



The United States Naval War College

Academic Awards for the 2025–2026 Academic Year

DIANE M. DISNEY WRITING AWARD

Major Leah R. Deignan, U.S. Marine Corps	CNCS Jun 2026
Major Zachery B. Teague, U.S. Air Force	CNCS Jun 2026
Lieutenant Colonel April C. Harker, U.S. Air Force Reserve	CNW Jun 2026
Lieutenant Commander Rajashekar Gorla, Indian Navy	NSC Jun 2026
Major Eric N. Dayhuff, U.S. Air Force	CNCS Jun 2026

AFCEA RESEARCH HONOR AWARD

IJO/IW/OIE Category

Winner:

Name: Lieutenant Daniel Chmura, U.S. Navy	CNCS Mar 2027
Essay: “Coordinated, Not Commanded: The Case for a Joint Force Information Warfare Component Commander”	

Cyberspace, Communications, Electronics, Command and Control,
Information Systems Category

Winner:

Name: Major Samuel C. Harding, U.S. Army	CNCS Jun 2026
Essay: “Massing Data, Not Just Effects: Integrating AI-Enabled Simulation into Joint Planning”	

ASIA-PACIFIC STUDIES PRIZE

Winner:

Name: Major Dylan Ban, Singapore Navy	NSC Jun 2026
Essay: “China’s Wealth-Power Paradigm: Implications for US China Strategy”	



Honorable Mention:

Name: Captain Faisal Chawdhury, Bangladesh Navy **NCC Jun 2026**
Essay: "Covenantal Alliance or Strategic Subordination: Can Small Indian Ocean Littoral States Forge Durable Maritime Autonomy Amid Great Power Competition?"

ROBERT E. BATEMANS' INTERNATIONAL PRIZE ESSAY AWARD

Winner:

Name: Captain Hiroshi Matsukawa, Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force **NCC Jun 2026**
Essay: "Designing Difference, Collaborative Asymmetry in Maritime Force Planning for the U.S.-Japan Alliance"

Honorable Mention:

Name: Commander Scott Andrew Taylor, Royal Navy **NCC Jun 2026**
Essay: "Lessons from Jutland to Cape Matapan: The Limits of Artificial Intelligence in Naval Command"

ADMIRAL RICHARD G. COLBERT MEMORIAL PRIZE

Winner:

Name: Lieutenant Commander Craig Allen, U.S. Navy **CNW Mar 2027**
Essay: "Leveraging Allies and Partners in the Indo-Pacific: Mitigating Risk in Maritime Capacity"

Honorable Mention:

Name: Major Sarah N. Long, U.S. Army **CNCS Jun 2026**
Essay: "The Scars That Shape Peace: Assessing Risks to Ceasefire Missions"



JOHN J. D'LUHY PRIZE TO HONOR EXCELLENCE IN STRATEGIC ANALYSIS AND THOUGHT

Intermediate-Level Course Category

Winner:

Name: Lieutenant Commander Braxton J. Godfrey, U.S. Navy **CNCS Jun 2026**
Essay: "Defeating Adversaries Employing Irregular Warfare"

Senior-Level Course Category

Winner:

Name: Lieutenant Colonel Christopher C. Robinette, U.S. Army Reserve **CNW Jun 2026**
Essay: "Impediments for Building Great Sea Power"

VICE ADMIRAL JAMES H. DOYLE, JR., MILITARY OPERATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL LAW PRIZE

U.S. Student Category

Winner:

Name: Mr. Adnan A. Mirza, Department of State **CNCS Jun 2026**
Essay: "Autonomous Weapons Systems: Examining Human Control Frameworks"

Honorable Mention:

Name: Commander Sara P. Neugroschel, U.S. Navy **CNW Jun 2026**
Essay: "Effects Governance: The Law of Armed Conflict and the Modern Commander's Dilemma"

International Student Category

Winner:

Name: Lieutenant Colonel Alvin Tan, Singapore Navy **NSC Jun 2026**
Essay: "Contesting China's Lawfare in the South China Sea"



Honorable Mention:

Name: Lieutenant Commander Rajashekar Gorla, Indian Navy **NSC Jun 2026**
Essay: "From Platforms to Weapons: The Legal Classification of Unmanned Maritime Vehicles in Naval Warfare"

FOREIGN AREA OFFICER ASSOCIATION AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

CDE/CNCS/NSC Category

Winner:

Name: Major Dylan Ban, Singapore Navy **NSC Jun 2026**
Essay: "India on Its Own Terms: A Durable Framework for Managing a Complex but Promising Relationship"

