusiasm to know people from different countries, through learning their language and culture is stronger than ever.

In the Surface Navy there is little formal training before assuming responsibility for a division, so I have quickly learned to operate in unknown situations and confidently face obstacles with uncertain outcomes. From being the Officer of the Deck in the Persian Gulf during a major engineering casualty to assisting sailors with serious personal issues during deployment, my experiences have increased my ability and confidence to communicate, adapt and improvise.

The Olmsted Program can be a key to a unique Navy career. Many Olmsted Scholars are at the forefront of an ever-changing international climate and are often the ones leading the military towards new policies based on learned cultural sensitivities and foreign relations skills. I strive for leadership positions as a Surface Warfare Officer, but I also aspire to increased responsibility within the Navy as a whole. As the world gets "smaller," it can be argued that the Navy's mission is the security of our nation and citizens, at home and abroad, and, increasingly, to partner with our allies for greater global security through cooperation. My goal as a SWO and as an officer is to protect America and her allies. To accomplish this through a full career would be the highest honor.