



REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

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

NDU-BOV

May 29, 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 11-12 May, 2020. The meeting was called to address the dynamic issues confronting the University since our last meeting marked by significant changes in the operating environment, most evident through COVID-19 conditions and in light of the Defense Wide Review. It was a very productive and engaging meeting with much relevant information on NDU's proposal and challenges. For the first time it was held virtually resulting in a significant public presence for our deliberations.

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 offer you the following recommendations and observations:

1. We strongly support VADM Roegge's concept of curriculum transformation. The Secretary of Defense has directed NDU to design JPME II Master's degree programs for Academic Year 2020-21 with 50% of the curriculum focused on strategic competitors. This focus would include 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.
2. The Board encourages Outcomes Based Learning and continuing Institutional Research effectiveness and, as proponents of online learning, we believe NDU can do more virtually than ever before. However, if we are not thoughtful in making this transition instructors may end up getting locked into outcomes and metrics leading to teaching and writing to the rubrics but missing content and intellectual growth. We have charged the NDU leadership to ensure this does not happen.
3. The Board 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. It is clear that there are significant efforts underway to address these conditions with the renovation of the Eisenhower building, and 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.

4. The Board appreciates the interest and engagement of members of Congress expressed through the two letters concerning restructuring of the University. Given what we have been through with COVID-19 and the fact that we now have a choice in how to reopen, NDU needs to consider not only how education can be taught but the effective structuring of the institution. This presents an opportunity for NDU to evaluate what new approaches to bring to its programs.
5. There remain some issues that were not satisfactorily resolved. Discussion concerning hiring gaps and billet strategies is critical to the long-term success of the NDU academic program. A fuller discussion and assessment of personnel issues, focusing on civilian academic expertise and staffing would be useful to understand the directions and challenges facing faculty utilization and retention.
6. The Board strongly encourages the NDU-P to continue to seek feedback from the faculty and staff, and to foster strong two-way communication. Governance in academics must attempt to balance maximum faculty participation in decision making with clear accountability. This requires a clear sense of engagement, options and decisions prior to executing any re-organization. The decisions concerning the re-organization have been moved to a much different level of authority, but engagement with internal stakeholders is essential for a successful transformation.

Sincerely,



Patrick Walsh, Admiral USN (Ret.)
Chairman

The NDU Board of Visitors

Admiral Patrick M. Walsh, U.S. Navy (Ret.), Ph.D.; Chairman
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