

Army War College students in specialization program work to bridge civil-military divide

By Elena Patton, Public Affairs Office 03 March 2022



USAWC students in the Eisenhower Series College Program engage with a civilian audience at GA Tech, discussing a variety of topics related to national security.

USAWC students in the Eisenhower Series College Program engage with audience at Atlanta Council for International Relations.

The Army War College offers multiple specialization programs that enable students to tailor their educational experience. One of those programs focuses on exposing students to the dynamics and importance of civil-military relations.

For the last 50 years, the Eisenhower Series College Program has enhanced students' public speaking skills, bridged civil-military divides, and improved mutual understanding of national security issues.

During eight of their ten months at the U.S. Army War College the students execute two phases to the program: preparation and engagement. First, students research two topics of strategic importance and collaboratively develop short speeches addressing them. Then, in the latter half of the

program, students travel to discuss those topics with audiences at universities and civilian organizations around the country.

The program provides mutual benefits, explained USAF Col. Leon Perkowski, the program director. Students become better communicators, deepen their understanding of the material taught in the classroom, and engage with civilian perspectives on national security issues.

"I think it's important because many of our audience members have never had a thoughtful exchange with a military officer before we encounter the students at these universities," said Perkowski. "We put a human face on this thing called the military, and I think it's important that they both see the quality and humanity of the officers that are involved in leading the armed forces."

The engagements take multiple forms, such as formal speeches and presentations, panel and classroom discussions, and questions and answers. The personal connections are most effective in strengthening civil-military relations, said Perkowski.

Student perspectives

Lt. Col. Brian Dudley is an active-duty Arizona National Guardsman. Before coming to the War College, he commanded the 91st Civil Support Team Weapons of Mass Destruction. Upon completing his AWC studies, he will take command of an Explosive Ordnance Disposal Battalion.

Dudley and his unit will work closely with civilian organizations and first-responders. For example, Arizona will host the super bowl next year, and Dudley's unit will coordinate security effects with the police, FBI, and others.

However, Dudley said that less than 1% of the population serves, and that creates a civil-military disconnect. The Eisenhower program offered Dudley to create meaningful engagements with civilians beyond what you see in the media, the national anthem and the color guard, explained Dudley.

"What was uniquely appealing to me was that [we] are going to environments with limited exposure to the military, and it is neat to bridge that divide," said Dudley.

His two research and engagement topics focus are space and integrating the LGBTQ+ community into the armed services.

Outreach by military personnel is necessary to create connections with the country and community we serve, said Dudley.

Michael Rossman is a Foreign Service Officer with the United States Agency for International Development, the principal U.S. agency to extend assistance to countries recovering from disaster, trying to escape poverty, and engaging in democratic reform. He has worked in Washington for the Bureau for Development, Democracy, and Innovation and overseas in seven countries. Next, Rossman will assume the position of Deputy Mission Director to USAID Pakistan.

As the humanitarian arm of the U.S. government, USAID works with the military to provide immediate relief from natural and man-made disasters and development assistance.

"The Eisenhower program is a way for me to frame in my mind and explain international development and how that fits into our national security," said Rossman.

Rossman talks with students about soft power and climate change impacts national security. During the engagements, students ask difficult questions, forcing the presenters to think through what they are talking about and how the civilian population sees their work, noted Rossman.

"The fun for me is afterward, talking to the students and connecting with them," said Rossman.

Col. Michael Foote is a U.S. Army Special Forces officer. He came to USAWC from a garrison command, and upon graduation, he will assume command as the garrison commander for Fort Riley.

Foote works with a primarily civilian formation. This program provides him the opportunity to further engage with a civilian audience

"The Eisenhower program challenges you as a leader because you have to find different leadership styles and approach problem sets differently," said Foote.

This is not a recruiting mission. Instead, the military talks back to the civilian population and engages with the future civilian leadership. "The presentations turn into conversations," said Foote. "I am amazed at how

receptive the younger generations are."

Foote's research focuses on what special forces do outside the combat zone and suicide within the special forces.

"We tie back to our kids and our family, so they know we are not robots," said Foote. "And afterward, we hang around, and that is where that engagement really happens."

Colleges and civic groups

Gettysburg College

World Affairs Council - Pittsburgh

University of Missouri, St Louis

Washington University, St Louis

Emory University

GA Tech

Atlanta Council for International Relations

Temple

University of Pennsylvania

Princeton University

Haverford College

UCONN

Bucknell University

Susquehanna University

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Mt Union College

Sewickley Academy

Dickinson College

University of Arizona

Arizona State University

UT Austin

Denver University

CU Boulder

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