

From The Bridge

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY FOUNDATION

2017 ISSUE 1

Immediate Impact

Ernst Volgenau '55, Ph.D., and his wife, Sara, recently made a leadership gift to the Naval Academy Foundation establishing the Volgenau Funds for Academic Excellence, which support six key Naval Academy initiatives:

- **The STEM Center for Education and Outreach**

Naval Academy faculty and midshipmen engage in outreach activities with middle school and early high school students and teachers in local Maryland as well as national communities to encourage more young people to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

- **Project-Based Learning**

Through hands-on design experiences supported by faculty mentors, midshipmen work together in

interdisciplinary teams to understand and resolve significant problems and issues.

- **The International Programs Office**

This office creates opportunities that contribute to midshipman knowledge regarding strategically important regions and proficiency in foreign languages. The Volgenaus are supporting semester abroad opportunities.

- **The Stockdale Center for Ethical Leadership**

Faculty and staff at the Stockdale Center strive to empower leaders to make courageous ethical decisions by identifying and analyzing important leadership issues; developing innovative products that provide new ways to strengthen the leadership development process; disseminating new concepts through lectures, publications and web projects; and overseeing the integration and alignment of all Academy leadership, character and ethics programs.

- **Science and Technology Academic Projects**

The Volgenaus support academic initiatives associated with the academic departments to be located in Hopper Hall, the future home of the Center for Cyber Security Studies.

- **Information Technology Support**

The gift will provide resources for information technology improvements needed for academic excellence.



Ernst Volgenau '55, Ph.D., and his wife Sara

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Annual Fund Impact



Jeffrey Neufeld '76

When we talk about the work of the Naval Academy Foundation, we often focus on the priorities that have a visible impact on the Yard and the Brigade of Midshipmen: outfitting Hopper Hall, creating

new international study opportunities, sponsoring project-based learning initiatives. But the most powerful way for many alumni and friends to support the Academy is the hardest to understand—the Naval Academy Annual Fund.

The Annual Fund provides the Naval Academy Superintendent with more than \$1 million in versatile resources each year to address emerging needs and fund programs ahead of the federal appropriations process. The Annual Fund also provides the Naval Academy Alumni Association with more than \$1 million each year to offset some of the costs associated with alumni programs and services.

The Annual Fund's most significant impact, however, is the operating resources it provides the Naval Academy Foundation. Unlike the fundraising arms of most colleges and universities, the Foundation is entirely self-funded. The Naval Academy Foundation raised more than \$49 million in calendar 2016. Annual Fund donations made up \$10.2 million of that total—meaning Foundation staff leveraged those resources to raise an

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Annual Fund Impact

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additional \$39 million in gifts directed specifically to the Academy's leading priorities.

It can be difficult to recognize and celebrate Annual Fund contributions. There are no laboratories to christen, no professorships to name, no lecture series to brand. But the Naval Academy Foundation has a strong, loyal and growing community of donors who have consistently shown their support for the Annual Fund, at levels that have been truly transformative. These donors, the lifetime and most recent calendar year leaders in unrestricted giving, are now recognized in a display outside the Armel-Leftwich Visitor Center.

As the chairman of the Foundation's Council on Annual Giving, I am profoundly grateful to these donors for setting the standard for unrestricted giving in support of the Academy. Without them, the Foundation simply would not be able to continue its work in support of the Academy. I also realize that few members of our alumni and friend community have the capacity to give at this level. That doesn't mean your Annual Fund gifts don't have an impact. The average Annual Fund gift in 2016 was \$834. More than 12,200 people made a gift to the Annual Fund. The Annual Fund's strength stems from the combined impact of thousands of Naval Academy alumni and friends demonstrating their belief in the Academy and its future.

If you are already an Annual Fund donor, thank you—and I hope you will consider increasing your commitment as circumstances allow. If you have preferred to contribute to other Naval Academy priorities, I hope you might consider an Annual Fund gift as well, to ensure that those priorities continue to receive as much support as possible.

Sincerely,

Jeff Neufeld '76

Chairman, Council on Annual Giving

Editor's note

From The Bridge is published periodically by the U.S. Naval Academy Alumni Association and Foundation.

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Large gifts to academic institutions often take the form of endowment funds, which provide vital resources; however, typically only a small percentage of the overall fund is made available each year. The Volgenaus gift is structured quite differently.

"In conventional philanthropy, the results can be effective, but they build slowly," said Ernst Volgenau. "We chose not to go that route, feeling our gifts could be much larger for a few years and therefore have an immediate impact."

