

Army War College's NSPP team wins strategy competition

By Robert Martin, USAWC PAO 29 April 2023



USAWC NSP team of Lt. Col. Scott Smith, Lt. Col. Alison Gonzalez, Ms. Aria Lu, Lt. Col. Michael Tobias, and Lt. Col. Feby Collins emerged as the winners of this year's Strategy Competition

The 2nd annual Strategy Competition held at the Army War College, April 20 - 22 tests the competency of students from various military and policy schools in applying their knowledge of national security to real-world situations. The competition provides a platform for students to learn from one another, share ideas, and gain feedback from military and civilian judges.

This year's competition featured 16 teams from 10 schools, including seven military-education programs and three policy schools. The prompt given to each group was to identify the most problematic aspect of the relationship between the United States and the People's Republic of China. assess

U.S. policy aims and strategy concerning the aspect identified, and recommend alternatives to existing U.S. policy aims and strategies.

The competition is designed to facilitate learning about strategy formulation and implementation. Students are given a whole day to analyze and formulate their strategies before presenting their recommendations to judges. This process allows students to explore issues important to senior Army leaders, the Joint Staff, and the Secretary of Defense.

The judges for this year's competition were military policy expert, Dr. Risa Brooks, Columbia University professor Steve Biddle, retired Brig. Gen. Kimberly Field, currently the US Special Operations Command J5 and former U.S. Ambassador C. Steven McGann to the Republics of Fiji, Nauru, Kiribati, and the Kingdom of Tonga and Tuvalu.

"The judges did not have a rubric," said Tino Perez, USAWC executive strategic leadership chair. "Reflecting real-world situations wherein senior policy and military leaders assess the quality of strategic work based on their unique experiences, education, and strategic preferences."

"Communication skills become essential in real-world situations where military and civilian leaders have different backgrounds. The competition helps to develop these skills in students and enables educators and administrators to recognize trends across the various programs," said Perez.

The judges provided feedback to the teams, highlighting areas for improvement in their strategic work. For example, "Steve Biddle noted that each of the presentations he saw could better specify the causal theories linking proposed interventions to desired outcomes," said Perez.

"Educators can use these lessons to revise curricula and help students improve their strategic thinking."

"Dr. Megan Hennessey, representing Air University, brought a team of five Ph.D. researchers to observe the teams as they prepared and presented their work. The researchers collected "tons" of data, which will inform a scholarly report on the interpersonal, curricular, and strategy-formulation practices across the various programs," said Perez.

Ultimately, the NSPP team of Lt. Col. Scott Smith, Lt. Col. Alison Gonzalez, Ms. Aria Lu, Lt. Col. Michael Tobias, and Lt. Col. Feby Collins emerged as the winners of this year's Strategy Competition. The competition provides an opportunity for students to develop and apply their strategic thinking skills, which are essential in real-world situations, and contribute to the

United States.

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