



**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY
WASHINGTON DC 20319-5066**

24 May 2022

MEMORANDUM FOR Board of Visitors, National Defense University

SUBJECT: NDU President's State of the University Remarks, May 24, 2022

Welcome to the National Defense University and the first meeting of our reconstituted Board of Visitors. Today marks the first meeting of the NDU Board of Visitors since December 2020. Our board was one of dozens of defense advisory committees and boards across the Department of Defense that was directed to perform a zero-based review of its activities starting in February 2021. Secretary of Defense Austin approved the reconstitution of the NDU Board of Visitors to provide independent advice and recommendations on the overall management and governance of NDU. This approval to resume Board of Visitor activities included the appointment of a diverse group of 10 recognized experts to serve on the Board, each of whom brings deep experience in national security, military, industry, Congressional, government, and higher education issues. This august group of 10 includes 4 returning and 6 new Board members and is chaired by one of NDU's most distinguished graduates, General Norton A. Schwartz, with Ambassador Bismarck Myrick returning to our Board and serving as vice chair.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I speak on behalf of our entire university community when I say we are grateful and honored that you have chosen to serve on the Board of Visitors. We are excited to have a reconstituted Board of Visitors and it is our privilege to host you for this inaugural meeting. We look forward to sharing with you what we do at NDU, how we do it, and why we believe NDU is a uniquely valuable investment in our national security now and into the future.

I would like to start with a brief summary of what we do today before moving on to our vision of the future of NDU. When you look around at the faculty and staff of NDU, you see a unified team that is dedicated to our mission of "educating joint warfighters and other national security leaders in critical thinking and the creative application of military power to inform national strategy and globally integrated operations, under conditions of disruptive change, in order to prevail in war, peace, and competition." This is our mission statement—newly codified and approved by the Joint Staff just this past summer. Unlike any other institution of higher education, military or civilian, our education and research programs feature a holistic, whole-of-government and whole-of-nations approach in which all of the instruments of national power are considered in the context of all-domain cooperation, competition, and conflict. No other institution offers this focus with a similarly diverse faculty, staff, and student body that represents the broader national security community. It is in this way that NDU serves the national security community of the United States, our allies, and our partners through dynamic thought leadership, world-class education, and leading-edge research.

Today's NDU features a talented hardworking faculty and staff team. Our faculty comprises 285 scholars and practitioners who represent all the military services, our Interagency partners, and Department of Defense civilians. Of our 129 civilian faculty, more than three-quarters of

them possess terminal degrees: 68% have earned PhDs; 6% hold Juris Doctorates; 2% have earned Doctorates of Education, and the remaining 24% hold master's degrees. Of our 43 Interagency faculty, 28% hold either a PhD or JD, with the rest having earned master's degrees. Lastly, of our 113 military faculty, 11% have either a PhD or JD and the remaining 89% hold master's degrees. This is a powerful mix of expertise that ensures our NDU graduates are immersed in concept and theory, as well as the practical applications and experience of national security issues.

Our NDU student body is similarly diverse. For this academic year, we have 683 full-time students in our Joint Professional Military Education – Phase II master's degree programs across our 5 colleges. They come from the U.S. Army, U.S. Air Force and Space Force, the sea services—to include the U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, and U.S. Coast Guard—Department of Defense agencies, non-Department of Defense U.S. government agencies, and our international partners and allies—with more than 150 International Fellows from 77 different countries as members of our Class of 2022. This diversity across the faculty and student body is intentional so that every seminar has a planned mix of professionals who bring the unique culture and perspective from their home agencies and nations into the classroom. This diversity, combined with NDU curricula and experiential learning, enables the joint acculturation and relationship building that are hallmarks of an NDU education. When our students graduate, they have transformed from tactical and operational experts into strategically minded leaders who have a holistic understanding of the use of all instruments of national and international power across all domains, and across the spectrum of cooperation, competition, and conflict. This is what they will need to succeed in their future jobs and throughout their careers. Each graduating class includes the future senior military leaders, senior diplomats, and agency heads upon whose shoulders will rest the responsibility for our nation's safety and security. That is where an NDU education ultimately pays off as a uniquely valuable investment in national and global security.

In addition to world-class student education, NDU research also has a well-earned reputation for providing scholarly, cutting-edge research that benefits our faculty and students, as well as senior DOD decision makers. Our faculty are routinely tasked by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and, most recently, the Secretary of Defense, to conduct highly consequential and sensitive studies. Our research and policy staff help draft national strategic documents such as the National Defense Strategy, the Nuclear Posture Review and the Biodefense Policy Review. Our insights into the motivations and capabilities of competitors like China, Russia, and Iran are sought after by current senior policy makers, operational planners, and force developers. Our expertise on the application of disruptive technology to warfighting is similarly impactful. Most importantly, the knowledge and insights that this research creates finds its way back to our students through lectures, contributions to our curriculum, and faculty seminars.

