Departing GSEAS Dean Reflects on School’s Development

Kays, a retired Army Brigadier General, became the first Dean of GSEAS in July 2002 after having served as the Founding Head of the Department of Systems Engineering at the U.S. Military Academy and the Mathematics Department Head at Auburn University. One of his first goals as Dean was to articulate the strengths of the school’s eight academic departments using interdisciplinary focus areas. “Rather than try to describe the school in terms of department or academic disciplines, we thought it would be better to describe ourselves in terms that the Navy’s senior leadership would understand and appreciate,” Kays said. “So rather than talk about mathematics and physics, we talk about interdisciplinary domains such as battle space environments, combat systems, electric powered ships, directed energy weapons, systems engineering unmanned systems and space systems,” he added.

The use of these domains enabled the school to better articulate its academic and research needs to the Navy, which helped secure additional funding to maintain labs and programs, and ensured students were learning the latest technologies. As a result, Kays said students have become “better prepared to do what they need to do when they get back to the Navy, and it’s helped bring the school together to work across department boundaries.”

With such a large number of disciplines and limited resources, Kays was often concerned about how to select the best possible investments for the school. To ensure GSEAS was using its resources most effectively, he connected the school with the naval engineering community through an advisory board composed of Navy flag officers. “We used this advisory board to answer questions and share ideas… it’s one of those ways, instead of guessing, you get concrete feedback from those experienced in the Navy who know where the Navy is going,” Kays said.

One of the school’s most valued resources—its dedicated faculty—is what makes GSEAS a world-class program, added Kays, who believes their value not only resides in their devotion to defense-related research, but in their passion for teaching. “We have attracted the finest faculty you will find anywhere… for example, I don’t think there’s a finer space program anywhere in the world doing what we do,” he said. “No university in the country has graduated more astronauts than NPS, some of whom are now a part of our faculty.”

Kays will continue his career with NPS and remains closely tied to GSEAS as the Naval Chair of Systems Engineering, a position he said was established to ensure the engineering education at NPS keeps pace with and responds to naval needs. Kays said he finds fulfillment in his work with the military population and is eager to continue to help the Navy develop its educational programs. “I really do best when I’m in an environment dedicated to doing something of value and taking on very difficult challenges,” he explained. “I was fortunate to come here and I’ve had a wonderful experience; the people are fabulous, just as I knew they would be. Hard times attract good people, and if you want to work with dedicated, high-quality people, go where it’s most difficult—that’s where you’ll find them.”

An underwater robot pod is launched into Monterey Bay. This cold-water upwelling, oceanographic research was developed with the help of NPS’ Graduate School of Engineering and Applied Sciences and headed by a team of multidisciplinary investigators. The departing Dean of GSEAS, Dr. James Kays, understood the importance of each department’s role in the development of the nation’s defense and established interdisciplinary focus areas to help articulate its strengths to the Navy.

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Faculty Notes

Anne L. Clunan authored the following Chapters: "In- troduction: Identifying Biological Agents, Characterizing Events, Attributing Blame," "Building Information Networks for Bio-Security," and "Demobilization of Paramilitaries in Colombia: Transformation or Mop-up?" She co-edited with Peter R. Lavoy and Susan B. Martin, "Conclusions: The Role of Attribution in Bio-Security Policy" in Terrorism, War, or Disease? Unraveling the Use of Biological Weapons, which was co-edited with Peter R. Lavoy and Susan B. Martin. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).

Journal Articles:

Douglas Porch and Maria Rasmussen – "Demobilization of Paramilitaries in Colombia: Transformation or Mop-up?" in Studies in Conflict and Terrorism 31, No. 6 (June 2008).


Navy officers Lt. Benjamin Grant and Lt. Tiffany Hill presented their thesis research to the Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Financial Management and Comptroller), Dr. Doug- las Brook, and the Director of the Office of the Budget, Rear Adm. Stanley Bezin, in Washington, D.C., where they were designated as Conrad Scholars in recognition of their dis- tinguished academic achievement in financial management. Hill’s thesis was titled “An Analysis of the Organizational Structures Supporting PPBE within the Military Depart- ments.” Grant’s thesis, “Density as a Cost Driver in Naval Submarine Design and Procurement” was also selected for the Association of Military Comptrollers Research Award. Grant was also awarded the Monterey Council Navy League Award for Highest Academic Achievement, DoN Award for Academic Excellence in Financial Management, American Society of Military Comptrollers Award for Excellence in Graduate Level Research, and the Louis D. Liskin Award for Excellence in Business and Public Policy.