The NCO Leadership Center of Excellence

ULTIMA TIMES

MAY 2018

ULTIMA Times

The official newsletter of The NCO Leadership Center of Excellence

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Front Cover: Illustration by David Crozier, Command Communications

The NCO Leadership Center of Excellence

"Home of Noncommissioned Officer Education"

"To provide Professional Military Education that develops enlisted leaders to meet the challenges of an increasingly complex world; and develop leaders who are fit, disciplined, and well-educated"

Photo by David Crozier, Command Communications

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A Note From the Commandant

Command Sgt. Maj. Jimmy J. Sellers

It's been almost a year since the Change of Responsibility ceremony that provided me the honor and privilege of becoming the 21st Commandant of this great institution. It has been a very eventful and eye-opening experience to say the least. As a student attending the Sergeants Major Course in Class 56, I never fully realized everything this institution does. As I've travelled throughout the Army, I think that sentiment is true for most Soldiers and senior leaders in the Army today. When the Sergeants Major Academy is mentioned they automatically say, "Oh yeah, that's the place that teaches the Sergeants Major Course". That is partly the impetus for the name change which will be official on June 22 – The NCO Leadership Center of Excellence. Immediately upon arrival I quickly gained an appreciation for the number of missions we are charged with handling. We do so much more than just the Sergeants Major Course. This name change alone tells the Army and the world that if it has anything to do with NCO Leadership, or if it has NCO in the name. The NCOL COE develops, integrates and delivers, training and education readiness to our Army.

When you think about it. We are an organization totally led and run by noncommissioned officers and Department of the Army civilians, most of whom are retired NCOs. This team, this ULTIMA family, is responsible for 28 missions affecting the entire enlisted force. Over the past year we have redesigned the Basic Leader Course, instituted the Master Leader Course across the Army and developed a nonresident version as well; the NCO Guide is now an iBook; Structured Self Development has been totally rewritten and is now the Distributed Leader Course with DLC I debuting next month. We realigned under Army University for academic governance and got the go ahead to move forward on obtaining accreditation through the Higher Learning Commission where soon we will be able to award a Bachelor's Degree in Leadership and Workforce Management; we passed our latest TRADOC accreditation with flying colors; we've reorganized internally to better meet our mission; we established our brand and publications guidance; and much, much more.

I've grown very fond of our international relationships, as we continue to create new and mature

existing ones. We've sent teams of instructors around the world to provide education at the point of need, not only our own Soldiers who can't get to the schoolhouse because of mission, but also to help our international partners. We've sent teams to Jordan, Africa, Afghanistan, Kuwait, and Guantanamo Bay Cuba to name a few. We also educate international students in our schoolhouses as well with Class 68 having 59 students from 46 partner nations. We also have international students attending our Basic Leader Course, Battle Staff NCO Course, and yes even our Commandant's Pre-Command Course. To date we have welcomed more than 1,000 international students into our courses.

In this past year we have touched more than 391,000 Soldiers through the courses and products we produce; and in less than a month we are going to give back to the active force several hundred fit, disciplined and highly educated senior NCOs who are ready to move the Army forward into 2025 and beyond.

At the same time we are welcoming the students of Sergeants Major Course Class 69, the first class to experience the new collegiate model; we will celebrate the graduation of Cohort #3 of the Fellowship and welcome Cohort #4; and we will continue to reevaluate and grow. This month we will also say goodbye to our Deputy Commandant– Command Sgt. Maj. Jeffery Huggins and his wife Penny. As he relinquishes responsibility and retires from the Army. He will be sorely missed and I wish him and his family well on their future endeavors. Being the Deputy is oftentimes a thankless job, working behind the scenes doing the heavy lifting, so to say. But let me tell you, he was a great part of this command team.

While we lose one great warrior, we gain another in Command Sgt. Maj. Mike Henry. He's coming to us from a great assignment with the 157th Infantry Brigade, with previous experience serving with U.S. Army Cadet Command. We welcome him and his wife Heather to the ULTIMA family! He is ready to hit the ground running. So when you see him running around the center of excellence, be sure to introduce yourself, tell him what it is you do for the ULTIMA family and welcome him to our incredible team of professionals.

Until the next edition- Ultima Strong!

Picture perfect!

International students from Sergeants Major Course Class 68 place a wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery, May 1. The students were on a Field Studies Program trip which took them to the Nation's capitol.

Photo by Spc. James Seals, Command Communications

Exploring America with Class 68 International Students

Story and Photos by Spc. James Seals
Multimedia Specialist, Command Communications

Editor's Note: This is a first person account by Spc. Seals who accompanied the international students of Sergeants Major Course Class 68 on their trip to New Yorks and the Nation's Capital.

Chances are that if you are a master sergeant in the United States Army or equivalent from our sister services, you have heard of the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy (now known as The NCO Leadership Center of Excellence) and the Sergeants Major Course. Uncommonly known though is that the Sergeants Major Course also hosts military students from our international allies and has been doing so since 1975. These students are senior noncommissioned officers, some are senior enlisted advisors, for their respective militaries. These students fall under the International Military Student Office while attending courses at The NCO Leadership Center of Excellence.

The International Military Student Office creates the conditions and climate for sustained professional growth and success for the international students and instructors while promoting a favorable impression of the American way of life; and to support the Security Assistance Training Program objectives. One way that IMSO satisfies those objectives is through the Field Studies Program. This program helps provide a better understanding of the United States, its people, political system, military, institutions, and way of life through FSP trips across various locations in the United States.

SMC Class 68 includes 59 international military students from 46 partnered nations. Multiple FSPs occur throughout the academic year, taking the students (and optionally their families) to places in Texas such as Hueco Tanks, San Antonio, and Austin, and most recently from New York City, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, Baltimore, Maryland, and Washington D.C. I had the incredible opportunity to join these students to document their journey which took place from April 24 through May 4.

Having touched down the previous day with a few hours to explore New York City on their own, the students started Day One of their FSP early in the morning. The students were divided into two groups, and each began a walking historical tour of the concrete jungle led by two docents. The first destination was famed Times Square, which was not even a full block away from their hotel. Awe and wonderment could be seen from everyone as they gazed upwards at the skyscrapers with

Day 1 of the FSP in New York City on April 24, the second group of students receive a historical brief of Times Square.

Day 7 at the Marine Corps War Memorial outside of Fort Myer, Virginia on April 30, IMSO Class 68 and their families pose for a group photo.

their massive electronic displays. Here the students learned about the Glowing Ruby-Red Stairs of TKTS, the Times Square Ball that NYC commonly uses for New Year's Eve celebrations, and the history of Times Square itself. The tour continued to the Rockefeller Plaza, taking a shortcut through Rockefeller Center (which also holds the world's smallest and only mollusk museum) to get to St. Patrick's Cathedral. After a brief history lesson and self-exploration, the class made its way to the Grand Central Terminal and finally the New York Public Library where they concluded the tour.

