

Norwich University

2022 Presidential  
Position Paper:

Proud Heritage,  
Infinite Future

(Executive Summary)

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15 September 2022

The two years since I assumed the presidency of Norwich University in June 2020 have been among the most challenging in our institution's long and storied history. Upon my arrival, the campus community was working through the early stages of a global pandemic, saying farewell to a long serving and successful leader, and trying to give the graduating Class of 2020 a meaningful departure. This was not the ideal environment for our institution to face the added stress of welcoming the first new chief executive in almost three decades, and certainly not the circumstances in which I hoped to begin my service as President.

The first year quickly became one of simple survival. As pandemic restrictions limited campus instruction and activities, every day held new challenges in keeping the school open. The mental health of students, faculty, and staff were significantly strained. Balancing the need to ensure our students continued their academic and personal growth while keeping our community safe was a constant struggle. Our students and families justly expected value, while our faculty and staff rightfully asked to be kept safe and have risks reduced to reasonable levels. Every decision was made with great care and thorough coordination, and we kept good faith with our entire community. During the year of extreme difficulty and high tension, Norwich became a national success story for multiple reasons, especially our handling of the mental health challenges associated with quarantine, isolation, and other stressors of living through a public health crisis. We thrived through the adversity in the truest spirit of Norwich University's centuries-old motto: "I Will Try"

Year two continued the period of tension and challenge, related to persistent pandemic operations but also changes in leadership across our institution. The student experience was restored thoughtfully and safely; our classrooms and labs operated with enhanced student interactions, our athletic teams returned to competition, and our students again enjoyed the experiential learning programs for which Norwich is so well known. We said farewell to many long serving leaders and concluded international searches for their replacements. The final members of the new leadership team arrived in summer 2022 and are leading their areas of responsibility. In fall 2022 we are starting the processes of recovery, stabilization, and growth. As we build the next version of our school, we will leverage the qualities that have made Norwich a great institution for 203 years. We will be faithful to our past, but focused on the future.

## *Our Proud Heritage*

I have clearly heard the concerns that we have lost some of the qualities that define the Norwich that so many have come to love. We will move quickly and aggressively to restore and reclaim our identity; this brand reclamation will be a critical effort over the next few years.

A key component of this campaign will be proud ownership of our status as a Senior Military College (SMC). We are the original SMC and need to be the best. To this end, we must ensure a thriving Corps of Cadets. Our new strategic plan, strategic enrollment plan, and other initiatives will include reference to the phrase “Corps 1400”—our intent to build towards a population of 1,400 members in our Corps. Our civilian students and online learning communities will also grow and be fully resourced and valued, but we will work hard to bring the Corps back to full health.

We will also ensure we remain steadfast in our devotion to our mission statement, which remarkably was penned in 1843. It remains among the most elegant and extraordinary in all of higher education. It reads:

“To give our youth an education that shall be American in character—to enable them to act as well as to think—to execute as well as to conceive—to tolerate all opinions when reason is left free to combat them—to make moral, patriotic, efficient, and useful citizens, and to qualify them for all those high responsibilities resting upon a citizen of this free republic.”

We will rededicate ourselves to the content of this mission statement. We will also restate clearly that we are a *values-based* institution. Finally, as stated more thoroughly throughout this paper, we will be very clear that our focus will be on building leaders, in all fields, in our students, and among our faculty and staff.

## *Our Students*

Norwich was founded to build a special kind of graduate; from our mission statement, a “moral, patriotic, efficient, and useful citizen.” Over the course of two centuries, we have developed alumni who have literally shaped our world. We must revitalize our institutional culture to ensure we remain dedicated to the creation of graduates ready to serve as agents of positive transformation for our nation and the global community. We will build and graduate *leaders*.

If we are to build leaders, we must model the tenets of leadership, in all ways and at all times. Our faculty and staff will be given the tools needed to bring an elevated experience to

students in all areas of university life and will internalize that our students are our “why.” Whether in a seat in a classroom, in the virtual learning space, on the athletic field, on the parade ground, or in any space where Norwich is affecting growth and development, we must never lose sight of the fact the student in that space is why we are here. We will become fiercely committed to student success with full effort given to the development of leaders.

