

The National Intelligence University

Strategic resource for Marine Corps intelligence

by Maj Toby J. Collins

“In the training and education of intelligence personnel, we seek to achieve a balance between specialization and generalization. Intelligence officers must possess a broad operational orientation—an understanding of just how intelligence supports operations in general terms—while also developing the specialized skills required by many intelligence disciplines.”¹
—MCDP 2, Intelligence

In the *Commandant’s Planning Guidance*, Gen Berger observes that the “complexity of the modern battlefield and increasing rate of change requires a highly educated force.”² The Marine Corps Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Enterprise (MCISRE) concept echoes this sentiment, calling for “an intelligent workforce, uniformed and civilian, [that] anchors the MCISRE with the skills, professional acumen, and functional expertise that mark them as a world-class contributor to our Corps and IC [Intelligence Community] missions.”³ As we prepare current and future leaders to rise to the challenges of great power competition, the National Intelligence University (NIU) is uniquely capable of building on service training and education to develop the highly educated intelligence professionals envisioned in the Commandant’s guidance and the MCISRE concept. Having evolved over nearly six decades

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from a narrowly focused military intelligence training organization into the Intelligence Community’s premier educational institution, NIU now offers a wide range of undergraduate and graduate programs, certificates, joint professional military education, and continuing education courses. These programs afford unparalleled oppor-

tunities to prepare Marines—officer and enlisted, active and reserve component—to excel in intelligence assignments in which they directly interact with or operate as part of the joint force or the interagency.

NIU has helped to educate and develop many noteworthy Marine leaders. Four Directors of Marine Corps Intelligence have studied at NIU. Gen John R. Allen (Ret), former Commander, International Security Assistance Force–Afghanistan and U.S. Forces. In 2002, MajGen Michael F. Fahey III, Commanding General of 4th MarDiv, graduated from NIU. He subsequently taught in and served as the Director of the Master of Science of Strategic Intelligence (MSSI)–Reserve Program. MGySgt Aaron L. Hoffman (Ret), former Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Director of Marine Corps Intelligence, graduated from NIU in 2006. MGySgt Joseph Davila, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command J2 Senior Enlisted Advisor, graduated from NIU in 2006.⁴ In addition to these distinguished alumni, hundreds of Marines have studied at NIU over the years. Since 2015, an average of 31 Marines have been enrolled in NIU programs annually, with the majority being part-time students pursuing a Master of Science of Strategic Intelligence.⁵

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NIU's History: From Service School to Intelligence Community University

NIU traces its foundation to the merger of the Naval Intelligence School and the Army Strategic Intelligence School to create the DIS in October 1962. Perceiving the existence of the two separate Service strategic intelligence schools as unnecessarily duplicative, Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric had issued a memorandum the previous February directing the recently established Defense Intelligence Agency to develop a plan for the merger. On 2 November 1962, *DOD Directive 5105.25* officially created the school as a professional military educational institution under DIA.⁶ The DIS opened its doors on 1 January 1963, operating out of the Naval Intelligence School's Anacostia Annex across the Anacostia River from the Navy Yard in Washington, D.C.⁷ Its mission was to enhance the preparation of selected military officers and key DOD civilian personnel for important command, staff, and policy-making positions in the national and international security structure; prepare DOD military and civilian personnel for duty in the military attaché system; and assist the broad career development of DOD military and civilian personnel assigned to intelligence functions. The DIS graduated its first class in June 1963.⁸

In 1973, DIA Director Vice Admiral Vincent P. de Poix approved a DIS pilot program to grant a graduate degree in strategic intelligence. In 1980, President Jimmy Carter signed *Public Law 96-450*, formally authorizing the DIS to award the MSSSI degree. After the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, a federally recognized accreditation agency, granted accreditation for the degree program in 1983, the DIS was redesignated as the DIC to reflect its role as an institution of education rather than training. It subsequently moved from the Anacostia Annex to the new Defense Intelligence Analysis Center at Bolling Air Force Base (present day Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling).⁹

In 1993, the DIC was redesignated as the Joint Military Intelligence College, reflecting growing emphasis on the joint force constructs. Four years later,

Congress authorized Joint Military Intelligence College to grant a Bachelor of Science in Intelligence (BSI) as part of a fourth-year degree completion program for students who had accumulated the equivalent of three years of undergraduate credits elsewhere.¹⁰