Day Two operated similarly to day one, as the students and family were split into the same groups with the same docents. This day, however, brought them to Liberty Island via ferry to see the Statue of Liberty, then to Ellis Island Immigration Museum for a self-guided tour. Once back to the mainland, the class visited the 9/11 Memorial, and then the Intrepid Sea, Space, and Air Museum concluding Day Two. Day Three wrapped up the students' time in New York City, where they challenged the Urban Orienteering portion of their trip. Much like a scavenger hunt, the students were divided into small groups and given clues to certain locations within approximately a three-mile radius of the hotel. This competitive event saw many groups analyzing the clues prior to leaving the hotel and using land navigational skills to plot points, to devise the best route and hit as many locations in the fastest time possible. Groups could be seen power walking and even running from location to location, easily blending in with the hustle and bustle New York City life breathes.

Rising early on Day Four, IMSO Class 68 left New York City for Baltimore, Maryland. On the way, they stopped in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, where they met with docents and received a historical tour of the bloodiest and most well-known battle of the U.S. Civil War before arriving in Baltimore and closing out the day. Day Five was short and sweet, but served as a preamble for the following day. The class toured the Pickersgill home, also known as the Star-Spangled Banner Flag House. It was here that Mary Pickersgill,

a skilled flag maker created the very same Star-Spangled Banner that was flown at Fort McHenry during the War of 1812 and that the U.S. National Anthem speaks of. Afterwards, they ventured to the Baltimore World Trade Center where they were given a brief tour around the observation deck and the many remnants from the actual 9/11 site. Day Six started bright and early with another Urban Orienteering competition; this time the hunt took them around the inner harbor of Baltimore locating many new and some familiar locations. That afternoon the class took a water taxi to Fort McHenry, the famed location which flew the Star-Spangled Banner in the War of 1812. This was the very same Flag that Francis Scott Key wrote about in his poem, which soon became the National Anthem for the U.S. They were treated to a historical tour by a docent and given the option to purchase a U.S. Flag of their own to hoist on the very same flagpole the Star-Spangled Banner once waved upon.

Day Seven marked one of the longest as the students departed Baltimore for Washington D.C. Several stops were made along the way, the first to Mount Vernon, home to the Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Army during the Revolutionary War and first elected President of the United States, George Washington. They first watched the short film, *We Fight to Be Free*, which briefly shows George Washington's roles in the French and Indian War as well as the Revolutionary War. Following the film, the students were released for a self-guided tour of the grounds before departing. Their next stop was at the Marine Corps War Memorial and the Netherlands Carillon, both of which are located just outside of Fort Myer, Virginia. The students themselves then briefed their peers about these memorials, explaining the importance of the monument and the historical U.S. event that it symbolizes. The students then departed for the hotel, and after a brief siesta were ready to attend a social hosted by Sergeant Major of the Army Daniel Dailey and his wife Holly. The entirety of the social, from entering Dailey's home and enjoying food and drink was accompanied by live music from U.S. Army musicians. Percussionists from the Fort Myer Band closed the social with an incredible performance for the guests and wrapping up the seventh day. The band was also joined by surprise guests from Norway, percussionists from His Majesty Kongens Garde (Kings Guard).

Students and IMSO staff look up at the Tower of Faces in the National Holocaust Museum on May 2 in Washington D.C.

Dressed in service uniform, class 68 departed from the hotel for an eventful Day Eight. The students first visited the Pentagon, home to the U.S. Department of Defense. After a quick initial brief, the students were formed into groups based on their respective military liaisons, where they were given an opportunity for questions and answers. The class then regrouped and were given a historical tour of the facility, ending at the impact site of the terrorist attack on 9/11. They then departed from the Pentagon, en route to Fort Myer to meet

with Sergeant Major of the Army Daniel Dailey for a luncheon and exchange of gifts. A quick goodbye, and the class made way to the Arlington National Cemetery to visit the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Here they were given a historical brief about the tomb and witnessed the Changing of the Guard while preparing for the next ceremony. Students from Norway, Iraq, and Senegal had the honor of participating in the "Full Honors" wreath laying ceremony, presided over by Command Sgt. Maj. Paul Biggs, command sergeant major of the Military District of Washington. Also present was the U.S. Army band, Pershing's Own.

The final days of the trip were rapidly coming to an end. While these days appeared short, much was accomplished. On Day Nine, the class visited the National Holocaust Museum. They were again formed into groups where they discussed the Holocaust at length before touring the museum. That afternoon they visited the U.S. Capitol, home to the U.S. Congress, receiving a historical tour before closing out the day. Day Ten brought the students back to Arlington National Cemetery and to the National Mall, where they walked the grounds visiting an assortment of memorials. At each memorial select students and IMSO staff briefed about the memorial and its relevance to U.S. history. Memorials visited included, the Thomas Jefferson Memorial, the Abraham Lincoln Memorial, the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial, and more. Day 11 brought the class to Ford's Theatre, the very same theater that Abraham Lincoln was assassinated. Here they witnessed a play that shed light on the events leading up to the assassination. That afternoon the students toured the Newseum, a museum dedicated to the history of news and emphasizes the importance of freedom of speech granted to U.S. citizens, a freedom not commonly seen outside of the United States.

The New York City to Washington D.C. Field Studies Program trip was nothing short of incredible. Walking through the cities and structures which defined some of the most important and well-known aspects of U.S. culture, history, and politics made me experience an array of emotions, as well as broaden my own perspective about my heritage. I constantly felt small and insignificant compared to the size of the skyscrapers in New York City, the memorials dedicated to U.S. history's greatest, the museums, and the U.S. Capitol Building. My emotions were everywhere, often transitioning between awe and pride to mournful and morose. All the while I could not help but think about how the students were taking all this in. If my experiences on this FSP were this grand, were they as nearly overwhelmed as I was? Americans are often viewed as energetic, loud, and grossly prideful about their country in the eyes of foreigners. Completing this FSP, do the international students of Sergeants Major Course Class 68 have a better understanding of the U.S., and why we Americans are the way that we are? I believe they have. As I traveled with them photographing their exploits, I could easily see the same feelings I was experiencing on their faces. I did my best to capture those moments for them. I often engaged in conversation with many of the students, of whom most approached me to either ask questions or just to express themselves at that current moment. Summing up those conversations, IMSO Class 68 was extremely grateful for this opportunity. For some, this might have been their only chance to see these historical landmarks. For others, it was an inspiration. For all of us it was a defining moment in our careers where bonds were made, and comrades were gained.

Photo of a cannon taken during the International Student Military Office Class 68 Field Studies Program in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania on April 27.

Training the trainer

NCO academies prepare for new Basic Leader Course

Photo by David Crozier, NCOL CoE

Members of the Army's 34 NCO Academies made their way to The NCO Leadership Center of Excellence for the purposes of attending the Train the Trainer course on the redesigned Basic Leader Course. The Soldiers learned the ins and outs of the new curriculum as well as the method of instruction using the Adult Learning Model. Above, William Ogletree, director of Curriculum Development Directorate, welcomes the group to the Center of Excellence.

