COMMITMENT TO CHARACTER AND EXCELLENCE
USMA STRATEGIC PLAN
2017 - 2022
Our vision at the United States Military Academy is to be the world’s preeminent leader development institution. Every day, the incredible men and women who comprise the USMA team work tirelessly toward that end. It’s vital that all of our efforts and hard work are integrated and synchronized so that we achieve our mission in the most effective way possible.

Through our shared governance process, we began in 2015 the implementation of the institution’s strategic plan (2015-2020) that provided the framework for accomplishing our mission. However, since its publication we recognized there were a number of redundancies within the plan that were causing confusion throughout the organization and thus limited its effective implementation. Therefore, we needed to reorganize the strategic plan to eliminate those redundancies and to help facilitate planning and communication throughout the Academy.

**Commitment to Character and Excellence** (2017-2022) sets the conditions for all of us to continually innovate and improve our world-class leader developmental program. We will synchronize and integrate our efforts to ensure we continue to be the preeminent leader development institution in the world. This plan is forward-looking, recognizing the complex, dynamic operational and fiscal environments we will face in the future, while aligning with the Army’s current strategic documents.

Our mission has not changed. Our number one priority is to develop leaders of character who will become officers in the United States Army and fight and win our Nation’s wars. To that end, we have organized this strategic plan around two strategic imperatives to shape the direction of every action and activity at USMA.

The first imperative “Develop Leaders of Character” is how we operationalize our mission through the West Point Leader Development System (WPLDS). Within this imperative are the eight WPLDS outcomes, the “ends” for our mission. Unlike the second imperative that contains goals, the first imperative focuses on graduate outcomes, which is consistent terminology in higher education.

The second imperative “Foster Relevance and Preeminence” describes how we operationalize our vision. It is comprised of five goals that serve as the “ends” for planning and resourcing within this imperative. Within each goal are commitments that articulate the “ways” we will achieve our goals.

Furthermore, the plan’s structure provides the West Point team an understanding of how everyone – staff, faculty, coach and cadet - contributes to the Academy’s success. Guidance from the
Department of the Army and the systematic assessment of this plan will inform the development of our annual priorities.

I would ask that you read and understand this plan so we all have a common understanding of everyone’s unique and important contributions to our mission. I also expect all leaders to integrate their planning with this plan’s outcomes and goals, and then assess appropriately to inform future planning and resourcing. Doing so will allow us to continuously improve and remain responsible and accountable stewards of America’s precious resources.

By continuing to focus on teamwork, communication, and integration with the Army’s mission, objectives, and values, we will ensure USMA continues to be the world’s preeminent leader development institution.

Robert L. Caslen, Jr.
Lieutenant General, U.S. Army
Superintendent
MISSION

The mission of the United States Military Academy is 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.

VISION

West Point is the preeminent leader development institution in the world.

VALUES

All members of the USMA team, military and civilian, have a role in developing leaders of character who aspire to an Army Ethic. The Army Ethic represents the set of principles that embrace the West Point values of Duty, Honor, Country and the Army values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage.

All USMA personnel are members of the Army Profession who are dedicated to living the Army Ethic. All Army Professionals are:

• Army experts – competent professionals
• Stewards of the Profession – committed professionals
• Honorable servants of the Nation – professionals of character

These characteristics of the Army Profession and the values of West Point - Duty, Honor, Country - form the cornerstone of all we do at USMA. The goal is for all USMA personnel to internalize the values so they become part of their very essence.
The global security environment remains volatile, uncertain, and complex. And it demands high readiness. Resurgent, revanchist, and unstable states and radical terrorist organizations continue to pose challenges to international order and undermine peace and stability… Mission command will be one of our toughest challenges. Crises will unfold rapidly, compressing decision cycles and response times. Ambiguous actors, intense information wars, and cutting edge technologies are going to confuse situational understanding. Information overload is going to be a problem for every echelon, and separating the wheat from the chaff will place a premium on information management systems… we will have to seriously train and prepare ourselves for decentralized independent operations based on mission command to execute the higher commander’s visualization and intent, without ever having actual contact with our higher headquarters for extended periods of time…On a non-continuous, non-linear battlefield, with little higher command supervision and maximum decentralization, we must, we have to, develop leaders who have incredible character under intense pressure, leaders that can be trusted to do the right thing when no one is watching except the enemy and the news media. Leaders who make the right moral and ethical choice in the most emotionally charged environment humans can ever face, the environment of ground combat. And those leaders will not only be responsible and empowered, but they will be accountable for both the results they achieve and the values they hold. ¹

General Mark A. Milley

Chief of Staff of the Army, 2016

¹ Milley, General Mark A., remarks at the AUSA Convention, Washington D.C., 4 October 2016
GEN Milley’s description of the strategic environment highlights the broader and more dynamic challenges that are now facing the Army. This environment is characterized by complexity and rapid change and is more multi-dimensional than ever. New technologies enable a global information environment that empowers people to see more, share more, create more, and organize faster. As global interconnectedness offers instant communication to multiple players with disparate views and intentions, the potential for complex and nearly unpredictable implications is accelerating.

