

## ERDC partnership paves way for advanced Army Corps training



Thea Henslee is an Army civilian in the Corps of Engineers, a computer scientist, and a doctoral student in the School of Engineering.

She is the first service member to enter an engineering Ph.D. program within a partnership agreement between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Research and Development Center and the Vanderbilt University School of Engineering. Corps employees take Vanderbilt engineering courses through the ERDC Graduate Institute course offerings.

"When I learned about the partnership between ERDC and Vanderbilt, it was a no-brainer for me. Vanderbilt gives me the chance to study machine learning in depth in a high-caliber program while also continuing to live and work in Mississippi," she said.

The partnership agreement, finalized in spring 2021, links top-tier experts from Vanderbilt and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for advanced workforce training. Of particular interest are graduate degree programs that include computer science, environmental engineering, risk, reliability, and resilience as well as non-degree workforce training programs.

ERDC's mission is to help solve the nation's most challenging problems in civil and military engineering, geospatial sciences, water resources, and environmental sciences for the Army, Department of Defense, civilian agencies, and the public good.

"Bringing these two institutions together to meet crucial societal challenges is mutually beneficial," said Bruce and Bridgitt Evans Dean Philippe Fauchet. "Research universities and the military working hand-in-hand can be transformative for our nation."

Henslee, for example, is on a team that specializes in data analytics and machine learning for the Computational Analysis Branch at the ERDC campus in Vicksburg, Mississippi.

"We work on a very wide range of USACE problems—anything from soil data to military construction to Operation Warp Speed (U.S. COVID vaccine response)," she said.

The range of tasks is one of Henslee's favorite things about working for the ERDC.

"We're always working on something new. The scenery is never the same," she said. "Working for ERDC is one of the best decisions I've made because it gives me the opportunity every day to serve my country, to solve very real problems, and to make an impact on so many lives."

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