

NPS, Defense Innovation Unit Sign MOU to Enhance Learning, Experimentation, Prototyping for Maritime Advantage



Retired Vice Adm. Ann Rondeau, president of the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS), and Doug Beck, director of the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU), are joined by senior Navy officials and NPS students after the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two institutions during the Sea-Air-Space conference in National Harbor, Md. The MOU will build upon past successes and existing academic and research relationships between DIU and NPS. *U.S. Navy | Lt. Cmdr. Ed Early*

The Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) and the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU) are joining forces in a cooperative endeavor to accelerate adoption of commercial dual-use technology solutions, while enhancing the advanced education of defense leaders necessary to employ them.

DIU Director Doug Beck and retired U.S. Navy Vice Adm. Ann Rondeau, President of NPS, announced a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on April 9 at the Sea-Air-Space Conference in National Harbor, Md. The MOU will build upon past successes and existing relationships between DIU and NPS to expand complementary efforts and future opportunities targeting education, research, and innovation through student fellowships at DIU, personnel exchanges, collaborative experimentation, and projects with the Naval Innovation Center (NIC) at NPS.

Said Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro, who announced the establishment of the NIC at NPS in December 2022: "I look forward to witnessing the vision for the Naval Innovation

Center coming to life at NPS. The NIC will provide an educational opportunity and venue unavailable anywhere else in the world, where industry and academic partners will work side-by-side with our NPS students to research and discover advanced warfighting solutions.”

Department of Defense (DOD) capabilities are built on American ingenuity and innovation. The recently published National Defense Science and Technology Strategy acknowledged the deep linkage of defense education and research to discovery and innovation, stating that “education is another cornerstone for building enduring advantage” and that DOD “cannot create 21st century capabilities using 20th century equipment, education, and employment policies.”

Increasingly, innovation is led by industry, and academic institutions are forging long-term relations with technology companies to stay on the cutting edge. This agreement will help to increase those relationships and deliver needed capabilities to the fleet and joint force.

“DIU partners with many Silicon Valley organizations, from tech icons to start-ups as well as universities, and NPS is a natural fit given its defense focus,” said Beck. “Through this partnership we will connect companies with NPS talent and technology leaders, providing a catalyst for their learning and applied research to deliver innovative solutions for the joint force.”

For the Department of the Navy, the Naval Education Strategy guides and articulates the Secretary’s vision “for naval education to develop the world’s most capable, adaptive, and innovative naval force in support of the President’s national security priorities and the National Defense Strategy (NDS).” With a technical, outcome-based focus, NPS graduate education meets naval-unique and national defense needs.

According to Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Lisa Franchetti,

the new partnership with DIU will enhance the capabilities of NPS aligned with her top priorities.

“NPS develops warfighters who are able to translate today’s uncertainties into tomorrow’s strategies, and continuously create warfighting advantages,” said Franchetti. “As the Navy’s flagship technical graduate school, this DIU partnership will strengthen NPS’ foundation to develop student excellence in their primary warfighting duties and further empower them to lead and solve real-world operational problems with leading-edge companies.”

Established in 1909 at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md., NPS moved to Monterey, Calif. in 1951, attracting faculty talent with the rise of Silicon Valley. Faculty depth across multiple disciplines in defense-related fields such as cybersecurity, oceanography, physics, naval engineering and space systems remains a hallmark of NPS – and a core attribute for DIU’s partners seeking to collaborate on defense research projects, experimentation and rapid prototyping.

“Our students are warrior-scholars, and they come to NPS to learn and make a difference,” said Rondeau. “NPS provides a venue to challenge assumptions, try new ideas, and with our industry partners, we serve as an innovation hub to rapidly adapt research concepts into prototype applications and capabilities. This new partnership with DIU will greatly enhance the impact our students can have on the fleet and force through expanded collaborations and greater access to emerging technologies.”

Today, NPS is home to the Naval Innovation Center, established by the Secretary of the Navy in December 2022 to enhance the school’s education, research and innovation impact. Del Toro is also championing a purposefully-designed building to house the NIC and fully leverage NPS attributes to support the innovation process at greater speed and scale.

The Defense Innovation Unit strengthens our national security by accelerating the adoption of leading commercial technology throughout the military and growing the national security innovation base. Learn more at: <https://www.diu.mil/>.