In 2006, *DOD Instruction 3305.1* renamed the school the National Defense Intelligence College (NDIC), reflecting the institution's growth and

to the IC's widely dispersed workforce by establishing four academic centers and sixteen additional educational sites in Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, Virginia, Australia, England, and Germany. In December 2019, Congress directed the NIU to transition from DIA to the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, and that transition is currently underway.¹³

“Projected future challenges for the Marine Corps include the potential for adversaries to achieve technological equivalence or superiority with the United States. That possibility, coupled with Marines’ expeditionary nature, means that the Marine Corps must be a more lethal, thinking force that fosters continuous personal and organizational learning.”¹¹

—MCDP 7, Learning

maturation to service the needs of an evolving Intelligence Community in the years following the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks, the initiation of Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM, the passage of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, and the creation of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence in 2005. In 2007, NDIC established a Center for Science and Technology Intelligence, paving the way for the creation of the Anthony G. Oettinger School of Science and Technology Intelligence in 2010. A 2011 revision to *DOD Instruction 3305.1* prompted yet another name change, and NDIC became NIU. The following year, Congress authorized it to grant a Master of Science and Technology Intelligence degree.¹²

From late 2016 to early 2017, NIU relocated from DIA Headquarters at Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling to the purpose-built, state-of-the-art Roberdeau Hall at the Intelligence Community Campus-Bethesda in Bethesda, MD. In the years since, NIU has sought to increase the accessibility of its programs

Programs: A Range of Options for Degrees and Certifications

NIU offers one undergraduate degree, two graduate degrees, and several certifications, including Joint Professional Military Education Phase I (JPME-I). All programs are tuition free and available to active component Marines, and all but the undergraduate program are available to reserve component Marines. Marines seeking sponsored participation in one of NIU's degree programs must meet both Marine Corps and NIU enrollment requirements and incur a three-year service obligation upon successful completion. Marines seeking unsponsored participation in one of the part-time graduate or certificate programs need only meet NIU enrollment requirements and incur no service obligation.

Undergraduate Programs. The BSI is NIU's only undergraduate degree program. It is a fourth-year completion program available to Marines who have completed the equivalent of three years of undergraduate study elsewhere. The BSI program is only available for full-time enrollment and lasts for eleven

months, during which time students are enrolled in five classes per quarter.¹⁴

The BSI program is available to qualified enlisted Marines in the 02XX, 26XX, and 68XX MOS in the rank of corporal through master sergeant. Applicants must have between four and eighteen years of service at the start of the program; they must have completed CMC-directed PME; they must meet height, weight, and military appearance standards; they need to possess a top secret clearance; and they must be eligible for access to top secret/sensitive compartmented information.¹⁵

Any Marine requesting enrollment in the BSI program must submit an application to HQMC with an endorsement from his commanding officer at the battalion or squadron level. The application must include certification of eligibility for reenlistment and compliance with height/weight and military appearance standards, a copy of a Page 11 entry for the obligated service requirement, a completed NIU application for admission, and an unclassified 500-word “Statement of Purpose.” Applicants must arrange for their undergraduate transcripts to be forwarded directly from the issuing institution to NIU along with copies of standardized tests such as CLEP or DLPT. A separate copy of the application package must be simultaneously submitted to NIU.¹⁶

In addition to Marine Corps requirements, NIU requires that BSI applicants possess a high school diploma or GED, and that they have completed at least 80 semester hours of undergraduate coursework (30 of which must have been earned at a regionally accredited institution) with a GPA of 2.5 or higher on a 4.0 scale.¹⁷

Graduate Programs. The two graduate degrees available to Marines at NIU are the MSSI and the Master of Science and Technology Intelligence (MSTI). The MSSI program is designed to prepare students for the complexity of intelligence work in the 21st century, focusing on three main themes—globalization, future-focused intelligence, and intelligence for national security. The MSTI program is designed to prepare students to recognize the impact of technological change on national se-

curity and intelligence through study in one of five concentrations—weapons of mass destruction, cyber intelligence, data science in intelligence, information and influence intelligence, and emerging technologies and geostrategic resources. Both programs entail a 43-credit curriculum designed to facilitate completion in one year for full-time students and two years for part-time students.¹⁸

Full-time sponsored participation in NIU’s graduate programs is available to commissioned officers only through the Marine Corps’ Junior Officer Strategic Intelligence Program (JOSIP). Marines in the rank of first lieutenant or captain with a primary MOS of 0202 with at least two years intelligence experience and not more than ten years total service are eligible to apply for JOSIP. Applicants are screened through the Commandant’s Career-Level Education Board; those selected are enrolled in NIU’s MSSI or MSTI programs.¹⁹

Full-time sponsored participation in NIU’s graduate programs is available to commissioned officers only through the Marine Corps’ Junior Officer Strategic Intelligence Program (JOSIP).

