

**State of the University Address**  
**By VADM Roegge**  
**NDU Board of Visitors Meeting**  
**December 11, 2020**

Admiral Walsh, members of the Board of Visitors, National Defense University colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the NDU Board of Visitors meeting for December 2020. I look forward to your thoughts and advice today, as each of you have uniquely valuable expertise, which enhances our ability to execute our mission.

First, I want to thank you for your continued support of the National Defense University (NDU). As we approach the mid-point of Academic Year 2021 and as I approach the end of my tour leading NDU, I sincerely appreciate the counsel that you continue to provide to me and to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) regarding his University.

Introduction and Overview

In his July letter to Admiral Walsh, CJCS General Milley noted his reliance “on the BOV to provide the best advice in helping NDU accomplish its mission.” He further noted that “Your continued feedback and advice will be invaluable as NDU moves forward with its transformation and implements the Vision and Guidance” for Professional Military Education and Talent Management. I echo General Milley’s sentiments when I say that the NDU leadership team and I look forward to taking full advantage of your insights and counsel as we work together toward an NDU that more perfectly meets the needs of the Joint Force of today and the future.

As you have seen from the agenda, during this Board meeting we intend to provide you with updates on key issues, including the University’s transformation and evolution, how we are supporting the core mission, and our work in preparation for a successful reaffirmation of our accreditation by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. To that end, I will provide you an update on the NDU Transformation initiatives we briefed at our last BOV meeting. As I described in my recent letter to you, those recommendations responding the Secretary of Defense tasks in the Defense Wide Review lack the congressional support to be enacted, and the FY21 NDAA Conference Report prohibits any changes pending completion of reports by the Secretary. We’ll discuss that landscape and the hard choices to operate within our reduced budget. We also have dedicated time so that the Provost, Dr. Alan Drimmer, can share his observations since becoming Provost and will discuss our progress in maturing and implementing our Strategy. You will hear from our Chief Operating Officer, Major General (Retired) Rob Kane, on how we are supporting the academic mission across each of his functional areas, and we’ll also spend time specifically addressing the BOV’s interest in personnel issues communicated in your letter of 29 May. Finally, Dr. John Yaeger will share our work on our Middle States Self-Study, a vital piece of our preparations for reaffirming our accreditation to award master’s degrees. The self-study is in effect the launching point for a

new strategic plan, and Dr. Yaeger will lead a discussion of this process and describe the opportunities for the BOV to contribute.

### Continuity of Command

As we discussed in previous meetings, ensuring the orderly transition of senior leadership, and maintaining continuity and stability, with a focus on communication and process improvement, creates the conditions for success. To that end, I would like to highlight some recent and upcoming leadership changes across the University. Their biographies are in your books, but I'll afford them the opportunity to briefly introduce themselves, so that you can put faces with names.

First, I'd like to introduce you to Dr. Alan Drimmer, who recently joined NDU as our new Provost. This summer, Marine Corps Major General Bill Seely became the 35th Commandant of the Joint Forces Staff College. Also this summer, Army Brigadier General Joy Curriera became the Commandant of the Dwight D. Eisenhower School for National Security and Resource Strategy; unfortunately, she is TDY in support of an Army mission and will not be able to join us today. I would also like to introduce Ambassador John Hoover, who is serving as Acting Chancellor of CISA. We have also recently hired a new Facilities and Engineering Director, Mr. Tom Griffin. In a more recent development within the past two weeks, I selected Ms. Kathryn Kolbe to become our new Chief Operating Officer; though she formally starts on the 21<sup>st</sup>, she was able to join us today.

At our May meeting I briefed you that NDU would soon be losing the services of Ambassador Arnold Chacon as Senior Vice President; we are fortunate that that did not come to pass, as he negotiated with State Department for another year. The leadership continuity that his presence provides is invaluable, and he continues to find great success in bringing impressive foreign service officers to NDU as students, faculty, and leaders.

I would like to also recognize changes in the leadership of the Faculty and Staff Advisory Councils. For the Faculty Advisory Council, I would like to thank Dr. Joe Schafer as outgoing Chair and Jim Churbuck, who is now Acting Chair, and welcome Dr. Dave Auerswald as the incoming Chair. For the Staff Advisory Council, I would like to thank Josh Baughman as he departs and Kelly Hart, who has served as Vice Chair and is now the Acting Chair. I appreciate your service and look forward to what we will accomplish together.

NDU's closest partners on the Joint Staff are in the J7 Directorate for Joint Force Development. At our last meeting we were joined by the Director, Lieutenant General Dan O'Donohue. He has been replaced by another great teammate, Vice Admiral Stuart Munsch. Admiral Munsch is unable to join us today, but his staff is represented. In that regard, I would also like to recognize the head of the J7 Joint Education and Training Division who for the last 17 years has been NDU's primary partner within the Joint Staff. Marine Colonel (Retired) Jerry Lynes will retire at the end of this month, having served our nation for more than 40 years in uniform as a

Marine officer and as a DOD civilian, as I said, the last 17 of which providing “concierge” service for NDU’s interactions with the Joint Staff.

