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Annual Naval Research Working Group Connects NPS Researchers to Fleet Sponsors, Warfighter

By Petty Officer 2nd Class Huy Tonthat, Naval Postgraduate School - May 5, 2021

The Naval Research Program (NRP) at the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) held its annual Naval Research Working Group (NRWG) event virtually, April 20-22, providing a forum for Department of Defense (DoD) organizations to be research topic sponsors, communicating their operational challenges and recommending research topics to NPS faculty and students.

Approximately 300 people from throughout the DoD, Navy and Marine Corps, as well as the NPS community, participated in NRWG to connect with each other for researching and developing solutions to current warfighter challenges.

"[NRWG] is about the ability to bring to the force and the fleet a remarkable aggregation of intellectual and experiential knowledge," said NPS President retired Vice Adm. Ann E. Rondeau during her keynote address. "Our research needs to be different. It needs to have that competitive edge, but also must have a collaborative core to it because we need to do these things together, not for redundancy, but for integration and the sharing of knowledge. That's what this particular NRP does, it's different than so many other research endeavors in the country. It requires and mandates collaboration with the purpose in mind of application."

NPS Senior Marine Corps Representative Col. Randy Pugh believes the NRP is tremendously important for three big reasons. The first being its ability to answer a multitude of difficult questions and provide insight about topics that the Navy and Marine Corps value over others, supporting 80 to 85 different projects per year. Next, it connects the Naval Education Enterprise (NEE), the Naval Research and Development Establishment (NRDE), the services' headquarters, and brings this to the Fleet and Fleet Marine Force as a coherent team working collaboratively and collectively toward finding solutions for these challenges. Third, and most importantly to Pugh, the NRP provides NPS faculty and students with critical projects to focus on.

"[The NRP] will provide them ideas about what the problems are and how to get after the solutions," said Pugh. "This will prepare them moving forward as they go back to the Fleet and Fleet Marine Force, integrating the solutions into operations."

As representatives from DoD organizations shared research topic briefs to potentially make connections through shared research interests or goals, NPS faculty and students highlighted their capabilities through poster sessions, panels, pre-recorded lab tours, and presentations during NRWG.

For example, faculty from NPS' newly-established Climate and Security Network talked about their current projects. NPS Energy Academic Group (EAG) Research Associate Kristen Fletcher talked about the EAG's interdisciplinary effort to develop an environmental portfolio focused on climate, energy and security. During the presentation, the U.S. Coast Guard Research & Development Center (RDC) expressed interest in working with the Climate and Security Network to develop scenarios for a climate and technology focused evergreen event with Coast Guard Headquarters.

Recently, RDC renewed a Memorandum of Understanding with NPS to conduct joint research projects and exchanges that directly support defense priorities and Coast Guard statutory missions within the Tri-Service Maritime Strategy. According to RDC Commanding Officer Capt. Dan Keane, the Coast Guard is eager to help researchers get aboard a Coast Guard vessel or aircraft to conduct research.

"Perhaps one of our strongest and most impactful partnerships is with the Naval Postgraduate School," noted Keane. "Since an MOU was signed three years ago, the RDC has become a topic sponsor, we have proposed questions related to our portfolio that have turned into academic products, NPS researchers have worked with our researchers on summer studies and we have provided platforms for NPS experimentation. We believe that we have just scratched the surface and the future is incredibly bright. We are excited about the next five years."

Since the start of NRWG in 2013, more than 2,500 topics have been submitted through the Navy Research Program. This year's NRWG covered nearly 350 research topics.

"[NRWG] exposes our faculty and our students to real-world problems," said Deputy Program Director



The Naval Postgraduate School (NPS), as part of its Naval Research Program (NRP), held the annual Naval Research Working Group (NRWG) online, April 20-22. NRWG-21 served as a virtual forum for Navy and Marine Corps organizations to connect with NPS faculty and students to review and recommend topics for NPS research over the coming fiscal year.

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for the NRP U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Col. David Forbell. "It allows them to work on solving these problems, which I think enhances their education. It allows the faculty to provide a much more enriching experience in their classes when they're using real world problems.

"There are few organizations or institutions in academia that are as purely defense-focused as NPS is," Forbell said. "When you combine our defense-focused curricula with our primarily active duty officers and enlisted students who have the requisite experience coming from operational tours, it's a powerful combination not largely replicated anywhere else."

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