

## Col. Michelle Ryan became the Dean of the School of Strategic Landpower on July 1

By Elena Patton, Public Affairs Office 06 August 2020



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Col. Michelle Ryan became the Dean of the School of Strategic Landpower on July 1. In her new role, she is tasked with guiding the education of resident and distance education students, while keeping faculty, staff and students safe amid the pandemic.

town.... I am [the] first-generation to go to college on my mom's side," said Ryan. "I have always valued education and saw it as key to a door that would unlock so many opportunities."

Her educational interests directly correlate with her personal interests. "I remember staying up and watching presidential election returns, even before I was in junior high," said Ryan. "I have been fascinated by what happens on the national stage for a really long time."

Previously, she practiced law in three 4-star headquarters—a Combatant Command, in the office of the Chairman of

Ryan, however, is not new to the War College. A 2012 graduate, she returned in July 2017 and served for two years as a faculty instructor and as director of the National Security Policy Program, a specialty resident education program. She then took on the Deputy Dean position.

"I believe in the Army War College and the value of educating senior leaders, and I wanted to be a part of that," said Ryan.

In addition to the Army and War College, Ryan brings with her a plethora of experiences and expertise from other institutions and organizations. She completed a B.A. in International Relations & Government and a Juris Doctor from Notre Dame.

"I grew up in a really small farm

the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and in within the international law section of the Office of General Counsel in the Department of Defense. She also has earned the Army Skill Identifiers as a Joint Planner and as a Strategist.

“What I began to notice... in my military career is that whatever position I was currently in, I had needed every other assignment I had to prepare me for that role,” said Ryan, who noted the link between problem-solving lessons and collaboration skills in her current role.

“Law school, in many ways, teaches you to look at problems, analyze them, and look for a range of potential solutions,” said Ryan.

“The law recognizes that often times there is not any one perfect solution,” said Ryan. “In my application of law since then, I’ve learned that what has helped prepare me is problem-solving -- How do you analyze a problem? How do you persuade someone? How do you identify who stakeholders are in order to move forward to resolve whatever the issue is?”

As Deputy Dean, she experienced the value of collaboration. “I learned that in order for the School of Strategic Landpower to be successful, we can only be successful through a combined effort, at the heart of which lies our faculty across the resident and distance education programs,” said Ryan.

“I did not fully appreciate that when I was a faculty member siloed within a department but when I became Deputy Dean, my scope broadened,” she said.

During her year as dean, Ryan has one primary goal. “It is such an unusual year, and under these unusual circumstances, regardless of what my philosophy may have been any other year, for me, the priority this year has to be educating our students in a way that keeps our faculty, staff and students safe,” said Ryan.

“In both the resident and distance education program, we have great department chairs, and great course directors, and lesson authors who are experts in their area ....,” said Ryan.

Ryan will concentrate her energy on the faculty in the current COVID environment.

“Where [we] cannot assume risk is with our faculty,” said Ryan. “[We] need to make sure our faculty know how valuable they are and that they are the engine that drives the education here.”

This year the school plans to execute face-to-face instruction as long as it is safe to do so. The school, however, is preparing for remote learning.

“That is going to require that we be innovative and creative ... we will have to be adaptive,” said Ryan. She described the actions underway now: testing online learning platforms, technical assistance, reformatting lessons, and collaborating between resident and distance education faculty.

Ryan emphasized her goal of creating a significant and memorable learning experience for students with the creative and skilled efforts of faculty. In time, graduates and faculty will look back and say ‘That year of COVID was a really challenging year but we still did it and it was worthwhile.’

“I am grateful, humble, and excited to be in this position,” said Ryan.



*Col. Ryan represents USAWC School of Strategic Landpower at the virtual 2020 Distance Education graduation.*