



REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

The National Defense University
Board of Visitors
Washington, DC 20319-5066

NDU-BOV

December 21, 2020

General Mark A. Milley
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
Room 2E872, The Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-5000

Dear General Milley,

I am pleased to report on our recent National Defense University (NDU) Board of Visitors (BOV) meeting held on 11 December 2020. The meeting was called to address the dynamic issues confronting the University since our last meeting that are marked by continuing challenges in the operating environment, most evident through COVID-19 conditions and the changes in senior leadership at the University. It was a very productive and engaging meeting with much relevant information on NDU's challenges.

It is a privilege for the Board to contribute to academic excellence in support of our military and our country. We see this as an opportunity to provide external perspective and guidance for NDU to achieve its Strategy for the Future — as the university develops joint warfighters who can strategically and decisively conduct global integrated operations. We would also like to recognize VADM Roegge, Mr. Kane and Dr. Yaeger's service and collaboration that has been so critical to the success of the University and the future of military leadership.

We offer you the following recommendations and observations:

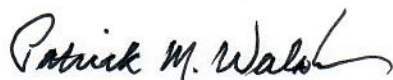
1. The Board recognizes that delivery of intellectual leadership and military professionalism requires both the specific mission learning objectives and outcomes of the Officer Professional Military Education Policy, along with academic rigor. NDU is specifically instructed by Congress to award academic degrees in 10 U.S. Code § 2163. This authorization directs NDU to meet the academic standards and requirements of the Department of Education and obtain and maintain regional accreditation.

The upcoming Middle States Commission on Higher Education reaccreditation process is critical for NDU to achieve its mission as well as retaining and hiring superior academic talent. The Board appreciates the innovative bottom-up approach to the Middle States process, noting the fact that the reaccreditation cycle has changed and that NDU-P and staff/faculty have made excellent adaptations to ensure our success.

2. We continue to strongly support VADM Roegge's concept of curriculum transformation. The Secretary of Defense directed NDU to design JPME II Master's degree programs for Academic Year 2020-21 with 50% of the curriculum focused on strategic competitors, especially China, and the University has clearly responded. This focus included enhanced understanding of non-military aspects of strategic competition such as economics, diplomacy, energy, and emergent domains, such as space, cyber, artificial intelligence and machine learning.
3. We also recommend a post-COVID review to identify positive and negative lessons learned to help shape the next year of response to classroom and travel management.
4. The Board recognizes the noteworthy response to the Chairman's request to double the presence of international students in the student body. NDU hosted a record number of international students from 65 countries and is on track to achieve an increase of international students by 10% per year.
5. The Board again remains concerned about the conditions of the University's facilities. Inadequate and deferred routine maintenance resulted in unrepairable systems and degraded facilities that affect life, health, and safety of our personnel. The deferral of maintenance resulted in significant additional requirements for the renovation of the Eisenhower building, and the loss of HVAC and heat in Marshall Hall. The Board encourages the continuation of the long-term vision for the institution. We recognize and appreciate the critical IT funding that has been provided, and its focus on transformation spending is a necessary element of rigorous education.
6. The Board appreciates the continuing interest and engagement of members of Congress as expressed through two letters concerning restructuring of the University. While the decisions concerning the re-organization have been moved to a different level of authority, engagement with internal stakeholders is essential for a successful transformation. It is important to simplify communication with the Joint Staff. Integration of disciplines will allow for transformation while maintaining fundamentals of the curriculum.
7. The issue of maintaining CIC within NDU or be spun off to another institution or collaborate with another agency needs to be evaluated in light of several fundamental questions:
 - a.) CIC hasn't hired a chancellor since Rear Admiral Hamby, USN (Ret.) retired in 2018. It also doesn't have a deputy chancellor or a dean.
 - b.) The demand requirement must be assessed. Not considering the demand requirement creates a real risk to delivery of mission. This program must be worthy, given the IT challenges it would have to address such as creating a secure and acceptable cyber laboratory and providing for system upgrades and maintenance.
 - c.) The assessment of facilities and the identified operational IT needs are separate from an advanced CIC environment. Due to additional funding, IT operations has greatly improved but is not where it should be for an institution with these responsibilities. Building an academic cyber program of substance will require financial commitments beyond operational IT support.

8. The Defense Wide Review mandated budget reductions but the Board remains concerned how NDU will accomplish its mission in this fiscally constrained environment.
9. The Board continues to strongly encourage the NDU-P to seek feedback from the faculty and staff, and to foster strong two-way communication. As required by accreditation standards, governance in academics must attempt to balance maximum faculty participation in decision making with clear accountability. The proposed innovative, bottom-up approach to the Middle States accreditation process will provide a clear sense of engagement, options and decisions. The University has responded to our concerns about hiring, especially mitigating risk by revisions in talent acquisition – the movement to a common position description and recruitment is noteworthy.

Sincerely,



Patrick Walsh, Admiral USN (Ret.)
Chairman

The National Defense University Board of Visitors

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