



Making Manifest and Powerful *The Grip of the Long Gray Line*



# STRATEGIC PLAN

January 2016 through December 2019

# The Corps

*The Corps, the Corps, the Corps . . .*

*The Corps, bareheaded, salute it, with eyes up, thanking our God.*

*That we of the Corps are treading, where they of the Corps have trod.*

*They are here in ghostly assemblage, the ranks of the Corps long dead.*

*And our hearts are standing attention, while we wait for their passing tread.*

*The Corps of today, we salute you, the Corps of an earlier day;*

*We follow, close order, behind you, where you have pointed the way;*

*The long gray line of us stretches, thro' the years of a century told*

*And the last one feels to the marrow, the grip of your far-off hold.*

*Grip hands with us now though we see not, grip hands with us, strengthen our hearts,*

*As the long line stiffens and straightens, with the thrill that your presence imparts.*

*Grip hands tho' it be from the shadows, while we swear, as you did of yore,*

*Or living, or dying, to honor the Corps, and the Corps, and the Corps.*



## Fellow Graduates:

The West Point Association of Graduates is the more than 50,000 living graduates of the U.S. Military Academy—the Long Gray Line. The focus of this plan is to enhance the Long Gray Line’s cohesiveness and capabilities to serve West Point and each other.

Our Association’s purpose is set down in our *Bylaws*: “The Association shall be dedicated to furthering the ideals and promoting the welfare of the United States Military Academy, and to supporting and serving its graduates.” From there we derived the mission to “Serve West Point and the Long Gray Line.” In the post-campaign years ahead, we will continue our strong support for West Point and improve our Association’s capabilities to enable graduates to interact for many purposes. From 2016 through 2019, we will continue to grow as an alumni body that makes...

## Manifest and Powerful... *The Grip of the Long Gray Line.*

*The Grip*, of course, is prominent in *The Corps*, one of West Point’s most meaningful and treasured songs. To many graduates, that image is the heart of the Long Gray Line’s ethos. The Grip suggests camaraderie, commitment, and mutual support. It connects graduates of all generations. It represents bonds forged in common experiences guided by our beacon *Duty, Honor, Country*. This plan is largely about adding to *The Grip*’s tangible aspects and the Long Gray Line’s cohesiveness.

*The Grip* is an apt central theme as we approach the 150th anniversary of our Association, May 22, 2019. Since the Association of Graduates’ first organizing meeting in New York City, four years after the American Civil War, our Association’s activities have brought together the members of the Long Gray Line to rekindle friendships and to support West Point. Those core functions remain the essence of *Gripping Hands*.

At the end of 2015, we concluded our seven-year comprehensive *For Us All* campaign. It focused on five categories of support: *For the Cadets*, *For the Landmark*, *For Our Today*, *For the Nation*, and *For the Long Gray Line*. The Campaign sought funding primarily for endowments for the Academy. They are especially meaningful because they provide long-term, consistent sources of support, even in uncertain budget circumstances. Areas of support touched every corner of the Academy, including cadet activities, athletic teams, academic departments and centers, cultural immersion opportunities, and cadet research programs, as well as West Point the landmark and WPAOG’s financial sustainability. USMA will benefit for many years to come from the more than \$400 million dollars raised under the *For Us All* banner. During the next four years, we will continue fundraising for USMA’s and our Association’s needs. Our goal is to continue raising funds at an annual amount near the level of the latter years of the campaign.

During the campaign years, we also established, transformed, or enhanced capabilities supporting our alumni. WPAOG now has a communications and marketing department, which produces *West Point* magazine, the *Register of Graduates*, and numerous electronic communications and social media. We dramatically expanded our services

for class and affinity group reunions, and we renovated the alumni center, greatly enhancing our information technology infrastructure and repairing the HVAC system. Leaning forward, we will continue to enhance our Association's services for graduates, as well as family members and others who share our graduates' passion for West Point. Note also, while we are an *association of graduates*, we are inclusive. We will continue to welcome participation by our affiliated members (Associate Members and Friends of West Point), as well as parents of cadets, families of graduates, and friends of the U.S. Military Academy.

