

Snider shares challenges for strategic leaders leading a profession

By Thomas Zimmerman, Public Affairs

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“One of the biggest challenges you will face as strategic leaders as the defense department reforms is to maintain the Army as a military profession,” said a world-renown expert on the subject recent during a recent talk to the U.S. Army War College.

Dr. Don Snider, Senior Fellow in the Center for the Army Profession and Ethic at West Point and Distinguished Visiting Professor in the Strategic Studies Institute at the U.S. Army War College, spoke to the War College Class of 2013 in Bliss Hall.

“The Army cannot simply declare itself to be a profession and its Soldiers or Civilians to be professionals,” he said. ““Profession” is not the default or natural character of the Army. The responsibility to develop Army professionals, both leaders and followers, both uniformed and civilian is mutually shared between the institution and the individual.”

Strategic leaders must have certain “meta-competencies” in order to lead a profession according to Snider.

- **Identity**-Maturity beyond self-awareness
- **Mental Agility**-Adaptability within cognitive complexity; improvisation
- **Cross-cultural Savvy**- Understand, work within “foreign” culture e.g. JIIM
- **Interpersonal Maturity**- Beyond face-to-face leadership to external power relationships, negotiation, consensus building; mentoring
- **World-class Warrior**- Strategic insights for the full spectrum of operations
- **Professional Astuteness**- Beyond members of a profession, to stewards of it

“Professional must earn and maintain the trust of their society by the effective and ethical application of their expertise,” he said. “As a steward of the profession, you have a responsibility to be a professional . Without that trust, we lose our autonomy in the application of our art.”

He said the unique relationship of the military and the government create unique challenges for

strategic leaders.

“The Army is not simply an ‘organization.’ It is not a business or corporation, rather an institution in constant tension between government bureaucracy and profession,” he said.

Snider pointed out three key challenges that Army strategic leaders must focus on in order for the profession to be successful:

- Expert knowledge - what is needed forward, Army 2020; prioritizing the knowledge
- “Developing” professionals for a “practice” with that expertise (educate, train, inspire)
- Negotiating Jurisdictions – legitimizing Army work through Army expertise, complementary within the joint arena

For more on Snider and to view some of his recent publications visit

<http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/people.cfm?authorID=53>

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