

RECORD VERSION

STATEMENT BY

**LIEUTENANT GENERAL STEVEN W. GILLAND
SUPERINTENDENT OF THE UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY**

BEFORE THE

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES SENATE**

FIRST SESSION, 119TH CONGRESS

UPDATE ON THE STATE OF THE UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY

MARCH 26, 2025

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES**

Chairman Tuberville, Ranking Member Warren, distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss with you the United States Military Academy and how we provide the United States Army and the nation with capable, trained, and lethal leaders of character ready to fight and win on the 21st century battlefield.

USMA'S MISSION

The United States Military Academy contributes to Army readiness and lethality through its mission to develop leaders of character, dedicated to the Army values and ready for a lifetime of service to our Army and the Nation. Through our rigorous, standards-based leader development system, grounded in the ideals of Duty, Honor, Country, West Point graduates are prepared to defend our Nation as they lead combat ready formations across the Army.

While many aspects of West Point evolve to meet the demands of modern warfare, some aspects of West Point remain the same. The Cadet Honor Code remains the unremitting standard starting on R-Day. Cadets are expected to adhere to the Code and strive for an even greater standard of honorable living beyond the tenets of the Cadet Honor Code. Furthermore, "Duty, Honor, Country" is our motto. These three important ideals, which are embedded in the Army Values, continue to inspire our entire West Point Team as they are engraved throughout the Academy's infrastructure and embedded in everything we do. "Duty, Honor, Country" is who we are.

ADMISSIONS

The United States Military Academy (USMA) is committed to admitting the best qualified candidates from across the United States to become leaders of character for our Army. Every candidate offered admission to USMA is fully qualified through our application and selection process.

USMA uses a holistic approach to evaluate each candidate for admission to determine which individuals will become the best leaders for tomorrow's Army. Our evaluation criteria consist of three parts: academics, leadership, and physical fitness. The academic component evaluates a candidate's standardized test scores and high school grade point average. The leadership component evaluates a candidate's extracurricular activities, varsity athletics participation, community and/or church activities, and school official evaluations. The physical component is determined via a standardized candidate fitness assessment. Beyond the whole candidate score, all candidate files receive an extensive qualitative review focused on character, grit, resilience, motivations for service, and leadership potential, as part of this holistic assessment.

Our nomination process, governed by law (Title 10, U.S. Code, implemented in 1956), ensures every congressional district in the nation has the opportunity to be represented at USMA. We truly appreciate the support from all members of Congress in identifying and nominating high-quality applicants, and we encourage all members to submit full nomination slates of 15 candidates each year.

Additionally, USMA shares most of its applicant pool with Army Cadet Command to inform candidates of Reserve Officer Training Corps scholarship opportunities.

PREPARING 21ST CENTURY LEADERS AND WARFIGHTERS

West Point is much more than a college or university. We are the United States Military Academy, charged with developing leaders prepared to fight and win our Nation's wars and steward the Army Profession. Our comprehensive leader development system, which encompasses warfighting, scholarship, and physical training, instills the Warrior Ethos and equips our graduates with the foundational professional competence and the moral character to serve our Nation as officers, grow professionally, and lead America's sons and daughters in complex and uncertain environments.

Character development is the most vital component of our mission and leader development system. At West Point, we believe that every cadet graduates with a degree in character development and leadership. Character development is a comprehensive effort that serves as the foundation to leader development and is thoughtfully and deliberately integrated throughout all aspects of the cadet experience. This approach harnesses every activity within the overall leader development system while leveraging specific common events and activities that reinforce and assess character and honorable living.

Our comprehensive character development program is anchored in our motto of Duty, Honor, Country and is coupled with the Cadet Honor Code as its foundation. This system is purposefully designed for each activity or opportunity to build upon previous ones, requiring cadets to make decisions when faced with uncertainty or moral ambiguity.

USMA graduates complete more than 50 courses across our academic, military, and physical programs, earning an accredited Bachelor of Science degree. Our full curriculum during the academic year includes 24 core academic courses, a minimum of a three-course engineering sequence (for non-engineering majors), three military science courses, seven physical education courses, as well as the course requirements for their academic major (typically, a minimum of 13 courses).

Our military program provides cadets the foundational military competencies and skills necessary to fight and win on the battlefield, while inspiring them to professional excellence and service to the Nation. Through a blend of military science classroom instruction, summer training labs, enrichment experiences and leadership opportunities, cadets learn and practice the relevant technical and tactical knowledge and skills necessary to lead, fight, and win in complex, multi-domain environments.