"The Volgenaus' generous contributions to academic excellence have made immediate and significant positive impacts on the Naval Academy and the Brigade of Midshipmen," said Academic Dean and Provost Dr. Andrew Phillips. "The sheer breadth of their gift ... from midshipmen studying overseas this past spring; to others participating in dozens of project-based learning capstone projects; to faculty, staff and midshipmen benefitting from engagement in leadership development; to helping attract the next generation of STEM-interested

youth ... Individually and collectively these investments in our people and our programs have already benefitted hundreds of midshipmen in many positive ways."

The scope of the gift reflects the comprehensive nature of the midshipman educational experience.

"As an engineer, I'm interested in science and technology; therefore a larger percentage of our gifts are in that direction," said Volgenau. "However, we recognize the importance of ethics and leadership and are particularly interested in how the Academy liberal, technical education can continue to create great military, government and business leaders."

While the Volgenaus' gift offers the leaders of the specific programs supported considerable latitude in how the funds are used, continuing support requires demonstration of significant results. The gift provides for initial contributions of \$1.5 million each year in 2016 and 2017. Subsequent contributions are likely and will depend on performance against



Ernst Volgenau '55, Ph.D., (sixth from left) met with Naval Academy and Naval Academy Foundation leadership at historic Ogle Hall during an October 2016 visit to Annapolis.

measures of success and how actions taken within each program directly benefit midshipmen.”

“We want to approach this in a very positive light,” said Volgenau. “It’s not so much about checking up on the programs as it is seeing their progress. In conventional gifts, you contribute money, get something named for you, and hopefully the results will be good. In our case, we’ll be able to see the payoff in the near term.”

Volgenau last returned to the Academy in October 2016, a visit which offered the opportunity to meet with a number of midshipmen and staff involved in the programs he and his wife are supporting.

“This is like coming back to an old home,” he said. “I see the continuity of values. I’m interested in hearing how the midshipmen feel about the Naval Academy. What’s good, what’s not so good, what it’s like now versus how it was 60 years ago.”

Volgenau, a native of Clarence, NY, was one of five children raised on a small farm. “This gift from my wife, my family and me is in memory of our parents and my brother Douglas, who was in the Class of 1959,” he said.

“My father served for five years during World War II, mainly in Pacific combat zones as an officer in the Army Corps of Engineers,” Volgenau said. “My older brother enlisted in the Marine Corps near the end of World War II. I was naturally attracted to military service.”

At the Academy, Volgenau participated in crew, wrestling and intramural football. Upon graduation, he served in the Air Force from 1955 to 1976, retiring as a colonel. Early in his military career, he helped develop space boosters and satellites and taught in the field of astronautics. Subsequently, he worked in the Pentagon conducting large-scale weapon system and command

structure analyses. Later he was director of data automation for the Air Force Logistics Command. He holds a master’s degree in electrical engineering from the Air Force Institute of Technology and a Ph.D. in Engineering from UCLA. After leaving the Air Force, he served as the director of inspection and enforcement at the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission. He founded SRA International in 1978. SRA specialized in information technology services. For 10 years in a row SRA was named by *Fortune* magazine as one of the 100 best places to work in America and for much of that time SRA was publicly listed on the New York Stock Exchange. In 2015 SRA merged with three divisions of Computer Sciences Corporation to become CSRA.

This recent gift is not the Volgenaus’ first significant show of support for the Academy. During the 1990s and early 2000s, the Volgenaus and a colleague from SRA, William K. Brehm, funded the creation of a distinguished ethics chair at the Academy and the newly created Stockdale Center for Ethical Leadership. Volgenau re-engaged with the Academy and the Stockdale Center in 2008, establishing the Volgenau Honor, Courage and Commitment Lecture series, which continues today.

“The Naval Academy gave me a wonderful undergraduate engineering education augmented with liberal arts courses that prepared me well for military and business life,” said Dr. Volgenau. “More importantly, it reinforced a strong ethical framework focused on leadership and physical conditioning. I cannot think of many schools that would have prepared me so well. It’s a national gem in undergraduate education. Sara and I hope that our donations will make this excellent educational institution even better.” ■

Scholarship Established in Memory of Midshipman Jason Jablonski '17



MIDN Jason Jablonski '17

A few weeks into plebe year, Midshipman Kyle Festa '18 separated his shoulder during a club hockey game. At the end of the game, Festa’s parents, Fred and MaryLynn, looked at their heavily wrapped, slightly green son and wondered what to do next.