For more than a decade, USMA graduates have honorably and courageously led Soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan against a constantly evolving and determined enemy. They have demonstrated cultural competence, professionalism, and mission command expertise, while partnering with our allies, host nation armies, government officials, non-governmental organizations, and local leaders.

However, in the coming years, graduates will lead units that must be prepared to conduct missions spanning a broader spectrum of conflict. This spectrum includes defeating adversaries in high intensity combat, conducting irregular warfare, providing stability and security operations, supporting humanitarian assistance, and addressing emerging cyber threats. Graduates will build partnerships to integrate joint, interagency, intergovernmental, nongovernmental, and multinational organizations, simultaneously operating within a mission command principle. They will lead smaller dispersed units that will be more capable than before and that will function in an increasingly decentralized manner.

Finally, they will operate in a wide variety of environments ranging from tropical to desert, urban, or rural. Simply put, our graduates will lead units that need to be fully capable of achieving all tasks anytime and anywhere.

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GEN Milley further states:

_Our leaders are going to have to be self-starters, they're going to have to have maximum initiative, they're going to be critical thinkers, they're going to have huge amounts of character so they make the right moral and ethical choices, and they're going to have to have a level of mental and organizational agility that's not necessarily current in any army today._

_Leadership success in this operating environment requires military, physical, and intellectual expertise that is continuously developed throughout a career. However, competence without character can be of little value. The Army requires officers with character who provide values-based leadership and who have the moral-ethical judgement to successfully conduct operations in any environment. Our graduates must have the talent and skill to excel in combat, but ultimately, they must be leaders of character._

**Implications for USMA**

In light of this dynamic environment, we must continuously improve our leader development program to meet the increasing challenges our graduates will inevitably face. Specific themes clearly emerge from this environment: global engagement, diverse partnerships, increased autonomy, rapidly changing technologies, and perhaps, most importantly, an understanding of the critical necessity for values-based leadership. These themes collectively challenge us to educate, train, and inspire cadets across a broad array of basic skills and to instill in them the desire to be agile, to adapt, and to seek new knowledge. USMA graduates will be officers who will physically lead from the front in the crucibles of ground combat. They need to have the intellect to understand the complexity of the strategic environment and the second and third order effects of all of their decisions.

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3 Milley, General Mark A., remarks at the AUSA Convention, Washington D.C., 4 October 2016
First and foremost, USMA graduates must be Army professionals who are leaders of character. Strong character demonstrated by honorable living strengthens the Army Profession by enabling us to build trust, the “vital organizing principle that establishes the conditions necessary for effective and ethical mission command and a profession that continues to earn the trust of the American people.” When leaders demonstrate character, it creates trust within their unit and with the public. This trust is critical in maintaining a strong relationship with the American people. Trust enables mission command and permits leaders to conduct decentralized operations without constant oversight. In contrast, weak character breeds mistrust, undermines cohesion, and degrades military effectiveness.

An important element of building and maintaining trust with our country and with our Soldiers is that our USMA graduates are diverse in thought, gender, and race. To admit a diverse student body which represents the diversity and strength of America requires that we are always cognizant of demographic trends when recruiting leaders, scholars, and athletes. Additionally, we maintain an awareness of the social media environment and information or events that may have an effect on our recruiting efforts and ultimately on our mission.

Also critical to our mission accomplishment is that we are always aware of the Academy’s dual-nature as both a military organization and an educational institution. As a military organization that reports directly to the Chief of Staff of the Army, USMA is subject to federal laws and regulations, Army policies and governance structures, and public accountability. As such, our planning, policies and procedures address the regulatory environment and senior leader guidance that governs decision making authority, resource management, and personnel policies. As a college, the Academy competes in an educational market with other top tier universities. To successfully compete in this market and continue to attract the best and brightest to be future Army leaders, we must maintain our premiere educational experience. We do this by maintaining our institutional and program accreditations, quality faculty, modern infrastructure, leading edge technology, and diverse curriculum offerings.