Our military program progressively develops leadership skills across three signature and progressive training events (Cadet Basic Training, Cadet Field Training, and the

capstone Cadet Leader Development Training), along with various developmental schools and opportunities throughout the Army. Our field training events have continued to evolve as we incorporate lessons learned from contemporary operational theaters. These evolutions start with a focus on the fundamentals and include increased night training, the use of drones, and other tactical enablers. In recent years, we have also increased the emphasis on continuous operations rather than discrete training lanes to better develop leaders for the Army's focus on Large Scale Combat Operations.

Our nationally recognized academic program is designed to educate leaders equipped with the intellectual agility needed to make critical decisions in the chaos of war. Cadets explore a wide breadth of subjects through robust engineering, scientific, and liberal arts, education that prepares cadets to outthink and outfight our adversaries as they lead Army formations on complex, multi-domain battlefields. All USMA graduates receive a Bachelor of Science degree; on average, 67 percent of USMA's graduates over the past three years majored in a science, technology, engineering, or math (STEM) subject. Each year, approximately 40 percent of all newly commissioned Army officers with an undergraduate STEM degree are USMA graduates. Additionally, since 2005, USMA has produced at least 95 percent of the Army's nuclear engineering undergraduate majors each year.

Most importantly, USMA's curriculum is underpinned by the United States Constitution and educates Cadets on its unique necessity for our Nation. During their 47 months at USMA, Cadets study the Constitution through five required courses: Army of the Republic, American Politics, International Relations, Constitutional and Military Law, and Officership. Additionally, every Cadet takes an oath to the Constitution three times: on Reception Day (Cadets' first day at USMA), Affirmation Day (prior to Cadets starting their junior year), and graduation. Cadets are consistently reminded of their future role in supporting and defending the Constitution of the United States as part of a unified Army.

In addition to military training and military science courses, Cadets also study war in the classroom through the five required courses, as well as two additional required courses: Philosophy and Ethical Reasoning (studying Just War Theory) and the History of Military Art. These academic experiences prepare them for thinking clearly about war and improves their judgement during the uncertainty of war.

One of the hallmarks of USMA's academic program is Cadet research and project-based learning, where Cadets get hands-on experience solving real world problems. Through warfighting-focused projects and research, Cadets are exposed to emerging technology and difficult problems such as ethical artificial intelligence or autonomous drones. This exposure means Cadets are not just in front of a chalkboard – they are in the lab, seeing the future of warfare first-hand. For example, Cadets from USMA's Space Engineering and Research Rocket team recently set a new amateur rocketry altitude record, launching a rocket past the Karman Line, which separates the Earth's atmosphere from outer space. This achievement highlights USMA's leadership in aerospace technology as well as our commitment to advancing STEM and Army space operations.

Enhancing the curriculum are annual intellectual themes, designed to center Academy efforts around a common interdisciplinary focus. This year's theme, "The Human and the Machine: Leadership on the Emerging Battlefield," focuses on this important intersection that all leaders must consider as they operate in the rapidly emerging age of artificial intelligence. Past themes have focused on civil-military relations and the role of military officers in a democratic republic, and innovation and technology, and how they shape warfare.

Our physical program promotes holistic health and optimal physical performance to develop leaders and warfighters who are physically fit and mentally tough. Cadets complete seven required physical education courses, to include boxing and military movement. Additionally, as part of their physical development, all cadets are required to participate in competitive athletics at the intercollegiate or intramural level. Athletic

competition teaches grit, resiliency, discipline, mental and physical toughness, the will to win, and other traits crucial for leadership in the crucible of ground combat.

TRANSFORMING TO DEVELOP 21st CENTURY WARFIGHTERS

From the Academy's early days under Superintendent Sylvanus Thayer to Douglas MacArthur more than a century ago, transformation and change have been an integral part of the West Point story. We continually assess, reorganize, and transform to meet the needs of the United States Army, both present and future.

The United States Military Academy continues to transform its curriculum, programs, infrastructure, and capabilities, to align our leader development efforts to the future battlefield to ensure the United States Army remains the most lethal and effective fighting force in the world and that West Point produces the leaders of character our Army requires, and our Nation expects.

With broad and much appreciated support from Congress and the Army, we continue to modernize infrastructure and expand capabilities to ensure our graduates are prepared to lead, fight, and win on current and future battlefields. Construction progresses on the Cyber and Engineering Academic Center, a 136,000 square-foot facility that will provide state-of-the-art laboratory and classroom space for USMA's cyber and engineering program, which is slated for completion in 2026. Additionally, a multi-decade renovation of our academic buildings, cadet barracks, soldier barracks, and administrative buildings is currently underway. Systemic challenges in construction and inefficient funding for project modifications, experienced on nearly all projects, has forced delays in West Point's modernization program which prolong operational disruptions at the Academy. This places at risk our ability to execute the recapitalization of Thayer Hall, our primary academic building.