Every new leader we welcome aboard also means bidding farewell to another. In the case of Dr. John Yaeger, we’re fortunate that he’s not departing NDU, but only changing seats as he now assumes responsibility to lead our efforts for our reaffirmation of academic accreditation. That work will certainly benefit from his service as Provost for the past eleven years, and so I want to thank him for what he has done and also thank him in advance for his continuing contributions to our mission. At the end of this month NDU will be saying goodbye to Major General Rob Kane as he retires after six years as NDU’s Chief Operating Officer. I want to thank Rob for his visionary leadership in creating and improving NDU’s Enterprise Business processes and aligning our resources toward more effective and efficient support of our academic mission over the past six years. As he accomplished this significant body of work, I have particularly appreciated his ability and willingness to ask hard, but necessary, questions and challenge legacy practices. Throughout our work together, I have relied on his sage advice and counsel on the most complex leadership challenges.

The materials provided to our Board members include a paper that traces significant NDU milestones from the last decade. I don’t intend to spend any of our precious time to discuss this, but it serves to document NDU’s progress in academic and institutional improvement through some challenging times. It can be difficult to appreciate this progress in the day-to-day grind, so I hope this document can serve to remind us of just how far we’ve come and of the many significant achievements over these years that have made NDU a better, more effective and more efficient institution. Every member of our team deserves credit for contributing to this progress, but I want to stress the leadership of Dr. Yaeger and General Kane in achieving it.

Finally, I am very pleased to report that the President has nominated my relief, Air Force Lieutenant General Michael Plehn, who is currently serving as the Deputy Commander of United States Southern Command. Planning for success, we have scheduled a change of command ceremony on 03 February. I expect that this will be a very small physical event as we apply COVID mitigation, but everyone will be able to join the virtual event.

### Continuing Impact of COVID-19

As we are again forced to meet in a virtual environment due to the ongoing pandemic, it probably goes without saying that COVID-19 continues to define our operating environment. COVID mitigation remains a primary focus for our staff, faculty and students. However, through virtual delivery of academics and large-scale teleworking, we have thus far mitigated the risk of community transmission, as we have avoided widespread outbreaks on our campuses while continuing to successfully deliver on our academic mission. To achieve this, we have continued to emphasize safe practices for all students, faculty and staff; we have conducted exercises of our ability to respond to a simulated positive COVID test result and quickly conduct reporting and contact tracing; and we are participating in the DOD’s surveillance sentinel testing program for our uniformed military members. But most of the credit for this success belongs to each

individual member of our team for their diligence in adhering to good personal hygiene practices that protect themselves, their shipmates, and their families.

I remain impressed with the ability of our team to adapt to this challenge to our mission. As you know, we moved to a virtual teaching model in mid-March and have continued to deliver education in that mode. While we remain hopeful of improvements in the COVID environment that would allow us to execute the national and international travel that would normally be part of the academic programs, the faculty have found alternative ways to achieve those learning outcomes. Although we recognize that our students are getting a different experience, I'm also pleased that our faculty shares perspectives that not only acknowledge the challenges of virtual instruction but also the opportunities – opportunities that will inform our use of virtual instruction even in the post-COVID environment. In addition to instruction, we have continued to deliver academic and business support through wide-spread telework, including the virtual onboarding and out-processing for all faculty and staff. There was also great work between our facilities and financial teams to be able to repurpose funds in order to make investments in ourselves. I applaud again the work of the enterprise business support team for their continued success in supporting our academic and support missions through telework.

For the rest of this year, we anticipate the need to continue adjusting the mode of delivery of academics based on COVID conditions on campus and in the surrounding communities. While the faculty and their Deans retain the ability to propose physical gatherings of faculty and students on campus to achieve our academic outcomes, we anticipate continuing to deliver instruction in this mode for the Spring semester, with the year most likely to culminate in another virtual graduation.

### NDU Transformation

In May, I briefed you on the recommendations that we provided in response to the Defense Wide Review (DWR) tasks and additional guidance from the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) and the Chairman (CJCS). This additional guidance included focusing curriculum on strategic Great Power Competition, such as with China, and emerging and disruptive technologies, such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, big data, robotics, hypersonic weapons, and so forth. An additional directive from SecDef was to increase our international students by 50% over the next five years. I'm pleased to report that this team is on or ahead of schedule to incorporate this guidance.

As a refresher, recall that the DWR tasked NDU to determine which colleges or programs could be consolidated or eliminated, and to provide a plan to eliminate, inter alia, the College of Information and Cyberspace (CIC) and the College of International Security Affairs (CISA). SecDef also specified that DWR recommendations focus on NDU's core mission, which the Chairman defines as the delivery of JPME in CJCSI 1801.01E.

