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EDUCATION EMISSARY — *Washington*

Preface

Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service is where the world's top dogs learn their tricks. With leading academics and powerful policy makers in the mix, the institution – and its students – is nothing if not ambitious.

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Washington's Georgetown University – a private, traditional institution that rigorously guards its Jesuit roots – is one of the most renowned higher-education bodies in the US. Founded in 1789, the same year that the constitution came into force, it is defined by Healy Hall, a Harry Potter-like building with a central spire that reaches for the skies in front of a manicured lawn. But away from this picture-postcard image, in a utilitarian 1980s building with rooftop solar panels that broke decades ago, it is the School of Foreign Service (SFS) that is arguably carrying out the university's most important work: training the world's future diplomats, intelligence-service employees and titans of industry.

SFS may have other institutions clamouring for its crown – including The

Fletcher School at Tufts in Massachusetts and the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore – but they can't compete when it comes to heritage. SFS is the oldest international-affairs school in the country, established before the US Foreign Service was even created. It also counts Bill Clinton, Abdullah II of Jordan and Barack Obama's current chief of staff Denis McDonough among its long list of prominent alumni.

"This was named the School of Foreign Service for a reason," says dean Joel Hellman as he explains the story of its founding in 1919 by Jesuit priest Edmund Walsh. Hellman, formerly of the World Bank and in his current position just under a year, is seated in his office in the Intercultural Center – the

ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY: GREG KAHN



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It is the School of Foreign Service that is arguably carrying out Georgetown university's most important work

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aforementioned 1980s building – nursing a cup of tea. “Before being established the initial documents called this the School of Foreign Trade. But then ‘trade’ started to be crossed out and changed to ‘service’ because the commitment was about engaging with the world.”

A few minutes’ drive from the capital’s temples of power, SFS’s location in the leafy Georgetown suburb of townhouses and boutiques also helps to set it apart. The school is able to lure not only top academics but also a string of big-name former and current policy workers. The faculty-member roster presently includes former secretary of state Madeleine Albright and former ambassador to Yemen Barbara Bodine. Other professors include Elliot Abrams, who was advising Marco Rubio before he dropped out of the Republican presidential race, and Colin Kahl, who was instrumental in the recent Iran nuclear deal. Former secretary of defense Chuck Hagel, meanwhile, had to leave his position as a professor at the school to join Obama’s administration.

Not far from the dean’s office Dan Byman – dressed in the requisite collegiate uniform of a shirt and jacket – is gathering his papers in readiness for a meeting. The professor, who is part of the graduate security-studies programme, explains how SFS has reinvented the notion of a part-time professor. “When I was going through university the adjunct professor was the 27-year-old grad student who got to fill the slot when the real professor suddenly had to go on family leave. Here it’s ambassador so-and-so who just has a weak spot for teaching.”



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One of those teachers with a penchant for education is Georgetown resident Madeleine Albright, the US's first female secretary of state during the Clinton administration. Albright taught at SFS between 1982 and 1992 and then returned in 2002 despite co-chairing a global-strategy firm, among other engagements. The 78-year-old talks to MONOCLE during a break from her Monday class (called national security toolbox), wearing one of her trademark brooches: an owl. "We were trying to figure out the wisdom of what we had done."

Albright explains how the previous weekend she had been playing a simulation game with her students about Russia meddling in Estonia. Her class had to try to find a diplomatic solution to the impasse while she made things difficult for them. "I really got a kick out of the whole weekend and it made me understand that I have something to do with the next generation of foreign-policy students."

Albright talks about the current batch of students having "greater international antennae" than her generation – and there's little doubt that the SFS student is a rare breed. One Georgetown joke is that while the School of Business is out getting drunk, SFS students are busy in the library. Unlike most universities where would-be students can apply first without choosing their course, all undergraduates at SFS have applied directly to the school. "It's a rather unusual 17-year-old who knows that he or she wants to study international affairs," says Byman.

