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## President's Forum

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*The U.S. Naval War College*

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*Rear Admiral Shoshana Chatfield is the fifty-seventh President of the U.S. Naval War College and a career naval helicopter pilot. A native of Garden Grove, California, she graduated from Boston University in 1987 with a bachelor of arts in international relations and French language and literature. She received her commission through the Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps in 1988 and earned her wings of gold in 1989. Chatfield was awarded the Navy's Political/Military Scholarship and attended the Kennedy School of Government, receiving a master in public administration from Harvard University in 1997. In 2009, the University of San Diego conferred on her a doctorate of education in leadership studies.*

## PRESIDENT'S FORUM

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THE MOST ICONIC BUILDING on the Naval War College's Newport campus is the venerable Luce Hall, built in 1892 as the first purpose-built home of the College. It stands majestically along the shores of Narragansett Bay, and its visage might imply that the institution is an independent and stand-alone entity. In fact, the College is one node in a rather intricate network of military and civilian institutions of higher learning. As such, we are guided by the standards and expectations of two national or regional accrediting standards or bodies: the Officer Professional Military Education Policy (OPMEP), administered by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), and the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE). We will look briefly at each of these to demonstrate how the standards they have established help to shape the manner in which we provide professional military education and graduate-level education to our students.

### *Accreditation by the Joint Chiefs of Staff*

Throughout their existence, the military services have each operated schools and educational institutions designed to focus on the specific war-fighting environments in which they operate: land combat for the Army; maritime operations for the Navy, Marines, and Coast Guard; and aerial combat for the Air Force, following its establishment as an independent service in 1947. It long has been recognized that any military operation of significant size will need to receive support from and to coordinate with multiple services, the particulars depending on the nature of the action contemplated. The term *joint operations* is used when forces from more than one service operate together, as they did during World War II and later conflicts. The National War College was founded in 1946 as the first senior service school designed specifically to teach joint operations by

providing joint professional military education (JPME). The Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 reorganized significant portions of the Department of Defense, and it encouraged joint education in the service-specific schools by requiring formal joint education for officers competing for flag- and general-officer rank. The primary CJCS instruction (CJCSI) providing guidance on how JPME will be administered across the military services is the OPMEP. It identifies required multiservice percentages in both faculty and student populations, joint-learning areas and special areas of emphasis, and other factors designed to ensure that the entire officer corps receives a broad education that goes beyond any single service's perspective. I want to share with you some of the noteworthy changes detailed in the most recent revision to this critical document.

In May 2020, the Directorate for Joint Force Development (Joint Staff J7) issued CJCSI 1800.01F, also known as OPMEP-Foxtrot (OPMEP-F), which introduces a significant shift in how professional military education at all levels must assess whether students are in fact *learning* what their professors, academic departments, and colleges intend for them to learn. Rather than simply requiring *coverage* of specified material, as in previous versions of the instruction, OPMEP-F will bring our command-and-staff and war-college assessment practices in line with those that have been in place across higher education for many years. Specifically, our programs now will have to demonstrate that students in our intermediate and senior courses have *mastered* the defined program learning outcomes (PLOs). Students will continue to take exams, write papers, and participate in war games and group exercises, while the faculty will grade those assignments as they have done in the past. Now, however, we must transform our curriculum and method of delivery to allow the faculty also to assess those assignments from the perspective of *outcomes mastery*. The outcomes students must master are designed to prepare them for service as joint warfighters, senior staff officers, and strategists.

Accommodating the changes in OPMEP-F and ensuring alignment with the tenets of outcomes-based military education (OBME) will require extensive effort over the next six years here at NWC and in the schools and colleges of our sister services. Here in Newport, a College Assessment Committee has been at work since September 2018 strategizing ways to address the large volume of changes. These efforts will include potential revisions to the academic calendar, core curriculum, and student assignments to accommodate the assessment of PLOs, including by developing formal capstone exercises. Interestingly, because of the phased accession of our students—three times a year—NWC is the only JPME institution that has not developed a programmatic capstone event. A well-designed capstone will give our students the opportunity to synthesize what they have learned across their courses. That synthesis will allow them to deepen their

learning, leading to better retention and a better ability to understand, analyze, and evaluate situations in their future assignments. In addition to involving faculty and leadership from across the College, assessment will require us to determine whether additional resources are necessary. Many details have yet to be worked out, so the groundwork will continue through the 2021–22 academic year. Adjustments to NWC curricula then will be implemented in academic years 2022–23 and 2023–24.

I believe that the ultimate shift to OBME will bring multiple benefits to our graduates and to the College itself. The most important of these will come in the area of student learning. Assessing students' mastery will provide evidence to our faculty of what our students are learning well and which areas need improvement. Assessment data on strengths and weaknesses will allow the faculty to close the loop on curriculum development by adjusting content coverage or teaching methods to ensure that students are learning what they really need to learn. Most importantly, the processes required to assess student learning in OBME will be the same as those required for our periodic reaccreditation through NECHE, as discussed in the paragraphs below.

#### *Accreditation by the New England Commission of Higher Education*

Over the first one hundred years of the Naval War College's existence, students graduating from the institution received a diploma certifying that they had met all the educational requirements established by the College, and their personnel records were annotated to recognize this accomplishment; but the leadership and faculty of the College long had believed that the quality of instruction and comprehensiveness of the curricula were equivalent to those found in many civilian degree-granting graduate-school programs. Upon assuming command in August 1987, Rear Admiral Ronald J. Kurth, USN—the first NWC president to hold a PhD—initiated a multiyear process focused on receiving the authority from Congress and the Navy to award a degree of master of arts in national security and strategic studies. The complex and lengthy process ultimately led to two major milestones: the 101st Congress's passage in November 1990 of a public law authorizing the degree, and the March 1991 decision by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (which in a 2018 reorganization became NECHE) to grant initial academic accreditation.

This accreditation remains in force today and is reviewed every ten years, with an interim assessment completed at the five-year mark between cycles. The College continually must meet nine specific standards that include but are not limited to the following: Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship; Educational Effectiveness; and Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure. We will undergo our next comprehensive evaluation visit in the fall of 2024, but much work must

be done in the coming months on a detailed institutional self-study to prepare for the on-site visit by NECHE evaluators. Our College is one of 210 institutions of higher education that fall under the purview of NECHE; others include Ivy League institutions Harvard, Yale, Brown, and Dartmouth. We are, indeed, in good company!

In summary, our Naval War College can be defined as a high-functioning educational institution that operates effectively in two worlds. We provide top-quality JPME leading to certification of our students as effective joint warriors; and we convey world-class, graduate-level academic programs that lead to regionally accredited master of arts degrees. The only thing we are missing is a football team! What a privilege it is to lead such a remarkable institution.



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*(Dr. Kristin Mulready-Stone and Prof. John Jackson contributed to this article.)*

