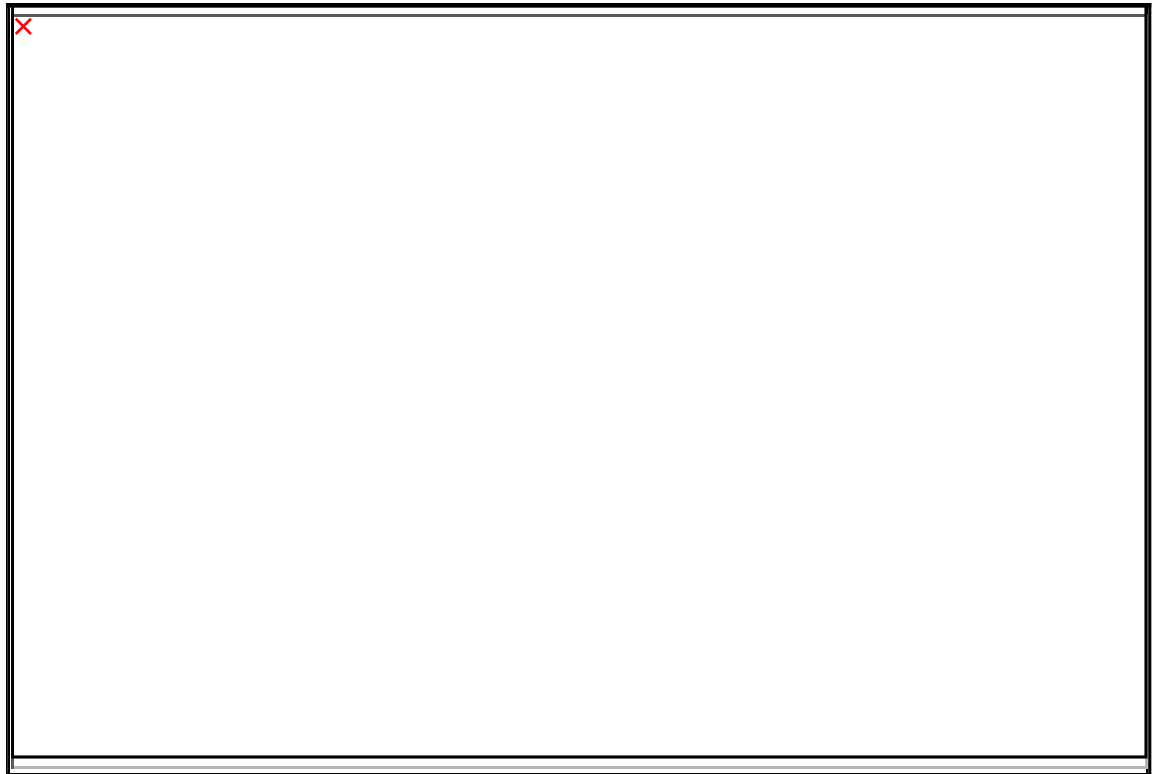


# Gettysburg staff ride drives strategic level decision making lessons

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Effective



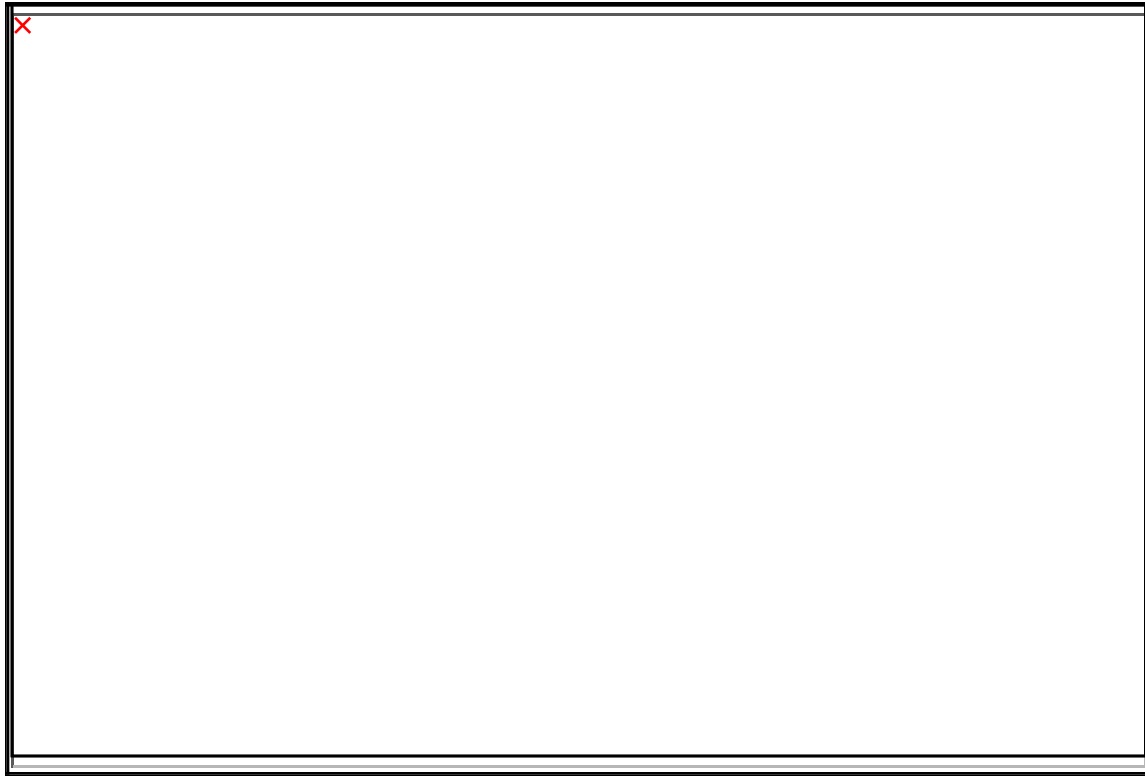
communication and interpersonal relationships with peers and subordinate leaders as well as understanding that senior-level leadership decisions are made within a political environment affect a leader's decision-making about operational priorities and management of military resources. The relevance of those lessons endure today; and in today's operational environments, informed decision making at the senior level can mean the difference between success and failure.

**USAWC Students gather near some of the monuments raised in commemoration of the Battle of Gettysburg while listening to staff ride leaders explain events that unfolded on Little Round Top.**

Tying the lessons of Gettysburg, 1863 to the Army War College lessons of senior leadership, students and faculty of the U.S. Army War College boarded buses bound for the Gettysburg National Military Park on Sept. 20 and 21. The annual staff ride used the historic battlefield as a case study in senior leader competencies and attributes with respect to the major strategic decisions that determined the

outcome of the battle of Gettysburg.

“There are some eternal things that remain from studying these battles, even back into antiquity, and it’s about the relationships among people,” said Dr. Paul Jussel, the lead faculty historian for staff rides at the U.S. Army War College. “It’s about decision-making at the senior level. It’s about managing the challenges that senior leaders have, because those challenges are very, very similar through history,”



“It gives a lot for us to think about as we move up into those roles, and opens our eyes to the types of situations we’ll be in, and what decisions we’ll need to make.” said Navy Cmdr. Kenny

Jensen, student.

**Students and faculty listen to staff ride leaders while taking aim at Pickett’s Charge before reenacting the infamous mile long march across open field.**

