

USAWC 2020 grads: ‘Your most impactful assignments are ahead – in competition, crisis, conflict, change’

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Maj. Gen. John Kem presided at the Distance Class of 2020 graduation, livestreamed July 24 from Bliss Hall, now available at www.youtube.com/usarmywarcollege.



Army G3/5/7 Lt. Gen. Charles Flynn addressed the far-flung student body graduating from the Army War College, congratulating and challenging them for the future.



The livestreamed Class of 2020 graduation included live elements with Dean Col. Michelle Ryan, Provost Dr. Jim Breckenridge, and Commandant MG John Kem (l-r).

FIND the graduation ceremony video at www.youtube.com/usarmywarcollege

FIND graduation photos at www.flickr.com/photos/usawc

The Army’s director of Operations, Plans and Training congratulated the Distance Class of 2020 for the big leap taken through Army War College studies, while challenging them to continue professional development and readiness. “Your most impactful assignments lie ahead of you, said Lt. Gen. Charles Flynn. “ I am confident in the Army War College Class of 2020, that you’ll play a crucial role in our nation’s ability to prevail through the renewed era of great power competition, and continue to adapt in a COVID environment.”



To honor his leadership the AWC Foundation presented a lifetime alumni

membership to the student class president of the Class of 2020, Col. Mark R. McCreary.

The Roll of Graduates compelled attention to the faces of the students, who represent the Joint, interagency, intergovernmental and multinational security environment -- a rare opportunity for students to concentrate attention on those colleagues with whom they shared ideas, worked through exercises, and collaborated to solve assigned problems, almost entirely virtually. The COVID environment dictated a virtual graduation for almost 400 students in the U.S. Army War College Class of 2020 who have completed the two-year graduate program that awards the Master's of Strategic Studies.

As requested by students, the ceremony a presentation by class vice president Col. Alisa Wilma who presented the class gift -- a gift meant to enrich the experience for future classes.

"Although we are grounded in the lessons of the past, we must look forward to the future," said Wilma, recounting the decision-making. "We realized that as DE Class of 2020, our future and our indelible mark on that future would be in the Army War College building [now under construction].

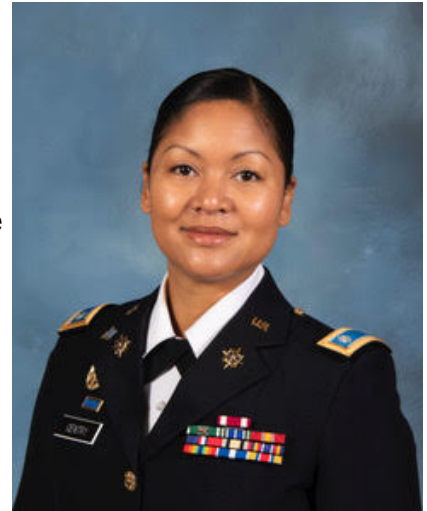
"Our gift today takes the form of an architectural rendering of the design, with the final production and installation taking place at the appropriate time as the new academic building progresses. In addition to the seal on the floor, any additional funds left over from the project will go to fund a scholarship be used for a scholarship that will help shape the next generation."

Students who achieved highest academic honors, in the top 10 or top 20 percent were identified as distinguished graduates or superior graduates. Select students were identified for strategy papers that earned writing awards sponsored by the Army War College Foundation, as were three faculty singled out for Excellence in Teaching awards.

Maj. Gen. John Kem, Commandant, thanked the class for an "amazing gift," as he offered a last set of graduation remarks, before his retirement, to this remarkable set of graduates in hundreds of places around the nation, and some around the world. "You picked something that's going to be dramatic and, as people walk into the new facility, connect people and ideas, they're going to see your class gift front and center.

"On behalf of the faculty and staff, congratulations. We are very proud of you.

"Two years ago, when we started this program, we challenged you to make



Army Lt. Col. Gentry is representative of the 390 graduates of the Distance Class of 2020 for whom a virtual graduation capped two years of online studies.

