



Dear Incoming MCWAR Student:

Congratulations on your selection to the Marine Corps War College (MCWAR) Class of 2026! You are joining an elite group of professionals chosen for one of the most prestigious educational opportunities in the Department of Defense. Your selection reflects both your proven leadership and the confidence senior leaders have in your potential to shape the future at the strategic level.

At MCWAR, you will be part of a truly exceptional cohort—comprised of officers from all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces, key U.S. government agencies, and allied and partner nation militaries. Together, you will study under a world-class faculty of military and civilian scholars, each bringing deep expertise and real-world experience in the art and science of strategy.

This is not just school—it is a transformational experience designed to sharpen your intellect, challenge your assumptions, and prepare you for the most demanding leadership roles in our profession. MCWAR offers a rigorous and rewarding curriculum that blends a graduate-level education in Strategic Studies with the requirements of Joint Professional Military Education (JPME) Level II. You will be immersed in the study of strategy, decision-making, joint operations, and global security—while also honing your skills as a writer, thinker, and strategic advisor.

In keeping with the evolving nature of warfare and national security, MCWAR places particular emphasis on the understanding and application of **artificial intelligence (AI)**. As emerging technologies redefine how we think, decide, and fight, you will explore the strategic implications of AI through case studies, readings, and engagements with thought leaders in defense innovation. We will examine how AI impacts decision-making, operations, deterrence, and ethical leadership—ensuring you graduate with a sharp edge in the modern strategic environment.

Beyond the seminar room, the MCWAR curriculum offers extraordinary learning experiences, including:

- **Constitution Field Study** (Philadelphia, PA) – Trace the roots of American strategy and governance
- **The Pentagon, State Department, Congress, and National Security Council site visits** – Gain firsthand insights into strategic decision-making at the highest levels
- **Civil War Staff Rides** – Explore timeless lessons of leadership, command, and operational art
- **OCONUS Field Study for U.S. Students** – Engage with senior leaders and strategists around the world
- **CONUS Field Study for International Students** – Deepen understanding of U.S. culture, institutions, and strategic priorities

MCWAR's mission is to develop strategic leaders, critical and creative thinkers, and joint warfighters ready to operate in a world of increasing complexity, uncertainty, and challenge. Upon graduation, you will be expected to:

1. Advise at the highest levels.

- Assess national security strategies, policies, and joint force operations
- Communicate strategic ideas clearly and persuasively in both written and spoken form

2. Think critically and creatively.

- Analyze risk, challenge assumptions, and apply diverse frameworks to complex problems
- Craft and evaluate strategies that address current and emerging global threats

3. Operate as military strategists.

- Apply the framework of ends, ways, means, and risk in strategy formulation
- Integrate instruments of national power effectively
- Understand the strategic implications of force employment and deterrence

4. Lead in joint, all-domain operations.

- Interpret lessons of history to inform future competition and conflict
- Plan campaigns in joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational environments
- Demonstrate ethical leadership and sound decision-making at the senior level

You will be supported every step of the way by a faculty and staff committed to your success. We intend to challenge you intellectually, encourage you to explore new ideas, and will provide constructive feedback to help you grow as a strategic leader.

To help you hit the ground running, all students will complete a writing and critical thinking diagnostic shortly after arrival. This will be based on *Fighting Talk: Forty Maxims of War, Peace, and Strategy* by Colin S. Gray (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2009). The Library of the Marine Corps will provide access to the eBook, though you may also purchase a copy if you wish to begin reading early.

Throughout the year, you will need your full inventory of service uniforms and appropriate civilian business attire.

MCWAR operates on an .edu domain, and you will receive your MCWAR email address during onboarding. Marine Corps University follows a “bring your own device” policy, so we encourage you to use your personal computer, tablet, or smartphone for coursework. If needed, a government-issued device can be provided.

You will receive additional details about the curriculum and academic calendar during in-processing in July. If you have any questions or need support in the meantime, please don’t hesitate to contact us at (703) 432-4545/4637 (DSN: 378-4545/4637) or email mcwar@usmcu.edu. Your primary point of contact is Ms. Carol-Anne Parker, MCWAR’s Program Manager.

We look forward to welcoming you to Quantico—and to a year of insight, challenge, and professional growth unlike any you’ve experienced before.

Semper Fidelis,

Colonel Andrew M. Kelley, USMC
Director, Marine Corps War College