By David Crozier, Command Communications

In just eight months, the newly redesigned Basic Leader Course will launch at each of the Army's 34 NCO Academies. To ensure each academy is prepared to teach the new curriculum, as well as adapt to the new teaching method, the NCO Leadership Center of Excellence conducted Train the Trainer sessions for select individuals.

"We are bringing in representatives from all of the NCO academies that teach the Basic Leader Course and giving them training on the new curriculum," William R. Ogletree Jr., director of Curriculum Development said. "We are doing two weeks – the first is focused on the Experiential Learning Model, problem solving, critical thinking and writing. The second week is focused on the curriculum itself – a deep dive into the lesson plans."

Ogletree said the individuals will obtain a full immersion into the new course including the assessments and how to deliver the lessons in the classroom.

"The outcome is the representatives who are sitting here for two weeks getting the training, will go back and establish their faculty development program within their respective NCO Academy," he said. "They can go back and train the folks and their cadre on the new curriculum so that when we roll out the new course in January, we won't have as many problems starting out."

The members of the Curriculum Development Directorate conduct a Train the Trainer class on the redesigned Basic Leader Course. The students are members of the Army's 34 NCO academies spent two weeks at the NCO Leadership Center of Excellence learning the Experiential Learning Model for of instruction and the course materials to be taught. The BLC will begin being taught to the active component on July 31 and will be fully operational capable by January 2019.
Photo by David Crozier NCOL CoE

Ogletree said with news of the new curriculum and method of instruction already out on the street there is anxiety with the writing program and the critical thinking piece.

"These are not Army tasks and we are switching from a task-based kind of approach to an educational-based approach," he said. "Some of the younger NCOs are struggling with this paradigm shift. So if we can get that across to them while they are here they can go back and create their own training program, learn the writing piece and relay some of the critical thinking piece."

Sgt. 1st Class Stacya Mitchell, a small group leader with the US Army Alaska NCO Academy who is attending the train the trainer course, said the new curriculum for the Basic Leader Course will get Soldiers to think more, to self-assess, and to be independent so that they can gain the confidence the Army needs for them to be leaders.

"I'm actually in awe, because my experience with the Warrior Leader Course was more 'do this, this is what I want you to do, this is how I want you to do it,'" she said. "There was no thought process to it. I think this allows the soldiers to make more decisions."

Mitchell said using the Experiential Learning Model is a big plus for the course.

"The Experiential Learning Model is allowing the soldier to generally think on their own," she said. "With the new curriculum we are going to start bringing them into the thought process and linking it to the Army curriculum, so they will have an understanding on their own versus, 'Hey you are going to do this, this way and at this time.'"

Mitchell said she would have benefited greatly from a course like the new BLC.

"I [could] see myself as a first sergeant already. I would have excelled because I know I would have all the tools I needed to be that leader the Army wants," she said. "I wouldn't be as reactive; I would have been a lot more proactive earlier in my career."

The validation of the new Basic Leader Course is already complete, Ogletree said. The NCOL CoE conducted four series of validations at seven different locations – all with favorable feedback. The launch of the new course is set for July 31 for the active component with full operational capability by January 2019.

"We made some adjustments, but all in all the feedback we got is we are going in the right direction," he said. "The curriculum is solid; this is what the students want and need to know. We got it right."

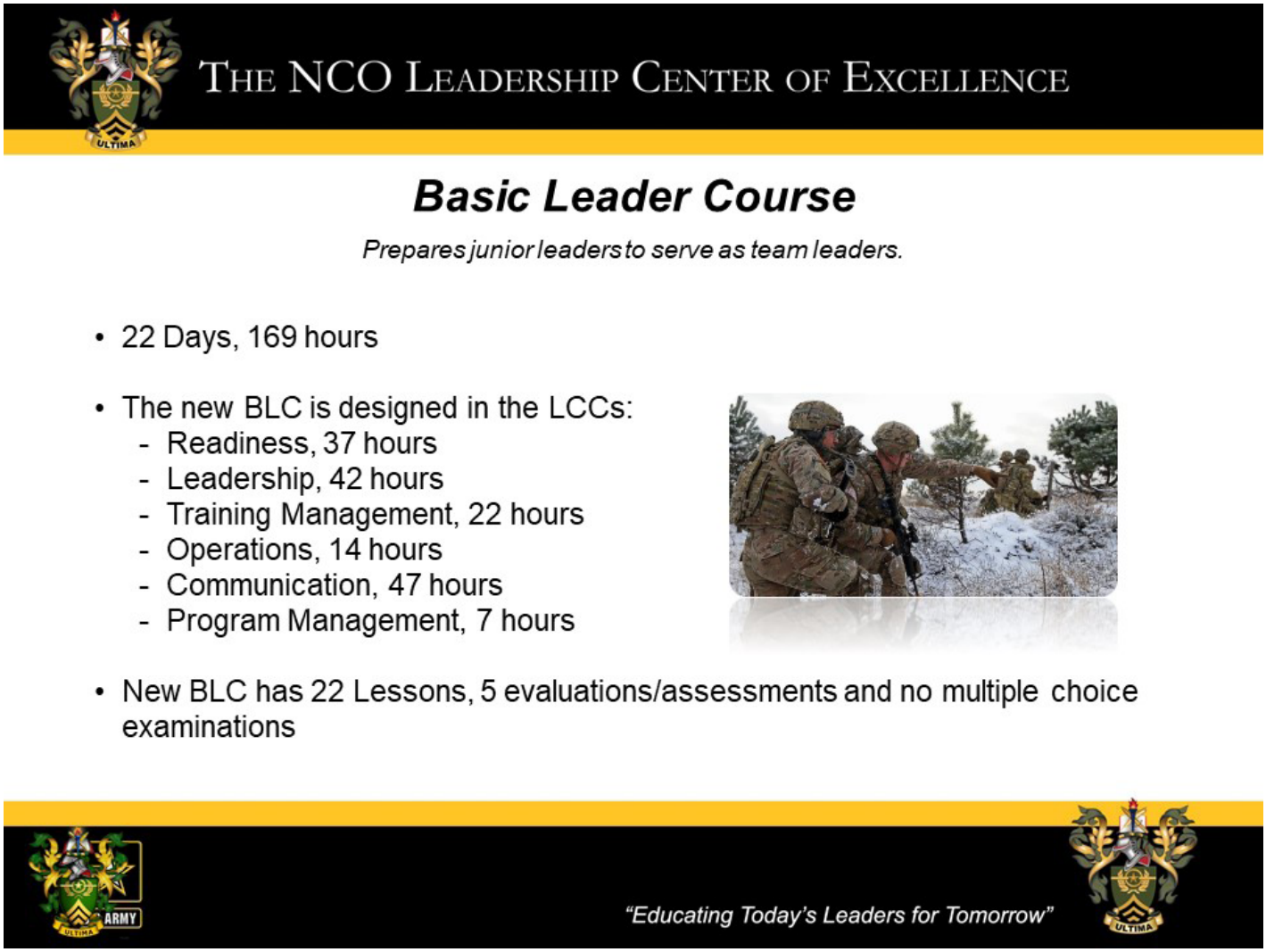
The NCO Leadership Center of Excellence is responsible for developing, maintaining, teaching, and distributing five levels of Enlisted Professional Military Education – Introductory, Primary, Intermediate, Senior and Executive. Each level best prepares the soldier to fight and win in a complex world as adaptive and agile leaders and trusted professionals of Force 2025.

