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By Thomas Zimmerman



Col. Richard Lacquement, Dean of the School of Strategic Landpower, speaks to Col. Mike Chesney, chairman, Department of National Security and Strategy, and Col. Martin Wilson, Deputy Chairman, Department of Distance Education, during a recent curriculum meeting.

What happens when you take a former Army brat who lived all over the world, add an Army career, and rich academic experiences at Princeton, The Army War College and West Point? You get a perfect example of a “Soldier-scholar,” Col. Richard Lacquement, Dean of the School of Strategic Landpower.

Lacquement credits his career as both a Soldier and academic to his life as a child of a military family. “I really enjoyed my life as an Army brat,” he said.

“We did move around a fair amount but I think it really prepared me for later in life. One of the things I love about the Army life is the traveling and learning about other cultures and their customs. He lived in Germany, Arkansas, New Jersey, Illinois, Kansas, Louisiana, Belgium and Italy just to name a few. “It really helps you developing a sense of cultural awareness and makes it easier to adapt to new places,” he said of his time in other countries. “I feel that it helped give me an advantage during my deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan.”

After graduation from West Point in 1984. Lacquement embarked on a Field Artillery career that took

him to Fort Bragg, Fort Campbell, Bamberg and Nuremburg, Germany just to name a few. His first operational experience was when he deployed to Saudi Arabia as part of Operation Desert Shield/Storm in 1991.

“This was my first combat experience and probably the last time I’ve participated in a typical, tactical combat mission,” he said. “We were firing into Iraq in what was basically an open desert so you really only had to worry about the bad guys, not civilians. I think that may be the last of that type of mission we’ll ever see.”

More tactical skills came with operational assignments, including deployments to Iraq in 2003 as special assistant to the commanding general of the 101st Airborne Division in Mosul and to Afghanistan as the strategy advisor for the International Security Assistance Force in Kabul.

Lacquement became a Strategic Planner (FA 59) in 2002.

While he was serving in these tactical and operational positions, his career on the academic side was also taking off, beginning when he was sent to graduate school at Princeton in 1993. After graduation he moved on to an assignment to West Point in 1995, when he served an instructor and later assistant professor of social science. While there he also completed his doctorate from Princeton in International Relations in 2000.

His hybrid career has enabled him to “straddle both worlds” between the operational and the academic worlds, according to Lacquement.

“It’s a reality now that our graduates are going to need to have a solid foundation not only in the tactical and operational worlds, but in academia and problem solving,” he said. “We’ve been blessed lately with perfect examples. Just look at Gen. Dempsey and Gen. Shinseki. They are both what you might call ‘Soldier - scholars’ who can operate in both worlds.”

One of the main challenges, he said, is to take the students, many of whom have spent most of their careers in tactical assignments, and help them make the transition to strategic leadership.

“Once they leave here, they will most likely be working in a joint, interagency, intergovernmental, or multinational world,” he said. “We have a duty here to broaden their perspectives so they can make that transition and operate at the edge of our profession.”

He said that his goals as the dean of the School of Strategic Landpower are wide- ranging.

“Educating strategic leaders, advancing research, and strengthening the core professional community for the application of Landpower to critical security issues, is key,” he said. He hopes to advance the

professional expertise and clarify jurisdictions of practice for the Profession of Arms, in particular, to help clarify the unique role of Landpower in serving society's security needs, he said.

“This is a crucial professional responsibility for the Army in particular but for national and international armed forces with whom the Army partners to meet American society's needs.”

Landpower is important for the students to study because they have a need to understand the critical role of military power and the interaction with other instruments of power to influence and, if necessary control, people, territory and resources, he said.

“The land domain is where human society resides,” he said. “Landpower provides the ability to accomplish critical national security aims in that domain.”

The Army War College faculty is up to this task, he said. “We have the experts the students will need in our faculty,” he said.

“We have a solid group of people who have practiced what we teach. They are military and national security professionals. On the other side, we have a highly experienced set of academics who have the absolute awareness and a wealth of practical and academic experience of complex topics , including political science and history, that our students will need as well.

“The individual talents we have here are amazing,” he said.

“As a group the faculty has experience in both worlds. They have the mix and talents to help the students learn and broaden their horizons.”

Rewarding are the contributions that come from working with talented faculty and students on issues of great importance to society.

The curriculum has matured and adapted since his time as a student in 2009, he said.

“The biggest change since I was a student is the incorporation of a more mature approach to design within the curriculum,” he said. “Particularly at the strategic level, design demands a greater attention to framing problems, hypothesizing, and continually assessing progress in pursuing solutions to unstructured or weakly structured problems. “

The curriculum now explores the impact of technology in terms of strategic communications, cyberspace, and social media, affecting U.S. capabilities as well as the capabilities of partners and adversaries, both current and prospective, he said.

“We have also seen refinement in approaches to counterinsurgency, counterterrorism and whole of government integration for national security.”

He discussed changes like the expansion of the International Fellows program.

At the core, recognizing that many of the lessons he learned as a student endure through time, he said.

“In general I would say there’s more continuity than change in the curriculum,” he said. “Given the enduring nature of strategic challenges, I think this makes sense. We draw heavily on the well tested wisdom of classics like Thucydides, Clausewitz and Sun Tzu as we frame, understand and respond to the contemporary security environment.

At the end of the day, the mission of the Army War College remains the same, he said, while issuing a challenge for the Class of 2013.

“I encourage each of the students to rise to the strategic level,” he said. “We merely serve as the guides to this transition as strategic leaders. It’s up to each of you to make the transitions. We are here to help you every step of the way.”