Midshipman Jason Jablonski '17 swooped in, coordinating arrangements back to Bancroft, ensuring Festa made it into his rack that night and assuring his nervous parents he’d get the injured plebe to medical the next day—after which he phoned Festa’s parents to update them on their son’s condition.

“It was such a mature thing to do,” said Fred Festa, Kyle Festa’s father. “He really made an impression on us.”

Jablonski, who was also the younger Festa’s company mate, continued to make an impression on the Festa family over the next several years. Kyle Festa followed in Jablonski’s footsteps in choosing an economics major and pursuing independent study at the London School of Economics.

The entire Festa family grieved when Jablonski passed away from complications from leukemia in November 2016, but a new scholarship will help his memory live on at the Academy. Established by a gift from Fred and MaryLynn Festa, the Midshipman Jason D. Jablonski '17 Memorial Scholars Fund for

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Scholarship Established...

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Economics will support study abroad opportunities for midshipmen studying economics, with a preference for those doing so at civilian universities.

“We wanted to help keep Jason’s memory alive in a way that was important to him, and important to the Academy,” said Fred Festa, who with MaryLynn has previously supported Naval Academy international programs. “There is a tendency for midshipmen to become inundated with ‘midshipman life’ and lose sight of what others are thinking and doing in other environments. Midshipmen need to be exposed to as much as possible to help them sharpen their leadership skills and learn to navigate difficult situations.”

Lori Jablonski, Jason’s mother, believes her son—who paid for his international study experience himself—would thoroughly approve of the new scholarship.

“It is critically important for all of us, but especially those serving in the military, to understand what’s happening in the rest of the world,” she said. “It’s hard not to get tunnel vision and focus only on what affects us at home in the U.S. International study allows midshipmen to gain exposure to other cultures, to learn how to best relate to them, to recognize the strengths of these cultures and the ways we can work together for the greater good. Jason would be thrilled.”

“It’s hard to put into words the testament this gift is to the type of person Jason was. He built so many relationships and was always such a positive influence on people. For the Festas to have thought so much of him from the first time they met him is completely humbling.”

The U.S. Naval Academy Foundation welcomes additional support for the Midshipman Jason D. Jablonski ’17 Memorial Scholars Fund for Economics. Those interested in contributing should call 410-295-4100. ■

A New Dimension in Leader Development

About five years ago, Colonel Art Athens ’78, USMCR (Ret.), had three encounters in the span of just a few months that opened his eyes about a growing need at the Naval Academy. A coach, a faculty member and a company officer each approached Athens, director of the Stockdale Center for Ethical Leadership, to discuss developing their skills in areas including leadership, team building and working with difficult people.

“We did a lot for midshipmen in these areas,” said Athens. “We offered seminars, classes, trip experiences and more—but what were we doing for those who have the greatest influence on those midshipmen?”

Athens and his Stockdale Center colleagues began offering what they called “Influence the Influencer” programming, including a luncheon and seminars designed to help Academy staff, faculty and coaches bolster their leadership skills. In conversation with Tim Sullivan ’80, a Naval Academy Foundation board member and longtime philanthropic supporter of the Stockdale Center, Athens came to realize that as the program grew, it ran the risk of being crushed by its own weight without the strategic direction of someone able to focus entirely on leading this new initiative.

A director’s position began to take shape, and in time, Sullivan and his wife, Sue, agreed to fund it.

“The Naval Academy gets great raw material in the door in terms



RADM Alan T. “Blues” Baker ’78, CHC, USN (Ret.), the Timothy and Susanne Sullivan Director of Influencer Development

of the talents and character of midshipmen,” said Sullivan. “Sue and I are interested in doing anything we can to help the midshipmen become great leaders. This position has the potential to touch many lives, including those who may not have had the opportunity to have this kind of training before. We know from our own experience, our sons are all Division I athletes—some of their coaches went to schools with great leadership programs, some didn’t. At the end of the day, leadership development is the core of what the Academy does. Strengthening ‘Influencer Development’ helps us find more people to carry the gospel to midshipmen, in and out of class.”

Athens and his team conducted a national search for the inaugural Timothy and Susanne Sullivan Director of Influencer Development, ultimately

selecting Rear Admiral Alan T. “Blues” Baker ’78, CHC, USN (Ret.). Baker’s 31-year naval career culminated with his service as Chaplain of the United States Marine Corps. Earlier in his career, he also served as Senior Chaplain at the Naval Academy. Following his retirement from the Navy, he established the consulting firm Strategic Foundations, where he taught, coached and catalyzed organizations valuing the intersection of learning, leadership and faith.