Looking forward, the 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS) notes the importance of a “workforce that is creative, adaptive, and well positioned to solve strategic problems.” The NDS also recognizes that “a diverse work force is better positioned to connect with and inspire collaboration with allies and partners and build a more comprehensive understanding of the security ecosystem.” As we go through our presentations today and tomorrow, I believe it will be apparent that today's NDU is focused on, and is delivering, programs that support fully this strategy.

As you may know, NDU operates under the direction of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as a Chairman's Controlled Activity. The chairman's vision is that "NDU will create strategic advantage by developing joint warfighters and other national security leaders and forging relationships through whole-of-nations and whole-of-government educational programs, research, and engagement." I know we do that today; I also know there is room for refinement and improvement, and we have laid out a strategic plan to do so, and we look forward to receiving your feedback on it.

On May 1, 2020, The Joint Chiefs of Staff Vision and Guidance for Professional Military Education and Talent Management—perhaps the 10 best pages to ever come out of the Pentagon on this subject—noted that "a world-class educational program is not an accident, nor does it come cheap; it is the product of deliberate design." This design begins with a plan for the NDU of the future; it also includes the efforts we are undertaking today to ensure we can continue to meet our mission while striving to meet our full potential. The Transformation effort of a few years ago that would have closed two of our five colleges has been put behind us, as the Congressionally-mandated reports from the National Defense Authorization Act of 2021 concluded that DoD should retain the College of Information and Cyberspace as well as the College of International Security Affairs. We have recently hired new chancellors for both colleges, and they—and the colleges—are thriving.

I have had the distinct privilege of leading NDU for the past 15 months. Last year, at the 90-day point, I provided the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff—General Mark Milley—with my initial observations and 90-day assessment. I noted two of my top priorities were facilities and hiring; that remains true today—and they are actually my top two priorities for 2022—and we look forward to sharing updates with you on the progress we are making on both issues. I also said I needed help with three things NDU could not do by itself: funding for failed and failing facilities, reconstituting our Board of Visitors, and stable, sufficient funding for NDU's operations. I am pleased to report to you that we are making strong progress in all three of these areas. We have many other important projects underway, such as reaffirming our accreditation with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, finalizing our strategic plan, and implementing an Enterprise Data Management Platform (EDMP). I informed the chairman of my intent to pursue three Lines-of-Effort (LOE) during my time at NDU. First is to enable student, alumni, and stakeholder Success; this supports NDU's move toward Outcomes-Based Military Education. The second LOE is to improve our university—we will do that through innovation, hiring, compensation, and process improvement. The third LOE is to develop our team—we will continue to work hard to build trust, boost morale, and enhance the professional development of all our teammates. We are making substantive progress on all of these initiatives.

With that in mind, the university leadership team and I are looking forward to presenting you with an update on our work and the concerted team effort to improve NDU on every level.

- We will start with Dr. Jamie Orr presenting the work now ongoing by a cross-university team to reaffirm our accreditation with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE).

- Following that, Dr. John Yaeger will brief you on our new NDU Strategic Plan and what to expect next.
- Our Chief Financial Officer, Ms. Barbara Gilchrist, will provide an overview of our budget while Mr James Schmeling, President and Chief Executive Officer of the NDU Foundation will discuss the impressive work they have undertaken on our behalf.
- Our Chief Operating Officer, Ms. Kathryn Kolbe, will update you on our facilities and our Capital Investment Strategy across our three campuses and the work we are doing to address infrastructure challenges.


We will also be pleased to offer you a tour of our facilities on the Fort McNair campus this afternoon. I will say up front that we are making significant headway in addressing infrastructure issues that have resulted from many years of deferred maintenance. For example, the Fiscal Year 2022 Appropriations Bill included \$50 million to the Army specifically for NDU facilities. With the help of the U.S. Army, we now have funding in place to repair Eisenhower Hall—our industrial and resource strategy college, the only one of its kind in the Department of Defense. This building has been vacated and closed for more than 2 ½ years due to water intrusion and mold bloom. The repair project is now being advertised, and we aim to have a contract awarded and in place by the end of the fiscal year with the help of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Additionally, we are pursuing funding for similar repairs to Roosevelt Hall and needed maintenance for all other facilities across the campuses through a holistic capital investment strategy.

In addition to covering our facilities, Ms. Kolbe will also share progress we are making on hiring, modernizing our Information and Academic Technology across the board to update both business systems as well as technology used in the classroom, much of which will be further enabled by our Enterprise Data Management Platform development and our work on an Organizational Diagnostic so we can better see ourselves and can truly be a data-driven organization with data-informed decision making.

Finally, we are pleased that this board meeting coincides with one of our NDU President's Lecture Series talks, because this provides an opportunity for you to experience one of our many high-level speaker events for student and faculty enrichment. Tomorrow's lecture features the Honorable Christine Wormuth, Secretary of the U.S. Army. I am confident you will see the value in creating such engagement opportunities between our students and the most senior policy makers across the national and international security community.

Again, I welcome you to your National Defense University and would be happy to take your questions.


MICHAEL T. PLEHN, Lt Gen, USAF
President, National Defense University