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a big leap – to go from the operational and tactical level and jump to the strategic, enterprise level. I personally spoke to all of you, [and with the Provost and Dean], we talked about the fact that making that jump requires you to be a lifelong learning, be a true thinker, be able to analyze questions with better analytics, think about how you communicate and, truly, just be a better leader.

“I pointed out then that these techniques and skills - Your previous success was necessary but not sufficient. You had to build on that – and you’ve done that in spades,” he said.

Kem introduced Lt. Gen. Charles Flynn, the Army’s Deputy Chief of Staff, G3/5/7. “Throughout his 34 years of service, as you’d expect, he commanded at every echelon ... most notably as commanding general of the 25th Infantry Division (Light) and Deputy Commanding General of the U.S. Army Pacific before he became the G3,” said Kem, about Flynn.

“You have persevered through countless hours of study and discussion, all while maintaining a full-time job. I commend the dedication you showcased and the sacrifices you and your families have made to complete such a rigorous course,” said speaker Lt. Gen. Charles Flynn to the graduating students via video from the Pentagon. “It is now time for you to apply the knowledge and the skills you have gained over the last two years to better the organizations where you will serve.”

“Every one of you has a crucial, upcoming role to play, ensuring continual readiness in competition, crisis, conflict and change,” said Flynn, noting that $\frac{3}{4}$ of the class are in the Reserve Component, upon which the Joint Force depends for constant support.

“You will be required to be problem-solvers, not just problem identifiers. You must help solve your boss’s problems in addition to the ones on your desk. Success in our line of work indisputably requires sweat equity....

Your most impactful assignments lie ahead of you.... I challenge each and every one of you to continually seek improvement both as an individual and throughout your organization.... I am confident in the Army War College Class of 2020 in that you’ll play a crucial role in our nation’s ability to prevail through the renewed era of great power competition, and continue to adapt in a COVID environment,” he said.

“We win because of men and women of character who stand for our nation’s values and are committed to the national defense.” As long as great leaders graduate from our war college, we will keep winning, said

“Much has changed since the establishment of the Distance Education Program some 60 years ago. Once again, competition against great power adversaries has become the number one threat to global security and stability. However, the competitive space has become significantly more complicated. New technologies have expanded the number of domains,” he said. “The Joint Force has to be prepared to fight and win....”

“The evolving dexterity of our near-peer rivals require the Army to balance the risks of modernizing while at the same time maintaining constant readiness.... [E]mergent crises, such as COVID-19, test our agility, command us to act as the nation’s ‘swiss army knife’ and stretch our capabilities beyond combat lethality.

“There is undoubtedly a gauntlet of challenges between you and the protection of American interests both at home and abroad. Despite the complex nature of today’s security environment ... we have to deploy, we have to fight, we have to be able to win our nation’s wars by providing dominance across the full spectrum of warfare ... ready to accomplish this mission ... in competition, in crisis, conflict, or change.

“In competition, we must be ready to contend for access, presence, and influence across all domains, overmatching our adversaries and posturing to deter opportunistic aggression.

“In crisis, we must be ready to dynamically deploy our forces across the globe in any capacity, whether that is for humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, or in response to aggressor or foe.

“In conflict, we must be ready to operate across multiple domains and at every echelon, from the tactical to the strategic, while remaining interoperable with our allies and partners. And we must leverage lethality to aid the Joint Force in winning....

“In change, we must be able to anticipate the trajectory of future warfare. We must innovate and progress from an industrial age army to one that is transformed. We require transformational change to integrate the multi-domain formations, calibrate force posture and joint convergence necessary to succeed in an information age.”

The graduating student body is predominately Army, and about three quarters of the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine officers are Reserve or Guard officers. The war college principle, learning from one another, is enhanced by the civilian students with the departments of the Army,

Defense, Justice, Veterans Affairs; Congressional staff, and others. Six international officers in the class represent the Czech Republic, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, and Mexico.

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