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The US Army War College: Gearing Up for the 21st Century

HOWARD D. GRAVES

There are few issues of greater significance to the long-term readiness of our military forces than the education of military officers to accomplish the vital roles they play in the defense of our nation. The resurgence of interest in the professional development of officers as a result of the DOD Reorganization Act of 1986 is thus a welcome development. Within the provisions of the Reorganization Act, Congress placed particular emphasis on senior officer education. In a related development, the House Armed Services Committee established the Panel On Excellence in Military Education, commonly referred to as the Skelton Panel, which initiated substantive hearings on the professional development of officers. In addition to addressing education in joint and combined matters, the Skelton Panel has analyzed the traditional pedagogical challenges faced by senior military professional development schools. Among these areas of inquiry are curriculum content and structure, educational methodology, faculty qualifications and development, student selection and evaluation, and the relationship of applied research to the academic program.

It was during this period of renewed interest in military education that I took over as Commandant of the US Army War College. At that time, General Carl Vuono, who had only recently become the new Chief of Staff of the Army, provided me Terms of Reference which laid out his vision for the College. In these instructions, he charged the US Army War College to be the capstone institution in the formal development of the Army's leaders. Additionally, he instructed the College to become the cradle of military strategy and a source of innovative thought for the entire defense community. Finally, he directed a comprehensive assessment of the College, its institutes, and associated activities, with a view toward accomplishing any needed redirection of the efforts of the College. The assessment was completed this past

summer. The results of the assessment and an implementation plan for recommended changes were approved by General Vuono on 25 July. The remainder of this article will highlight some of the results of the assessment and the major initiatives that will guide the US Army War College into the 21st century. I recognize that this report is an exception to our normal editorial policy of presenting analytical articles on controversial defense issues, but I believe that all readers interested in national security should be informed of the future thrust of the College.

The assessment was a faculty-led, top-to-bottom analysis of every aspect of the College, ranging from our *raison d'être* to the validity of our current roles in support of our national security efforts. In this sense, it has been a renaissance from within. Faculty committees were formed to look at missions, curriculum, senior officer continuing education, wargaming, faculty recruiting/retention/development, external programs, and tenant activities. Additionally, a group analyzed data on previous graduates' assignment patterns with a view to achieving a better correlation between the War College focus and the Army's needs. Although faculty-led, the assessment was not solely based on faculty perspectives. Ideas and comments were sought from students, alumni, the Army's senior leadership, former commandants, and also senior distinguished active and retired officers designated by General Vuono. The corresponding practices of civilian institutions and the other senior service colleges were also examined.

The faculty committee charged with analyzing the purpose and missions of the War College looked to the foundation of the College at the turn of the century. Secretary of War Elihu Root, the founding father of the College, captured the essence of why the War College exists in his remarks at the laying of the cornerstone for the original Army War College building in Washington, D.C., in 1903: "Not to promote war, but to preserve peace by intelligent and adequate preparation to repel aggression." Less well known was the original mission Elihu Root laid down for the College in the same address. He charged the College to "study and confer on the three great problems of national defense, military science, and responsible command." Although the words used today are somewhat different, the assessment group determined

Major General Howard D. Graves became the 40th Commandant of the Army War College in October 1987. After graduation from the Military Academy in 1961 and commissioning in the Corps of Engineers, he attended Oxford University in England as a Rhodes Scholar, where he earned B.A., M.A. and Master of Letters degrees. He served combat engineer tours in the Dominican Republic (1965-66) and Vietnam (1968-69), and later commanded the 54th Combat Engineer Battalion in Germany and the 20th Airborne Engineer Brigade stateside. He has also served as an instructor in the Social Sciences Department at West Point, as Military Assistant to Secretary of Defense Schlesinger, and as Assistant Division Commander of the 1st Infantry Division. Prior to assuming his present duties, General Graves was Vice Director of the JCS Joint Staff.

that this mission is still as valid today as it was in 1903. “Study” suggests the senior leader development mission of the College; “confer,” its strategic studies and analysis roles. The three immutable defense problems now translate into national security policy and strategy; operational art and campaign planning; and senior command, leadership, and management.

