

Whole-of-Army War College: the Strength and Wisdom of the Army Starts Here

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You've heard rumors about possible closures at the Army War College and I'll take this opportunity to separate fact from rumor.

The Secretary of Defense has tasked the Services to reduce civilian manpower. The Army Staff and the Commands, as a part of the planning, programming, budgeting and execution process are examining multiple courses of action to present to senior Army Leadership. The Army Staff and Commands will present their recommendations for decisions beginning in mid-April.

All courses of action are pre-decisional. But, there should be no doubt that a cost-cutting culture will require hard decision-making about what each organization must do to support national security.

The Army War College and its institutes are not immune from review. We are executing our own internal USAWC-wide review. We welcome the review as an opportunity to underscore the value of each of our institutes as relevant to Army Leaders and the Soldiers they lead and unique among all other Army organizations. This is a one-of-a-kind place. The power of the Army starts with its Army leaders: the strength and wisdom of the Army starts here.

Throughout our long history, the Army has developed capable and prominent strategic leaders. We pride ourselves in the long line of strategic leaders who have served this great Army and our beloved nation through its highs, its lows and everything in between for 235 years. To preserve this great legacy, it is our obligation to “keep first things first” and ensure leader development remains our first and foremost priority.

The Army War College executes its mission -- to develop, inspire and serve Army leaders and leaders throughout the Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental and Multinational community – with a carefully-crafted integration of expertise and guidance. On a daily basis, the Army War College educates almost 1000 leaders. It takes all of us: the Army Heritage and Education Center, the Army Physical Fitness Research Institute, the Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute, the Strategic Studies Institute, and the Center for Strategic Leadership and the College to coalesce into a formidable, synchronized force for senior Army Leaders.

The ultimate outcome of the full Army War College education is a senior leader informed by history and ethics; ready to exercise critical reasoning and creative thinking; resilient in the face of volatile, ambiguous environments; and confident in planning for complex strategic scenarios.

When a critical decision is to be made, our nation must be confident in senior Army Leader decision-making. Such decisions may put the lives of our Soldiers at risk and shape the future of our Nation. Army Soldiers, their families, and their communities deserve to have faith that their Army Leaders are at the absolute top of their game – in terms of knowledge, historical grounding, thinking skills, physical and mental health and fitness, and cultural intelligence. Each of our USAWC institutes contributes to the development of the Army Leader.

That's why I am committed to all of the Army War College organizations working in collaboration for senior leaders, even as they exercise tremendous strategic reach for the Army and the Nation. Let me share some insights about the strengths of our institutes.

The Army Physical Fitness Research Institute is a potent Army Leader resource. It has literally saved lives. It is a catalyst for developing Soldier Well-Being as leaders infuse military units worldwide with nutrition insights, habits for resiliency and fitness mindfulness. APFRI is about to start developing an Army-wide concept for a continuum of health that crosses medical, fitness and resiliency fields and guides the Army to create healthy Soldier lifestyles.

The Army Heritage and Education Center is TRADOC's best historical collection and a critical asset in senior leader development. General Martin Dempsey, our next Chief of Staff of the Army, recently wrote about changes underway in our professional military education and training – "We're discovering and re-emphasizing the study of history in our leader development programs. To be articulate and persuasive in providing advice to senior military and civilian leaders, our leaders must understand our history and they must understand what it means to be a member of the profession of arms." The Army Heritage and Education Center supports historically-informed leader development, historic mentorship, and historic materiel about strategic leader decision-making. The remarkable collection of papers, books and artifacts make USAHEC as highly valued by our community partners as it is prized by the prominent American and international military historians who write the Army story for future American generations.

The Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute is the Army's only organization focused on strategic and operational-level concerns associated with stability operations and peace operations. You may not realize the global reach of the PKSOI – writing doctrine for Stability Operations, working across the U.S. interagency spectrum, and fostering relationships for the Army. It is the only peacekeeping center in the U.S. military for engagements with other nations' PK training centers, and supports Geographic Combatant Commands' PK-focused mil-to-mil engagements. PKSOI supports pre-deployment exercises and training for Corps and Division-level battle command exercises, combat training centers, and the Atterbury center for training interagency civilians.

The Strategic Studies Institute sponsored the strategy conference that asked the compelling questions, what is the nature of the civil-military gap, and what are the implications for the Army? This line of questioning, debate and publication is typical of the SSI's commitment to address and help understand compelling, complex issues of national security. If you don't subscribe to the SSI Newsletter, you should.

The Center for Strategic Leadership creates strategic decision-making exercises for Army War College students and for other federal agencies. It supports Army leaders' understanding of emerging issues like cyberspace operations and the national security implications of climate change. It promotes Army relationships through strategic education workshops to build partner capacity and, CSL represents the Army in strategic communication events.

Clearly, the Army War College is a team of significance for our senior leaders. Thank you for all you do to make it so.