He returned to the Academy at the start of the 2016-17 academic year and quickly embarked on what Athens calls a “listening tour,” engaging with influencers, delving into institutional research, working to determine staff, faculty and coach needs and interests before initiating major developments to the program itself. Some of his first steps included connecting personnel with professional leadership opportunities at the Center for Creative Leadership, Northwestern University’s Kellogg School of Management and the American Council on Education.

“When I first read the position description, I thought it sounded like the capstone of everything I’ve done in my life,” said Baker. “I was immediately drawn to it for that reason, and because, as far as I know, this has never been done on an enterprise-wide scale at a college or university. Our mission at the Naval Academy is to graduate leaders who are confident in making consistently courageous ethical decisions. Midshipmen gain leadership competencies from those spending more time with them than anyone else:

our faculty, coaches and staff. So we’re now taking a step up, focusing on these key influencers of midshipmen. We are reaching up to them and demonstrating we want to invest in them. We are confident that they deserve the best the Stockdale Center offers to strengthen their leadership confidence and competencies.”

Baker sees the Stockdale Center’s approach to influencer development as something distinct from traditional professional development. “It’s invitational, not compulsory. It’s not just another program. It’s focused on the whole person, the integral leader.”

He conducted an enterprise-wide survey in conjunction with the Academy’s institutional research office in February. More than 300 key influencers enthusiastically responded to the survey and offered valuable programmatic recommendations. Thus far, initiatives include continued distribution of respected leadership books by nationally known authors, including featured presentations by Ken Blanchard, the continuation of the Honor, Courage and Commitment Luncheon series with an anticipated leadership presentation by pro golfer Billy Hurley III ’04 this fall, a very successful National Outdoor Leadership School expedition designed for the Academy’s key influencers, and Baker’s recent certification as a Gallup-Certified Strengths Coach.

“We’ve realized there is a lot of interest and need for this work across the Academy,” said Athens. “People are very excited to have this new asset to develop their leadership.” ■

Boeing Supports Naval Academy Leadership Innovation Lab

A \$1 million gift from aerospace leader Boeing will support the creation of the Boeing Leadership Innovation Lab at the Naval Academy’s Stockdale Center for Ethical Leadership. The Lab will fuse thought and experimentation to determine how to strengthen, individualize and accelerate the leadership development process, creating an environment where military, government, corporate, educational, athletic and non-profit organizations come to learn how the Academy delivers the most comprehensive, creative and effective leadership development program in the world.

“The Naval Academy’s Boeing Leadership Innovation Lab is unique in its focus on the development of emerging leaders who will operate in highly complex, volatile and dangerous environments,” said John Rudder ’78, vice president of development at the Naval Academy Foundation. “This effort has the potential to be transformational, not only for the Naval Academy and the Department of Defense, but other organizations who are committed to strengthening and accelerating the leadership development process for their own leaders. We are deeply grateful for Boeing’s investment in this critical component not only of midshipman education, but also of the Naval Academy’s contributions to broader discussions of leadership at the national level.”

Boeing has been a longtime supporter of a number of the Academy’s strategic priorities, most notably admissions outreach efforts in the communities surrounding the company’s headquarters in Chicago.

“It’s an honor to be partnered with the Naval Academy in its commitment to a tailored, innovative approach to leadership development,” said Leanne Caret, CEO of Boeing Defense, Space & Security. “This lab will empower the next generation of our nation’s leaders—I’m proud Boeing is a part of that.” ■

Lockheed Martin Donation Strengthens Naval Academy's Cyber Security Program

Lockheed Martin has donated \$1.5 million to the United States Naval Academy Foundation to build the Lockheed Martin Cyber Operations Center. On Friday, 21 October 2016, the Naval Academy formally broke ground on Hopper Hall, which will house the new center that will provide a space for research, project collaboration and hands-on learning for midshipmen and faculty in Cyber Security Studies and related disciplines.

The Cyber Operations Center will be part of a state-of-the-art facility that will allow the Naval Academy to better facilitate the Cyber Operations major, which had its first class of graduates in 2016, and provide world-class education to midshipmen.

"Cyber security is one of the most critical challenges of our time, both in the global infrastructure and within mission-specific systems," said Deon Viergutz,

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"Cyber security is one of the most critical challenges of our time, both in the global infrastructure and within mission-specific systems."