Honorable Mention:

Name: Mr. Douglas M. Johnson, Department of State **CNCS Jun 2026**
Essay: "Seizing the Initiative in the Western Pacific: An Integrated U.S. Framework to Counter China's Gray Zone Operations"

CNW/NCC Category

Winner:

Name: Lieutenant Colonel Ryan J. Buckingham, U.S. Army **CNW Jun 2026**
Essay: "Exploiting Fragmentation: An Economy of Force SOF Strategy Against Iran's Proxy Network"

Honorable Mention:

Name: Captain Gaurav Joshi, Indian Navy **NCC Jun 2026**
Essay: "Strategic Autonomy and the Limits of Alignment: The U.S.-India Partnership"



GENERAL GEORGE C. KENNEY AWARD FOR WRITING ON THE TOPIC OF AIRPOWER

Winner:

Name: Major Philip A. West, U.S. Air National Guard **CNCS Jun 2026**
Essay: "Drone Warfare and the Future of Airpower: Operational and Strategic Implications from Ukraine"

Honorable Mention:

Name: Major Stephen R. Barlow, U.S. Air Force **CNCS Jun 2026**
Essay: "Using ACE for Sea Control: Expanding JFMCC Options Within the PRC WEZ"

LTGEN VICTOR "BRUTE" KRULAK WRITING AWARD SPONSORED BY THE MARINE CORPS ASSOCIATION FOUNDATION

Winner:

Name: Commander David L. Duprey, U.S. Navy **CNW Jun 2026**
Essay: "Combating Suicide Through Operational Art"

CAPTAIN JEROME E. LEVY ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY AND WORLD ORDER PRIZE

Winner:

Name: Major Samuel C. Harding, U.S. Army **CNCS Jun 2026**
Essay: "Countering PRC Coercion through an Indo-Pacific Cable Security Fleet"

J. WILLIAM MIDDENDORF II AWARD FOR STUDENT RESEARCH

Winner:

Name: Major John C. Weidinger, U.S. Army **CNCS Jun 2026**
Essay: "SCUD-Hunting in the 21st Century: Lessons from the War with Iran"



Honorable Mention:

Name: Lieutenant David A. Doebrick, U.S. Navy

CNCS Jun 2026

Essay: "Accelerating the Kill Chain: Integrating Artificial Intelligence into Over the Horizon Targeting Operations"

MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN JOINT SERVICE WARFARE

CNCS/CDE Category

Winner:

Name: Lieutenant Commander Ben Dodge, U.S. Navy

CNCS Mar 2027

Essay: "Deciding Faster: Mission Command, Pre-delegated Authorities, and AI Planning"

CNW Category

Winner:

Name: Lieutenant Colonel John P. Biszko, U.S. Space Force

CNW Jun 2026

Essay: "Space Sea Battle"

LIEUTENANT MICHAEL P. MURPHY COUNTERTERRORISM PRIZE

International Student Category

Winner:

Name: Captain Geoffrey Ugwu, Nigerian Navy

NCC Jun 2026

Essay: "Enhancing the US-Nigeria Bilateral Relationships to Curb Terrorism in the Sahel Region"



NAVAL SUBMARINE LEAGUE AWARD

Winner:

Name: Lieutenant Commander Manuel Corral, Spanish Navy
Essay: "A Flexible C2 and Intelligence Model for
Submarine-Launched UUVs"

NSC Jun 2026

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE FOUNDATION AWARD

Winner:

Name: Lieutenant Colonel Nicholas J. Freeman, U.S. Marine Corps
Essay: "Bulwark or Busywork?: Weighing the Case for Naval Presence"

CNW Jun 2026

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE SURFACE NAVY ASSOCIATION AWARD

Winner:

Name: Major Anthony M. Johnson, U.S. Marine Corps
Essay: "Employing Fleet Combat Power for Sea Control and Denial"

CNCS Jun 2026

OUTSTANDING FOREIGN POLICY ANALYSIS ESSAY

Theater Security Decision Making

Winner:

Name: Captain Sebastian Argenti, Swedish Marines

NSC Jun 2026

National Security Decision Making

Winner:

Name: Ms. Winnifred P. Warren, Defense Senior Leadership
Development Program

CNW Jun 2026



MATTHEW C. PERRY AWARD FOR INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH

First Place:

Name: Commander Manuel Ariza, Colombian Navy **NCC Jun 2026**
Essay: "Reinvigorating the Keystone: A Shared Strategy for the United States and Colombia to Counter China's Growing Influence in South America"

