



SECRETARY OF WAR  
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

MAR 12 2026

MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR PENTAGON LEADERSHIP  
COMMANDERS OF THE COMBATANT COMMANDS  
DEFENSE AGENCY AND DOW FIELD ACTIVITY DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: Strengthening the Effectiveness of Our Senior Service Colleges

We have a sacred duty to ensure our Professional Military Education (PME) system is developing the strategic and operational leaders who will drive our warfighting dominance for decades to come. This is especially the case as it pertains to our senior field grade officers who are embarking in the study of war in the Department's Senior Service Colleges (SSC) and at other DoW institutions with SSC fellowships. We cannot afford to cultivate the same biases, toxic ideologies, and intellectual conformity within our own ranks that we have seen in civilian schools. Failing to meet the highest standards of education in SSC training is unacceptable, leading to degraded readiness, risk to mission and force, and the erosion of confidence of the American people in the military leadership of the Department.

The Department is committed to making certain that SSC standards are maintained at the highest levels and align to the priorities of the President. To ensure we meet this imperative, I am directing the Under Secretary of War for Personnel and Readiness (USW(P&R)) to establish an SSC Task Force (SSC-TF) to evaluate our SSCs, and ensure their faculty and curricula remain laser focused on national security, strategy, high standards, history, meritocracy, and overall excellence. The USW(P&R) will lead this effort and designate members of the Task Force. The Components will support the activities of the SSC-TF, as necessary.

The SSC-TF will undertake a 90-day review of the SSCs' educational standards in time for the 2026-27 academic year, assessing overall institutional effectiveness by identifying deficiencies in standards and evaluating the colleges alignment with the National Defense Strategy. The assessment will include a full review of SSC curricula to ensure SSC curricula are focused on core national security strategy issues, rooted in the founding principles of the republic, grounded in realism, and designed to forge strategic senior leaders trained to think critically, free of bias and influence, and win our Nation's wars. SSCs must engage in the preparation of senior officers to be critical and reflective thinkers that can plan and integrate multi-domain, Joint operations at echelon and serve (and think) at the strategic level.

Our warfighters deserve SSC training that relentlessly pursues educational betterment that furthers the warrior ethos, supports the re-establishment of deterrence, and contributes to rebuilding our military. I ask for your continued cooperation as we execute this effort together.

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