—Deon Viergutz

Building on a 40-Year Legacy

Eighty-one women arrived in Annapolis on 6 July 1976, the first female members of the Brigade of Midshipmen. Thousands have followed in their footsteps, with women now comprising more than a quarter of the Brigade, holding leadership positions as midshipmen, serving with distinction in the Navy and Marine Corps and rising to the highest ranks of military, government and corporate service. Increasingly, a growing number of the Academy's female graduates are looking for ways to give back to an institution that helped them prepare for such extraordinary success.

As the Academy marked the 40th anniversary of women midshipmen, the Naval Academy Foundation also celebrated the generosity of the first alumnae to join the Robert Means

Thompson Society, which recognizes those who have included support for the Academy in their estate plans.

"The Academy gave me a great education and a great start in life," said Commander Katie Thurman '83, USN (Ret.). Thurman and her husband, Paul, a 1979 Air Force Academy graduate who also served in the Navy, are longtime President's Circle donors, recognizing those who contribute \$2,500 or more each year. "We give what we can now, and through our estate can really offer a final thank you for all the Academy has provided us, our family and its future."

The Thurmans established a bequest that ensures a portion of their estate will support the Academy. Their commitment to the Academy deepened



CDR Katie Thurman '83, USN (Ret.); CDR Christy Sahler '85, USNR (Ret.); and the Honorable Maureen Cragin '85

when their son, Lieutenant Junior Grade Ryan Thurman '14, USN, now a naval aviator, became a midshipman.

“He saw right away that there were other people like him at the Academy, with similar goals, passions, worldviews and a desire to make the world a better, safer place,” said Thurman. “We want to foster the environment to ensure future generations have the opportunity to serve and tools to excel as they adapt to our country’s evolving circumstances.”

Thurman’s not the only female Academy graduate eager to contribute to the Academy’s future. The Honorable Maureen Cragin '85 hadn’t considered attending a service academy until Navy recruited her to swim. “I am who I am first because of my parents and family, but a close second is the Academy,” said Cragin, now a vice president for communications at Boeing who, in addition to her own President’s Circle-level giving, has helped foster a partnership between her company and the Foundation. She and her husband have also committed a portion of their estate to support the Academy. “It helped me go out and see the world and grow as a person and a professional. It’s important to make sure the Academy has all the opportunities midshipmen need to be the best officers the world can offer.”

Cragin’s classmate Commander Christy Sahler '85, USNR (Ret.),

is also a member of the Robert Means Thompson Society.

“I was in eighth grade when the academies first admitted women, and I thought going to one would be a really cool adventure, and a great way to help pay for college as the oldest of three girls. I applied to Navy, West Point and Air Force, and Navy ended up recruiting me to play basketball,” she said.

“We give what we can now, and through our estate can really offer a final thank you for all the Academy has provided us, our family and its future.”

—CDR Katie Thurman '83, USN (Ret.)

Both of Sahler’s sisters (Captain Erica Sahler '87, CEC, USN, and Duska Pearson '89)

followed her to the Academy, as did her own daughter, Ensign Tahler Bandarra '17, USN, and niece, Midshipman Annika Pearson '19.

“I left active duty after five years, had a baby, and eventually embarked on a great career in commercial real estate I discovered through an Academy connection, my classmate Linda Bolan '83. The Naval Academy has offered me so many experiences and opened so many doors for me,” said Sahler, who is now a global account manager based in the U.K. for CBRE, the world’s leading commercial property consultancy.

“The Naval Academy has given so much to the five women of our family—all of our lives have been touched in a positive way,” said Sahler, who has also established a bequest of a portion of her estate. “It’s important for me to give the Academy the funds it needs to help someone else.” ■

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vice president of Cyber Solutions for Lockheed Martin. “As a global security company, cyber security is at the core of our business, and the Lockheed Martin Cyber Operations Center is an investment in the talent that will one day protect the networks and infrastructures critical to the community.”

This initiative is part of Lockheed Martin’s commitment to inspire students to pursue science, technology, engineering and mathematics, which are critical to our national security and economic strength.

“Hopper Hall, the first new academic building on the Naval Academy Yard in more than 40 years, represents a critical next step in providing midshipmen and faculty with the resources they need to use cutting-edge technology, explore classified materials, participate in real-time attack and defend exercises and engage in the types of interdisciplinary collaboration that empowers first-rate learning and research,” said John Rudder '78, vice president of development at the Naval Academy Foundation, which raises all private gifts in support of the Academy. “The Lockheed Martin Cyber Operations Center will be a vital, versatile and innovative component of this exceptional facility.” ■



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every donor matters.