The Joint Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Academic Forum is the inspiration behind this special collection of student research papers that span a number of prestigious Department of Defense (DOD) academic institutions. Following the release of the 2019 United States Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS Strategy) and in anticipation of the DOD’s Women, Peace, and Security Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan (WPS SFIP) publication, several senior Service colleges began collaborating to identify best practices for incorporating WPS in Joint professional military education (PME). The WPS Strategy approach highlighted under its third line of effort that “the United States Government must equip and empower . . . military . . . personnel to advance the goals of this strategy . . . through an ongoing process of training, education, and professional development in partnership with specialists who can provide insight and understanding to this challenging field.” The issuance of the WPS SFIP further underscored this guidance. Defense Objective 1 states, “The Department of Defense exemplifies a diverse organization that allows for women’s meaningful participation across the development, management, and employment of the Joint Force.” Under this objective, “WPS principles are appropriately reflected in relevant [DOD] policies, plans, doctrine, education, operations, resource planning, and exercises.”

The first Joint WPS Academic Forum kicked off in January 2020 and the forum continues to grow in the number of participating defense institutions including academies, universities, war colleges, and regional centers. The Joint Staff J7 WPS also participates and supports the forum where needed. As the U.S. Army War College director of WPS Studies, I served as the primary facilitator and lead on behalf of the forum.

The vision of the forum is to share best practices to advance the integration of WPS concepts across PME institutions. Forum members identify opportunities to support one another and, where appropriate, synchronize efforts around common goals. The mission of the Joint WPS Academic Forum is to bring together PME institutions to build awareness and improve understanding of WPS concepts and principles to facilitate their integration into Joint and Service-specific PME programming. The forum also promotes increasing the participation of women from allied and partner nations in PME activities in support of the goals in the WPS Strategy and the WPS SFIP. The forum’s lines of effort are

3 Women, Peace, and Security Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan, 12, 16.
• Integrate WPS concepts and principles within PME.
• Conduct research on WPS topics to improve operationalizing concepts across the doctrine, organization, training, material, leadership and education, personnel, facilities, and policy (DOTMLPF-P) capability domains including capacity building within security cooperation activities.
• Advance diversity and inclusion initiatives that enable female officer, noncommissioned officer, and civilian career progression as PME faculty and staff members.

The forum meets monthly and includes discussion with various subject matter experts to advance collective goals. In August 2020, the forum conducted an inaugural two-day Joint WPS Academic Forum Workshop hosted by the U.S. Army War College. As part of these efforts, different institutions volunteered to lead a special effort in support of surging the forum initiatives. Dr. Lauren Mackenzie of Marine Corps University volunteered to lead the Best of WPS in PME Writing Award. Lieutenant Colonel Dana Perkins of Army War College, Dr. Brenda Oppermann of U.S. Naval War College, and Dr. Susan Yoshihara of Defense Security Cooperation University comprised the selection committee. The winner of the award received a Joint Staff J-5 certificate and a personalized note from me.

On behalf of the Joint WPS Academic Forum and Marine Corps University, we hope you find this special edition of the Best of WPS in PME Writing Award student research paper submissions informative and empowering, as many topics within this monograph intersect the DOD equities supporting global WPS principles.

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