You can learn more about the NCO Leadership Center of Excellence by visiting http://usasma.armylive.dodlive.mil/.

What to expect for the new BLC

Many discussions are happening across the Army about what the newly redesign Basic Leader Course will be like. Below are some of the *big* changes for the Basic Leader Course:

* Minimal PowerPoint slides (No Death by PowerPoint)
* Emphasis is on collaborative learning (students working in groups through difficult issues) instead of lecture-type lessons
* Teaching students "How to think" instead of "What to think"
* Students become trainers of Skill Level 1 tasks instead of training on Skill Level 1 tasks themselves (Land navigation will be executed differently)
* Emphasis is on thinking, writing, speaking and training as a leader



We are putting LEADERSHIP back into NCO PME

NCO Academy commandants converge on Fort Knox for training conference

By Eric Pilgrim, Gold Standard

U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command's top enlisted leader, Command Sgt. Maj. Dave Davenport, speaks April 12 to commandants from NCO academies worldwide about numerous issues concerning the academy attendance and the NCO 2020 Strategy, including the Expert Soldier Badge, the new Army physical fitness test called the Army Combat Fitness Test, facility investment and the One Army School System.
Photo by Master Sgt. Marisol Walker, U.S. Army

Noncommissioned Officer Academy commandants from across the U.S. Army gathered in Skidgel Hall at Fort Knox April 9-12 to discuss the multitude of changes coming their way soon.

"We're about to roll out the next level of NCO [Professional Military Education] that's changing our noncommissioned officer corps within the next couple of months," said Sellers. "So, in August, we're going to deliver a newly redesigned course for the Basic Leader Course. We're going to start introducing the leader core competencies for [Advanced Leader Course] and [Senior Leader Course], which used to be the old Common Core. And then we're going to have a display of the Distributed Leader Course that's going to replace [Structured Self-Development].

"So, I want the commandants to have an understanding about what their roles are in introducing all that change," Sellers said.

Another change coming out in May, said Sellers, is a distributed learning version of the Master Leader Course.

Sellers said the decision was made to host the conference at Fort Knox to promote the idea of the One Army School System. The location of Knox, coupled with the hub of Reserve leader training at the post, made for the right decision.

Command Sgt. Maj. William Griego, commandant of 515th Regional Training Institute in Santa Fe, New Mexico, poses a question to Command Sgt. Maj. Dave Davenport, the TRADOC senior enlisted leader, about an issue that directly affects the National Guard at regional training institutes. ***Photo by Eric Pilgrim,The Gold Standard***

"A large preponderance of our audience is National Guard and Reserve, so we wanted to do an off-site to bring them in closer and make sure everybody is on the same sheet of music and understanding," he said.

Other topics discussed during the conference included infrastructure and facilities issues, accreditation, manning and career counselor topics and issues unique to each component.

The conference culminated in a robust breakdown of all the changes explained by Command Sgt. David Davenport, the command sergeant major for U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command in Fort Eustis, Virginia.

Davenport highlighted the issues and challenges commandants need to deal decisively with during the changes. He broke one of those areas, who is eligible

for promotion, into four priorities — Soldiers who are eligible for promotion, Soldiers in star military occupational specialties, those who are promotable, and those who are non-promotable.

"I know Forces Command [focuses on] the promotion eligible population. That's not our concern. Our concern is the promotable population," said Davenport. "I'm counting on you to be the ones out [there] explaining this to your senior sergeants major.

"Anywhere in there did you hear me talk about [privates first class] being enrolled in the Basic Leader Course?"

The audience responded with a muted "Negative."

"Everybody north-south if you understand that we do not enroll PFCs in Basic Leader Course."

Many in the audience nodded.

"Okay, well we have," Davenport said.

He then praised Sellers and his team for working tirelessly to roll out all the changes over the next year.

"You know [BLC] is on track," Davenport said. "You know how it's tied to the mandatory board appearance ... That's still on track to begin in June and then phase them in over time the next year. BLC rewrite — on track."

Command Sgt. Maj. Jimmy Sellers, commandant of the NCO Leadership Center of Excellence at Fort Bliss, Texas, and his team, listen as Davenport explains about several issues that will be affecting academy commandants in the near future when the NCO Professional Development System changes start taking place. ***Photo by Eric Pilgrim, The Gold Standard***

After talking to the commandants, Davenport opened up the floor for questions. One of the questions came from Command Sgt. Maj. William Griego, the commandant at 515th Regional Training Institute in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The academy serves Soldiers in the New Mexico National Guard. He expressed concerns that the One Army School System concept and changes to the NCO Professional Development System may ignore unique challenges National Guardsmen face.

Sitting in the audience was Command Sgt. Maj. Edward Roderiques, the command sergeant major of 83rd U.S. Army Reserve Readiness Training Center. As other commandants huddled in three groups around the room, he talked with his commandants.

"When we went around the room and they had us introduce ourselves in the outset of the meeting, I shared with everybody how absolutely thrilled and honored I was to host this event here. It gives us the opportunity to showcase our organization to the rest of the Army."

The 83rd's headquarters sits on Fort Knox in Skidgel Hall and has authority over NCO academies at Fort Knox; Camp Parks, California; Fort Dix, New Jersey; and Fort McCoy, Wisconsin.

"We are absolutely, totally immersed in the One Army School System. We train and educate Soldiers from all three components and we've been doing it for years — much greater than a decade, well before the One Army School System was ever codified.

"It's great to have them converge on our location and have this dialogue here," Roderiques said. "They get to learn a little bit about us and frankly, we all get to learn about each other."

CTC Executive Summary

Submitted by Command Sgt. Maj. Mitchell L. Rucker
Director, NCO Professional Development and Education

Overview

The Commandant's Training Council took place at Fort Knox, Kentucky from 09-12 April. The 83rd U.S. Army Reserve Readiness Training Center hosted us at Skidgel Hall and the venue was very accommodating to all of our training requirement needs. We had a variety of subject matter experts, both internal and external to the NCO Leadership Center of Excellence, present information on best practices on how we do business at the individual NCOAs and how it can help other NCOAs across the enterprise. Additionally we had an opportunity to understand different perspectives from commandants from Advanced and Senior Leader Courses who were in attendance. We discussed how to improve our communication and maximize capabilities of Blackboard, and the Army Career Tracker as well as migrate some reporting requirements to the Strategic Management System to get into a more proactive reporting organization capable of analyzing trends and performance from a macro level.