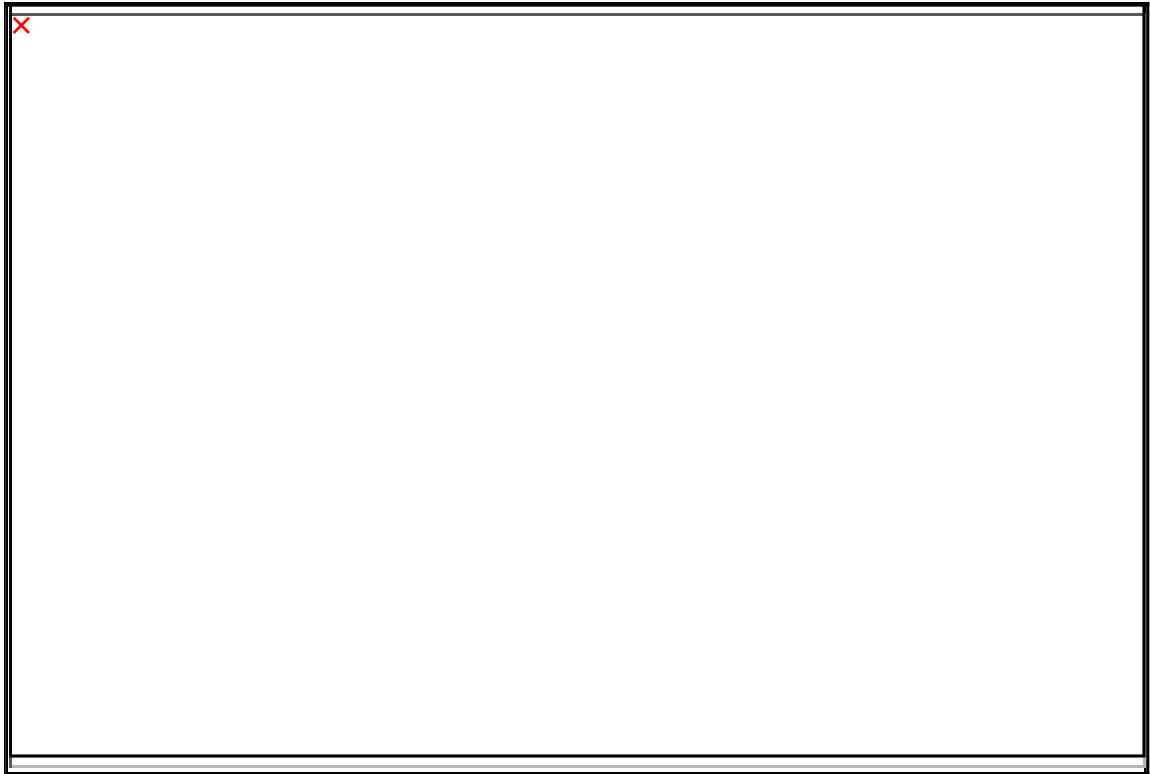
The students approached the historic battlefield along the same route J.E.B. Stuart’s Cavalry used as they approached Gettysburg following their siege of Carlisle. Upon arriving at the battlefield the students stepped onto the battlefield in nearly the same spot where the opening shots of the battle were fired. Standing there they listened to the guides as they discussed the events of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd of July 1863.

Of the decisions at Gettysburg, the students discussed many senior level challenges represented on both sides. Staff ride leaders shattered the myth that Gen. Robert E. Lee had no cavalry when he arrived in Gettysburg. In fact, because of personalities and biases Lee did not use the available units. Other examples related to actions taken that confirmed biases of seeing only federal militia when the

Union Army of the Potomac was on the field. Staff ride leaders discussed ways to avoid such situations. They also discussed instances of toxic leadership, senior leader incompetence, misplaced loyalties, building effective teams, and communicating vision.

“Leaders have to articulate their vision and make sure their subordinates understand that leadership matters,” said Romeo Wright, an Army civilian in the class.

As the students surveyed the Peach Orchard they discussed the political decisions that placed Gen. Daniel Sickles in command, and how



a communication breakdown between Sickles and his commanding officer Gen. George G. Meade led to an overextended Union line in an indefensible position.

**Dr. Paul Jussel, the lead faculty historian for staff rides at the U.S. Army War College, explains to a group of students some of the senior-level leadership decisions made during the Battle of Gettysburg.**

“You find yourself in situations where you can fall back on things that have occurred in the past and think about; how have other people managed these kinds of challenges. And what we see at a place like Gettysburg is ... many of those challenges, in decision making, in leadership, and in managing the uncertainties of warfare that are very similar to today,” said Jussel. “The relationship between decision making, national policy, and military strategy ... the same challenges Lincoln had to face with his generals, as the president does today.”

The staff ride concluded at the Gettysburg National Cemetery, standing near a grave dedicated to the unknown. It served as a stark reminder to the students that from this point in their careers forward their decisions can have substantial consequences.



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“It is for us  
the living,  
rather, to be  
dedicated  
here to the  
unfinished  
work which  
they who  
fought here  
have thus far  
so nobly  
advanced. It  
is rather for  
us to be here  
dedicated to  
the great task

remaining before us - that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion - that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain ...” - Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg Address.

**Students arrive at The Angle to complete their reenactment of Pickett’s Charge. The Angle marks the point where Confederate soldiers broke through the Union line. It is considered the high-water mark of the Confederacy.**

U.S. Army War College Archives - News Article - 27 September 2016