USMA’s history and tradition have become significant aspects of our professional identity. When adapting to our dynamic environment, we must strike the right balance between preserving the goodness of USMA’s unique historical tradition and updating our leader development system to maintain our competitive edge in higher education and relevance as a military organization. The diverse stakeholder community at USMA promotes vigorous debate as we adapt and continuously improve our institution to remain relevant and competitive. Whenever we pursue change, we serve our institution best by rigorously assessing the need for change and determining how that change aligns with our mission, values, and imperatives. Change for the sake of change is just as damaging as avoiding change based solely on tradition.

A final, yet critical theme of our dynamic environment is resourcing. We must constantly seek opportunities to establish efficiencies, improve practices and enact sound and disciplined stewardship of resources. This will enable us to develop our future leaders of character for our Nation’s Army.

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4 ADRP 1 *The Army Profession*, June 2015, p. 2-1
USMA’s mission statement clearly identifies our requirement to develop leaders of character. This strategic imperative constitutes our main effort for meeting our mission and guides and integrates planning efforts for our developmental programs.

The question guiding our leader development program is

“What leaders does the Army need in 10, 20, and 30 years?”

Our West Point Leader Development System (WPLDS) is the blueprint for how we answer this question and for achieving this imperative by providing an integrated system of experiences that prepares our graduates to thrive despite the uncertainties of a changing world. This system is also our means of ensuring that West Point’s staff and faculty are unified in their efforts to develop leaders of character who can successfully lead our Army in peacetime and in war.

Everyone assigned to West Point including tactical officers, faculty, staff, coaches, and other civilians who interact with cadets, has a role in developing cadets into commissioned officers. Every interaction with a cadet is a leadership event for staff and faculty, of which we must take advantage.
The critical component of WPLDS are the eight outcomes that state: Upon commissioning, West Point graduates are leaders of character committed to the ideals of Duty, Honor, Country and prepared to accomplish the mission. They will:

1. Live honorably and build trust.
2. Demonstrate intellectual, military, and physical competence.
3. Develop, lead, and inspire.
4. Think critically and creatively.
5. Make sound and timely decisions.
6. Communicate and interact effectively.
7. Seek balance, be resilient, and demonstrate a strong and winning spirit.
8. Pursue excellence and continue to grow.

Our graduates require a developmental program that is continuously improving, forward-leaning, and poised to take advantage of opportunities. The Army needs graduates who achieve the WPLDS outcomes because, as stated previously, the 21st century promises to be increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous.

The WPLDS outcomes guide the development of cadets in the Academy’s Character, Academic, Military, and Physical programs. While these four programs are distinct, they employ integrated lines of effort to achieve “Developing Leaders of Character.” The respective missions of the four programs (shown below) along with their goals and developmental experiences are intentionally aligned with the WPLDS outcomes. All four programs intentionally integrate experiences to maximize the effectiveness of the 47-month cadet developmental experience.
USMA is recognized worldwide for leadership excellence. To continue to be the world’s preeminent leader development institution, we must ensure the Academy grows and adapts to changes in the environment.

The strategic question that guides the planning for this imperative is

“What is required to foster relevance and preeminence in 10, 20, 30 years?”

This imperative consists of five goals that guide the Academy towards its vision of being the world’s preeminent leader development institution:

1. Build and Sustain Diverse and Effective Teams
2. Develop and Provide Intellectual Capacity
3. Promote Staff and Faculty Excellence
4. Practice Effective Stewardship
5. Instill and Foster a Culture of Excellence and Winning
Building effective teams is critical to mission accomplishment. This includes attracting, recruiting, admitting and retaining the Corps of Cadets who will become future leaders. The goal also includes attracting, recruiting and hiring excellent staff and faculty who will educate, train and inspire cadets. This goal supports a blend of excellence at USMA that reflects diversity in our Army and contributes to the collective strength of the Academy.

By leveraging individual talents and backgrounds, these diverse teams will more effectively accomplish the mission. These teams can only be created in an environment where all teammates feel safe and respected; therefore, sexual assault and harassment is not tolerated.
To build and sustain diverse and effective teams, USMA is committed to:

► **Attract, recruit, and admit a highly talented and diverse Corps of Cadets.** We will recruit candidates for admission from among the most talented young men and women across the country, possessing talents and the physical, intellectual, moral/ethical qualifications that enhance and advance the character and skills of each individual in the Corps. The end result will be a Corps that is stronger than the sum of its parts, populated with exceptional young men and women who are dedicated to leading our Nation’s Soldiers. Additionally, they will be equipped with socio-cultural competencies essential to multicultural leadership in the 21st century.