A key discussion was the implementation of the Basic Leader Course redesign, and the new Distributive Leader Courses. The draft of the Basic Leader Course, Course Management Plan was released out to all of the Commandants prior to the start of the training event and allowed for a more comprehensive discussion on the way ahead and collaboration on how to improve the NCOAs ability to execute the redesigned course. The discussion allowed for the Curriculum Development Directorate to make adjustments to the Course Management Plan which in turn will solidify requirements commandants can leverage at the posts, camps, and stations, as well as the centers of excellence. The CoEs manage the personnel and resources, ensuring all learners are provided with the best qualified facilitators, excellent facilities and equipment, and a dynamic learning environment.

In an effort to discuss manning challenges with Human Resources Command, we held the training event at Fort Knox so that we could get several branch managers and the schools managers from HRC in one room with us. We allocated one afternoon for the commandants to go to HRC and speak with branch managers one-on-one to address specific issues pertaining to their NCOA. HRC provided an overview of how the manning process works from their perspective. Then, we had a brief from the schools branch managers and opened the floor up to a question and answer session with all of the branch managers in attendance in a panel session. The discussion was a great success for the active component but unfortunately had little value for the National Guard and Reserve Components. This will be corrected during the fall Commandant's Training Council.

We made a lot of progress in collaboration efforts by breaking commandants and other attendees into

sessions designed to get after a variety of problem sets. These groups covered topics ranging from the uses of the Strategic Management System, Blackboard, Army Career Tracker, Digital Training Management System, the Digital Rucksack, and also they were integral in helping to finalize the naming conventions and right-sizing of all our NCOAs. Another aspect which went well was by making the commandants more participatory instead of recipients of information, were their individual briefs on their NCOAs using the Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership and Education, Personnel, Facilities and Policy format and a three-year long-range outlook at their academies. Unfortunately we ran out of time and did not get to all of them. We kept note of who briefed and who did not. Those who did not get a chance to brief, will brief in the fall.

We had a lot of dialog and discussion with respect to Quality Assurance particularly in consideration of bringing back the Institutions of Excellence. As TRADOC QAO briefed the plan, the inspection for the NCOAs would only occur once every three years. The commandants expressed a desire to increase the frequency to annually otherwise, they and a portion of their NCOs may never have an opportunity to compete to be an Institution of Excellence. Additionally, we discussed the validity of it being a volunteer to compete, and if it remained that way, why the paperwork to request the inspection had to be a complicated process which may lead some NCOAs to not want to go through the pain of requesting to compete. Further discussion was correlated to who they would compete against themselves and a set standard measured by a percentage obtained, or they would compete against one another. If they competed against one another, what are the universal metrics that would be applied to make it equitable for a large NCOA to compete against a small NCOA or a Multi-Component NCOA competing against an Outside Continental United States (OCONUS) NCOA with a wartime mission like 8th Army in Korea? TRADOC QAO took in all of the inputs and is going back to discuss it further and find answers to these questions.

There was a lot of discussion on the authorities of a commandant. Currently there is no regulatory guidance that addresses an enlisted commandant. In discussing what commandants do and how they operate as more than a command sergeant major, while understanding that they do not have the same authorities as a commander. We discussed changes to the Commandant's Pre-Command Course, as well as clearly defining their authorities in writing and getting them codified in regulations. As a part of this discussion, The NCOL CoE commandant

made it clear that they are responsible for everything that happens and fails to happen in their organizations. Moreover, they have a responsibility to be the messenger to the operational force on everything NCOPDS that originates from The NCOL CoE. Finally where it pertains to facilities, resourcing and manning, Command Sgt. Maj. Jimmy Sellers made it clear the commandants own that; they will be held accountable for the state of their facilities and management of their training, personnel, and budget.

The Commandant's Training Council culminated with the arrival of the TRADOC command sergeant major, Command Sgt. Maj. Dave Davenport who provided clear priorities for the future of NCOPDS and expressed the importance of ensuring the BLC is filled by priority. He discussed specifically the priority fill order for commandants to be aware of and to educate the force on - first priority were Sergeants who still need BLC; second are the STAR MOS in a promotable status; third are SPC/CPL promotable; fourth are SPC/CPL non-promotable. Sellers closed out the training with the following priorities to all commandants:

- Army Training Requirements and Resources System (ATRRS) - Commandants to G3s, Fill by Priority
- Training Resource Arbitration Panel (TRAP) - Stay Focused and inform when they hurt beyond capacity and capability.
- Naming Conventions - Active Component
- Transition from Legacy to new BLC POI - Laser sharp focus.
- Facilities - Commandants, you own them.
- Fill all NCOAs to Max capacity - mitigate the additional eligible population that will occur as a result of the May mandatory board appearance.
- Educating the Field on everything NCOPDS
- Better understanding of Installation Status Reports (ISR)

Outcomes

- Clearly defined priorities from both TRADOC CSM and the NCOL CoE commandant. As stated in the Summary, all of the commandants walked away understanding the direction that they need to go with their NCOA. Additionally they walked away with a clear intent on what is expected of them as a commandant when it comes to owning everything that is theirs from facilities to educating not only their students but the operational force that is collocated with them on their post, camp, or station.
- Commandants gained a lot of understanding of the larger picture of what BLC and MLC are, not just

the concerns of their individual NCOA.

- Group participation during the breakout session, provided great feedback to initiatives and programs we are currently running. It also provided buy in from the Commandants as we all move forward together for the betterment of NCOPDS.
- Commandants were able to share information and ideas in an open setting which aided in solving problems and sharing best practices. This was overly evident during the Blackboard discussion and demonstration conducted by Ft Campbell NCOA.
- All participants walked away with a clear direction of where NCOPDS is headed.

Deliverables

- Capture the recommendations made on the Naming Convention breakout session for the Active Component Academies and post on the Army Career Tracker Page for all of the Commandants to see and confirm recommended changes were made. As of 19 April, the recommended changes were made and the document was posted to the ACT Page. The commandants had until 27 April to review and provide any final feedback.
- Consolidate the Facilities portion from incoming reports from all of the Academies and roll them up into one report for the Training and Doctrine Command Master Engineer to see.
- Take reporting recommendations and apply them to the Strategic Management System for unified reporting and a Common Operating Picture for the Commandant.
- Ensure Commandants are enforcing the academy fill priorities as they were addressed by CSM Davenport and CSM Sellers.
- Take a new look at total capacity of all NCOAs and understand what the potential impacts of the mandatory board appearance will have on the amount of Soldiers who will need to attend the Basic Leader Course.
- Continue to develop systems that streamline reporting requirements and are proactive in nature to reduce the amount of requests for information from us to the Commandants.

SEC Army visits with SMC Class 68

The Secretary of the Army, Dr. Mark Esper, made a quick visit to The NCO Leadership Center of Excellence April 19, to speak to the students of Sergeants Major Course Class 68. The former infantry officer and graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, provided the students with an overview of his three priorities – Readiness, Modernization and Reform – and noted that he wanted to reduce the amount of mandatory online training requirements and allow NCOs to be responsible for ensuring troops are trained and ready.

