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

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

NDU-BOV

August 22, 2019

VADM Fritz Roegge
16th President of National Defense University
300 5th Avenue SW
Building 62
Fort Lesley J. McNair
Washington, DC 20319-5066

Dear Vice Admiral Roegge,

I am pleased to respond to our recent National Defense University (NDU) Board of Visitors (BOV) out-of-cycle meeting held on 5 August, 2019. The meeting was called to address the very specific issue of reorganizing the leadership of the university. It was a very productive and engaging meeting that provided the board with much relevant information on the NDU's proposal and challenges.

We offer you the following recommendations and observations:

1. It is a privilege for the Board to contribute to this opportunity in support of our military and our country. We see this as an effort to step back across a number of stovepipes created individually and assess the right organization to achieve NDU's new Strategy for the Future.

    a.) From our May 2019 NDU BOV meeting, we agreed to support the implementation of NDU's Strategy for the Future which includes developing an internal assessment of how to balance costs to understand the necessary trades needed to have a balanced and coherent program to deliver to students. We saw this as an important and responsible approach to the long-term management of the institution. We understood that the process to that point has been tactical in nature and conducted within the existing organizational construct. We were told the long-term plan would be focused holistically across the University in ways to meet the Chairman's direction and to deliver graduates with intellectual overmatch.

    b.) The BOV was told the schoolhouses were stove-piped and currently not uniformly teaching the concepts of globally integrated operations (GIO). We were told the university system has stagnated and it needs to be more adaptive. Senior leaders believe there is a need to teach topics related to not only the traditional subjects that include the current artificial intelligence and nano-technology but also to teach the ability to be open and alert to the disruptive technology that will emerge and to develop the anticipatory skills of mental agility that prepares students to adapt to those ideas or to mitigate the effect.

    c.) The underpinnings for this Strategy for the Future evolved, in part, from the fact that the strategic environment has changed and the US competitive advantage has gone down. NDU had assessed that its own capacity continues to lag and the traditional use of military forces is changing. The very nature of warfare is changing. As MG Irwin said, if we fail to adapt, we lose the ability to compete. This is what they are trying to reflect in their strategic plan. NDU doesn't stand out like it did in the past; NDU needs to recreate the exceptional learning

experience to prepare its graduates to operate in globally integrated operations in order to conduct future wars.

d.) We have approved the "what" NDU believes it must do for the future. We now need to guide and support them to operationalize their Strategy for the Future—the financial capabilities for this change, the curriculum modifications that need to be made, and the faculty/leadership capabilities to achieve the strategy.

2. The proposals advanced in the July 29 Information Memo by the President, National Defense University are worthy of serious consideration but there is a clear need for the development of more NDU internal consensus building in support for the proposals -- before moving to implementation. Therefore, the BOV did not endorse the proposal at this time.

   a.) The Board is not persuaded that the problem has been adequately defined prior to attempting to "fix" it. The leadership team needs to clearly define the end state and gather additional inputs as well as gather the early joiners—who at the University share that vision and support the change that will be necessary to accomplish the strategy.

   b.) There is consensus that there should be a review of the existing climate survey by college, separated by staff/faculty and student responses if possible. The Board expects to find positive evaluations by faculty, staff, and students from each of the colleges if we are asking about the value of the program and the quality of learning.

3. The majority of the Board members oppose the concept of dual-hatting (as presented) at this time. Among other objections, there is a particular concern that placing the head of Eisenhower and the head of NWC over the Deans of CIC and CISA clearly subordinates CIC and CISA regardless of any statements to the contrary - and this sacrifices both the academic quality and the unique point-of-difference of NDU. Moreover, from a purely education-delivery perspective, we should probably avoid the perception that creative strategic military thinking can only be done by military officers.

   a.) The Board is concerned about the history of long-term Acting Chancellors, and would like to know more about why CISA and CIC were left in such situations for extended periods. Was it done for financial reasons, or because of the perceived prestige of a flag officer as the head of the organization or other reason? It could appear as a *de facto* effort to render the role ineffective in advance of presenting a plan to eliminate it and not a managed organizational plan.

   b.) We can easily understand how this might happen—government hiring can be challenging and can take undue amounts of time, budgets can be tight, and priorities can dictate. Nevertheless, a way forward that will not leave these schoolhouses in such a precarious position for the future is necessary. A flag officer can handle diverse responsibilities and can focus appropriately on both; but there is a need for Deputies in both areas with strength in those disciplines.

4. Trust is critical to a successful organizational change. The Board strongly encourages two-way communication. Governance in academics must attempt to balance maximum participation in decision making with clear accountability and requires a clear sense of sharing: of who is sharing what with whom prior to executing any re-organization.

   a.) The design does not have to be either supported or owned by all; but there is a need for all to provide their inputs for consideration. Some of the Board were deeply troubled by the way this process was handled, and how staff and faculty at all levels have been alienated, and feel that the leadership has not been transparent and collaborative.

b.) While the NDU-P must retain decision authority, leadership at this level - with extremely experienced, credentialed, and talented staff - requires much more engagement in defining the problem and war-gaming solutions. In a nutshell, as stated in one of the public comments, "We teach our students not to do straw-men."
c.) The presentations we heard were coming from the faculty/staff of only one college, although written comments were also received. Does that mean that the other colleges are supportive or agnostic? This is an essential element of understanding the dynamics of change.

5. The Board strongly encourages the NDU-P to seek feedback from key stakeholders, especially CJCS, SOLIC, CyberCom, and as many of the COCOMs as practical prior to taking any further steps in re-organization.

   a.) It is important to know if the students are actually using what they have learned and if they are advancing in their careers higher and faster than others. Additionally, knowing what the marketplace can share is central—are curricula focused on 21st century learning methods and the latest knowledge on the subjects or are we continuing to do what we have been doing for the last decade? Are we on the cutting edge or following the crowd? Does another schoolhouse get better results or more capable of delivering the learning than we are, etc.

6. As the NDU leadership gathers additional inputs from its stakeholders, we feel confident its strategies will be adjusted to meet the needs of its broad stakeholder base. We have a strong team leading the University and must also listen to their perspectives. This is a huge undertaking which, if done well, will be transformational for officer development for the future. The Board of Visitors deeply appreciates your considered engagement and support for the institution and its mission. The next scheduled BOV meeting is being planned for October 29-31, 2019 to be held at the Ft. McNair campus. Our focus is the mission critical success of educating joint warfighters who can think critically, apply military power creatively, and conduct globally integrated operations in support of the National Defense Strategy in order to conduct and win war.

Sincerely,

Patrick Walsh

Patrick Walsh, Admiral USN (ret.)
Chairman