At the end of 2019, we will have reinforced the foundation to sustain success and grow our capabilities in 2020 and beyond. Members of our governance organizations, individual graduates, and others have contributed to our strategic planning process. It has produced three strategic goals:

**Goal 1—*Maintain WPAOG's Momentum.*** Build on the success of the *For Us All* campaign. Conduct targeted fundraising and other alumni activities that address the U.S. Military Academy's needs as defined by the Superintendent, as well as our Association's needs as defined by our Board of Directors.

**Goal 2—*Enhance The Grip of the Long Gray Line.*** Expand the engagement of all graduates and serve them in ways that are relevant during the stages in their lives. A specific objective will be to improve our networking systems and services that facilitate graduates' interaction with one another for a wide variety of purposes.

**Goal 3—*Invest in WPAOG's Capabilities as an Association.*** Prepare and develop our systems, infrastructures, professional staff, and volunteers for high performance in the operating environment of 2020 and beyond. Leverage the 150th Anniversary of the Association, using it as an occasion to attract additional participants, reaffirm our values as an alumni body, and continue to enrich our culture of philanthropy and engagement.

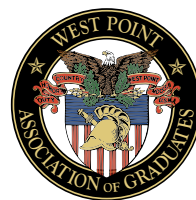
The years 2016 through 2019 will be exciting ones. They will be a time for us to build on the great work that graduates and others have been doing for many years in the name of West Point. The team in the alumni center and I look forward to working with the Long Gray Line's leadership and with all graduates to create new opportunities for us to thrive as an alumni organization bonded by *The Grip of the Long Gray Line*.



**Robert L. McClure '76**

Colonel, USA (Retired)

President & Chief Executive Officer



# Goal 1:

## Maintain WPAOG's Momentum

### *Continue Strong Support for West Point*

Primarily, this goal refers to the fundraising momentum of the *For Us All* Campaign, but, secondarily, it refers to the many modes of operational support that WPAOG provides USMA. The Campaign sought funding primarily for endowments for the Academy, touching on cadet activities, athletic teams, academic departments and centers, cultural immersion opportunities, and cadet research. In the post-campaign years of 2016 to 2020, today's WPAOG services and programs supporting USMA will continue, and we will continue to review them and enhance their effectiveness. Specifically, WPAOG will continue to raise funds for the Margin of Excellence needs designated by the Superintendent, as well as the Long Gray Line funds and WPAOG needs designated by the Board.

West Point's graduates support USMA in many ways. Many alumni activities, for example, are intended to be inspirational and educational. Examples are our Association's awards—the Thayer Award, the Ninger Award for Valor at Arms, the Distinguished Graduate Award, and the Pershing Writing Award. Other activities include the 50-Year Class Affiliation Program, the Class Ring Memorial Program, and the semi-annual, iconic alumni march across diagonal walk followed by the wreath-laying ceremony. WPAOG's direct operational support includes our communications, which often complement or reinforce USMA's messages. Using WPAOG's electronic and print media we help to tell the USMA story to the nation, especially those chapters of the story focused on the service of West Point's graduates, cadets, staff, and faculty. Through publications such as *West Point* magazine, *TAPS*, and the *Register of Graduates*, we shine a light on the service of our members, and preserve the Long Gray Line's record of service to our nation. Additionally, our staff and

alumni center serve as host and home for many alumni returning to West Point for a multitude of purposes: reunions, parents weekends, athletic tailgates, WPAOG governance meetings and leadership conferences, USMA activities associated with graduation-day events, and retirement ceremonies are just a few of the alumni activities at West Point that WPAOG supports. Additionally, we assist in raising public awareness of the West Point brand. The Gift Shop sells products bearing Army West Point athletic marks, as well as USMA institutional marks. These high quality products, purchased by graduates, family members, and the public help to project the West Point brand around the world.