Photo by David Crozier, Command Communications

Master Leaders Course Review of Class 503-18

By Sgt. 1st Class Kahlil D. Warner
DLA-Distribution Headquarters

Sgt. 1st Class Kahlil D. Warner

Introduction

According to the Course Management Plan (CMP) for Master Leaders Course Non-residency (MLCNR), The MLCNR provides the Army with competent senior Noncommissioned Officers (NCOs) who maintain a positive presence and who are self-aware, adaptive, and able to shape the joint Operational Environment (OE). The CMP further explains that senior NCOs of today must understand decisive action and mission command executed through combined arms formations. Also, this course delivers operations-capable Master Sergeants (MSG) who can lead a force to fight and win in complex OE from Battalion and Brigade levels to Echelons Above Corps (EAC). I will cover the 6 weeks of my MLCNR starting on 8-Jan-2018 thru 20-Feb-2018. The topics covered in this essay will pertain to command support, breakdown of 6-week curriculum, keys to successful completion, and conclusion.

Command Support

Before a student begins the MLCNR, there must be a clear understanding between the student and his/her chain of command regarding course demands and expectations. What became apparent during my experience in this course was the level of support for the student enrolled during the 6-week course. Students that had full support of their command and generally had ample time to apply a deeper method of critical and creative thinking and formulate that thought into constructive input during complex problem-solving scenarios, discussion boards (DB), journals, practical exercises (PEs) and group projects. This level of attention increased the student's mental focus and worked towards maximum absorption of lesson content.

Students with a low level of command support generally struggled with achieving satisfactory course standards. Combine this low level of command support with the student's inability to navigate blackboard, communicate to peers effectively, and apply structured time management, wrote the recipe for poor performance or resulted in students that did not meet course standards. Most students enrolled in MLCNR will have a primary job that already consumes the majority of the student's time in one day. Additional outside distractions such as family considerations that are not experienced in a residence course due to the student's remote location, take away the other time allocated in that students day.

Once a student becomes selected for attendance to MLCNR. The senior leadership in that student's direct chain of command should counsel the student on their own expatiations and offer the student adequate time to complete the course based from their individual capabilities and mission demands. A leader must be engaged in their subordinate's career and personal life to correctly assess and assist the student during this 6-week period.

The Break Down

MLCNR is an intensive 6-week course that covers the four Army Learning Areas: Army Leadership and Profession, Human Dimension, Professional Competence, and Mission Command (as described in chapter two of the Army Mission Command Training and Education Plan {MCTEP}, June 2017). Each of these lessons are further broken down within each week with the last two weeks covering Military Decision Making Process (MDMP) and Staff Exercise (STAFFEX). Week 1 introduces the student to MLCNR overview and then provides 6 lessons that cover listening, public speaking, briefings, writing skills and leadership. The

last lesson in week 1 covers the 10 principles of a servant leader and challenges the students to think of leadership outside the conventional method of Be, Know Do. Students will begin to submit journals, DB's, and PE's through blackboard. Their assignments of topics for individual research paper are distributed and assignment of group is also identified.

During Week 2 students will cover the fundamentals of management, organizational management, training management, critical thinking and problem solving, DoD (Department of Defense) strategies, and Army/Joint doctrine. For most students this is the first time they will experience DoD strategies and the focus of the lesson is to introduce what DoD strategies are and expand on the students understanding of how these strategies effect units at the three levels of war, strategic, operational and tactical level. During this week students will submit their Individual research papers for peer review. This is also the start of when DBs, reflective quizzes and PEs grades will affect overall GPA (Grade Point Average). It's imperative that students start to work on communication skills and contributions to the group.

Week 3 continues to require students to submit journals, PE's, reflective quizzes and DB's. Submission of the final research paper will be presented to the instructor for grading. The student must take the time to review their individual research paper and utilize Purdue OWL guidelines for proper format. This guideline is an all-inclusive tool that assists the student in paper formatting and ensures the student can achieve the most points for proper formatting of their individual research paper. Mission Command is also the focus of this week. When students fully immerse themselves in this lesson content, the absorption of how the Commander visualizes and understands the Operational Environment through Operational Variables (political, military, economic, social, information, infrastructure, physical environment, and time—known as PMESII–PT) and Mission variables (mission, enemy, terrain and weather, troops and support available, time available and civil considerations-known as METT-TC) increases the students' ability to relate past experiences with current doctrine concerned with Mission Command. Other lessons during this week focus on Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operational Environment (JIPOE), Joint Planning Process (JPP), and Operational Art and Design. These lessons, combined with feedback from peers and instructors, help the student prepare for the first group project and second group project.

Week 4 follows the same format of previous weeks with the recurrence of journals, PE's, BD's and reflective quizzes. What's particular about this week is with the student will complete their first group project. The group project requires students to interact with each other as a team and submit a "voice over" power point presentation. This will present many challenges and requires absolute collaboration from all members of the team. Students will have to identify a group leader that will be responsible for timelines of individual slide submission, format of slide deck, suspense dates, order of slides, and submission of final product to instructors.

Week 5 and 6 also require students to submit journals, PE's, BD's and reflective quizzes for this week. During the last portion of MLCNR, students will work on completing their Course of Action (COA) briefs. This brief will be presented in "voice over" power point and all information will derive from lesson content in week 5 and 6, and from the "training only" provided Operations Order (OPORD).

Keys to Success

Throughout MLCNR 6-week curriculum students will be academically challenged in areas that for some, will force them out of their comfort zone. Upon notification of enrollment the student must realize the importance and dedication required to successfully pass and ultimately excel during this course. In my view the pillars of success in MLCNR are vision of success, time management, critical and creative thinking, and communication skills.

When the student is able to visualize success at the end of the road, this strengthens the mind which provides positive reinforcement during challenging lesson requirements. Since MLCNR provides unique challenges due to the students having to juggle primary job requirements against course required content. Some students will lose focus and become frustrated during challenging moments. It's imperative for students to understand that although the current moment may seem impossible, visualizing individual success will provide the needed "push" to complete course requirements during time constants, complex

scenarios, communication gaps and other factors that raise the stress level during MLCNR.

Time management is a crucial key to success, possibly the second most important pillar of success. My reasoning for this statement is because MLCNR is a complete web-based learning course. I've noticed students that have experience with on-line college courses or have competed courses through Blackboard have the least troubles navigating the course work. Students must establish a rhythm early in the course. Week 1 does not provide a large amount of course requirements which allows time for a student to develop a base rhythm. Failure to establish this rhythm may present unnecessary challenges in following weeks due the student's own negligence. As President Abraham Lincoln would say "Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe."

During my experience of MLCNR, there were many times I had to think critically about journals, reflective quizzes and DB's. When I thought critically about a situation it sparked the creativity in my mind to help solve the issue. This simple step quickly became the base for every situation that I encountered during MLCNR and filtered out into my daily scope and responsibilities. Students that have the ability to apply this method of thinking early on will capitalize on achieving higher GPA's. I believe the D.E.E.P strategy is an important tool that is encouraged to students by MLCNR instructors when submitting assignments. Define- state the precise meaning of a word; Explain- make understanding clear by providing detail; Elaborate- put forth complex details; Provide examples of- incorporate the explanation and elaboration with personal experience, historical reference, or point of view. When a student applies the D.E.E.P method, they will consistently show critical and creative thinking habits which sends a clear message to instructors of the student's ability to fully understand and retain the course content.

