

# From the Commandant: Explore the Space, Lead Change, and Create a Legacy

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Farewell to the resident class of 2012 and congratulations to the faculty and staff members who have developed, inspired and served this tremendous set of emerging strategic leaders.

Although Maggie and I hate to leave our beloved Army War College, I will take to my next responsibility as president of the National Defense University a new depth of knowledge and insights. I've learned much in two wonderful years of the awesome Army War College experience.

At Convocation last August, I challenged the student body to leverage the Army War College's capabilities and guidance to develop professionally and personally in preparation for the responsibilities of senior leadership and service at the strategic level. The nation invested in our students; the Army War College invested faculty, curriculum and seminar processes. This year represents the gift of time, wisdom, friends, mentors, thinking skills, judgment and confidence. Equally, this year represents a responsibility to use the Army War College year wisely.

Members of the class of 2012 have risen to the challenge and fulfilled my expectations. I salute the rigor invested in studies, award-worthy strategic research projects, triumph on the Jim Thorpe Sports Days fields(!), and the genuine 'win' of deep-rooted relationships that will sustain and fortify our graduates in the future.

The new challenges of serving at the strategic level will demand all the skills and wisdom acquired through experience and study. We are at a tipping point, much like the moment faced by Secretary of War Elihu Root at the turn of the last century when he established the Army War College as the first stage in what would be known as the Root Reforms.

*Graduates: Just as Root relied on his 'Colonel-of-Steel' William Harding Carter, so too will strategic leaders look to you to be technically proficient, innovative, and committed to **leading change** at the strategic and enterprise level.*

*We will look to you to "**explore the space.**" Think beyond traditional solutions. Gather a multitude of*

*opinions and insights. Expand possibilities. Innovate. Boldly go in directions we've never gone before.*

*Make this motto your own – “explore the space” to adapt to the strategic leader environment and its unique demands and pressures. Recreate this year’s individual learning plan through which you identified priorities: study and research, family and friends, physical and emotional fitness. Name your priorities. Create strategies for family time. Re-craft your fitness activities, sleep plan and nutrition plan. Inject fun into work and home life. If you truly explore the space and plan well, you will thrive in that environment.*

*Develop for yourself a strategy to develop, inspire and serve your people – and **create a legacy** for the profession. Develop the people who will grasp your intent, step up to your challenge, offer innovation, achieve the mission and, ultimately, become the next generation of great senior leaders. Help them to be wise, strong leaders in mind, body and spirit. Guide and inspire them to be built to last with the commitment, passion, and expertise that will enable them to take the baton from you and carry it into the future. Develop a strategy for this and you will contribute to the profession, on behalf of the nation. Develop a strategy for this and your people will become your enduring legacy.*

We may one day reflect upon these years as the tipping point for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This time faced by our national leaders is one of complexity and uncertainty – exactly the right time to apply the lessons of the Army War College: strategic environmental assessment, design and strategic planning, cultural change.

Root established this institution as an engine of change, working through leader development and education. Now, we have applied our responsibility to be an engine of change, to our own organization. We assessed the USAWC structure, processes, and culture, and determined that our commitment to serve strategic leaders demands a transformation of our own Army War College organization.

Recent decades have added new institutes and capabilities to the Army War College, each adding to the expertise and strategic reach across the US military, national security community, and international community. We have ‘explored the space’ and recognized opportunity and mandate to reorganize our critical functions into a wisely streamlined, more agile USAWC 2020 that will help unleash and drive forward our potential and value to our nation and our partner nations in the international security community.

We teach that strategic leaders are masters of adapting organizational culture, of critical thinking,

collaborative problem-solving and courageous decision-making. I trust that by applying those tenets of change leadership, we have triggered a wise path to a bright future for the Army War College and the leaders we will develop, inspire and serve.

The graduation diploma is a ticket to lifelong ties to the Army War College's personnel, publications, and the expertise they so willingly share. Ask, and we will respond. Graduation is an iconic moment to reflect on accomplishments; it represents as well the beginning of a new stage of lifelong learning: read, ask questions, seek alternative perspectives, challenge yourself, challenge others and, explore the space!

We are committing our future to your hands. We are filled with pride for the wisdom and strength of mind and body that you bring to our nation, and the community of nations. We are filled with hope that you will advance the vision of our founding father Elihu Root, "... not to promote war, but to preserve peace."

*Prudens futuri -- Wisdom and Strength for the Future*

GREGG F. MARTIN

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