U.S. MILITARY ACADEMY MISSION
To educate, train, and inspire the Corps of Cadets so that each graduate is a commissioned leader of character committed to the values of Duty, Honor, Country and prepared for a career of professional excellence and service to the nation as an officer in the United States Army.

“Make no mistake … you are preparing to join an incredible brotherhood. In it, you are never alone, never without a helping hand.”
-CPT Ross Pixler’s, Class of 2005, Nininger Award Acceptance Speech

SUPERINTENDENT’S GUIDANCE
The West Point Leader Development System (WPLDS) is the United States Military Academy’s (USMA) leader development program. Integrated across the military, academic, and physical programs, the WPLDS guides the development of cadets into commissioned leaders of character for the United States Army. As the Army looks to the future, the competence and character requirements of our officers has never been greater; as the 21st century promises to be ever more volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous. To effectively lead Soldiers and units in this contemporary operating environment, USMA graduates will need a strong foundation of values-based leadership skills. Each person assigned to the United States Military Academy shares the burden of responsibility to lead and inspire the Corps of Cadets. Nested within the Army’s leader development strategy, the WPLDS drives strategic resourcing, processes and policy in its objective to prepare future leaders of character for the nation.

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OVERVIEW OF U.S. ARMY LEADER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Informed by the Army’s experiences since the end of the Cold War, to include operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as by the foresight of an ever more competitive learning environment, the Army Leader Development Strategy (ALDS) attends to the Army’s most important core competency – leader development. ALDS emphasizes that our leaders must learn faster, understand better, and adapt more rapidly; and it also focuses on restoring balance in preparation for military operations in an era characterized by persistent conflict. Three key paradigm shifts identified in the ALDS are: 1) the need to develop leader capacity for complex and dynamic challenges over extended periods of time; 2) the reality and necessity of greater decentralization of capability and decision making wherein lower levels of command assume greater responsibilities; and 3) the requirement for creative thinking in the design of campaign plans that anticipates change, develops opportunities, and manages transitions.¹

“Decentralized operations place a premium on disciplined, confident small units that can integrate joint capabilities and fight together as combined arms teams. Leaders must prepare their units to fight and adapt under conditions of uncertainty and, during the conduct of operations, must also ensure moral conduct and make critical time-sensitive decisions under pressure.”²

- The Army Capstone Concept

¹ “A Leader Development Strategy for a 21st Century” was released by Army Chief of Staff. It’s part of the Army Capstone Concept, CSA’s Green Book article “The Army of the 21st Century”, and FM 3.0.

² Department of the Army, TRADOC PAM 525-3-0, The Army Capstone Concept, Operational Adaptability: Operating Under Conditions of Uncertainty and Complexity in an Era of Persistent Conflict, 2016-2028, 21 December 2009
OVERVIEW OF WEST POINT LEADER DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM
The United States Military Academy develops commissioned leaders of character who are prepared to serve as officers in the United States Army. The West Point Leader Development System aligns with the Army Leader Development Strategy by building capacity to lead in an era of complexity, change and competitiveness. Beyond building technical and tactical proficiency, the WPLDS is grounded in theories from adult development, leadership and organizational behavior, emphasizing identity formation and the development of increasingly refined perspectives.

The West Point Leader Development System seeks to develop officers who:

• Lead and inspire their units to accomplish the mission
• Embrace their roles as United States Army officers
• Demonstrate a broad perspective that is open to new ideas and experiences
• Understand ambiguous situations and solve complex problems
• Make sound and timely decisions under stress
• Communicate effectively with all audiences
• Demonstrate proficiency in military and physical skills required to succeed in combat
• Demonstrate mental and physical toughness with the strength of spirit to win
• Demonstrate respect for others and work effectively with different cultures and people
• Live the Army values

In addition to cadets taking responsibility for their own and their peers development, USMA community members are responsible for assisting in developing these young men and women, their competence and character, as appropriate given their many roles and interaction opportunities.
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
Commissioned officers are leaders in the Army who are inspired by a unique professional identity. This identity is not only shaped by what they KNOW and DO (competence), but most importantly by a deeply held personal understanding and acceptance of what it means to BE (character) a commissioned officer. Officership is based on a self-concept that consists of four interrelated facets: warrior, leader of character, servant of the nation, and member of a profession. Army officers must adopt all four facets in order to construct a professional identity that is sufficiently robust to meet the complex demands of the 21st century.