► **Retain and graduate the exceptional young men and women of the Corps of Cadets.** When we admit a cadet, we do so because of his or her leadership potential. We must ensure the necessary support systems are in place that will enable all members of the Corps to reach their fullest potential.

► **Attract, recruit, hire and employ a highly talented and diverse faculty and staff.** Effective teambuilding requires that we attract, recruit, hire and employ exceptional, high-potential, and diverse professionals from the military, academia, government, and elsewhere to serve on the staff and faculty. Staff and faculty members with diverse perspectives from all backgrounds support a blend of excellence at USMA that reflects diversity in our Army and contributes to the collective strength of the Academy.

► **Eliminate sexual harassment and sexual assault.** No one can be a contributing member of a team if they do not feel safe or respected. We will create and maintain an environment where everyone feels safe and respected.
As mentioned in the first imperative, every interaction with a cadet by a staff or faculty member of West Point is a developmental event. Thus, each West Point team member shares the privilege to educate, train, and inspire the Corps of Cadets. Developing exceptional graduates requires that everyone interacting with cadets reflect the highest standards of professional expertise, leadership, and character in accordance with the Army Values. We expect ALL – tactical officers, faculty, staff, coaches, and cadets – to model the WPLDS outcomes and serve as trusted Army Professionals.

The Academy supports the development of staff and faculty so that they can be exemplary professional role models for cadets and grow and excel as leaders of character themselves. The net result is a stronger Academy able to effectively develop leaders of character for our Army and the Nation.
To promote staff and faculty excellence, USMA is committed to:

► **Develop high quality faculty.** We ensure faculty development in all five domains (teaching, scholarship, cadet development, faculty development, and service), so that they are top performers at USMA and ready for increased responsibility whether at West Point or elsewhere. This requires growth as teachers, scholars, servants, and developers of both cadets and other faculty members. We must leverage the diverse talents of our faculty and appropriately advance their skills to ensure they are prepared for future positions in the military or academe. We want our faculty members to be recognized and valued throughout the Army and the Nation for their efforts and contributions. Our goal is for all faculty members to possess exemplary character while committing themselves to leader development, professional excellence, and continual growth.

► **Develop high quality staff.** Our staff, which includes tactical officers, staff officers, civilian staff members and coaches, have daily contact with cadets and contribute significantly to their overall developmental experience. We develop our staff so that they are top performers at USMA and ready for increased responsibility. We leverage the staff’s diverse talents to enhance the span and scope of their contributions to our mission. Our commitment is for all USMA staff to possess exemplary character while committing themselves to leader development, professional excellence and continual growth.

► **Maintain academic currency and practice academic freedom.** We always strive to use the best ideas and pedagogical techniques available. To ensure we remain current with these techniques, we stay closely connected with the academic community through continuous interaction with peer academic institutions. We practice academic freedom by ensuring an open and transparent educational environment that supports the pursuit of academic rigor and excellence.
To achieve USMA’s mission and remain relevant, we must stay connected with the operational Army and our Nation as a whole. Additionally, we must strive to improve collaborations and partnerships with other Department of Defense (DoD) organizations, colleges and universities, disciplinary organizations and other public and private organizations.

Maintaining our relevance in these areas is critical to our continued success in providing a top-notch education to our future leaders. The Army continues to ask USMA to help solve some of its hardest problems. In response, we leverage our faculty and cadets as a resource that can provide expert support.
In order to develop and provide institutional intellectual capacity, USMA is committed to:

► **Ensure operational relevance.** We remain connected to the operational Army in a number of ways. We will continue to seek opportunities for faculty and staff to assist Army units in a variety operational environments.

► **Build collaborations and partnerships.** Through the collaborative nature of our research, we seek ways to strengthen the intellectual capacity of cadets and faculty through collaborations and partnerships with other military, governmental, and civilian organizations at home and abroad.

► **Solve problems of national significance.** We continuously enhance the cadet and faculty experience by using the unique resident talent at USMA to help solve problems of national significance.

► **Provide intellectual support to the Army.** We leverage USMA’s research, analysis, and education capacities to solve problems and enhance the creation of knowledge across the Army. As the world’s preeminent leader development institution, USMA must be a lead in Army’s research, particularly in leader development and in officership.
USMA continuously ensures all of its operations are integrated with and support its core mission, WPLDS outcomes, and goals. To this end, we must understand and follow principles of good stewardship at all levels of the Academy. These principles include understanding the priorities and responsibilities of our mission, imperatives, and goals. Rigorous and effective stewardship of the financial resources, with appropriate “checks and balances,” is critical to the Academy’s ability to achieve its core mission. USMA’s budget and finance functions must be open, transparent, and effective in achieving its institutional goals.

