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by Lt. Col. Mark McCann, U.S. Army War College Public Affairs



*Ms. Ellen Helmersen, Deputy Chief of Staff, G1/4, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, provides a organizational overview and talks with civilian students attending the Army War College during "Civilian Career Days" last week at Carlisle Barracks. Photo by Scott Finger*

CARLISLE BARRACKS, Pa. – Dec. 1, 2011  
– Civilian students at the U.S. Army War

College met with Senior Executives here to learn about the path to career success and discuss the placement process for senior civilian positions following graduation next June.

Each year, the College offers select civilian employees from a wide range of government agencies the opportunity to study about strategic leadership.

This year's 368-student class includes senior officers from all U.S. services, international military officers, and 25 civilians from the Departments of the Army, State, Homeland Security, and Veterans Affairs, the Defense Intelligence Agency, and the National Security Agency.

The recent "Civilian Career Days" provided a forum for the 13 Army civilian students to exchange ideas with senior civilian leaders from their service about professional development and the path to career success in the Army Civilian Corps.

"This is a forum for facilitating interaction between U.S. Army War College civilian students and senior civilian leaders," said the College's Associate Dean Julie Manta. "It provides our civilian students with an opportunity to think about their future and opportunities available to them as they continue their service after graduation."

Diversity in assignments is an invaluable component to overall civilian leader development, according to Ms. Ellen Helmerson, a senior executive who is the Army Training and Doctrine Command's Deputy Chief of Staff, G1/4.

"While education and training certainly are important, do not underestimate the value of experience," she told the students. "You are here because the Army needs you to build the knowledge, skills, and ability so you can move into more demanding assignments."

"There is a benefit to seeing different areas of the Army that we haven't been exposed to," said Army civilian student Pete Dulniawka. "This was an opportunity for us to speak with senior civilian leaders. There was a benefit in this exchange of ideas."

When Army civilian employees are selected to attend the College, they sign mobility agreements to leave their current positions. Civilian students begin working a placement process before graduating from their year-long resident study program so they can use their education in senior civilian leadership positions.

"This is a great opportunity for Army civilians to be in the room with colleagues and their military counterparts so they get a feel for a more strategic approach to things," said Mr. Joe Capps, executive director to the commanding general of the Installation Management Command. "Because we do this, civilians walk away from here with a common understanding of the Army's strategic picture leading to one unified strategic approach."

Army civilian student Linda Groat thought it was good to hear civilian senior leaders dispel the myth that Army organizations only promote from within.

"This has been enlightening to know that there are valuable positions that we can be placed in and to hear that there is a positive outlook in placing people from other organizations," she said. "It also is good to hear that Army commands look forward to having civilian graduates from the U.S. Army War College placed in their organizations."

"This supports strategic leader development of our civilians," said Manta. "We want to make sure our civilian students go to positions that will enable them to use the education they received here."

In speaking with the Army civilian students during his visit, Capps said, "It is clear to me that we are sending quality people here who receive a quality education, and that is value added to the Army."

Senior leaders from the Army G-1, the Office of the Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of the Army, the Army Training and Doctrine Command, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the Installation

Management Command participated in this two-day event, co-sponsored by the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs' Civilian Senior Leader Management Office and the Army War College.

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