For more than a decade, WPAOG has led the collaborative design and construction of privately funded brick and mortar projects prior to their being proffered by WPAOG to the Academy. With a new visitors center, lacrosse center, soccer stadium and other capital construction projects in progress or on the horizon, this construction management function has become an essential component of the Margin of Excellence process. WPAOG now assists in managing the maintenance and repair of many gift-funded facilities and monuments on the Academy grounds.

WPAOG also has a long-standing role in supporting USMA Admissions. For example, the West Point Preparatory Scholarship Program supplements USMA Admissions' direct admission sourcing. Annually, the program provides over forty candidates with financial assistance for a year of academics at a civilian preparatory school

During the next four years, the following objectives will be the focal points in our work to *Maintain WPAOG's Momentum* in our support for West Point:



**1a. Continue to Raise Funds for USMA’s Margin of Excellence, as Well as for WPAOG’s Needs:** Annually, raise private funds for USMA and WPAOG, achieving annual cash, pledge, and participation goals approved by the Board of Directors. Specific actions include over time lowering the Gift Allocation Percentage from 12% to 10%. Our goal for the alumni participation percentage is to increase incrementally the annual percentage of graduate donors from 32% to 35% (of the total living graduates) in preparation for the next fundraising campaign (see objective 1e.).

**1b. Enhance WPAOG’s Legacy and Archival Services for USMA:** One of WPAOG’s traditional roles has been to compile and archive the record of West Point graduates’ service to the nation. By the end of 2019, develop a long-range plan for the *Register of Graduates and Former Cadets*, West Point’s historic repository for the composite service records of the Long Gray Line; develop a 10-year publication plan (print and electronic) for the *Register* as a complementary element of WPAOG’s legacy/archival services. Additionally, develop a master plan for preserving or maintaining WPAOG’s suite of print and digital archival services such as the Cullum Files and *TAPS*, which memorialize our graduates and preserve the record of their service to our nation.

**1c. Continue to Support USMA Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives:** Proactively support the Superintendent’s diversity initiatives to recruit and retain a Corps of Cadets and staff and faculty who reflect the diversity of the nation that West Point serves. Co-host and financially support the annual West Point Diversity Leadership Conference, as well as complementary initiatives such as the Second Decennial West Point Women’s Conference in 2016 and the series of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) workshops.

**1d. Enhance WPAOG’s Construction-Management Capabilities:** Supporting USMA. In cooperation with USMA, refine policies and operating procedures for managing the design and construction of gift-funded USMA facilities and monuments. Manage or monitor, as appropriate, the repair and upkeep of selected facilities and monuments.

**1e. Establish the Conditions to Launch the Next Fundraising Campaign:** By January 2020, conduct the donor pool research, collaborate with USMA to define the needs, establish information systems, review coordination procedures with USMA, define WPAOG needs, and organize the WPAOG staff and volunteer leadership to launch the nucleus phase of the next fundraising campaign.

## Goal 2:

# Enhance *The Grip of the Long Gray Line*

## *Add Value to Membership in WPAOG*

WPAOG is not a *benefits*-based association, and, as defined in our *Bylaws*, every member of the Long Gray Line is a Regular (i.e., voting) Member of our Association. However, our goal is for *all* graduates to value their memberships in our *association* and to be active.

The practical and emotional value of a WPAOG membership is an area of special emphasis during the period covered by the plan.

Personal connections and relationships have always been major drivers in deepening the affinity for West Point that every graduate feels to some degree. In fact, our Association's first *Constitution and By-Laws*, written in 1870, defined the *objects* of the Association as follows: "to cherish the memories of our Alma Mater, and to promote the social intercourse and fraternal fellowship of its graduates." The diction may be archaic, but the meaning resonates today: *Old Grads* (even a USMA second lieutenant on his or her first day of commissioned service is an *Old Grad!*) brought together by common experiences related to West Point and interacting for a variety of purposes.