Second Place:

Name: Commander Igor Maury, French Navy **NCC Jun 2026**
Essay: "Securing Freedom of Action: A Pathway to a Resilient and Competitive European Defense Industrial Base"

DETERRENCE STUDIES INSTITUTE AWARD FOR WRITING ON DETERRENCE

Winner:

Name: Major Dylan Ban, Singapore Navy **NSC Jun 2026**
Essay: "Credibility in the Gray-Zone: Towards a Unified Theory of Gray-Zone Deterrence"

Honorable Mention:

Name: Major John C. Weidinger, U.S. Army **CNCS Jun 2026**
Essay: "Deterring the PLARF Threat to the Homeland: Missile Retaliation or Missile Defense"

Honorable Mention:

Name: Commander Waqas Khan, Pakistan Navy **NSC Jun 2026**
Essay: "Stable Deterrence, Unstable Peace: Can South Asia Escape the Escalation Paradox?"

MR. B. FRANKLIN REINAUER II DEFENSE ECONOMICS PRIZE

Winner:

Name: Major Dylan Ban, Singapore Navy **NSC Jun 2026**
Essay: "Sustaining INDOPACOM's Political Economy: Mitigating Effects of US Unilateral Tariff Policy on Operations"



Honorable Mention:

Name: Lieutenant James Trichilo, U.S. Navy CDE
Essay: "Global Capital Flow Recycling and the Fiscal Architecture
of the Global War on Terror"

Honorable Mention:

Name: Mr. Erik A. Mims, Defense Contract Management Agency CNW Jun 2026
Essay: "The Economics of Deterrence: Restructuring the
U.S. Defense Industrial Base"

ADMIRAL STOCKDALE MEMORIAL LEADERSHIP AND ETHICS PRIZE

Winner:

Name: Major Philip A. West, U.S. Air National Guard CNCS Jun 2026
Essay: "Moral Clarity Without Moral Closure:
Leadership Responsibility After Lawful Violence"

USNI-NWC NONRESIDENT ESSAY CONTEST

Winner:

Name: Lieutenant Commander Adam T. Biggs, U.S. Navy CDE Jun 2026
Essay: "Fostering Engagement in Non-Resident Professional
Military Education"

CAPTAIN WALTER B. WOODSON, JR., ACADEMIC MEMORIAL PRIZE

First Prize:

Name: Lieutenant Colonel Alvin Tan, Singapore Navy NSC Jun 2026
Seminar essay written in response to the following prompt:
"Under what conditions should leaders consider risking their fleet?"



ZIMMERMAN-GRAY ESSAY AWARD

Winner:

Name: Lieutenant Commander Nahian Baker Milky, Bangladesh Navy **NSC Jun 2026**
Essay: "The New Geometry of War: Strategy in the Age of Alliances and Proxies"

EDWARD H. BRAGG AWARD FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE BY A U.S. COAST GUARD OFFICER

Name: Lieutenant Commander Brian P. Hagerty, U.S. Coast Guard **CNCS Jun 2026**

DALE JENKINS AND SANDRA PANEM INTERNATIONAL MASTER OF ARTS PROGRAM ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Name: Captain Sebastian Argenti, Swedish Marines **NSC Jun 2026**

ADMIRAL IKE KIDD NAVAL INTELLIGENCE FOUNDATION AWARD

Name: Lieutenant Commander Nicholas A. Szappanos, U.S. Navy **CNCS Jun 2026**

CAPTAIN JAMES T. LARKIN, U.S. MARINE CORPS, AWARD FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE BY A U.S. MARINE CORPS OFFICER

Name: Lieutenant Colonel Nicholas J. Freeman, U.S. Marine Corps **CNW Jun 2026**

DRS. DANIEL AND SUSAN THYS ACADEMIC PRIZE

Name: Commander Sara P. Neugroschel, U.S. Navy **CNW Jun 2026**

RADM JOSEPH C. STRASSER INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP PRIZES

Naval Staff College:

Name: Commander Øyvind Lavoll, Royal Norwegian Navy **NSC Jun 2026**

Naval Command College:

Name: Captain Francesco Rima, Italian Navy **NCC Jun 2026**



NAVY LEAGUE AWARDS

William S. Sims Award:

Name: Major Eric N. Dayhuff, U.S. Air Force

CNCS Jun 2026

Stephen B. Luce Award:

Name: Commander Sara P. Neugroschel, U.S. Navy

CNW Jun 2026