In concert with developing a professional identity, the WPLDS seeks to build capacity through perspective transformation. Indeed, preparing officers for the Army can be understood as part of the much larger process of human development. Being human is about making sense of our experiences. As one develops, the frame or perspective from which one makes meaning of themselves, their relationships with others, and the world evolves. The WPLDS is designed to expand these future officers’ perspectives to be more sophisticated in order to operate in ambiguous and complex environments.

Leader development remains holistic through four dimensions. Graduates must demonstrate tactical and technical competency in three dimensions: military, intellectual and physical; while developing character across the moral-ethical dimension. A plethora of developmental experiences empowers future officers to learn through engagement of these four dimensions, thereby crystallizing their professional identity and realizing broader perspectives.
Military: Developing the skills, knowledge and abilities necessary to lead and succeed throughout a broad range of operations.

Intellectual: Developing the intellectual capacity and perspective needed to understand and adapt effectively to the demands of complex and ambiguous situations.

Physical: Preparing leaders to handle the physical challenges associated with military operations, live an active and healthy lifestyle and develop the physical readiness of their Soldiers.

Moral-Ethical: Developing leaders’ ability to know and do what is right personally and professionally across a range of complex and continually changing situations.

The USMA experience is ripe with developmental opportunities. However, unless you are prepared to learn from them, in terms of motivation and competence, you can have an experience and miss the development. Staff and faculty remind cadets to prepare for their experiences, help them make meaning of these experiences and integrate them into their overall progression. Developmental experiences challenge these future officers and get them out of their comfort zone; revealing the limits of their current capacities and propelling them forward. These challenges, however, are not tackled alone. The WPLDS provides appropriate levels of support to assist individuals in stretching to meet their objectives. Furthermore, staff and faculty help cadets reflect on their learning, offering up alternative perspectives and suggesting areas of further growth. These new skills, understandings and perspectives are then applied to future challenges in a continual cycle of growth. Over the 47 month experience, this systematic experiential learning cycle drives development and transformation.
Preparing future officers for the complexity of the 21st century, the West Point Leader Development System is centered on an outcomes-based model of leader development. Shifting from an emphasis on inputs the Academy provided, this model now focuses on ten specific, measurable outcomes. The goal of the WPLDS is to prepare USMA graduates who, upon commissioning, will:

**LEAD AND INSPIRE THEIR UNITS TO ACCOMPLISH THE MISSION**
Lead by example; be committed to excellence. Foster a positive leadership climate within the unit. Maintain discipline and build accountability throughout the organization. Earn the trust and respect of Soldiers and establish the teamwork essential for success. Contribute to accomplishing the mission while building the larger team. Operate and take initiative within the commander’s intent, applying the appropriate level of direction and supervision to attain the objective. Accept responsibility for the actions of the unit. Demonstrate care and compassion for Soldiers and their families. Maintain the health and welfare of all members of the unit. Commit to the personal and professional development of Soldiers.

How can you, a member of the USMA community, help cadets achieve this outcome?
- Maintain discipline and a sense of order within your sphere of control
- Hold cadets and colleagues accountable for their actions
- Share duties and demonstrate how teamwork can accomplish a goal
- Take responsibility for your own actions

**EXAMPLE:** As a faculty member, assign a project requiring cadets to effectively operate as a team; evaluate their ability to perform assigned roles, lead the group when required, and effectively communicate and work together to complete the task.
EMBRACE THEIR ROLE AS UNITED STATES ARMY OFFICERS

Embrace the four facets of an officer’s identity: warrior, leader of character, servant of the nation, and member of the profession of arms. Lead in a moral and ethical manner. Maintain professional competence, develop intellectual capacity and embrace the responsibility for personal development. Accept responsibility for their actions. Serve the country faithfully, accepting unlimited liability. Contribute to the development of subordinates and of the profession as a whole. Enhance self awareness through regular reflection and introspection. Hold themselves and others accountable for adherence to standards of professional and personal conduct, both on and off duty. Commit to a lifetime of service to the Army and the nation.

How can you, a member of the USMA community, help cadets achieve this outcome?

• Share your experiences as a professional with cadets
• Model all behavior and expectations of a U.S. Army officer
• Live the Army values
• Provide honest and supportive feedback

EXAMPLE: As a Tactical Officer, focus individual counseling for first and second class cadets on officership and being a member of a profession by sharing why you serve and what it means to be an officer.