One of the most important pillars to consider during MLCNR is mastering the ability to effectively communicate and employ socialization skills. Most of the student's grade will depend on his/her ability to work well with others. This comes into play with all DB's, PE's, peer reviews and group projects. Remaining professional at all times is expected from all senior leaders during this course. If placed into a leadership role, the student must display adequate skills of communication due to the remote nature of the course. Some students may become non-receptive during group projects. The responsibility of corralling products and input from other students falls to the group leader. "We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak"- Epictetus. Receiving input from peers and establishing strong lines of communication is the difference between a student failure versus success. The student must remember that a large majority of their classmates will reside in different time zones. During my experience in MLCNR there were multiple students in different time zones and represented from different Army branches. This diverse assortment of demographics requires special attention from students that volunteer or are selected for leadership roles. Students can't expect a team member that is deployed to have products submitted at the same time team members that are station local. Communication remains key to success throughout a student's time in MLCNR.

Conclusion

MLCNR is a challenging course which provides the Army with competent senior NCOs who maintain a positive presence and who are self-aware, adaptive, and able to shape the joint OE. If a student can fully appreciate the importance of MLCNR and how this course impacts their organization and career, then success will easily gravitate with possibilities of exceeding course standards. "Leaders are made, they are not born. They are made by hard effort, which is the price which all of us must pay to achieve any goal that is worthwhile." - Vince Lombardi.

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How Might NCO courses improve output?

By Sgt. Maj. Scot D. Cates & Sgt. Maj. Raymond P. Quitugua Jr.
The NCO Leadership Center of Excellence

Editor's Note: Sgt. Maj. Scot D. Cates is a Fellow at The NCO Leadership Center of Excellence. He holds Master of Business Administration and Master of Education degrees and teaches in the Department of Training and Doctrine in the Sergeants Major Course.

Sgt. Maj. Raymond P. Quitugua Jr. at the time of this writing was an instructor/facilitator at The NCO Leadership Center of Excellence. He holds a Master of Science degree in Organizational Development and taught in the Department of Distance Education in the Sergeants Major Course.

Sergeants Major Course students conduct research at the NCO Leadership Center of Excellence.

(U.S. Army photo)

Over the past few years, significant changes were proposed in the way the U.S. Army approaches its education and training. In 2011, Training and Doctrine Command published *The U.S. Army Learning Concept for 2015* (http://www.tradoc.army.mil/tpubs/pams/tp525-8-2.pdf), a publication designed to support the Army operating concept and "drive change through a campaign of learning."[1] In April 2017, the Army published an updated version of TRADOC Pamphlet 525-8-2 (http://adminpubs.tradoc.army.mil/pamphlets/TP525-8-2.pdf): *The U.S. Army Learning Concept for Training and Education 2020-2040.*[2] Both of these publications refer to the learner-centric environment.

As a result of these publications and others like Army Doctrine Publication 7-0 (https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/pdf/web/adp7_0.pdf), *Training Units and Developing Leaders,* leaders across the Army look for ways to improve noncommissioned officer courses. In other words, what goals and objectives can be applied to these courses to improve performance?

As the Army continues to revise curricula in NCO professional development courses, leaders should consider addressing pre-assessments, educational distance traveled, and levels of knowledge to improve output from these leadership courses.

Pre-Assessments

Army Learning Concept 2015 highlights how the Continuous Adaptive Learning Model not only expands learning opportunities but also requires pre-tests to "allow Soldiers to test out of instruction they have already mastered."[3] Without conducting effective pre-assessments, NCOs may find themselves attending courses or conducting training which fails to challenge them.

Creating sensible pre-assessments will open opportunities for NCOs to demonstrate their proficiency, capabilities, and understanding based on the curriculum while identifying areas where they need improvement. Through practical measurement, a targeted approach can be developed toward learning based on an NCO's knowledge, as opposed to completing the curriculum based on the standardized course. Tailoring curriculum that allows learners to attend courses based on pre-assessment also supports the learner-centric environment recommended by ALC 2015 and adult learning principles.[4]

"As the costs of having Soldiers away from units, providing instructors, and maintaining facilities continue to rise, training and education across the Army cannot just validate what NCOs already know but must increase their knowledge."

"Testing out" of classes is nothing new. Many colleges and universities allow students to "test out" of courses using college-level examination program exams.[5] CLEP exams require the student to demonstrate knowledge they already possess. Utilizing the same approach through pre-assessments will allow for increased rigor within military courses. Instead of NCOs attending classes covering content they already mastered, they can select from a variety of opportunities tailored to their knowledge and experience.

We must also focus on improving our leaders, so the military achieves a return on its investment. As Dr. John M. Persyn, assistant professor in the Development Division of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College (https://usacac.army.mil/organizations/cace/cgsc), Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and Cheryl J. Polson, associate dean of the Kansas State University Graduate School and director of Fort Leavenworth Graduate Education and Outreach, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas, explain in their article, "Evolution and Influence of Military Adult Education":

"Military education programs encompass almost every adult education component from basic skills training through graduate-level higher education....To ensure that this extensive workforce is well prepared for the challenges of their important roles in national defense, DoD budgets, since the fiscal year 2003 [through 2012], have included more than $10 billion annually for training and education programs."[6]

As the costs of having Soldiers away from units, providing instructors, and maintaining facilities continue to rise, training and education across the Army cannot just validate what NCOs already know but must increase their knowledge.

Distance Traveled

Increasing the knowledge, skills, and abilities of every Soldier who attends a course should not be just a goal, but a mandate. Leaders should consider this as taking "a value-added approach" when it comes to course/training development.[7]

This added value should be reciprocal between NCO course instructors and their students, as well as between the students themselves. Part of a learner-centric environment is not just the meaningful value students receive from the instructors, but also what students learn from each other.

Conducting effective pre-assessments and post-assessments will help Army course managers understand the "distance traveled" for each NCO and how well the curriculum or training plan achieves its objectives.[8] "Distance traveled" is a non-formal term used to describe the cognitive gap between the learning state in which the student begins training and where we, as educators, elevate them upon graduation.

Students arrive at NCO courses with varying degrees of critical, creative, and analytical skills. It should be every educator's goal to improve upon this baseline and shorten the distance to a mastery-level achievement. For some students, this is a very short distance, while the gap for others is much larger. In either case, students will leave the institution with greater self- awareness of their scholarship abilities and intellectual aptitude.

By changing Army culture so we assess leaders in a significant manner before and after each course, the Army can evaluate whether the return on investment is worth the expense.