Full-time sponsored participation in NIU’s graduate programs is available to enlisted Marines in the 02XX, 26XX, and 68XX military occupational specialties in the rank of corporal through gunnery sergeant, although 0231 master sergeants may also apply. Marines must have between four and eighteen years of service; be PME complete; meet height, weight, and appearance standards; and possess a top secret clearance with eligibility for access to SCI.²⁰

Part-time sponsored participation in NIU’s graduate degree programs is available to Marines in the 02XX, 26XX, and 68XX MOS in the rank of corporal through lieutenant colonel. Additional eligibility requirements are similar to those for full-time sponsored participation.²¹

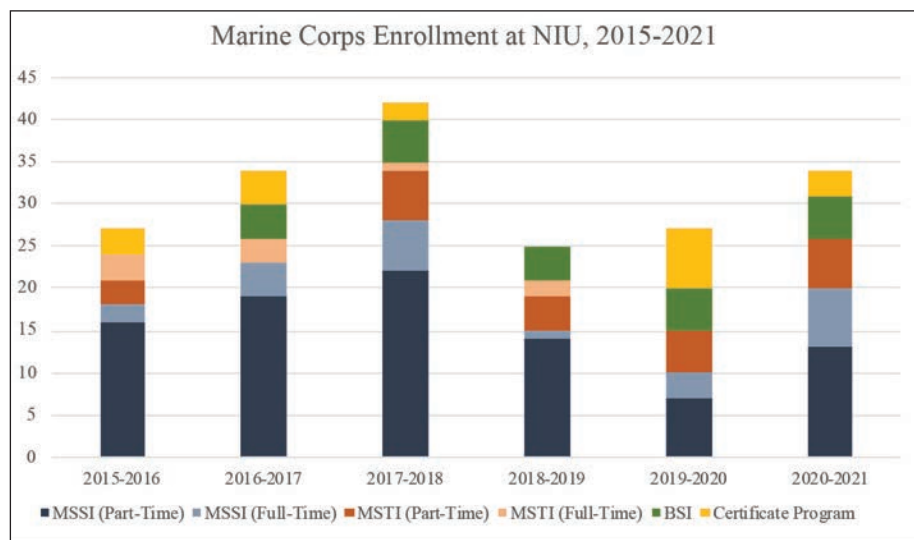
Marines requesting enrollment in the MSSI or MSTI programs must submit

an application to HQMC with commanding officer endorsement at the battalion or squadron level. Applications must include certification of compliance with height/weight and military appearance standards, a copy of a Page 11 entry for the obligated service requirement, a completed NIU application for admission form, and an unclassified 500 word “Statement of Purpose.” Enlisted Marines must also include certification of eligibility for reenlistment. Applicants must arrange for undergraduate and graduate transcripts to be forwarded directly from the issuing institution to NIU, along with copies of standardized tests. A separate copy of the application package must be simultaneously submitted to NIU.²²

In addition to meeting Marine Corps requirements, Marines must meet several for NIU. Applicants must possess a baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited institution; NIU has no

minimum GPA requirement, but competitive applicants have a cumulative undergraduate GPA of 3.0 or higher on a 4.0 scale. Applicants must also have completed the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) within the last five years. While NIU does not specify a minimum score, competitive applicants should be in the 50th percentile or higher in verbal and quantitative reasoning, and 3.5 or higher in analytical writing. Those who have earned a master’s or a doctoral degree from a regionally accredited institution are not required to submit GRE scores. For Academic Years 2020–2021 and 2021–2022, the school has temporarily waived the GRE because of testing-site restrictions associated with COVID-19.²⁴

A range of options for participation in NIU’s MSSI and MSTI programs are available to Marines—active duty



