U.S. Military Academy
Minerva Initiative

To learn more about the DOD Minerva Research Initiative, visit

"(The Minerva Initiative) is designed to bring in these sociologists to basically bring cutting-edge resources into the equation, Graham said. "West Point is now at the cutting edge of anthropology and sociology, not only from a scientific perspective, but from a practical one," Graham said. "That's an incredible advantage for us to have a whole cadre of social scientists who are able to bring that into the conversation--the Office of the Secretary of Defense launched the Minerva Research Initiative."

Recognizing the need to focus on these cultural and environmental conditions--and include experts in the field of social sciences into the conversation--the Office of the Secretary of Defense launched the Minerva Research Initiative. This Department of Defense program has provided competitive funding for dozens of colleges and universities, to which West Point recently was granted support.

"We are really excited about this because of what it's doing for the academy," Graham said. "It's changing how we see ourselves participating with the Department of Defense and engagement with societal issues. The Minerva Program is one way of making that happen."

"The workshop is three-tiered. It's (intended to speak) to the big picture of social science as it pertains to national security and to the military. The Minerva Initiative is bringing sociologists to examine the impact of deployments on military families, while other social scientists are working toward developing those connections, according to Ringler. West Point is excited to be involved in helping us understand the population is thinking or doing," Graham said. "We lucked out, if you will, and got this amazing asset for the academy," Graham said. "It's changing how we see ourselves participating with the Department of Defense and engagement with societal issues. The Minerva Program is one way of making that happen."

"The Minerva Research Initiative is an important element of West Point's long-term strategic goals toward developing a force that can face the emerging 21st-century threats to national security," Col. John Graham, associate dean for research, is West Point's lead developer on the District Stability Framework in Afghanistan for the U.S. Army War College and studied extremism in Southeast Asia at the International Center for Political Violence and Terrorism Research in Singapore. Gerdes is the Behavioral Sciences and Leadership Fellow for the Army's Center for the Study of Political Violence and Terrorism at the U.S. Army War College. She conducted research on the impact of women in the military in the Middle East and the United States with Dr. Joan Rose, a retired Army officer. Gerdes is the Behavioral Sciences and Leadership Fellow for the Army's Center for the Study of Political Violence and Terrorism at the U.S. Army War College. She conducted research on the impact of women in the military in the Middle East and the United States with Dr. Joan Rose, a retired Army officer.

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West Point Public Affairs
Feb 22, 2012

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