Our transformation efforts expand beyond brick-and-mortar projects. We are also transforming our academic programs to prepare future officers to lead in complex

environments. We recently reorganized several academic programs, establishing two new departments. The first, the Department of English and World Languages, aligns experts in literature, culture, and language acquisition. They help prepare graduates to effectively communicate and collaborate with a growing network of allies and partners in support of our National Defense Strategy and U.S. interests around the globe. The second, the Department of Law and Philosophy, provides graduates the tools necessary to remain true to the Constitution, the law, and their ethical obligations when faced with unanticipated challenges.

Later this year, we will establish two new departments: Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering, which will feature a new Aerospace Engineering major; and History and War Studies, featuring a new War Studies interdisciplinary major that combines history and theory to study war, strategy, and warfare in the past, present, and future.

To better leverage our resident intellectual capital and research efforts in support of the Army and Nation, USMA recently established the West Point Werx. This is an innovation hub that integrates research efforts from across the Academy. The Werx develops critical thinkers for the Army and the Nation by providing research opportunities for Cadets and faculty that are directly tied to national defense, while creating connective tissue across the Army's innovation ecosystem. The Werx's research portfolios include space; biotechnology; cyber and data; directed energy; human-machine integrated formations; and laws, ethics, and policy. Currently, the Werx has more than 250 partnerships across the Department of Defense, industry, and academia.

USMA's TEAM OF EXCELLENCE

Behind these efforts is a dedicated and talented team of military and civilian professionals who comprise our staff, faculty, and coaches. Every member of our staff and faculty, whether military or civilian, takes an oath to support and defend the Constitution. Just as importantly, everyone on the USMA team – staff, faculty, or coach

– is firmly committed to our mission of developing warfighters and leaders of character for the Army and our Nation.

We refer to our faculty model as a “blend of excellence.” Our current force structure authorizes that nearly 74 percent of our faculty are active duty servicemembers. More than 75 percent of our military faculty are rotating instructors, junior and mid-grade officers. Our rotating faculty bring current, relevant operational experiences and perspectives into the classroom to both develop and inspire these future Army officers. Following their USMA assignment, rotating instructors return to the operational force as senior staff officers or battalion and brigade commanders, often leading the young officers they once taught in the classrooms of West Point.

Our senior military faculty (primarily lieutenant colonels and colonels) serve as Academy professors, and academic department heads, providing leadership, continuity, and academic depth. Additionally, our senior military faculty have experience working in the highest levels of the Army and Department of Defense, periodically returning to the operational force to serve with senior Army and joint commands. Our civilian instructors and professors also bring academic depth and expertise in a variety of academic disciplines, primarily in STEM and physical education. Of note, approximately 25 percent of our civilian faculty are veterans or retired servicemembers.

Another important component of the overall developmental team is our cadre of Tactical (TAC) Officers. TAC Officers serve as the legal commanders of cadet companies within the Corps of Cadets. They are post-company command officers who, like our rotating instructors in the classroom, bring current operational experience and perspectives to cadet development. Working alongside each TAC Officer is a senior Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) who not only brings current operational experience but also exposes future officers to the important role of NCOs in the Army. TAC Officers and NCOs serve as trainers and mentors as they lead Cadet companies, proving “front line” leadership for Cadets and helping them bring together all the threads of the developmental experience.

Within our athletics program, our team of coaches, athletic trainers, and staff are also, first and foremost, committed and focused on developing leaders and warfighters as they coach their teams to win on the fields of friendly strife. Additionally, each team has an assigned officer representative who mentors, develops and inspires our Cadet-athletes.

CONCLUSION

This year, the United States Army celebrates 250 years of service to our Nation. For much of the Army's history, the United States Military Academy has produced the leaders of character who have led with honor and distinction in peacetime and war, guided by the Army values and the West Point ideals of Duty, Honor, and Country. Our graduates have the professional competence needed to fight and win, but more importantly, they possess the tremendous character that leadership demands.

This legacy of excellence continues today, embodied in the thousands of graduates who are selflessly serving around the world, leading America's sons and daughters in defense of our Nation. We continue to strive to be the "gold standard" for leader development, preparing and inspiring the next generation of officers who live honorably, lead honorably, and demonstrate excellence as they are prepared to lead, fight and win in the future 21st Century Army.

We appreciate the opportunity to discuss the excellence taking place at West Point, and we invite you to visit and see for yourselves these outstanding future leaders in action. We are confident they will inspire you.

Thank you for your continued support for your Military Academy and the United States Corps of Cadets.