Students currently entering college are unlike any previous generation in their learning style, capacity for synthesizing new information, and their desire to be challenged. They strongly desire the skills to be leaders. We must meet their expectations. The application of virtual reality across many academic disciplines, augmented reality in the classroom and in the student experience, leveraging of emerging fields like artificial intelligence, and building the kind of culture where innovation is rewarded and thrives will be hallmarks of our future. Other institutions continue to force industrial age techniques on these information age students. We must be better.

We will learn and we will lead. We will become The National Leadership University.

### *Our People*

The Norwich we must build is only possible if we attract and retain the best people and ensure they are fully committed to our institution and our students. Our continued demonstrated commitment to our faculty and staff will translate into a more positive culture and renewed energy devoted to student success and leadership development.

During the two years of pandemic operations and current economic pressures, Norwich insulated our employees through pay raises and inflation-offset stipends. Using our new budget process, and with support of our Board of Trustees, we will continue to address compensation as an institutional priority.

Of course, the employee experience is not all about pay and benefits. We are also improving culture and ensuring Norwich is a preferred destination for every role. My ultimate goal is an institution where employees are developed and prepared to succeed anywhere they wish to be, but treated so well at Norwich they do not want to leave. I look forward to taking that journey together in collaboration and partnership.

### *Our Future*

There is no denying the significant and perilous challenges facing higher education. Due to demographic shifts and declining birthrates, fewer students are attending college in the United States. High school and early college experiences during the pandemic reduced interest in college in large segments of the population. In this environment we must be relevant, and we must be excellent, in all ways.

We also must be distinctive. Potential students and their families must find the value proposition of a Norwich education to be peerless. Norwich graduates are highly employable and measurably successful, both immediately after graduation and in the years and decades that follow. We will preserve and build upon the already stellar value of a Norwich degree.

We will establish courses and concentrations that will create leaders of the future economy. Through our Applied Research Institutes (NUARI), Centers of Excellence, and academic departments, we will establish programs in emerging areas like machine learning, data analytics, artificial intelligence, quantum engineering, and quantum computing. We will also ensure our students are ready to apply the concepts contained in those areas to all disciplines. Whether using artificial intelligence to create more effective policing strategies, data analytics to build more resilient businesses, machine learning for more affordable medical devices, or quantum computing to protect our cyber networks and national infrastructure, the world will know that a Norwich graduate is ready for the future economy— *now*.

### *Our Partners*

The best universities excel due to a diverse network of partners. Norwich is no exception to this rule; in fact, we are exceptional. First, our Board of Trustees will continue to guide our institution with the vision and refinement for which they are known. Our Board is among our greatest assets and will help ensure we build the Norwich that will endure for the next 200 years.

Partner relationships with our military services will be expanded. Norwich University is celebrated as a top ROTC program every year, but we will not be satisfied until we are ranked #1, in every measure. It is our goal to be the premier commissioning program for all six branches of our armed forces. We are the Birthplace of ROTC; while this is a tremendous honor, we must never rest on past laurels. Being the original is something only Norwich can claim. Being the best is something we will earn perpetually.

Relationships with government agencies will be enhanced. Norwich has provided elite leaders across the non-uniformed sectors of government for centuries. From espionage, to cyber,

to law enforcement, Norwich University has been an institution of positive transformation across every arena of service. As technological fields create competencies we do not yet appreciate, Norwich will ensure our future workforce is ready to serve and excel.

Expanded and refined partnerships will also continue at the state and local levels. We will partner in collaboration with other institutions of higher education in Vermont, and will work closely with our beautiful hometown of Northfield to make our shared community a preferred destination. We will grow together without losing the quality of the classic and idyllic New England community that defines the greater Northfield area. We will leverage what makes the area so special, while improving quality of life and standard of living for all.

Through relationships with federal, state and local government and the private sector, Norwich will be a major player in building the future economy. Our graduates will be well prepared to demonstrate mastery of fields that are just now being created, or in some cases like quantum engineering and quantum computing, still being developed. Many institutions of higher education continue to tell industry sectors what they need from higher education. Norwich will instead listen to what businesses say *they* need now and, in the future, so our graduates will be well postured for success.