Although the two primary mission areas of the College—senior leader development and strategic studies and analysis—are inextricably linked, for clarity they can best be discussed separately. So far as senior leader education and development are concerned, the College has a proud history which serves as an important point of reference. From a modest start of about a dozen resident students at the turn of century, the College’s student population has now grown to over 1600 senior officer students each year. These include not only the resident academic program for 288 students, but corresponding studies courses for over 1200 officers each year plus a number of shorter specialized courses in strategy and military operations. Students range in rank from major through lieutenant general. Over the years, the graduates and faculty of the College have included such notables as USMC General John Lejeune, USAF General Hoyt Vandenberg, Army Generals Dwight Eisenhower, Omar Bradley, and George Patton, USN Admiral Bull Halsey, and many of the recent senior Army leaders as well as the current Commandant of the Marine Corps. Although the program for international students is only in its 11th year, we have graduated 204 international fellows to date and have another 33 enrolled in this year’s resident course. Graduates include the military chiefs of Australia and the Netherlands and the army chief of Canada. Less well known but just as important, the graduates of the Army War College include thousands of other senior officers who led our armed forces in World War I, World War II, Korea, and Vietnam, and who also served to preserve the peace by their intelligent and adequate preparation to repel aggression.

One of the major challenges of the assessment was to clarify the focus of the College curriculum. The Curriculum Committee first noted that leader development in the Army is based on three pillars—formal schooling, operational experience, and self-development. Formal schooling such as that received at the College, although the most visible and tangible element of leader development, should not be considered in isolation. Just as important are the developmental experience acquired by an officer in the performance of his other varied duties and the self-development pursued throughout one’s career in the form of individual reading and study. While considering these other two important pillars, the faculty looked at the total spectrum of institutional training and education of Army officers. This review considered the formal development from second lieutenant through general officer. The analysis clearly pointed to the conclusion that the US Army War College’s senior leadership development efforts should focus on strategic issues. This

is not to say that the sole purpose of the College is to produce military strategists. The number of officers serving in official strategy-formulating roles is relatively small. Rather, the curriculum should be designed to provide the student a strategic perspective, to equip future senior leaders with the ability to operate competently and confidently in a strategic environment.

The analysis also indicated that the War College experience should be directed toward providing the student more than specific military skills, knowledge, and abilities. The War College experience should be a period of broad intellectual and personal growth for an officer: first, in professional knowledge and understanding; second, in his creative, critical, analytical, and verbal capacities; and third, in personal and family development.

Based on this clearer focus of the War College experience, the Curriculum Committee reviewed the content of the curriculum. Certain foundational purposes of the curriculum were validated: specifically, to provide the Army and the nation with senior leaders who understand the role of the military officer in a democratic society, who can advise properly on the use of military force to achieve national objectives, and who are adept at leading and directing military forces to achieve these national objectives. Essential subjects were derived from these purposes. These included senior level leadership, national military strategy, joint doctrine, regional threats and strategies, theater campaigning, and the Army's role in the implementation of our national military strategy. The Curriculum Committee also identified a need to improve the integration of military history and ethics into all courses and to improve logistics and intelligence instruction at both the strategic and operational levels.



Root Hall (center), home of the US Army War College, at Carlisle Barracks, Pa. Carlisle Barracks was established as a military post in 1757.

Joint and combined operations have always received a great deal of attention in the College's curriculum, but even more so today. The Army cannot fight as a single service and must rely largely upon the air and sea components of our armed services if it is to fulfill its role in implementing the national military strategy. In a similar vein, our national military strategy is not and cannot be solely a unilateral US effort. In today's world, the deterrence and conduct of war must be a coalition effort. Therefore, more than 75 percent of our current curriculum is devoted to joint, national, or coalition subjects. The composition of the resident class of the College also reflects the heavy emphasis placed on joint and combined operations and coalition warfare. In addition to the approximately 200 active and reserve component Army students in each War College resident class, there are students representing the other services, civilians from several government departments, and senior officers from allied and friendly nations. In the present resident class, for example, there are eight Navy officers, nine Marine Corps officers, 18 Air Force officers, one Coast Guard officer, 17 civilians, and 33 officers from other nations.

The Curriculum Committee also examined our curriculum structure and educational methodologies. The seminar principle was validated as a basic teaching modality. The Committee also identified a need for increased emphasis on active learning as well as greater academic rigor and challenge. Consequently, lectures—a passive learning method—have been reduced by almost 50 percent. In order to hone the students' critical and creative thinking skills and to involve them more directly in an active learning process, case studies, exercises, gaming, and analytical discussions have been increased. Since performance standards have been increased, obligated classroom hours have been reduced to provide additional time for reading, study, and directed research. For example, structured lecture and seminar time during academic year 1988-89 has been reduced by 25 percent.

