

## Commandant, Dean partner for ‘hybrid’ Faculty All- Hands Forum

By Elena Patton, Public Affairs Office 10 July 2020



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*USAWC faculty gather on MS Teams and in Bliss Hall for an interactive discussion with the Commandant and Dean, July 10, about planning for Class of 2021 reception and teaching plans in the current health environment.*

The Faculty All-Hands forum took place today, led by USAWC Commandant Maj. Gen. John Kem and Dean Col. Michelle Ryan. This meeting provided faculty with the opportunity to ask questions about their role in maintaining the health of the students while continuing to provide the unprecedented education in strategic leadership that the Army War College has always provided.

The Commandant acknowledged the institution's success in handling the COVID challenges since March. “I have been impressed by how everyone has come together . . . and how everybody responded across the faculty and staff: very resilient with a great ‘can do’ attitude,” said Kem.

He also acknowledged the greater challenges ahead. “That hard part is coming . . . how will we execute a potential, fully-remote, or blended mix of

face-to-face instruction and a rolling cycle as things go on,” said Kem.

Ryan, whose School of Strategic Landpower leadership began July 1, spoke of looking forward to the next year. “It is going to be an exciting year . . . full of uncertainty and opportunities for us to demonstrate our flexibility and adaptability,” she said.

“My pledge to you, the faculty, is that I am going to do everything possible, with the assistance of the department chairs, the staff, and of course you as faculty members, so we can deliver the curriculum in a safe manner,” said Ryan.

The War College conducted the forum in a hybrid manner. About 20 faculty physically in the Bliss Hall auditorium, allowing for ample social distancing. It was also streamed through MS Office Teams, enabling others to participate virtually. A Teams facilitator passed on virtual question to ensure every faculty member had an opportunity to understand challenges and planning, and guide students' orientation to active learning in a COVID environment.

In a risk informed way, the War College will also conduct the resident seminar courses in a hybrid fashion. “We as an institution have always valued that connective tissue of face-to face.... [T]hat’s how we best achieve learning outcomes,” said Kem.

Col. Ryan agreed, while underscoring the necessary agility in using physical, virtual, and hybrid methods. “We do know that there is real value in that face-to-face learning; we believe in it,” she said. “But we can’t have it be like it was before.”

During the planning phase, the public health nurse assessed potential classrooms in buildings across the installation, identifying the maximum number of occupants able to maintain physical distancing. So, this year will kick off with 14 new seminar rooms, with half the class attending morning sessions, and half in the afternoon. Staggered schedules and cleaning protocols between classes will make face-to-face seminar sessions possible. Both Kem and Ryan acknowledged that resident education faculty can learn from what the Distance Education Program instructors are doing already, to improve the student learning experience in hybrid teaching conditions. Col. Ryan rises to the occasion.