

Distance Class of 2012 gets first hand look at Gettysburg campaign

By: Tyler Davis

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On the morning of July 2 1863 165,000 soldiers from the Union and Confederate Armies were preparing for battle. Little did they know that over the next day and a half nearly 61,000 of them would become casualties in largest and costliest military engagement of the Civil War.

Fast forward 149 years. The U.S. Army is back in Gettysburg, this time the force was made up of students in

the Army War College Distance Education Class of 2012.

Distance Class of 2012 students look to where the battle changing Pickett's charge began on the final day of the campaign.

On July 20 the students descended on the town and battle field to absorb the many lessons left over from the bloodiest battle on American soil as part of their second and final residence course.

“The Gettysburg trip is a capstone to the student’s studies over the last two years,” said **Dr. Kevin Weddle**, Department of Distance Education. “It helps us to illustrate the core principles of The War College in a great example that is close to home.”

The Gettysburg campaign is a striking example of the core coursework at the U.S. Army War College, “providing a direct example that illuminates and expands on the six principles of Strategic Leadership, Strategic Decision Making, Application of Land-Power, Civil-Military Relations, Theater Strategy and Campaign planning,” said Weddle.

“I looked at the Gettysburg campaign from a strategic stand point,” said **Lt. Col. Karl Nell**, Class of 2012. “There were a lot of big decisions made in the battle, but the opposing factors were more important.”

“The Confederate General Robert E. Lee was a master at winning because he used the terrain of the battlefield to his advantage,” said Nell. “In this case Lee go drawn in by the Union forces and wasn’t fighting the battle he ultimately wanted.”

Nell noted the value of getting an up close look at the Gettysburg campaign.

“Ultimately you take away the lessons learned from both the good and bad decisions made on the battle field,” said Nell. “It is a different experience from reading about the battle field to getting a first-hand look.”

“The Gettysburg staff ride was outstanding,” said **Marine Lt. Col. Morgan Mann**, Distance Class of 2012.

The class spends just one month at the Army War College spread out over the course of two years. The majority of their studies are done online from around the country, or if they are deployed, the world.



“The War College experience is an incredible opportunity for every officer,” said **Col. Paul Raaf**, Distance Class of 2012. “It has been an amazing experience for me.”

The Gettysburg staff ride was led by senior staff members with extensive knowledge of the battlefield, commanding generals, tactics involved and overall repercussions that each decision had on the outcome of the battle.

“We have world class guides that lead the staff rides,” said Weddle. “They use the Gettysburg campaign to connect the student’s studies over the last two years on a strategic level.”

USAWC Professor Tom Dombrowsky leads seminars through every phase of the historic battle.