Our analysis of career patterns of incoming students has revealed considerable diversity in past assignments and formal schooling. For example, approximately 50 percent of current Army War College students have not attended the resident US Army Command and General Staff Officer Course at Fort Leavenworth. They have obtained their intermediate formal education through either the nonresident Leavenworth course or attendance at other staff colleges. Because of this diversity in staff officer education and even wider diversity in individual career experiences, the Curriculum Committee recommended additional flexibility in the curriculum to allow a tailored program which would meet widely varied individual and service needs. Accordingly, we plan to reduce the amount of time devoted to the core curriculum common to all students, thus generating more time for specific advanced courses. For example, in academic year 1988-89, the number of required advanced courses was increased from five to six. We shall increase the number to eight in academic year 1989-90. This increased flexibility in the

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curriculum will allow our faculty and students to broaden or deepen their program according to individual student experiences and career requirements.

One of the most controversial issues examined by the Curriculum Committee was that regarding testing and grading students. Many authorities, both internal and external to the College, feel that students should be tested and that each student requirement should be graded. These authorities also believe that compilation of class standings based on grades will serve to motivate students even further by promoting individual competition. We have concluded, on the other hand, that individual competition, while an important and inherent factor in an officer's career, tends to be dysfunctional at the senior level; that at this point in our students' careers, with their excellent performance and potential firmly established, the emphasis should be on cooperation rather than individual competition. Army War College students have already competed at a high level of intensity for some 20 years for the privilege of attending the College. Their goal at the War College should be cooperative learning through active and informed interchange of ideas. Our plan, therefore, is to have the students strive not against each other, but against clearly delineated performance standards in all areas of endeavor.

Individual evaluation will occur, to be sure, since it plays an important part of the student's development and growth at the War College. But rather than competitive grades, evaluation will be in the form of candid, specific, and meaningful feedback to the student. Performance critiques will be scheduled. Specific areas requiring improvement will be identified. Students who fail to meet the established standards will be required to repeat the requirement until the standards are finally met or exceeded. There is clearly another important form of informal testing inherent in the active learning process: that most challenging test which occurs when the student is performing or reciting in front of his or her peers as part of the practicum method employed in the seminar. This method provides strong motivation indeed, perhaps even stronger than a "report card" from a faculty instructor.

The final area looked at by the Curriculum Committee was the curriculum planning process itself. The result is a new system which will provide stability and continuity in the curriculum while allowing for refinements and adjustments based on continuing evaluation from both internal and external sources. We now have logical and sequential curriculum development milestones, as well as a formalized process for planning, programming, and

current-year implementation. The new curriculum planning process was instituted this academic year.

In addition to the work of the Curriculum Committee, which dealt with the instruction for the resident class, another faculty committee looked at specialized senior service college level programs conducted by the College and also the programs for senior officer continuing education. We have initiated efforts to ensure that the highly challenging Corresponding Studies Course remains in parallel with the new curricular content of the resident course and that it capitalizes upon the latest distance education techniques. We shall continue to improve the management of the College-sponsored Senior Service College Fellowship Program, through which selected Army students obtain their senior service college level education at civilian universities and other entities such as government agencies and civilian think tanks. In a related development, current plans call for the establishment of five fellowships at the NATO Defense College in Rome. In addition to attending the NATO Defense College course, officers selected for these fellowships will conduct research on designated coalition topics.

The assessment also resulted in a number of improvements in the College's senior officer continuing education program. In addition to further refinements of the highly successful two-week Flag Officer Joint Warfighting Course for major generals and rear admirals, which we jointly sponsor with Air University, a new Army War College General Officer Update Program has been initiated. Through this program, Army general officers destined for joint and combined assignments are provided the opportunity for tutorials on joint and combined matters conducted by faculty experts at the College. Initial results of this program have been very positive. A further enhancement calls for our debriefing Army general officer incumbents of certain critical joint and combined billets and incorporation of the acquired information into the tutorials.

Although less well known than many of the College's other educational programs, the US Army Contemporary Military Reading List (CMRL) is an important part of the College's efforts. College faculty review over 350 books per year and identify those which comprise ideal self-development reading for the officer corps. A number of enhancements to the CMRL have been adopted as a result of the assessment. These include better publicity for and wider distribution of the CMRL. Additionally, future versions of the list will provide for a continuing section of military classics that should be a part of every officer's library as well as contemporary works which are worthy of professional attention.

