



## DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARDS

C. Robert Kehler '74



### To Gen. C. Robert Kehler, U.S. Air Force, for his outstanding leadership and dedication to serving his country.

Shamokin, Pa.-native Bob Kehler had a choice: major in music at Susquehanna University or venture farther from home and study engineering at Penn State. He chose Penn State, though two years after arriving he switched his major to music education. One constant during his college years was the Air Force ROTC.

"After I graduated, my plan was to fulfill the four years I owed the Air Force and then teach high school music," Kehler explained. Thirty-five years later and now a four-star general, Kehler is still with the U.S. Air Force, currently as commander of Air Force Space Command, one of the branch's highest leadership positions. Of his decision to stay in the Air Force, Kehler said, "I found my niche. The people are phenomenal and their sense of mission and purpose is infectious." He laughed and added, "And I would have made a lousy music teacher."

As commander of Air Force Space Command, Kehler is responsible for maintaining mission-ready space and cyberspace forces and capabilities for

North American Aerospace Defense Command, U.S. Strategic Command, and other combatant commands around the world. To meet that objective, Kehler oversees Air Force network operations; manages a global network of communications, satellite command and control, missile warning, and space launch facilities; and is responsible for space system development and acquisition. He leads more than 46,000 professionals who are assigned to 88 locations and deployed to an additional 35 locations throughout the world.

Kehler started his Air Force career as a second lieutenant in 1975, two years after the Vietnam War ended but with the Cold War still raging. His early commands involved intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) operations, space launch and operations, and missile warning and space control. "During the Cold War, there was very much the sense that the Air Force was the first line of defense," he said. "We were on constant alert."

Promotions followed with Kehler becoming a major just 10 years after he was commissioned and, in 1994, a colonel. He has been a general officer since 2000, and his current job is his 20th assignment with

the Air Force, including five assignments at The Pentagon. Though he has enjoyed aspects of each position, Kehler said his time in the Air Force Legislative Affairs Division in Washington, D.C., was "enormously helpful" because he witnessed the legislative process daily as the secretary of the Air Force's point man on Capitol Hill. That experience is useful in his current post since Kehler said he "spends a lot of time in D.C."

His personal decorations include the Distinguished Service Medal, Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit, and the Meritorious Service Medal.

In addition to his Penn State degree, Kehler earned master's degrees in public administration from the University of Oklahoma (1987) and in national security and strategic studies from the Naval War College in Newport, R.I. (1995). He also completed executive and management programs at Carnegie-Mellon University (1998), Syracuse University (2002), and the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University (2006), among others.

Kehler credits the roots of his success to the self-discipline he learned at Penn State, both in ROTC and in music. In addition

to his studies, he played clarinet in the Penn State Symphonic Wind Ensemble, Concert Blue Band, and the pit orchestra of the 1974 summer theatre season at Penn State.

A member of the Penn State Alumni Association, Kehler and his wife, Marj, live in Colorado Springs, Colo. They have two grown sons, Matthew, a 2004 Penn State graduate, and Jared, a 2008 graduate of James Madison University.

