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2018-11-01

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Vencill, Taylor

Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey California

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Students Attend Experience Tour at PEO Integrated Warfare Systems

MC2 Taylor Vencill | November 2, 2018



A cohort of NPS students visits with Capt. Seiko Okano, fourth from left, head of Program Executive Office Integrated Warfare Systems and recent winner of the Navy Acquisition Excellence Award for Program Manager of the Year. Okano, a 2001 graduate of NPS, and her command were just one stop on a high-pace tour through future combat system development.

Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) students recently participated in an internship trip sponsored by the Program Executive Office (PEO) Integrated Warfare Systems (IWS). The annual experience tour allows the students to see first-hand at what combat systems developers are working on, and how these systems will be used in the fleet.

“At NPS, we get visiting admirals and captains who talk to us about our opportunities, but we don’t actually get to see what EDOs (Engineering Duty Officers) are doing in the field,” said Lt. Tricia Nguyen, a student at NPS participating in the program. “That’s pretty much what we did. We chaperoned a couple junior officers as well, to see what they were doing working for them.”

The students traveled to several places along the east coast that included both Navy facilities and private companies. The pace was high speed, but the experience provided students with exposure to several technologies and programs.

“We were packed ... We spent a day at Moorestown, New Jersey and learned all about AEGIS, a missile defense system, and all of the various baselines and what we’re doing to develop that technology,” said Nguyen. “Then we had to get to Washington, D.C., for a meeting with [senior officers] who talked to us about the program management side. We also had to spend four hours at NRL [Naval Research Lab]. ... It was difficult getting from place to place, but the actual things we did went pretty smoothly, once we got there.”

“We went to Raytheon and Lockheed Martin and saw what they do in the industry and how we liaison with them,” she added. “They explained their processes as to how they develop new technology for us. And on our end, they explained what we should be well versed with by the time we get there so we can liaison between the Navy and them.”

The trip allowed students to meet senior officers to see what their perspectives are in working with weapon systems development. The group spent some time with head of PEO IWS, Navy Capt. Seiko Okano, just after the announcement of her selection as Program Manager of the Year through the Navy’s Acquisition Excellence Awards program.

Okano is a 2001 graduate of NPS in the Space Systems Engineering program, and she provided some insights to the group from her perspective at the helm of the unit developing critical combat systems for Sailors across the fleet. It’s a job any one of the students could find themselves in further in his or her career.

“It’s a chance to meet senior EDOs,” said Navy Cmdr. Durward Dunn. “Most of the people who leave here will be going into their qualification tours. It gives them the chance to say, ‘Is this what I want to do as an EDO?’

“There are many different ways you can go,” he continued. “There is ship repair and construction, IT [information technology], weapons, and you have a few others areas. So, this is a good chance for them to see what you would do as someone who works with weapons and combat systems.”

Even though the purpose of the trip will help these Sailors in the fleet, it also has a more immediate and direct impact on their studies here at NPS.

“I’m doing applied physics and pretty much every student on that trip was an applied physics student,” said Nguyen. “It gave us ideas for what to research as far as our thesis goes. For me, for example, I’m working with SPAWAR [Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command] and some of the others really haven’t picked their thesis yet, but these are opportunities for them to find a project relevant to what the fleet is seeing today.”

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