For many years, WPAOG's primary strategy for supporting alumni has been to do so by supporting the leaders of the Long Gray Line's alumni organizations—most notably USMA Classes and West Point Societies. During the timeframe of this plan, we will refine our services supporting alumni leaders. However, we also intend to expand services for



individual graduates that are relevant during different phases of their lives. At the heart of this effort will be multi-dimensional connecting or networking services. The power of *The Grip* is largely defined by meaningful connections among graduates (and others who love West Point). These connections might be for the purpose of career advancement, business-to-business networking, sharing hobbies and recreational interests, continuing education, or remembering those who have gone before us, as well as for *cherishing memories of our alma mater*, to borrow the phrase from our Association's first constitution.

We envision the following objectives as supporting the goal to *Enhance The Grip of the Long Gray Line*:



**2a. *Establish a Highly Capable Career Networking Service:*** Connecting graduates with one another for career-related purposes is a well-established function within many alumni bodies. We have identified two supporting objectives. First, establish a master networking function on staff—one or more individuals who are capable of assisting graduates in career transition, as well as those seeking internships, part-time employment, and volunteer and board opportunities, in addition to graduate-employers who would like to hire other West Point graduates. Second, deploy our Association’s next generation electronic career services support systems. This system will be a self-help complement to the personalized services provided by a networking advisor (see Objective 3b.).

**2b. *Enhance Networking Services Supporting Shared Interest Groups:*** By the end of 2016, develop and implement a plan and supporting technical capabilities, policies, procedures, and staff to support shared interest groups (i.e., members of the Long Gray Line who wish to make contact and interact with one another based on their shared interests. The shared interests might be professionally, socially, recreationally, or otherwise based. (See also Objective 3a.)

**2c. *Enhance Services Supporting Class and Society Leaders:*** Over the next four years, we will enhance our Association’s services for Class and Society leaders with an emphasis on information technology-based capabilities. Specifically, improve: (1) services used by Class and Society leaders to communicate with their constituents, (2) processes for updating constituent contact information and managing its use, (3) online “homes” (websites or similar electronic venues) for Classes and Societies, (4) information for Class and Society leaders via services such as online tool kits, (5) event-management tools, and (6) advanced multimedia-based support for leaders. (See also Objective 3a.)

**2d. *Establish a Process to Evaluate Proposed Services for Graduates:*** In 2016, implement a formal process to review and assess the programs and services that WPAOG operates for individual graduates. This effort will be a combined staff and volunteer team, centered in our Alumni Support organizations. Its charter will be to search for and review new services that our graduates and others might value. Potential new services will be evaluated in the context of a graduate’s life/professional cycle (e.g., recent graduates, active duty military, graduates in post-military careers, those who are fully retired, families of deceased graduates, etc.).

**2e. *Establish a Process to Evaluate Proposed Affinity Partnerships:*** WPAOG often receives partnership proposals. Entering into an affinity partnership (which typically has a co-branding aspect) or a simple business partnership is the culmination of a deliberate analytical process. It must take into account the partnership’s effects on our WPAOG brand, as well as the practical (and sometimes financial) benefits to our membership as individuals and as an aggregated alumni body. In 2016, we will institutionalize a process to analyze proposals, formalizing the ad hoc processes we have used for many years.



## Goal 3:

# Invest in WPAOG's Capabilities

## *To Reinforce our Foundation for Sustained Success*

Three facts are driving this goal: the continuing exponential global evolution of electronic communications (and the increasing threats to these electronic communications); our Association's growth in data and transactional volume (operational and financial); and our alumni center's aging support systems and infrastructure.

Substantial work toward this goal has begun. In 2014, we began to renovate the alumni center (HVAC replacement, IT upgrades, and internal renovations were completed in 2014-2015). We have also begun to develop concepts for the alumni center's possible expansion for the purpose of enhancing our alumni center's capabilities to support the Long Gray Line as their real and virtual home at our alma mater. In 2015, we identified the need to invest in and install our next generation Constituent Relationship Management—CRM—system. The current system has reached the end of its product life cycle. Its database's features are limited and its computing power marginally adequate. Additionally, rapid growth in online

payment processing and use of services such as our online event/membership registration capability has caused us to begin reviewing the technology/staff dynamics and to consider revising the operational concept that is the foundation of that service. Personnel transitions within WPAOG have also created a natural point where it makes sense to conduct a bottom-up review of internal processes and procedures in the context of the goals of this strategic plan and anticipated needs for 2020 and beyond.