DEMONSTRATE A BROAD PERSPECTIVE THAT IS OPEN TO NEW IDEAS AND EXPERIENCES

Remain curious and dedicated to a lifetime of learning. View situations from perspectives that combine the knowledge gained from a robust liberal-arts education with personal experiences. Interpret experiences using multiple viewpoints while appreciating the diversity and nuance of the human dimension. Seek to increase personal and professional knowledge and remain open to experiences that push you beyond your comfort zone.
How can you, a member of the USMA community, help cadets achieve this outcome?

- Discuss books, lectures and seminars
- Debate topical issues considering all viewpoints
- Exercise professional caution in sharing your opinions; instead, facilitate cadet reflection upon what they think and why

**EXAMPLE:** As a cadet sponsor, engage cadets in healthy debate on pertinent domestic and global issues; challenge their assumptions and encourage open dialogue.

**UNDERSTAND AMBIGUOUS SITUATIONS AND SOLVE COMPLEX PROBLEMS**

Think critically and pursue innovative and creative solutions. Identify the essential aspects of a situation. Employ available resources and seek additional information when needed. Draw upon mathematics, science, engineering, social sciences, humanities and technology to anticipate change. Make meaningful connections between seemingly unrelated experiences. Monitor, assess and refine solutions to optimize outcomes. Learn from success and failure alike.

How can you, a member of the USMA community, help cadets achieve this outcome?

- Give broad guidance to cadets, allowing them to develop their own creative solutions
- Create complex scenarios which require cadets to think critically in order to solve the problem
- Relate problem solving to issues facing the West Point community and explore solutions using combined knowledge from different academic majors and extracurricular activities

**EXAMPLE:** As a Cadet Field Training cadre member, develop complex tactical scenarios that will challenge the cadet leadership to use critical thinking and problem solving skills that they have learned both in and out of the classroom.

**MAKE SOUND AND TIMELY DECISIONS UNDER STRESS**

Maintain poise under pressure. Define the problem and determine the appropriate level of urgency. Plan ahead and prepare in order to facilitate rapid decision making. Anticipate risk and build prudent risk-mitigation measures into action plans. Combine critical reasoning, sound judgment, creativity and intuition to make decisions that permit timely action regardless of the level of stress. Reflect on experiences to strengthen and refine intuition.

How can you, a member of the USMA community, help cadets achieve this outcome?

- Share situations where reflection and experience helped to achieve sound judgment
- Adjust the course of action as needed to mitigate risk
- Maintain confidence and poise while interacting with cadets
- Demonstrate poise in pressure-filled situations

**EXAMPLE:** As staff and faculty member supporting Cadet Summer Training, mentor cadet-leaders in their ability to quickly analyze a situation and make sound decisions in a complex, time-constrained environment.
COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY WITH ALL AUDIENCES

Communicate clearly and confidently with subordinates, peers and superiors. Ensure mutual understanding. Demonstrate effective interpersonal and negotiation skills. Prepare clear and concise oral, written and visual messages. Make effective use of technology. Be comfortable and effective when communicating with a variety of audiences, including Soldiers’ families and local community members.

How can you, a member of the USMA community, help cadets achieve this outcome?

- Hold yourself and cadets to a high standard in all communications whether they are verbal, written or electronic
- Use only professional language and ensure cadets do the same

EXAMPLE: As a member of the U.S. Army Garrison Command, interact with cadets to exemplify professional and respectful communication.

DEMONSTRATE PROFICIENCY IN MILITARY AND PHYSICAL SKILLS REQUIRED TO SUCCEED IN COMBAT

Remain capable of handling the rigors of combat in harsh environments. Possess the military and physical skills needed to be effective in individual, collective and leader tasks across all military operations.

How can you, a member of the USMA community, help cadets achieve this outcome?

- Exemplify a healthy physical fitness level
- Maintain proficiency in war fighter skills through continued study and practice
- Demonstrate behaviors necessary to maintain a balanced and healthy lifestyle through recreational physical activity and sound weight control

EXAMPLE: As an Officer Representative or Officer in Charge, model the personal fitness and physical skills required of a military officer.
DEMONSTRATE MENTAL AND PHYSICAL TOUGHNESS WITH THE STRENGTH OF SPIRIT TO WIN

Embody the Warrior Ethos: place the mission first, never accept defeat, never quit, never leave a fallen comrade. Maintain personal effectiveness. Develop and maintain a support network. Be resilient—able to rebound from setbacks. Possess the self-control required to persist and to overcome personal hardship and adversity. Find meaning and purpose in adverse experiences in order to learn and grow.