Since 2015, an average of 31 Marines have been enrolled in NIU programs annually, with the majority pursuing a Master of Science of Strategic Intelligence as a part-time student.²³ NIU's programs are available to officers and enlisted Marines in the active and reserve components with the exception of the BSI program, which is only available as a full-time study option for enlisted Marines. (Figure provided by author.)

and reserve, officer and enlisted. Some options require formal Marine Corps nomination and sponsorship, while others do not. The options are as follows:

- *Full-time.* Marines may only enroll at NIU in a full-time capacity with Marine Corps sponsorship. Full-time MSSI and MSTI students undertake an eleven-month program that typically begins in August and ends in July. During this time, NIU is the Marine's place of duty, and he is not expected to assume additional duties outside of the program. Marines enroll in four to five daytime classes per quarter and must complete a master's thesis in addition to all required coursework.

- *Reserve/Monthly Executive Program (MEP).* Marines may participate in the Reserve/MEP in either a sponsored or unsponsored capacity. The only appreciable difference between the two options is whether the reserve Marine receives drill pay and points for attending classes and receives funded annual training orders to participate in NIU's two-week summer intensive term. Individual Mobilization Augmentee, Selected Marine Corps Reserve, and Inactive Ready Reserve reserve component Marines are eligible to apply for sponsored participation. Prerequisites for sponsored participation in the Re-

serve/MEP differ slightly from those outlined above. Applicants must be first lieutenant to major, chief warrant officer 2 to chief warrant officer 3, or staff sergeant to gunnery sergeant and not have failed selection to the next higher grade. Majors must have less than four years' time in grade. The programs are open to any MOS, but preference is given to 02XX and 26XX Marines. Applicants must have a minimum of five years intelligence or cryptologic experience, and officers and staff non-commissioned officers must agree to remain in an intelligence billet in the Individual Mobilization Augmentee or Selected Marine Corps Reserve for three years following graduation. Reserve Marines' applications for sponsored participation in the Reserve/MEP must also include a Reserve Qualification Summary, Master Brief Sheet, and one-page resume detailing military and civilian experience. Active duty Marines participating in the Reserve/MEP do so on their own time at no additional expense to the Marine Corps. Reserve/MEP students undertake a two-year, part-time program, throughout which they typically enroll in two classes per quarter. Fall, winter, and spring quarter classes are conducted on weekends, with summer intensive term classes

taking place Monday through Friday for two consecutive weeks.²⁵

- *Evening.* Marines may participate in NIU's evening program in an unsponsored capacity. The program is part-time and requires two years to complete. Most students begin in August, and they enroll in two classes per quarter.

- *European and Southern Academic Center Cohorts.* NIU offers the MSSI program at its European Academic Center in Molesworth, England, and the Southern Academic Center at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida. Both cohorts are two-year, part-time programs. Marines may participate in these programs in an unsponsored capacity with chain of command approval.²⁶

Certificates. In addition to undergraduate and graduate degrees, NIU offers several specialized certificates providing intelligence professionals with the opportunity to focus on specific regional, technical, or topic areas of interest at any point in their careers. Examples of current certificate programs include Afghanistan/Pakistan, Africa: Strategic Intelligence Studies, China: Intelligence Concerns, Leadership and Management in the Intelligence Community, Strategic Warning Analysis, and Data Science Intelligence. These programs typically entail part-time enrollment with one class per quarter for four consecutive quarters. Marines interested in applying must hold a bachelor's degree, have a top secret clearance, and be eligible for access to SCI. Participation in a certificate program is typically undertaken in an unsponsored capacity, requiring no HQMC approval. However, Marines must formally apply to NIU to participate in certificate programs.²⁷

JPME-I Certification. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized NIU to grant credit for JPME Phase I to graduate students who complete the prescribed curriculum. To receive credit, students must complete the full curriculum for the MSSI or the MSTI degree, take certain designated JPME courses, participate in a staff ride class, and complete an examination on joint doctrine.²⁸

Value Proposition: Good for the Marine, Good for the Corps

Sending Marines to NIU is an expensive proposition for the Marine Corps. Full-time participation in one of NIU's degree programs effectively removes a Marine from the fight for an entire year, while part-time participation will demand a considerable amount of the Marine's time and attention for two years. This is in addition to time away from the operating forces that the Marine might spend attending Expeditionary Warfare School, the MAGTF Intelligence Officers Course, Command and Staff College, and other training or education. In the case of reserve component Marines, sponsored participation in one of NIU's graduate programs will consume all of his or her drills and AT periods for two to three years. Although NIU charges no tuition or fees, the Marine Corps continues to pay an active duty Marine's salary, BAS, and BAH, and potentially PCS expenses. For reserve component Marines participating in NIU programs in a sponsored capacity, the Marine Corps will pay for drills, two weeks of AT, and associated authorized travel and lodging expenses. Despite these costs, the benefits to both the Marine Corps and to the individual Marine constitute a significant return on investment.