The goal to *Invest in WPAOG's Capabilities* is framed by the following objectives:



**3a. Conduct a Comprehensive Programs and Services Review:** In conjunction with the 2016 and 2017 budget development processes, conduct a bottom-up programs and services review. Its purpose will be to ensure that policy, technology solutions, skillsets, and funding allocations are optimized to meet the needs of the years ahead and, in particular, the relevant needs and interests of alumni leaders and individual graduates.

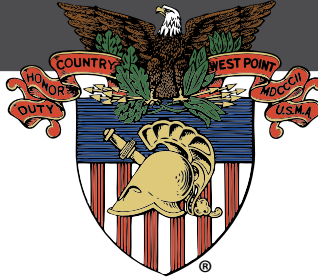
**3b. Deploy WPAOG's Next, Highly Capable Constituent Relationship Management System (CRM):** By the end of 2017, acquire and implement our next-generation CRM system (as well as our outwardly facing Constituent Management System—CMS). CRM is our core information technology infrastructure, which supports all services, information and communications systems, databases, and fundraising systems. (Requirements development and other initial analysis began in the first quarter of 2015. This analysis will closely review interoperability needs. It will also key on the comprehensive services review envisioned in Objective 3a.)

**3c. Successfully Celebrate Our Association's 150th Anniversary:** In 2016, prepare a plan and budget for celebrating our Association's Sesquicentennial year—2019. The celebration's overarching goal will be to use the occasion of the Sesquicentennial to continue our growth as a highly participative and highly capable alumni body. Among our objectives will be the following: (1) add 75 new Cullum Society Members; (2) achieve 75% USMA Class representation at the 2019 West Point Alumni Leaders Conference; complete a campaign to receive and approve 75 new memberships in the Friends of West Point category; (4) unveil a display at Herbert Hall honoring those who have made extraordinary contributions of the time, talent, or treasure to the Association; establish measurable goals and grow participation among the more recently graduated classes (5) execute a series of 150th Anniversary activities celebrating the history of the Association and projecting into the future.

**3d. Enhance Staff Training in Best Practices:** Beginning in 2017, implement an annual staff training program (reflecting needs identified in the 2016 bottom-up programs review), implementing best practices from alumni and higher education industries, as well as selected practices from industries such as media and communications, hospitality, veterans affairs, and so forth. In 2017 implement an element of our survey program to measure how well our staff is meeting our graduates' expectations.

**3e. Plan to Expand Herbert Alumni Center:** In 2016, prepare a plan to expand Herbert Alumni Center to better serve graduates as their home at West Point. Develop a corresponding plan for the use of the immediate grounds leased from the U.S. Government. Prepare a supporting financing plan.

**3f. Enhance WPAOG's Financial Sustainability:** Annually, in conjunction with the annual budget cycle, review funds, reserves, endowments, and other indicators of our Association's capabilities to support the incremental growth of programs supporting our mission; implement specific measures to enhance the funding available for enhancing or adding services.



## ALMA MATER

*Hail, Alma Mater, dear!  
To us be ever near,  
Help us thy motto bear,  
thru' all the years.  
Let Duty be well performed,  
Honor be e'er untarn'd  
Country be ever armed,  
West Point, by thee!*

*Guide us, thine own, aright,  
Teach us by day, by night,  
To keep thine honor bright,  
For thee to fight.  
When we depart from thee,  
Serving on land or sea,  
May we still loyal be,  
West Point, to thee!*

*And when our work is done,  
Our course on earth is run,  
May it be said, "Well done.  
Be thou at peace."  
E'er may that line of gray  
Increase from day to day;  
Live, serve, and die, we pray,  
West Point for thee!*

*West Point  
for thee!*