Opening Spread: U.S. Naval War College's Luce Hall on Coasters Harbor Island in Newport, R.I. Luce Hall is named after the first president of the college, Commodore Stephen B. Luce.
Photo by Chief Petty Officer James Foehl

During the fall bidding season, tenured Foreign Service officers and specialists at the FS-03-01 levels can take advantage of an often-overlooked learning opportunity by seeking an assignment to the Naval War College in Newport, R.I.

When Department of State employees spend a year studying national security and strategy at one of the nation's war colleges, they often attend the National Defense University in Washington, the Army War College in Carlisle, Pa., or the Marine Corps War College in Quantico, Va. For me, the Naval War College proved an interesting option in my native New England, offering a sheltered learning environment away from conference calls and evening receptions.

The Naval War College isn't strictly about naval combat, it is also a highly regarded historic institution (founded in 1884) known informally as the "Ivy League" of the war colleges. Students come from all the branches of the military, and the courses are intended for those who will someday reach the highest ranks of their professions: admirals, generals, cabinet secretaries and ambassadors. A place of rigorous standards, the college faculty focuses on teaching about national security through political, theoretical, financial, environmental, historical and strategic lenses.

For myself, I hadn't done any heavy studying in 20 years, and it was a shock to tackle 600 pages of reading per week on top of lectures and seminars. Despite the workload, I came to love the program, as did colleagues who've studied there. Jeff Izzo, an economic officer who also studied at the college

"The Naval War College was hands down the best professional experience of my career." Jeff Izzo