Perhaps the most profound and unique benefits of NIU's programs are the opportunities they provide to conduct classified research and think deeply about complex intelligence issues that characterize the contemporary operating environment or will shape that of the future. NIU is the only accredited, degree-granting educational institution designed, organized, equipped, and authorized to conduct all coursework and thesis research in a classified environment. A number of educational institutions now offer intelligence-related degrees, but NIU is unique in its ability to offer Marines the opportunity to incorporate classified intelligence into their studies, drawing from data unavailable elsewhere in the academic world. A sampling of recent unclassified thesis titles illustrates the depth of research and analysis on complex, operationally relevant intelligence issues:

- "Intelligence Driven Cyber Risk Management," GySgt Patrick Bolger, 2019.
- "Is It a Use of Force and How Will We Know? The Legal Inadequacies of Measuring the Scale and Effects of Cyberspace Operations," Maj Chris Pavlak, 2019.
- "The Evolution of the Department of Homeland Security Insider Threat Program," Maj Ray Wong, 2019.
- "Measuring Soft Power: A Survey on Soft Power Metrics and Their Utility For Strategic Intelligence Analysis," Maj Aled Fain, 2020.
- "Quantitative Discursive Analysis for Event Detection in Open-Source News Media," Maj Krysta Anthony, 2021.
- "The Future Legal Regime in the Space Domain: The Evolution of International Space Law," Maj James Astuno, 2021.

Just as NIU offers unique opportunities for Marines to pursue classified academic work and think about current and future challenges, its programs also offer unique leadership development opportunities not available elsewhere. Some might argue that given the Marine Corps' substantial investment in leadership training and education, there

designed to prepare students for the challenges of leadership in the IC. *MCR 608, Leadership and Management in the Intelligence Community*, and *MCR 611, Intelligence and National Security Policy*, are core courses that every Marine seeking a graduate degree must complete. These courses provide a foundation on which a number of leadership-focused electives build; these include *INT 603, Intelligence Resource Management: Process, Politics, and Money*, *INT 604, Professional Ethics*, *INT 605, Intelligence and National Security Law*, *MSI 501, Leadership and Intelligence*, *MSI 502, Leadership, Intelligence, and National Security Decision-Making*, and *MSI 504, Organizational Management and Change*.²⁹

Beyond formal coursework, NIU offers a form of leadership development with a value that is virtually impossible to quantify—the expansion and diversification of the Marine's professional network outside the Marine Corps. For Academic Year 2018–2019, NIU's total enrollment was just under 660 students representing over 53 different organizations. Every branch of the military—active duty, reserve, and National Guard—was represented, as were dozens of agencies and activities

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is no need to incur the additional cost of sending a Marine to NIU for leadership development. However, NIU offers unique perspectives that prepare Marines for the nuanced challenges associated with leadership of intelligence organizations within the Marine Corps, the joint force, or the interagency.

While virtually every course at NIU will increase a Marine's readiness for positions of greater responsibility and authority by strengthening his or her regional or technical expertise, a body of core and elective courses are specifically

including CIA, DIA, MCIA, NGA, NRO, NSA, ODNI, ONI, and the Departments of Commerce, Defense, Energy, Homeland Security, Justice, State, and Treasury. Represented law enforcement organizations included the AFOSI, ATF, FBI, DEA, NCIS, and U.S. Secret Service. In addition, organizations not typically associated with intelligence uniquely contributed to the organizational diversity of NIU's student body—including the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the Office of Personnel Management, U.S. National



The National Intelligence University is located in Roberdeau Hall at the Intelligence Community Campus-Bethesda, MD. (Photo courtesy ICC-Bethesda.)