A major portion of the assessment was directed at the use of computer-assisted wargaming in support of the educational programs. The result has been an increased emphasis on instructional support capabilities of the War College's Center for Strategic Wargaming. We have launched a major recruitment

effort to procure the critically needed expertise in this important area. We are also refining existing computer and manual simulations and incorporating into the curriculum special advanced courses designed to provide students with an enhanced ability to employ this important planning tool. New hardware and software acquisitions are underway, as are new initiatives to evaluate models for future curricular application.

The committee charged with analyzing the purpose and missions of the College did not limit its efforts to the senior leader development responsibilities of the College. It also examined the College's past and present strategic studies and analysis role. Secretary Root's mission for the College to "confer" on the three great defense problems was intended to improve strategic planning at the War Department by capitalizing on the creative and intellectual abilities of some of the Army's best and brightest officers who were serving as faculty and students at the College. Of equal importance to our assessment, by involving the students and faculty in actual war planning and strategic studies, Secretary Root clearly established a precedent for active learning by insisting that the students *do* rather than simply read, hear, and see.

Here, again, as with its senior leader development responsibilities over the past 85 years, the College has a rich and proud history which served as an important foundation for the various assessment committees' efforts. For example, the Rainbow Plans which served to guide our strategic efforts in World War II had their genesis in work by Army War College students and faculty in the 1930s. Colonel Harry Summers' seminal and widely acclaimed book, *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War*, grew out of a study sponsored by the College's Strategic Studies Institute. The widely distributed Strategic Studies Institute report, *Campaign Planning* (1988), has played a major role in the resurgence of interest in doctrine for the planning and conduct of theater operations. Hundreds of other studies and articles by faculty and students have served to influence the strategy, doctrine, and policies of the entire defense community. In the last two years, for example, the War College faculty has published ten books and 66 articles in professional journals. An additional five books and 30 articles have been accepted and are awaiting publication.

The assessment has resulted in a clearer delineation of the College's strategic studies and analysis mission. As the Army's center for the study and analysis of military strategy, the College is charged with conducting independent studies and analysis on the nature and use of land power in support of our national military strategy and on other issues relating to national security. The assessment extended the College's mission to include a clearer and more formal statement of our responsibility to participate actively in the development of military concepts and doctrine at the national and theater levels. In executing this responsibility, the College will exploit the experience

and creative abilities of its students and faculty in guided research and analytical wargaming.

Given the clarified strategic studies and analysis mission, assessment committees have identified new initiatives aimed at strengthening the College's role as a cradle of the nation's military strategy. Specifically, by joining the creative and critical abilities of the students in a collaborative effort with the Army staff and the joint community, the War College will assume an integral role in developing national and theater level concepts and doctrine. The faculty has formed functional and regional teams which will work with the Joint Staff, the Unified and Specified Commands, the Army Staff, and Army Major Commands to identify specific relevant topics and issues appropriate for faculty and student research. Periodic visits by faculty teams to their respective areas will enhance faculty currency and expertise, while clarifying areas where faculty and student research will aid the national security community. This arrangement will not only focus research on topics with professional utility, but it will also add some specific accountability to our student research projects.

Other initiatives adopted to enhance the College's external strategic studies and analysis focus include improvements in the interface with other military schools and civilian academic institutions. We have defined a conference program which will bring together the best military and civilian minds to address strategic issues, ranging from the role of intelligence in strategy to US military strategy in a post-INF environment. The College-managed Chief of Staff Army Strategic Fellows Program has also been redefined and refocused to bring six of the Army's best and brightest senior colonels together for two-year fellowships to serve as an independent strategic think tank for the Chief of Staff.

The College's Center for Strategic Wargaming has also initiated a number of actions to improve its support of strategic studies and the development of concepts and doctrine at the national and theater level. These initiatives range from expanded participation in joint wargaming to the evaluation of new hardware and computer simulation models. Plans for a new Center for Strategic Wargaming facility are also being developed. In addition to providing an expanded wargaming capability for the College, this multipurpose facility will provide critically needed space for Army conferences and exercises in support of the College's senior officer continuing education efforts. Current plans call for the construction of this facility to begin in 1990, with an estimated completion and occupancy date in mid-1992.