As well as homegrown leaders of the future, SFS attracts a steady stream of international students who are either looking to apply what they've learnt back home or hoping to join international bodies such as the World Bank or the UN. Lounging on the grass in front of Healy Hall, German Maximilian Funke, 22, says he could have gone to Berlin: "But think about the internship opportunities you have here, the professors you have here." For 20-year-old Zoe Sun, sitting nearby, the conversations she has with SFS students are "of a much higher quality" than those she has with her friends back in China.

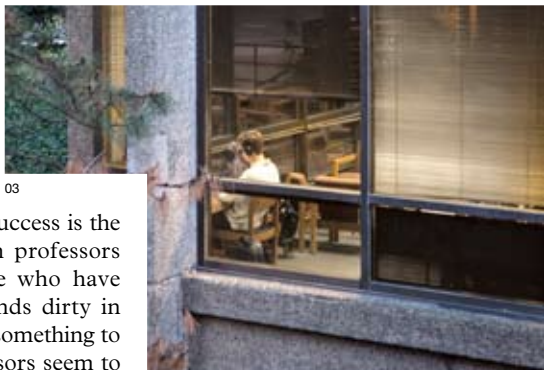
Perhaps the secret to the SFS's success is the formula of mixing bookish professors with 'practitioners'

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Perhaps the secret to SFS's success is the formula of mixing bookish professors with "practitioners": those who have gone out and got their hands dirty in the field. It might also have something to do with the fact that professors seem to listen to their students, a point Albright had been keen to reinforce. Security studies director Bruce Hoffman agrees. "I spent most of my years at think-tanks," he says from his office at the Intercultural Center. "And I'm convinced that really cutting-edge research is always informed by teaching and the interaction with students. These students are much younger than me so they have a completely different perspective."

Hoffman's office is crammed with paraphernalia from his multiple travels to countries as varied as Colombia, Iraq and Northern Ireland; odd trinkets picked up along the way include a Twin Towers cigarette lighter from Bahrain. These trips attest to Hoffman's prestigious career as one of the world's most respected voices on global terrorism. Later that day he teaches one of his evening classes on



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Class apart

The School of Foreign Service has had a campus – known as SFS-Q – in Doha, Qatar, since 2005. There are about 250 students from some 60 nations studying there, all receiving classes in English.

SFS-Q is by no means the only foreign educational institution lured to the emirate's "Education City", which offers generous expenses. Other foreign universities that have taken the punt include Britain's UCL, France's HEC Paris and US universities such as Cornell and Northwestern University. But critics haven't failed to see the irony: a school that promotes diplomacy and democracy choosing to open an outpost in an absolute monarchy with limited freedom of speech.



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Options open

Alongside their major, undergraduates take a host of core classes in everything from philosophy to international affairs, while the most popular graduate programmes are the science in foreign service master's and arts in security studies master's. SFS isn't uniquely focused on training government workers and diplomats – although it remains a premier supplier – and there is a growing realisation that courses need to be shaped to the private and NGO sectors, helping form future consultants, lawyers and bankers.



counterinsurgency in Healy Hall and before it begins MONOCLE catches up with some of his students. "This faculty has so many connections," says 26-year-old Kathleen Walsh, originally from New York. "You're able to learn from other students in this class because a lot of them have professional experience."

Indeed, security studies draws a diverse bunch, from current government employees who want to improve their expertise to armed-forces veterans such as Joe – who doesn't want to give his last name – who was deployed to Iraq and is now adapting to civilian life. "This programme is very enlightened and shows the whole picture," says the 33-year-old.

While Hoffman is finishing his day's teaching an event is beginning upstairs in Riggs Library, the intricate and opulent space of dusty tomes, curved windows and gold-leaf flourishes that was the university's main library until 1970 and is now used for special functions. Sat at round tables and dressed in their finery, a group of undergraduate students are plotting how to rule the world



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- 01 Barbara Bodine, former ambassador to Yemen
- 02 Matches that Hoffmann has collected, calling for Bin Laden's head
- 03 Lauinger Library
- 04 Bruce Hoffman's class in Healy Hall
- 05 Undergraduate dinner in Riggs Library
- 06 Student study room
- 07 SFS dean Joel Hellman
- 08 Professor Erik Voeten
- 09 Worldly corner of Hoffman's office



