

Step 2 also has mixed results. Many of our students come in with lots of prior experience in many fields. Instructors' use of facilitation has enabled students to share subject-matter knowledge with other students. This has assisted instructors to understand students' competence so classwork can be tailored to the needs of the class. The use of pretests and pre-assessments is not as widespread as hoped, but there is improvement in this area as well.

Step 2 grade: B

As for Step 3, I wish I could say PowerPoint is a thing of the past. Alas it is not, but significant effort has been made to reduce the frequency of instructors reading slides to students. There also has been a focus on using technology as much as possible, not only as a tool to capture the generational characteristics of the millennials and Generation Z but also to provide

practical assistance to instructors teaching difficult or technical subjects. The Army has spent time and money harnessing technology within the infrastructure of the classroom and field environments. This has been of great benefit to students.

Step 3 grade: A

ALM established general learning outcomes for soldiers in institutional training and those in an operational-learning environment. The Army identified the areas in which a 21st-century soldier must gain competency and expertise.

These areas are character and accountability; comprehensive fitness; adaptability and initiative; lifelong learning (including digital literacy); teamwork and collaboration; communication and engagement (oral, written, negotiation); cultural and joint, interagency, inter-governmental and multinational compe-

tence; and tactical and technical competence (full-spectrum capable).

In developing training and education that make soldiers competent in these areas, the training developers, curriculum writers and instructors have excelled. They address the needs of character, adaptability, technical competence, communication and all the others every day. They also strive to make it relevant within the operational environment. This was the goal, and this is how far we have come. Let's finish the race.

Establishing 21st-century soldier competencies: **Grade: A** □

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War College Students Along for the (Staff) Ride

By Col. Charles D. Allen, U.S. Army retired

Students at the U.S. Army War College must develop frames of reference in preparation for their roles as strategic leaders. Apart from the traditional curriculum of core and elective courses with volumes of reading material, lectures from prominent leaders and scholars, and group-based experiential exercises, one way to do that is the staff ride.

Introduced in 1906 by Maj. Eben Swift at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., with 12 officer-students of the General Service and Staff School, now known as the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, the staff ride calls for active participation by faculty and students. Staff ride participants role-play key leaders and staff officers, think through historical decisions and actions, and reflect on consequences as they stand on the same ground where battles were fought. This education method has been adopted and adapted by the War College.

Most like the standard of old is the daylong Gettysburg Staff Ride. The stage is set with the strategic perspective of political and military leaders from opposing sides of the American Civil War. Students learn that the Battle of Gettysburg was a tactical engagement that resulted

from an operational campaign to support the strategic choices of Confederate President Jefferson Davis and Gen. Robert E. Lee.

Focus on Human Dimension

While the tactical organizations and maneuvers on the battlefield may be of interest to some, our focus is on the human dimension of war. Students delve into the relationships among the Union and Confederate leaders, decision-making under uncertainty with the fog and friction of war, building and leading teams, and operating under commander's intent/Mission Command. Closing the staff ride with President Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address at Gettysburg National Cemetery, students learn how a leader can take the results of a tactical event and reframe the strategic direction of a nation.

Following the core curriculum courses on national policy and strategy formulation, and strategic leadership, the second "strategic" staff ride is a 2½-day visit to New York City. The purpose of this staff ride is to "strengthen ... understanding of national security and strategy through interaction with key organizations and institutions that significantly influence it,"

War College communications say.

Accordingly, War College students are divided into three dozen small groups to visit with varied organizations and activities—city government, corporate, education and media as well as international venues (the United Nations and country missions). They, along with their foreign military officer classmates, experience the kaleidoscope of U.S. culture in an iconic American city. They observe what it takes to lead and manage large complex organizations, which may interface at civic, state, regional, national and global levels.

And given that the U.S. military is often isolated from the society it serves, it is important for our students to acknowledge that the strength of the nation is largely drawn from the talent of its people who serve in many sectors of society and the economic power that is clearly on display in New York City. By design, the staff ride provides an exposure to the other instruments of national power—diplomatic, informational and economic—beyond the military.

Engaging With U.S. Government

The last strategic staff ride comes near the close of the academic year. As with

the New York trip, this event is a 2½-day visit to Washington, D.C. Students are assigned to small groups to visit with organizations and activities in our nation's capital. This time the engagements are with elements of the U.S. government—the executive, legislative and judicial branches—with think tanks and nongovernmental organizations, as well as with national and international media outlets.

Our after-action review revealed that the core element of this year's D.C. trip was national policy. I offered the framework of IDEA-A to my seminar students—Influence, Develop, Execute, Assess and Adjust. Think tanks, nongovernmental organizations and media organizations have the clear purpose to inform and influence U.S. policy. The president of the United States, assisted by the interagency process, has the authority and responsibility to develop policy. Executive branch organizations such as the Cabinet departments (e.g., the State and Defense departments) are responsible for implementing and executing policy following presidential direction and congressional legislation.

Importantly, the U.S. Constitution gives Congress the oversight role to assess compliance with the law and the Supreme Court the power to adjudicate challenges

to the Constitution and our laws. Lastly, multiple players—domestic and international—provide feedback that may reveal the need to adjust existing policy

A Student's View

One student captured the D.C. experience of our War College seminar: "For me, the trip was informative and a reminder that national security is a convoluted, deeply partisan process even without factoring in an outside 'enemy.' Each organization that I visited demonstrated a view that is very much informed, or clouded, by where they sit in the process, which also directly impacts their output [and] contribution to national security.

"While this is all part of the democratic process, it is easy to see how the concept of strategy gets lost. Getting us out of Carlisle, [Pa.] even for only 2 days, to see pieces of the process up close was invaluable. But to a person, regardless of organization, the recurring theme is that relationships matter and one must cultivate these in order for anything to happen [or] be accomplished in D.C."

As a longtime faculty member, I see the intellectual growth of our students over the course of the academic year and from staff ride to staff ride. They change perspectives from tactical and operational

to the interface of strategy and policy. They become less sure of answers, focus more on understanding concerns, and challenge underlying assumptions. And that makes me smile.

As our War College students graduate and return to their respective services, agencies and nations (for international fellows), the modern application of the traditional staff ride offers them a frame of reference for the strategic context. They will provide value through environmental scanning to discern challenges and opportunities with implications for national security interests. Through strategic thinking, they will help define issues by asking critical questions and framing strategic-level problems for senior civilian and political leaders.

Importantly, our graduates will use existing models and processes or develop new ones to address the ill-structured problems of the strategic environment. In doing so, they will, as the War College mission statement says, become "strategic leaders ... invaluable to the Army, joint force and nation." □

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Staff rides allow students to visit historic sites such as Wheatfield Monument at Gettysburg National Military Park, Pa.