Globally, we have started to re-establish relationships with international partners from our past, and with nations seeking a relationship with Norwich. It is Norwich's mission to offer an education that is global in perspective; we are all bettered by our international partnerships. Thus, Norwich will be a willing partner in nation-to-nation endeavors that bring students to our campus from all corners of the globe. Beyond traditional exchange programs, Norwich will be positioned as the preferred commissioning source for partner nations. We are building systems that will allow international cadets to complete a Norwich degree and commission directly into their home nation's military. This arrangement is complex but will undoubtedly create leaders who will literally change the world—as Norwich graduates do.

### *Our Alumni*

Norwich University alumni are among the most passionate and devoted in the world. Their grit and creativity have transformed industries. Their leadership skills have led to their advancement to flag officer rank and key positions in all services, and in senior civilian posts in every sector of government. Norwich alumni have been outperforming their peers for over 200 years. Our alumni are the reason for our lofty reputation.

We will be leveraging our alumni much more effectively. The passion of the Norwich alumni base is far beyond that of any previous institutions I have served, and the comparison is not even close. Our alumni will be heavily involved in our strategic direction. Their voices will ensure we build a Norwich of the future that is faithful to our past but devoted to relevance and excellence. We will harness the passion and energy of the world's greatest alumni community.

### *Our Financial Operations*

Higher education was battered by the COVID-19 pandemic. There is no way or reason to parse words on this fact. Enrollment was severely harmed by our inability to host camps, visit high schools, and host visits due to restrictive public health guidance. It will take several years to recover from the enrollment effects of the COVID years. As with all institutions, pandemic-related enrollment declines have placed us in a deficit budget environment, but we are taking steps now to achieve recovery quickly.

Post-pandemic enrollment declines, inflation, economic recession, global conflicts, and social unrest make this a very complicated and challenging time for a university. It is worth stating that higher education is not a business, and institutions should not be run as such. Higher education is better described by a "calling with fiscal realities." Colleges and universities must face these fiscal realities head-on if they are to survive. Norwich will attack these challenges and emerge from the current environment in a position of strength and durability.

### *Our Recovery*

As our enrollment goals are met, we will continue to advance efforts to become more student-centric. Stated clearly, we must keep the students we enroll. The need for reformation in our approach to student success is incontrovertible. For the past decade up to and including the current year, retention and graduation rates for Norwich University have been unacceptably low. We will no longer hide from these facts and will be facing them head-on. Our new strategic plan will include clear goals for enrollment, retention over four years, and graduation rates, and we will hold ourselves accountable. At the end of the five-year plan, Norwich will be a national leader in all student performance measures.

Increased performance will extend to our online program offerings as well. We are currently working through a revised pricing model for all online programs with the goal of making a Norwich degree more accessible for a larger number of students. Special efforts will be applied to reaching more of our military members and their families. We will be the first choice

for online education for active military members, veterans, military family members, and the government sector by increasing our cost appeal while building on the already strong reputation of our well-established online degree programs.

We must also continue to grow our strategic financial position. The growth of the Norwich University endowment earned a top 5% national ranking during the pandemic years 2020-2022. We have realized tremendous gains but must continue to grow. Professionals in our development office are already working through the specifics of our next capital campaign. When the campaign is launched, we will be postured to achieve the next level of investment needed to fund Norwich through our next phase of growth and expansion.

### *Closing*

This executive summary of the full 2022 Presidential Position Paper conveys observations of my first two years as president, provides a summary of the current State of the University, and lays the foundation for our strategic future. Each portion of this executive summary is explored in more detail in the full Position Paper which is available to all. The content of this summary and the full position paper will be included in our new strategic plan, which has been drafted with full and collaborative input and will be presented for adoption to our Board of Trustees in October 2022.

The next five years will be a critical time for Norwich. We must address immediate threats to enrollment and must devote ourselves passionately to enhanced student success, while simultaneously building strategically toward emerging curriculum and facility needs. We have the talent and support to accomplish all this and more.

We are facing many challenges. It is certain that more will emerge. Fortunately, there is nothing in front of us or heading our way that cannot be met and overcome by what has always made Norwich so special. I have full faith and confidence in where we are going, and am profoundly grateful to the Norwich students, faculty, staff, supporters, and Board of Trustees for allowing me to serve as President during these turbulent times. I am ready to get to work.

It is time we reach our full potential and build the Norwich University of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Our nation and the world need us. We must not fail. I have been told that for too long Norwich has been a giant walking on its knees. It is time to stand up.