How can you, a member of the USMA community, help cadets achieve this outcome?

• Share professional and personal stories of setbacks and success
• Coach cadets to overcome obstacles or setbacks to make themselves and their organizations better
• Discuss the Army’s Comprehensive Soldier Fitness program which is designed to increase the physical and psychological health, resilience and enhanced performance of Soldiers

EXAMPLE: As a coach, inspire cadet-athletes to overcome adversity during a competition or over the course of a season; leverage these experiences to enhance resiliency and teamwork.

DEMONSTRATE RESPECT FOR OTHERS AND WORK EFFECTIVELY WITH DIFFERENT CULTURES AND PEOPLE

Treat others as they should be treated. Recognize and respect the beliefs of others and accept differences. Demonstrate common courtesy and consideration for others. Interact effectively and develop cooperative relationships. Leverage the strengths of peers and subordinates. Understand the cultural environment and adjust leadership techniques as appropriate.
RESPONSIBILITIES FOR LEADER DEVELOPMENT

Developing cadets into commissioned leaders of character is the responsibility of every cadet and person assigned to USMA, as well as all graduates and friends of the Academy worldwide. We model standards of professional behavior to inspire cadets to hold each other accountable, by doing the same. While some members of the West Point community, such as cadets, tactical officers and members of the staff and faculty have specific leader development duties, everyone on the team plays a role in developing cadets across each of the four dimensions and throughout the ten outcomes.

CADETS: First and foremost, cadets are expected to assume responsibility for their own development through the environment and experiences created by the members of the USMA community. As these future officers progress through their four years at the Military Academy, they will be challenged with sequential and progressive military training and leader development opportunities. Cadets take ownership of their own and others’ development to maximize growth, achieve desired outcomes and embrace their future roles as commissioned officers. Upper-class cadets support the development of subordinates, assisting them with reflection on their experiences and comprehension of the West Point Leader Development System.

How can you, a member of the USMA community, help cadets achieve this outcome?

- Expose cadets to culturally diverse backgrounds in the home and community
- Challenge cadets’ cultural assumptions through discussion and personal example

EXAMPLE: As a non-commissioned officer assigned to USMA, discuss how you and your units developed an effective partnership with coalition and/or host-nation forces to accomplish a mission.

LIVE THE ARMY VALUES

Embrace the West Point Honor Code and the Army values. Apply a moral foundation to guide one’s own behavior and that of others both on and off duty. Recognize moral dilemmas and apply ethical considerations to guide decisions. Look beyond the moment to choose the harder right over the easier wrong.

How can you, a member of the USMA community, help cadets achieve this outcome?

- Talk to cadets about honorable behavior, extending beyond the letter of the Honor Code
- Discuss the destructiveness of sexual harassment/assault and alcohol abuse on an organization’s readiness and command climate
- Demonstrate integrity by always doing the right thing, even when no one is looking

EXAMPLE: As a member of the USMA staff and faculty, use XY cases to engage cadets in ethical decision making.
TACTICAL OFFICERS: The Tactical Officers (TACs) and Tactical Non-Commissioned Officers (TAC NCOs) comprise the Brigade Tactical Department for each of the 36 standard cadet companies, equally distributed into four regiments and under one brigade. The TACs serve as the commanders and legal authorities for cadet companies. Regimental TACs (RTOs) and the Brigade TAC (BTO) perform the same functions at their respective levels of authority. The company TAC and NCO—the TAC Team—serve as coaches, teachers and mentors to each cadet in the company, and assess their performance and potential throughout their four years at USMA. The TAC Team encourages, develops and assesses tailored opportunities that support each cadet’s personal and professional growth. They serve as the primary integrator, assessing the holistic development—Academic, Military, Physical—of each cadet, and potential for service as commissioned officers. The TAC Team assists each cadet in linking together curricular experiences and, through a process of reflection, helps them make meaning out of their progression from USMA cadets to U.S. Army officers.