Through the strategic planning process, we continuously assess and have sufficient flexibility to address issues or pursue important opportunities as they arise.

Additionally, we continuously improve our shared governance and collaborative decision making processes with a commitment to open communication, built-in feedback processes, and transparency in planning, priority setting, and decision making. This commitment requires and values input from all stakeholders and effectively communicates the USMA story to both internal and external audiences.
In order to practice effective stewardship, USMA is committed to:

► **Continuously improve planning processes.** Continuous improvement helps us remain at the leading edge of both academic and military communities. Our culture of continuous improvement must be pervasive throughout the Academy and begins with setting achievable goals and commitments, and then planning and resourcing them. We assess our operations and activities based on our outcomes, goals, and commitments, which then inform future decision-making. This continuous improvement cycle occurs at every level of the organization.

► **Strive for excellence in resource management.** Allocation of our precious resources are guided by our goals and informed by assessments. Every member of our USMA team accepts responsibility as a steward of the resources needed to execute the USMA mission. We effectively manage resources from a variety of funding sources in accordance with established best practices and regulations. We also remain responsive and innovative through robust, transparent and nimble business processes.

► **Strive for excellence in infrastructure.** As part of managing our resources responsibly, we plan, build, and maintain high-quality facilities, utilities, and information technology all of which promotes excellence in our programs. Our sound planning is documented in a current master plan that is forward-thinking, innovative and well-communicated to our constituents.

► **Practice effective shared governance.** Shared governance throughout the institution ensures the resident expertise of our diverse organization has the opportunity, through a formal structure, to contribute to the decisions made at all levels at the Academy. Effective shared governance stimulates innovation in solving challenges and results in faster, more effective implementation. Integration of the work of appropriate governance structures further improves mission accomplishment. Our leaders communicate to our staff and faculty their decisions and associated rationale that are informed by our shared governance structures.

► **Communicate effectively.** We are committed to facilitating shared understanding of each other’s efforts and accomplishments, and in general, transparent planning, resourcing, and decision-making. To do this, we continuously improve our communication processes and tools. Externally, our effective and proactive communication of Academy successes to those outside of West Point encourage USMA’s broad-based support. External audiences include the American public, cadet candidates and their families, alumni, Department of the Army, Congress, other higher education institutions, and international partners. Establishing, sustaining, and leveraging relationships with these audiences encourages support of Academy initiatives and Margin of Excellence programs to further cadet development.
Foster Relevance and Preeminence - Goal 5

Instill and Foster a Culture of Excellence and Winning

The Army Ethic is defined as “the evolving set of laws, values, and beliefs, deeply embedded within the core of the Army culture and practiced by all members of the Army Profession to motivate and guide the appropriate conduct of individual members bound together in common moral purpose.” Members of the Army Profession, military and civilian, are dedicated to fostering a culture of excellence and winning consistent with these Army values.

At USMA, we expect excellence from our staff, faculty, and cadets. This winning attitude motivates members of the USMA team to continually strive to achieve accomplishments of increasing significance. We are vigilant in preserving this culture because we realize its importance and we never take it for granted. Our culture truly represents “Who we are.”
To instill and foster a culture of excellence and winning, USMA will strive to ensure that:

► **We are honorable.** The public’s expectations leave no room for behavior that creates doubt in our ability to fulfill our obligations as members of the Army profession. The American people and our Soldiers expect us to behave honorably and inspirationally all the time. They do not make a distinction between private life and professional life, even if we believe that distinction exists.

► **We are winners who pursue excellence.** Everyone in the community desires to reach his/her full intellectual, physical, and professional potential. We are dedicated to excel in all endeavors, both individually and as a member of a team. We foster an environment where everyone has a stake in each other’s pursuit of excellence.

► **We are team players who support each other.** We strive for a teammate’s success as much as our own, take part in it, and celebrate it.

► **We are inclusive.** We have an organizational culture that understands and values diversity and employs inclusive practices. Everyone strives to recognize their teammate’s unique contributions and helps others appreciate the teammate’s contributions.

► **We are respectful.** We have a culture of dignity and respect, where everyone feels valued and lives and works within an environment in which he or she feels secure, both physically and emotionally.

► **We are professionals.** We hold ourselves to standards by enforcing standards and discipline in one another. We are committed to the Army and West Point Values and to a lifetime of service to our Nation.