Archives and Records Administration, and the U.S. Agency for International Development.³⁰ The opportunity to meet and develop relationships with such a remarkably diverse set of colleagues outside the Marine Corps likely exceeds that found in any of the Marine Corps' Service schools or even in the majority of other Services' schools or joint schools some Marines attend. It is of inestimable value to Marines charged with leading intelligence activities within the joint force or interagency, as well as to Marines leading intelligence organizations within the Marine Corps' operating forces that are integrated into a joint or interagency endeavor.

Closely related to, but distinct from, the leadership development opportunities NIU affords are the ways its programs prepare Marines to excel in the joint or interagency environment through both formal instruction and informal exposure to diverse organizational cultures and perspectives. Marines successfully completing command and staff programs will have had a thorough exposure to the Joint Operational Planning and Execution System. NIU offers elective courses that provide graduate level examination of the nuanced intelligence aspects of Joint Operational Planning and Execution System, including *DEF 601, National Strategy:*

Theory and Intelligence Considerations, DEF 602, Joint Campaign Planning and Intelligence, and *DEF 624, Operational Capabilities Analysis.* In addition to formal instruction and coursework, NIU exposes Marines to an exceptional range of organizational cultures across the federal government, both internal and external to the IC. Marine Corps intelligence professionals are exposed to concepts pertaining to IC organization, roles, and functions during initial MOS training, and intelligence officers explore these concepts in greater depth during the MAGTF Intelligence Officers Course. NIU builds on this baseline knowledge by affording Marines the opportunity to interact with students from all the aforementioned organizations.³¹

Having extolled the virtues of NIU's programs and detailed the various paths and mechanisms through which Marines may take advantage of them a few words are appropriate addressing who should not apply. NIU coursework—whether for continuing education, a certificate program, or to satisfy the requirements for an undergraduate or graduate degree—requires a substantial amount of time and effort. Students should not expect rote memorization or lecture designed to convey what to think—exams rarely feature multiple choice questions. Rather, students

should expect problem-posing educational methods designed to convey how to think, decide, and act. While this often contributes to a more rewarding educational experience, many will find it extremely strenuous and challenging. Marines applying to NIU should have strong written communication skills. Poor writing skills will compound any difficulties the Marine might encounter with the substance of coursework, and reduce the likelihood of timely, satisfactory thesis completion. Considering the time required to attend classes, complete readings, research and draft papers and presentations, and for graduate students to complete a thesis, Marines should carefully consider the potential impact on other aspects of their lives such as family, work, religious, and social obligations. This is particularly true for those considering part-time enrollment. Marines anticipating significant life events such as marriage, divorce, the birth of a child, or transition between civilian positions for reservists should probably defer application to a later date, as should those considering simultaneous enrollment in Service nonresident PME.

Recommendations for Prospective Students

More Marine Corps intelligence professionals should take advantage of NIU's programs. A relatively small number of commissioned officers and SNCOs are able to enroll in NIU's full-time programs each year; however, the number of Marines able to apply for NIU's part-time programs is virtually unlimited. As we posture for an era of great power competition that is very likely to emphasize distributed operations, we should leverage NIU's part-time programs to prepare more junior officers, warrant officers, and SNCOs to thrive in the joint and interagency intelligence environment.

While being able to attend class full-time and focus predominantly on school might be ideal, part-time enrollment carries some unadvertised and lesser-known advantages. Part-time students have more time to think about both their coursework and their theses. Perhaps more importantly, they often

join cohorts with greater organizational and experiential diversity than those available to their full-time counterparts. Part-time programs are full of students from across the interagency who cannot get time off from work for full-time participation, and reservists in part-time programs often bring a staggering amount of non-military, non-intelligence professional experience that amplifies the breadth and complexity of class discussions.

A range of resources are available to assist Marines weighing the decision to apply for one of NIU's programs. NIU's website (<https://www.ni-u.edu>) contains a wealth of information for prospective students, including the most current course catalogue and information on NIU's enrollment requirements. Detailed information on Marine Corps requirements is available in MARADMINs released annually to solicit applications for full-time and part-time programs for active and reserve component Marines. Additional information on Marine applications for NIU programs is available on the Intelligence Division website (<https://www.hqmc.marines.mil/intelligence/Intel-OPS-PERS/Educational-Programs/>).

Notes

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>Author's Note: This article presents the views of the author and does not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the National Intelligence University, the Marine Corps, the DOD, the U.S. Intelligence Community, or the U.S. Government. The Defense Intelligence Agency has reviewed this draft article and approved it for public release.

