

2022

## President's Forum

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*The U.S. Naval War College*

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### Recommended Citation

Chatfield, Shoshana Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy, President, Naval War College (2022) "President's Forum," *Naval War College Review*. Vol. 75: No. 4, Article 3.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol75/iss4/3>

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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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### *Get Real, Get Better*

IN JANUARY 2022, the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) and the Secretary of the Navy launched an initiative designed to foster within the Navy an ecosystem—a culture—that helps our service to assess, correct, and innovate better than the opposition does. Get Real, Get Better (GRGB) promises to accelerate our competitive edge as the world's strongest navy. It is a call to action for every Navy leader to apply a set of Navy-proven leadership and problem-solving best practices that empower our people to achieve exceptional performance.

Admiral Michael M. Gilday, USN, describes key components of GRGB in the following way:

- The Navy has teams with great culture and performance, but we also see examples of teams with poor culture and weak performance. The gap between our best and our worst performers is too large.
- To remain the world's strongest navy, we must have a consistently strong performance. Get Real, Get Better is the mind-set that our best performers use consistently.
- This approach empowers our people to find and fix problems—and innovate—at their own levels, from the deckplates to senior echelons. We reward ownership and ingenuity, and we help each other remove barriers.
- We are committed to accelerating our war-fighting advantage by unleashing our people, not burdening them with additional requirements, policies, or bureaucracy.
- These principles make our Navy more ready for competition and combat.

He expands on these broad themes by noting that Get Real, Get Better is a proven mind-set that every Navy leader must embrace to unlock the full potential of our people. It starts with our core values of honor, courage, and commitment as the bedrock of a winning navy.

Building on these values, he defines the key components of GRGB as follows:

- “Getting Real” is about having the courage to self-assess and to build teams that embrace honest, hard, transparent looks at our performance to understand our strengths and shortcomings. We must be our own harshest critics.
- “Getting Better” is about a commitment to improving, to being self-correcting. It’s about taking pride in high standards and fixing problems together when they’re small, before they grow large and complex. It’s about applying proven methods to get after the things that matter most in a focused and disciplined way, not by just adding activity.

Here at the Naval War College (NWC), our College of Leadership and Ethics (CLE) is helping our institution to embrace the tenets of GRGB. CLE has imbued the principles of self-assessment and self-correction into our in-residence course (Leadership in the Profession of Arms) and the flag-level leader-development courses for two- and three-star admirals and senior civilian executives. The Navy can accelerate our war-fighting advantage by having a growth mind-set and building learning teams. For example, when leaders self-assess they help their teams focus on aligning with the organization’s standards and goals. They lead their teams to identify and tackle problems, often encapsulated in the concept of “embracing the red.” This entails focusing on performance using data to challenge preconceived notions. Another facet of GRGB that NWC teaches is embracing the Navy’s core values of honor, courage, and commitment. Living these values can mean telling your boss about your challenges, not just sharing successes. It can mean having the courage in a meeting to spotlight barriers that you and your subordinates have recognized and bringing them to the boss with potential solutions.

Self-awareness is a crucial grounding point in anyone’s leadership-development journey. It’s the first step in GRGB’s self-assessment phase. Once you’ve self-assessed, getting feedback will help you self-correct so you can focus on what matters most. These are two behaviors that the Vice CNO has highlighted as desirable GRGB behaviors. The third behavior is to build learning teams. There is a difference between leading individual learners and leading a learning team. A learning team has a culture that supports getting to the root cause of each problem it uncovers and attacking that root cause relentlessly. A learning team shares trust and respect across the group. Team members provide their input without

fear of being ridiculed for thinking of something new or for challenging the assumptions underlying a proposed solution.

While GRGB is a Navy initiative, it aligns with recent Joint Staff directives to move the professional military education programs of all the services to an outcomes-based military-education (OBME) environment. This shift relies heavily on a robust process of authentic, direct assessments that approximate the conditions our graduates will face in their operational environments. NWC faculty members have been working hard for more than four years, under the leadership of the dean of academics, to embrace the tenets of OBME. Akin to the “Get Real” prong of GRGB, we are developing a plan to assess how well our educational programs provide our students with what we expect them to *know*, *value*, and *do* once they complete the program, as defined by written program learning outcomes. We will delve into the many implications of adapting our educational programs to embrace OBME concepts in a future President’s Forum column.

In summary, the GRGB initiative encourages us to act transparently, focus on what matters most, and build learning teams. It’s about fostering a culture that rewards leaders, sailors, and civilians not only for the outcomes they achieve but for how they lead. This underlying cultural focus will drive us, at NWC and throughout the Navy, to perform at peak levels.



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