

THE ACADEMY ASSEMBLY

THEN AND

NOW An Enduring Tradition Lives On

By C2C Zachary Crippen, Class of 2012 – Director, 53rd Academy Assembly and C2C Clayton Schmitt, Class of 2012 – Deputy Director, 53rd Academy Assembly

FIFTY-TWO years ago, the faculty of the Department of Political Science teamed up with cadets to host the Academy's very first academic conference. The Academy's first Dean of Faculty, Brigadier General Robert McDermott, recognized the necessity of instituting a forum that allowed cadets to debate relevant international issues with equally talented peers from universities across the country. In response to this challenge, the Academy Assembly staff focused the inaugural conference on "International Stability and Progress." However, perhaps what proved more important was establishing the objective of bringing together elite students from undergraduate civilian and military institutions in order to inform future leaders of salient national and international issues and to encourage serious academic debate over the same. What followed over the next fifty years quickly became one of the most recognized annual events in our institution's history, and the commitment to fulfilling these enduring goals is alive and well today.

The 52nd Academy Assembly which ran from October 19th through 22nd 2010 featured the topic: *In Defense of Freedom: Protecting Human Rights at Home and Abroad*. We hosted 65 delegates from 26 different universities and showcased some of the premier academic and legal minds as speakers and roundtable discussion leaders. Former Ambassador at Large for War Crimes Issues, David Scheffer, opened the 52nd Assembly and challenged delegates, cadets and faculty to consider how "lawfare" will shape future conflicts. After an inspiring string of plenary speakers and dynamic roundtable sessions, Amba-

sador Michael Kozak, Senior Advisor for the Department Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor U.S. Department of State, concluded the conference with a poignant keynote address on the impact of human rights on military contingencies in Afghanistan and beyond. Our hand-picked group of "Candlelight Committee" delegates wrote a policy report sent to over one hundred universities and the Department of State.

From top: Jack Adler, a survivor of the Nazi Holocaust, addresses the Academy Assembly delegates in a plenary session. Ambassador Michael Kozak delivers his keynote address to over 2,000 cadets and delegates in Arnold Hall.



For the past fifty years, the Academy Assembly has focused on prescient issues that are bound to be at the forefront of U.S. policy in the near future. This year is no exception: The 53rd Academy Assembly will focus on the changing global atmosphere, examining human, economic, political, and cultural power bases and exploring their interconnectedness. The topic, Sources of Power: Global Dynamics in the Modern Age, is one that will allow us to invite a variety of influential speakers from academic, civil sector, and governmental backgrounds.

Since its inception, the Academy Assembly has been a truly premier conference. However, recent years have witnessed several organizational challenges, including new scheduling and funding challenges. This year, the staff of the Assembly is dedicated to continuing the conference's upward momentum as it becomes a magnet for the nation's best subject matter experts and undergraduate students. Funding from the Olmsted Foundation, through gifts to the USAFA Endowment, has helped support the program's sustained growth. The support of the graduate community in promoting awareness of the Assembly is also vital to our success.

One of the greatest benefits the Academy Assembly offers is an extraordinary venue for cadets to develop leadership. This year, our hand-picked staff of over forty cadets is tasked with officer-level responsibility of exercising fiscally sound management of our operating budget, curriculum design for a serious academic topic, publication of all conference materials, logistics planning, and coordination with major NGOs, government agencies, and universities. As the two cadets responsible for all elements of this year's Academy Assembly (and staff members for last year's Assembly), we have witnessed firsthand the leadership reinforcement that cadets receive at the strategic, organizational, and tactical levels.

From a strategic perspective, the Academy Assembly serves to bring academic prestige to our institution. Chief among this year's objectives is ensuring that this goal is reflected in our planning for every aspect of the conference. Primarily, we hope to draw high-caliber speakers to the Academy. We are aggressively working to recruit several highly esteemed figures, but at the same time are being very intentional about recruiting an array of diverse talent and



experience. That same diversity is reflected in the nature of our staff—we have selected these cadets from a variety of academic departments and personal backgrounds.

To that end, the Assembly demonstrates to the rest of the academic community that Air Force Academy cadets are committed to addressing global issues in a joint civil-military paradigm. Especially in today's world of asymmetrical conflict, this ability to stand next to our Ivy League counterparts and examine foreign policy implications of the changing global scene is essential. As cadets go on to become senior officers, legislators, cabinet members, community leaders, or executives in the private sector, a proper understanding of these issues will prove critical.

The Academy Assembly does not only benefit staff members and delegate participants. The keynote speaker of the Assembly traditionally addresses the upper two classes of the entire Wing. In addition, the numerous plenary sessions of the conference are open to all cadets and faculty. Last year, one of our most popular sessions pitted a CIA officer against a distinguished international relations professor in an animated debate. This year, we hope to bring some of the same disagreement to the table, welcoming controversy in hopes of reaching common ground. As the entire Cadet Wing is exposed to these key issues of global politics and international relations, they are receiving information that will be invaluable to their role as leaders in our United States Air Force.

For these reasons and more, we believe in the Academy Assembly and the opportunities it presents to cadets and civilians alike. We invite you to join us in creating a truly premier conference this year. ❑

From left: C2C Zachary Crippen prepares his introductory statements for the opening banquet of the 52nd Academy Assembly. USAFA cadets and midshipmen from the United States Coast Guard Academy, United States Naval Academy, and United States Military Academy are well represented among our student delegates.