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SFS in numbers

Founded: 1919
Undergraduates: 1,671
Of those, number in Qatar campus: 257
Graduates: 891
Full-time professors: 114
Adjunct professors: 368



- 01 Brutalist Lauinger Library building
- 02 Dusty tomes in Riggs Library
- 03 Professor Shiloh Krupar
- 04 Gaston Hall auditorium
- 05 View from the Intercultural Center
- 06 Among his collection Hoffman has one of the 'bombs' from the film 'Speed'
- 07 White House chief of staff and SFS alumnus Denis McDonough
- 08 View from Georgetown University's ramparts
- 09 Healey Hall

over a buffet dinner while offering their thoughts on how the school can improve for the centennial celebrations in 2019.

The evening proves that although SFS continues to excel, small issues remain. One of the biggest gripes from the student body that evening is the state of the Intercultural Center, where the majority of SFS classes take place; it's viewed as nothing short of a 1980s monstrosity. Question marks are also raised about whether parts of the syllabus need to be updated, not that it's doing much to dent the ambition of the students. "My dream since I was way too young to have a dream like that was to be a diplomat," says 19-year-old Tara Subramaniam, mingling in the hallway after the event. "Here at SFS they're trying to create a different culture." Her friend Arielle Rosen agrees, having noticed that professors "want to learn about you".

This sense of student-teacher reciprocation is echoed by alumni in the highest echelons of power. A 10-minute drive across town SFS's most powerful alumni, White House chief of staff Denis

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Here at the School of Foreign Service they're trying to create a different culture

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Four notable alumni

Bill Clinton, former US president

William Jefferson Clinton – the 42nd US president – graduated from the undergraduate programme in 1968. He has made an annual speech for the past few years, while his wife Hillary is a regular invitee.

Denis McDonough, White House chief of staff

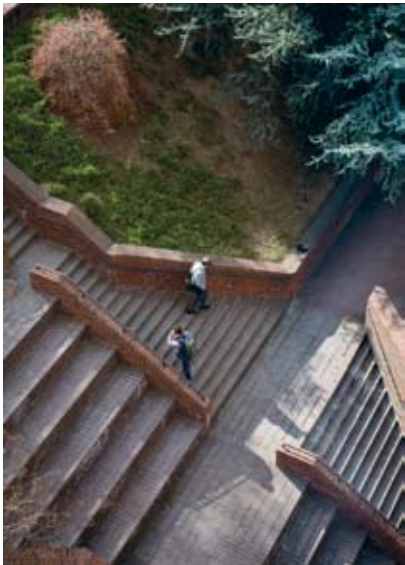
McDonough says he's a regular guy from Minnesota who didn't go to an Ivy League university. He did, however, study for the MSFS, graduating in 1996. How has he got this far? "By not being an asshole."

John Blaney, former ambassador

MSFS graduate of 1976. As well as serving as a former economic adviser in Zambia and the US deputy chief of mission and chargé d'affaires in South Africa, Blaney was ambassador to Liberia from 2002 to 2005. He is now a senior adviser at Deloitte Consulting.

Sarah Margon, Washington bureau chief at Human Rights Watch

Part of the graduate programme, Margon worked in the senate for four years as a director for a Wisconsin senator before heading to Oxfam and now Human Rights Watch. SFS taught her how to perfect the "elevator pitch".



McDonough, is clear about the role the school played in his rise. "I think the MSFS programme in particular did a good job of making the curriculum hands-on and usable," he says. "It wasn't esoteric or philosophical; it was very grounded."

McDonough says that his time at Georgetown, as well as providing a rounded education and mentors along the way, instilled a sense of curiosity that has helped him get to the top. "You know, we have a very curious president," he adds, "and I think that's why he's as good as he is."

Obama may be good but his time is almost up and McDonough will find himself out of a job. So would he like to join the long list of esteemed individuals that have become part of the School of Foreign Service teaching staff? "I don't think so," he says with a grin. "I tried teaching before and I was no damn good at it." SFS students might have to deploy the full force of their diplomacy skills to convince him otherwise; one gets the sense that they might just rise to that challenge. — (M)

