

USAWC Class of '99 grad reaches new heights

Thomas Zimmerman, Army War College Public Affairs Office

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Col. Oliver Norrell III, Senior National Guard Advisor to the USAWC Commandant, sits at his desk in Root Hall after reviewing some planning documents for the upcoming Senior Reserve Component Officer Course.

Jan. 21, 2011 -- Col. Oliver Norrell III, currently the Senior National Guard Advisor to the Commandant, has been selected to become

a brigadier general and received his certificate of eligibility from the Army National Guard.

Norrell, USAWC Class of 1999 grad, said that when he started his career he thought it would be a success if he made it to lieutenant colonel.

“Then to be promoted to colonel and now receiving my certificate of eligibility for brigadier general is fantastic,” he said.

Norrell said spent the majority of his career as a “traditional” National Guard officer.

“For my first 15 years I practiced law and was a member of the Virginia National Guard, when life was much different than it is now for our Soldiers,” he said.

He said that his time here as a student really helped open his eyes to the many challenges that military officer’s face, even if he didn’t realize it at the time.

“The strategic leadership course was really excellent,” he said. “Of all of the courses I took as a student that one really helped me develop as a leader in both my civilian and military jobs.” He said that as he assumed new positions on the National Guard bureau staff that his world changed and he needed the new skills he had developed while a student.

“I think the course does an excellent job of at least exposing the students to the broad aspects of an issue like budgets so that when they face it later in their career they are at least aware of some of the challenges,” he said. “I just wish I had been able to realize at the time how valuable other parts of the course would become.”

Norrell said that this course remains important for Reserve Component officers.

“The world has changed a lot for our Reserve officers,” he said. “For many of these officers, they spent the first half of their career as ‘traditional’ Guardsmen and now they find themselves in a very different world with multiple deployments and facing the same challenges as their active component counterparts. The ability for them to talk in seminar about the issues and challenges that they all face is invaluable.”

AGNSS, SRCOC programs focus on the Reserve Component

Norrell, who has been at the War College since June 2009, now brings his experience and expertise to programs like the Adjutant General National Security Seminar, and the Senior Reserve Component Officer Course which kicks off this year on Feb. 21.

During SRCOC, 38 Guard and Reserve General Officers from all seven components and Canada are invited to the Army War College to take part in seminar discussions, take part in a staff ride and receive briefing on relevant topics from USAWC staff and faculty.

“I really think that programs like AGNSS and SRCOC help both the students and the general officers that we invite to understand the issues that each faces as well as have an open and frank discussion of the challenges they face,” he said. “As a general officer at the state level, you may not always get these kinds of opportunities, so this is important.”

Norrell’s next step will be to find and be selected for a National Guard brigadier general slot within the next two years.

“I’m going to take my time,” he said. “I really enjoy what I’m doing here and working with the students.”