

# Industry Day encourages thinking outside the box

*Thomas Zimmerman, Army War College Public Affairs Office*

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The Army War College brought together leaders of industry to talk with Army War College students during the 2011 Industry Day.

The annual event provides a forum for students to gain a better understanding of the military-industrial relationship, the Army requirements and capabilities development process, and the acquisition processes.

“It is a unique opportunity for students to consider the complexities of providing the correct mix of capabilities to the warfighter now and in the future,” said Maj. Gen. Gregg Martin, USAWC commandant, during his opening remarks.

The day-long event includes both Bliss Hall lectures and seminar room discussions with invited guests such as retired Lt. Gen. David Melcher from ITT Defense and Information Solutions, Heidi Jacobus the chairman and CEO of Cybernet Systems and Lt. Gen. Michael Vane, U.S. Training and Doctrine Command.

“It so important to bring together students and industry for events like this,” said Melcher. “You learn a lot about each other from experience like these. You need to know what each other think and needs.”

Melcher, also a USAWC graduate, had thanks and advice for the students.

“I have a deep appreciate for people in this audience,” he said. “Thank you for the services you have rendered for the last nine years. This is a great year, take full advantage of it. You get to think more critically, reconnected with your families and take care of yourself.”

The event also strives to help students understand the role of industry in providing materiel solutions for warfighters’ current and future needs, and to gain an increased appreciation for the perspective and interests of industry as a key member of the defense industrial base.

“This is a great group of professionals who want to make sure the warfighter has what they need,” said

Melcher. "They want to share ideas and tools with you that will enable you to better leader."

Jacobus spoke about the role of small businesses in the procurement and development process.

"Small businesses often address unsolved problems or unmet needs," she said. "We need to be more agile in the procurement process." She pointed out how need equipment for Navy subs, Army Strykers and others came from small businesses. She said that small businesses many time are able to complete short-fuse requests from necessary equipment and may save money due to less overhead costs.

"We need to learn how to think outside the box," she said. "Small businesses can contribute more to DoD acquisition."

Vane, also a USAWC grad, spoke about the issue from the military perspective.

"Whether you are civilian or military, odds are you will serve in a job that will deal with acquisition or force management at some point," he said. "This force management, how you develop and train the force is very important. Effectiveness and efficiency are vital in both."

Air Force Lt. Col. Matt Smith a student, said that the event helped expose the students to the ways that industry looks at an issue.

"We really need to be able to look at issues from their point of view in order to make sure we are solving the problem most effectively," he said. "It may not always be the big companies that can best solve our problems, small business play an important role."

Other topics discussed during the day included the changes of operating and acquiring new equipment in a constrained economic environment, the procurement process, analyzing strategic issues that affect defense industries and ways to develop effective partnerships toward fulfilling warfighters' materiel requirements.