STAFF AND FACULTY: Staff members should create and maintain an environment that empowers cadets to achieve desired developmental outcomes, while holding themselves, one another and cadets responsible for appropriate professional behavior. All staff members are encouraged to align themselves with their cadet staff counterparts to share knowledge and experience in their particular specialties. USMA’s faculty members have varied and demanding responsibilities derived from the special requirements of the Academy’s mission. Like all comparable academic institutions, USMA’s faculty is deeply involved in teaching, scholarship and service. Faculty members design educational activities that inspire and challenge cadets to demonstrate critical thinking and a commitment to lifelong learning. They also create opportunities for one-on-one mentorship through activities outside the classroom such as athletics, extracurricular clubs and Cadet Summer Training.
COACHES: Coaches at USMA, including Division I, competitive club and company athletics, have a unique role compared to their counterparts at other colleges and universities. Their primary mission is the same as other members of the USMA team: to produce leaders of character for the United States Army. Coaches develop team cultures that motivate cadets to grow in all dimensions of leader development and inspire cadets to compete and win with honor.

OFFICER REPRESENTATIVES (OR), AND OFFICERS IN CHARGE (OIC): Officer Representatives and Officers in Charge have a vital role in representing USMA while supporting cadets in athletic events and cadet club activities. They monitor individual performance in each developmental dimension, support cadets’ personal discipline and balance of activities, and guide them as leaders of teams and organizations. In addition to guiding cadets, they advise the coaching staff concerning issues of the cadet environment and monitor team/club culture to ensure it supports WPLDS outcomes and Army values.

WEST POINT COMMUNITY MEMBERS: Each member of the West Point community has the opportunity to coach, teach and mentor cadets. Soldiers, DA civilians, sponsors and families assigned to USMA Garrison Command and Keller Army Community Hospital, military spouses, and former graduates are just a few examples. All must serve as role models, exemplars of professional and personal behavior. Appearance, bearing and personal conduct should reflect a commitment to professional excellence and be the model of our Army. Each member of the West Point community is encouraged to create opportunities for one-on-one mentorship through activities outside the classroom such as cadet sponsorship, athletics and extra-curricular clubs. Additionally, capitalize on opportunities to interact socially with cadets and to provide them with a chance reflect on their developmental experiences.
OPPORTUNITIES FOR CADET INTERACTION: Most team members fulfill multiple roles throughout their assignment at West Point. For example, an instructor in the English department might serve as a facilitator for Professional Military Ethics Education (PME2), or serve as a staff officer supporting Cadet Summer Training. Likewise, a Tactical Officer might fulfill additional roles as a cadet sponsor, Officer In Charge for a competitive club, or Officer Representative for a Division I athletic team. All members are encouraged to seek additional opportunities to interact with cadets and support their growth across the four dimensions in support of the ten outcomes.

Here are a few tips to consider as you interact with cadets:

- Listen to cadets carefully and look for opportunities to discuss leader development
- Remember, cadets often see things differently based on their age, maturity and experiences
- Increase opportunities for cadets to make real choices with real consequences
- Build reflection into the USMA experience
- Support cadets’ efforts to resolve problems rather than solve the problem yourself
- Help cadets recognize in themselves an opportunity for self-assessment and change
- Increase cadets’ self-awareness of their strengths, weaknesses, talents and biases
ASSESSMENT OF WEST POINT LEADER DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

The West Point Leader Development System is the United States Military Academy’s leader development program. Integrated across the military, academic and physical programs, the WPLDS guides the development of cadets into commissioned leaders of character for the United States Army. Through the systematic and continual assessment of the ten outcomes, the WPLDS provides an individual cadet leadership evaluation tool integrated across the Academy that is holistic, relevant and adaptable to the needs of the Army. It simultaneously provides the evidence necessary to support institutional level discussions that will factor into strategic resourcing, policy and decisions.

CONCLUSION

“We need to understand that we are developing leaders in an ever-evolving, more complex world that we live in. So we have to adapt what we are doing.”

- General Raymond Odierno, Chief of Staff, US Army

Nested within the Army’s Leader Development Strategy, the West Point Leader Development System prepares future leaders of character with the capacity to anticipate and adapt to the challenges of the 21st century. Our approach to leader development is intentionally linked to our educational and training activities to meet cadets where they are and develop them to achieve ten specific and measurable outcomes. To prepare commissioned leaders of character for our Nation, we not only expose young men and women to relevant knowledge and skills; additionally we facilitate the development of their professional identity and build their capacity for perspective transformation. First and foremost, cadets take responsibility for their development; however, every member of the USMA community supports the holistic development of these future officers, often through many different roles and interactions.


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