

Distinguished graduates talk about what the War College education has meant to them

By Public Affairs Staff 26 August 2022



Left to right: USAWC graduates British Col. Tom Harper, Brig. Gen. Stephanie Ahern, and Brig. Gen. Matthew Higer share the insights and best practices the gleaned from their War College education, August 23.

As students end their second week of classes, they have a lot to look forward to, receiving multiple briefings about the educational and professional opportunities available to them while at the Army War College. Students engaged with a panel of distinguished War College graduates who discussed their experiences at the War College, what this education has meant to them in their follow-on assignments, and how current students can make the best of their Carlisle experience.

Three graduates participated in the panel discussion: Brig. Gen. Matthew Higer, the Commander, 412th Test Wing, Edwards Air Force Base and a 2015 graduate; Brig. Gen. Stephanie Ahern, Director of Concepts Futures and Concepts Center, United States Army Futures Command and a 2017 graduate; British Col. Tom Harper, the Strategic Command Attaché at the British Embassy and a 2021 graduate.

Higer opened the candid dialogue by advising students to have a clear vision for the year.

Students must decide what they are going to do for themselves while at the War College he said. Devoting time to coursework, finding balance, getting healthy, and staying healthy are all crucial.

Students are arriving from high-demand command and staff positions, but this year offers them an opportunity to slow down and recalibrate said Higer. Enjoy Carlisle, find your gems, and enjoy them.

Higer summed up why making the most of this academic experience matters. Upon graduating from the War College, students will return to the high-paced and high-demand assignments and are going to be the water that lifts all boats in the strategic national and global environment.

Ahern, similarly, opened by encouraging students to make the most of this year.

She addressed three pillars of her War College experience: substance, community and family, and professional connections.

The breadth of experiences represented by all the services and international partners and allies enables students to fill holes in their experiences and knowledge. That, in conjunction with a plethora of resources, guest speakers, and subject matter experts, makes for a substantive War College experience said Ahern.

This year represents a pivot in most of the students' careers. Rather than relying on the ideas and priorities of their leadership, students will now be asked what they think and what they would recommend because they have had the time to research, think, and reflect she explained.

The community here embraces War College students. Ahern recommend that students find a way to give back, spend time with their families, and foster professional connections in and out of seminar discussions.

Harper discussed the importance of context, choices, and connections. This year affords students the time to think about various challenges in the context of the global security environment. Harper said he learned so much about his own region in the European Regional Studies Program

The choices the War College provides, through electives, specialty programs, and research project, allow students to prepare themselves for

their future roles said Harper.

Connections with allies and partners are vital to the nation's security. Allies and partners are our nation's source of strategic advantage he said.

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