Regardless of the merits of our plan to enhance senior leadership development and strategic analysis efforts, our long-range plans will remain merely a collection of good ideas unless the resources are available to implement the various initiatives. The Resource Committee has identified the resources required and has developed plans, procedures, and priorities for providing

these resources to the College and associated activities. Appropriately, the Resource Committee has identified resources not only in dollar terms but also in terms of the requisite qualified personnel and the time and energy needed to implement the plan. In addition to the requirements, management procedures have been established to provide for consistent, predictable, and prioritized resources to support the current and long-range efforts. These management procedures are tied directly to the curriculum planning process which provides for a three-year cycle consisting of planning, programming, and execution years. It is refreshing to note that, with the exception of the new Strategic War-gaming facility, most of the new initiatives do not require significantly increased resources.

Without question, a top-quality faculty was identified as the most critical resource required to implement the US Army War College plan. The committee which addressed faculty requirements was faced with some of the most challenging issues of the assessment. Its charter included not only assessing the qualifications of faculty, but also the recruiting process, military and civilian faculty mix, incentives, tenure, and faculty development programs. We have identified the need for a faculty mix of approximately 75 percent military and 25 percent civilian. Although there were advantages to having some tenured or permanent military and civilian faculty, the Faculty Committee concluded that the disadvantages outweigh the advantages. The optimum normal tour length for our military faculty was ascertained to be four years, with possible extensions on a year-to-year basis for individuals with unique qualifications. The primary qualification for faculty selection was determined to be teaching experience and ability. Closely related to this, of course, is subject-matter expertise. In some fields civilian faculty can provide the expertise and experience not normally found in military officers. The optimum normal tour length for civilians will be three to five years, with more lengthy assignments to the faculty on an exceptional basis where continuity and long institutional-specific experience are advantageous. Procedures are being established with the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel and the Total Army Personnel Activity to track potential faculty members. Additionally, we have adopted some special incentives to enhance our ability to attract the Army's finest colonels for faculty positions. Among these incentives are improvements in the Academic Chair Program, which serves to recognize outstanding faculty and provides additional time for faculty research, writing, and professional development. Perhaps the greatest and most important incentive, however, is the inherent reward for senior instructors of professional military education—teaching and mentoring the future leadership of the Army and the nation and influencing future strategy, plans, and policies.

A major part of the Faculty Committee's efforts was directed toward identifying requirements and procedures for faculty development. They appropriately recognized that even when experienced teachers with the required

specialties are assigned to the College, there is a requirement to further adapt their teaching skills to the needs of senior professionals in an active learning environment as well as to improve individual subject-matter expertise. As a result of the assessment, new minimum faculty qualifications have been established, to include major revisions in our faculty orientation program. A continuing faculty development program is now focused on improvement of those teaching skills unique to a senior-level educational institution. This program also provides for funds, time, and personal energy to be committed to the development of the subject expertise of each faculty member. These faculty development programs have been given the highest priority for resources.

This top-to-bottom analysis of every aspect of the College resulted in a number of other initiatives by the faculty to enhance the College's role as the Army center for the study and analysis of military strategy. These included the development of programs and resourcing to further improve the holdings and management of the US Army Military History Institute, already a valuable national resource, and improvement of facilities and the family environment at Carlisle Barracks. These initiatives, plus those pertaining to the curriculum, wargaming, external programs, and other areas mentioned earlier, have now been incorporated into a prioritized plan of action to guide the efforts of the College in the future. And the planning process itself has been institutionalized to provide for the continued evaluation and annual refinement necessary to ensure that the plan always reflects the current needs of the Army.

The Army War College assessment has been a momentous undertaking. Rarely in the life of an established and revered institution such as the War College do we have the opportunity—and the profound responsibility—to reexamine it from the ground up, sparing no program, no course, no activity from fresh scrutiny and appraisal. Perhaps our most cogent lesson from the assessment has been that there are few new ideas to be discovered in this challenging task. Our forebears have left us a rich heritage of excellence upon which we could base our assessment. We believe we have captured the best of the principles of the past success of this great institution. The assessment committees properly insisted upon no change to Elihu Root's original conception of a College dedicated to senior officer development and investigation of strategy and defense policy. On the other hand, they looked unflinchingly at aspects of the College that did demand change. And in the process of sifting what should be changed from what ought not to be changed, the assessment committee displayed uncommon wisdom.

The results of the assessment are now embodied in a long-range plan that will carry us well into the Nineties. Adjustments in the plan will be required from time to time, of course. But we are confident that as the old order changes, yielding place to new, it will do so on the basis of an orderly and far-sighted approach to institutional growth. □