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Faces of NPS: Capt. Emily Hastings

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Faces of NPS

Spotlighting the students, faculty, staff and alumni of our Nation's premier defense education and research institution.



Capt. Emily Hastings

MANPOWER SYSTEMS ANALYSIS '23

Marine Corps Capt. Emily Hastings is a current student in the Naval Postgraduate School Manpower Systems Analysis program pursuing efficient talent management, within the DOD, using econometric models. She enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps in 2011 and commissioned as an officer in November 2017. Prior to coming to NPS, she served as a Manpower Officer for Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 122. She holds an MBA in industrial and organizational psychology from Johnson & Wales University and a bachelor's degree in social psychology from Park University.

What brought you to NPS and what, so far, has been the most impactful part of your time here?

The Marine Corps selected me to come to NPS via the Commandant's Career-Level Education Board. My experience at NPS thus far has been enriching personally and professionally. I am not sure I can say that just one piece of it has been most impactful. Taking Professor Helzer's class GB 3010: Managing for Organizational Effectiveness course was an incredibly impactful way for me to feel as though my passion and enthusiasm for change was not only allowable at NPS, but that it was welcomed. I truly believe that I am exactly where I am supposed to be to continue

my quest in quantifying individuals' personal and valuable contributions in the military through action on innovation.

Can you tell us a little bit about your current studies and personal research? Anything you are finding particularly interesting or valuable?

Being a student at NPS opens up your mind in a way that you have so much to study, learn and understand about the world not just from a military perspective. It can be difficult to choose exactly what to focus on now, in our current climate.

Throughout my academic pursuits and my time as a Manpower Officer at VMFA-122, I have been fascinated by why people choose to join the military, what encourages them to stay in the military and the overall fulfillment of their time in the service. Currently, I am focused on how we effectively form groups in the military to manage change. While en route to NPS, I read the books "Upstream: How to Solve Problems Before They Happen" by Dan Heath, "Think Again: The Power of Knowing What You Don't Know" by Adam Grant and "Man's Search for Meaning" by Viktor Frankl. I have since been inspired and drawn to how we best appreciate our people, adopt new ways of problem-framing, collectively work together to solve problems, and form groups in the Marine Corps to embrace change. I am also exploring how we value our changemakers and mavericks that we are at risk of losing if we do not connect a qualitative way to value them as people not just as a number (the irony is intentional). This is a challenging pursuit as the status quo has been centered around the idea of how every service member is essentially replaceable.

What are NPS' greatest strengths in changing the military's mindset about innovation and innovation adoption? How has the Innovation Leadership course influenced your studies?

Enhancing NPS' reputation through its ability to connect and provide solutions to current problems in the fleet, welcoming and onboarding new and current students through the student all-volunteer force, the President's Board for Student Affairs, receiving thoughtful feedback from faculty in an imaginative way (credit to Mie Augier), offering courses that are not necessarily technical in nature but extremely relevant, such as the Innovation Leadership Course and Manpower Economics (taught by Tom Ahn) are all ways that we strengthen the core of NPS (the students) and increase our impact on the fleet. Additionally, NPS aids in enhancing our competitiveness by supporting critical thinking development, which our adversaries, arguably, are not doing.

NPS is a unique place where students have the opportunity to affect real, necessary change that the force, and the American people protected by our services, need more than ever. The Innovation Leadership course exposed me to the world of possibility in which culture change is possible, and likely probable, if we can grasp how to look at it and take action from a new perspective armed with the tools centered around listening for concerns within communities.

The Naval Postgraduate School Foundation is preparing to transfer Project Athena, a research collaboration tool built securely in MS Teams, to NPS. From what you know about Project Athena, how will it impact NPS and the DOD?

Todd Lyons brought me into the Athena project, I was unable to be involved as much as I would have liked during the early stages, due to my Q3 curriculum, but I have had the opportunity to see the tool in action and provide a student perspective.

While doing our background research, we found a quote from a young marine identifying you as someone that inspires her "because Hastings keeps achieving her goals no matter what stands in her way." Who is someone that you admire or that inspires you in your career and why?

My mother — who raised five children on her own, worked four jobs (at times), is currently an educator for troubled youth, politician, and overall saint for supporting all my efforts — is my greatest inspiration. There is simply no way to summarize all the ways that she shows selfless service every day, to every person she meets and continues to believe that compassion, coupled with critical thought in problem solving, is the right way to be an effective changemaker. She also 'put up' with my antics for 18 years (and continues to do so), so she deserves many awards for that. She taught me how to stand up for what I believe in but to also never miss an opportunity to keep my mouth shut, allowing others to be a part of the conversation.

Wendy Leece is a force and if I accomplish even a fraction of what she has in her career and life, I will have accomplished a lot. One of her favorite quotes is, "The ultimate test of a moral society is the kind of world that it leaves to its children" (-- Dietrich Bonhoeffer), which when read through a military lens, is exactly what NPS can do for its future military personnel: enable them to provide for a stronger military force beyond our tour here.

What are your professional goals? How has your time at NPS influenced those goals and your career trajectory?

I believe that in order for the Marine Corps and DOD to remain vigilant in efforts mentioned in documents such as Talent Management 2030, we need to partner accredited academics with service members and continue to consult with outside organizations to get the best perspective on how we manage change. Ideally, I would like to pursue a doctorate in social psychology so that I can continue to engage in change from the 'phase zero' approach, thus allowing for the Marines in the trenches to understand their greater purpose for service in and outside of their time in the military. I plan to propose to the Marine Corps a way for me to further my education in social and industrial/organizational psychology. I'd like to use that education to connect industry to the insight that only service members have about how culture change can work with our constraints. I do not believe that we can model culture change in the ways that Fortune 500 companies do, but we can pull and apply best practices to enhance our efficiency and retain our top talent that considers leaving the service specifically because of the culture.

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