NDU's transformation efforts and DWR recommendations would require congressional support to be enacted, either through changes in law or in recognition of congressional oversight

responsibilities. That support does not exist. The Conference Report for the Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21) National Defense Authorization Act – which has been passed by the House and is to be considered by the Senate next week - prohibits any changes to NDU programs or structure pending completion of several reports by SecDef. However, the money associated with our proposed Transformation initiatives has already been harvested. In the context of today's presentations, we'll discuss the legislative and budgetary landscape, as well as the hard choices required to operate within our reduced budget. The Department of Defense is also operating under a continuing resolution - passed yesterday – that is set to expire on December 18<sup>th</sup>. We remain hopeful for a defense appropriation, but have done our due diligence in the event that a government shutdown occurs next week.

Although we've now set aside our planning efforts to implement those DWR recommendations, the work of these leaders and their faculty and staff over the past year to support that planning did yield some positive results. In the next presentation on the agenda, the Provost will describe some of the results from that work to revise our curriculum to align with new Institutional Learning Objectives, better integrate all-domain knowledge into our curricula to benefit all our graduates, and revise our curriculum framework with new opportunities and offerings in our electives.

### NDU Strategy for the Future

We appreciate the Board's support of NDU's curriculum transformation, as mentioned in the 29 May letter to CJCS. I have asked Dr. Drimmer to share his observations since becoming Provost and to discuss our progress in maturing and implementing the strategy. The work that we've done has been very much about answering the strategic question, "What does every NDU graduate need to know?"

In his presentation, Dr. Drimmer will walk you through the status of our curriculum transformation, our development of a framework of core and elective courses, and how we assess the efficacy of these changes. He will also explain how we focus on outcomes-based education, such that we don't get locked into teaching to metrics and rubrics at the risk of intellectual growth in the joint warfighting leaders that we are developing. We appreciate that this was a specific concern of the BOV, and it's also an admonition expressed in the National Defense Strategy. He will also address the effectiveness of our Institutional Research capabilities.

### Supporting the Academic Mission

General Kane and his Team will discuss how we are resourcing and supporting the academic mission across each of his functional areas, including resource management, security, human capital, information technology (IT), and facilities and engineering.

Through past meetings and specifically in your 29 May letter to CJCS, the Board expressed concern about the conditions of the University's facilities, in which maintenance and

sustainment had been deferred or was inadequate, such that facilities had degraded and systems had become unrepairable. I'm pleased to report that we're making some progress, both at the tactical level in fixing what's broken and at the strategic level with an actual investment strategy. The Board also expressed interest in ensuring that critical IT funding continued to be provided to ensure that the University's IT infrastructure can effectively support the mission, and the CIO will provide an update on his efforts. Your letter also shared your concern for personnel issues and requested additional discussion. We look forward to providing you an update on our efforts in all these areas.

### Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

As we have briefed in previous meetings, we remain committed to understanding and improving the University climate and culture with respect to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI). We signed a contract in September to provide research and data analysis, strategy development, training, and assessment of our progress. This work included identifying a training strategy to help NDU meet our DEI requirements based on research into past surveys and current employee group discussions, providing a DEI training suite that is specific to NDU, and putting in place metrics to measure the success of our program. The recent Executive Order has required us to stop work, but we are ready to resume this effort when it is possible to develop a cleared training product under the existing Executive Order or to comply with whatever guidance might result under the new administration.

### Accreditation: Middle States Self-Study

As I mentioned earlier, Dr. Yaeger now leads our efforts in support of the Provost to prepare for NDU's reaffirmation of academic accreditation. In addition to being a key component of the University's Middle States accreditation, the self-study is also the launching point for a new strategic plan. Dr. Yaeger will lead us through a discussion of this process and describe the opportunities for the BOV to participate and contribute. We will appreciate your candid observations and feedback on these important efforts.

### Closing

Before I conclude my remarks, I would like to recognize the hard work that Dr. Brian Shaw and Ms. Joycelyn Stevens have put in, along with other staff members serving as scribes, recorders, and support that have made possible our engagements with the Board. In particular, I want to take a moment to recognize that this is Dr. Shaw's last BOV; please join me in thanking him for his service to NDU and to the BOV.

Finally, on behalf of all my NDU shipmates, I want to thank every member of the Board for your guidance and support for NDU. As senior leaders with myriad other responsibilities and demands on your time, I appreciate your commitment to this institution and to our mission. The support you provide the Chairman's University is an investment in our nation's future. As this is my last BOV meeting, I want to express my personal appreciation for this relationship,

your candid and thoughtful advice, and the opportunity for us to improve how we support the Chairman and our many stakeholders in order to deliver the joint warfighters and strategic leaders our security demands and our people deserve.