"Capitalizing on the opportunities that pre-assessments and post-assessments illuminate will allow the Army to increase the learning distance each NCO travels by not only creating additional opportunities but also by helping them develop plans to make better use of their time"

Furthermore, recognizing the educational distance individuals need to travel, helps shape classroom management and teaching styles. It may also alter organizational motivations and culture for attending classes. Requiring baseline knowledge to attend each course, then tailoring the curriculum for individuals based on flexible classes, will improve the distance traveled by each student, and benefit the Army. Basic, Advanced, and Honors Classes

As an example, consider how a logistics NCO attending the Master Leader Course may require a more challenging and advanced curriculum, in comparison to an NCO who has a limited logistical background. Pre-assessments can help generate flexibility in NCO professional development.

Mandating that this logistician attend a basic level logistics class along with everyone else is a wasted opportunity. Providing an advanced course for logisticians, or the option to take an elective in the area where the NCO tested poorly during the pre-assessment, would better support the learner-centric approach to training and education.

This same method, based on course's learning outcomes, would benefit the learner and the organization by adding value and return on investment for the force.

Conclusion

"To meet the military's education needs," said Persyn and Polson, "the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force have all integrated adult learning principles and theory to increase their organizations' effectiveness and address their learners' educational needs."[9]

Capitalizing on the opportunities that pre-assessments and post-assessments illuminate will allow the Army to increase the learning distance each NCO travels by not only creating additional opportunities but also by helping them develop plans to make better use of their time. As time is a precious resource for all leaders, using it more efficiently not only improves organizational performance but also relocates it to other high priority areas.

Adopting a learner-centric environment is one of the most important areas in the U.S. Army Learning Concept that can help increase the organization's effectiveness. We simply need to apply technology and assessments in a way that allows the curriculum to address learners' needs while adding value by making them more effective leaders.

Notes

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Congratulations SLDC Class 68-009 graduates

The NCO Leadership Center of Excellence held a graduation May 2 in the Academy's Cooper Lecture Center for the Spouse Leadership Development Course Class 68-009. The 18 graduates, which included one international spouse from Singapore, attended classes totaling 40 hours of instruction in areas such as: human psychology, human relations, leadership development, conflict management, protocol/etiquette, public speaking, communications, computer operations, effective listening, team-building, family readiness group training, benefits and entitlements and health awareness. (Photo by David Crozier)

CALL delivers on lessons learned

Tells Class 68 help is available 24-7

The Center for Army Lessons Learned visited the NCO Leadership Center of Excellence March 20, for the purposes of briefing the students of Sergeants Major Course Class 68. Pictured is Michael Robinson, a tactical analyst for the Center, who showed the students how to navigate CALL's extensive website and informed the them how to better prepare for rotations to any of the Army's three Combat Training Centers.

Photo by David Crozier, Command Communications

By David Crozier, Command Communications

The Center for Army Lessons Learned is *the* place for senior enlisted leaders to look to when seeking answers on how to best prepare, and train, for rotations to any of the Army's combat training centers or for pending deployments, said Michael Robinson, a tactical analyst for the Center.

"Call was created initially to cover the best practices so that we don't make the same mistakes again," Robinson said. "Over time CALL has become a platform to not only correct and disseminate best practices, but to also archive all the different exercises and [operations] downrange."

Robinson, who was at The NCO leadership Center of Excellence, March 20, to brief the students of Sergeants Major Course Class 68, said CALL was established during Operation Just Cause, the invasion of Panama, and has been collecting best practices and lessons learned for posterity for nearly 30 years.

"We sent analysts [into Panama] which started us on the contingency side of not only the operation, but the [collection of the] nuts and bolts lessons learned and best practices for posterity," he said. "That's kind of our connection [to the force]."

The Center for Army Lessons Learned mission states that it *drives Army change as it leads the Army Lessons Learned Program and identifies, collects, analyzes, disseminates, and archives lessons and best practices while maintaining global situational awareness in order to share knowledge and facilitate the Army's and unified action partners' adaptation to win wars*.

"Recently we had a request for information from the 1st Security Force Assistance Brigade about their radio system and their connection across the theater," Robinson said. "So with all of the resources, databases and with our partners around the world at the centers of excellence, we gathered all the information, packaged it up and sent it back to them."

Robinson said that is what CALL is all about and added sergeants major and senior enlisted leaders should make themselves familiar with its resources - in print and online.

"We are a resource for them. CALL has information on any [operation] we are involved in," Robinson said. "We give them context for how they can use the CALL publications, specifically the [combat training centers] and how they can prepare them for their next step in their careers."

Robinson added that while CALL is a resource for the students, they also need the students help to keep them relevant.

"We want feedback. One of our core tenants is the submitting of After Action reviews," he said adding that they know every unit that is deploying or redeploying and CALL goes to them to provide information and collect information – to capture all of their reports and place it into a repository for use by all. "When you put all that data together into one nice little book, that is what we like to do."

Robinson noted CALL's vision - *The Center for Army Lessons Learned is the Army's daily focal point for adaptive learning based on lessons and best practices from the total force and provides timely and relevant knowledge to the warfighter and our unified action partners utilizing integrated systems and interactive technology in order to simplify winning in a complex world.*

"Senior NCOs are the backbone of the Army; they are the master trainers and the executors," he said. "We just want to make sure we at CALL are partnered with them."

For more information about CALL and its products visit https://usacac.army.mil/organizations/mccoe/call.

Combat Training Centers visit Class 68

Photo by David Crozier, Command Communications

The students of Sergeants Major Course Class 68 received briefings, March 20, from the senior enlisted leaders of the Army's three Combat Training Centers - the National Training Center, the Joint Readiness Training Center, and the Joint Multinational Readiness Center. In the afternoon they received a brief from the Center for Army Lessons Learned. Each of the presenters gave an overview of life in the box and what the centers do. Each also emphasized that home station training is paramount to a successful training event at any of the CTCs. CALL briefed the students on where to find all the information they need to prepare for their training events as well as all of the lessons learned since CALL stood up nearly 20 years ago. A complete story to come in our next addition of the ULTIMA Times. Additional photos of this event can be found on our Flickr page at https://www.flickr.com/photos/sgmacademy/albums U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, Army University, National Training Center/Fort Irwin, Joint Readiness Training Center, Operations Group, JMRC

Uzbek delegation visits NCO Leadership Center of Excellence

Photo by David Crozier, Command Communications

Command Sgt. Maj. Patrick Kelley (r), commandant of the Fort Bliss NCO Academy, briefs the Uzbek delegation March 26, on the responsibilities of the NCO Academy to educate and train future leaders.

By David Crozier, Command Communications

The NCO leadership Center of Excellence hosted a delegation from the Uzbekistan Ministry of Defense and National Guard March 26 in an effort to build stronger ties between them and the U.S., and to provide the delegation with an overview of the U.S. Army NCO Professional Development System and the functions of our NCO Academies.

The team, consisting of Col. Ganiev Shukhrat and Lt. Col. Zafardjon Sulaymonov of the Uzbek National Guard; and Lt. Cols. Sukhrabkhon Akhrorov and Shukhrat Zakhidov of the Uzbek Ministry of Defense, spent the day receiving briefings from then NCO Professional Development and Education Directorate and the Fort Bliss NCO Academy commandant, Command Sgt. Maj. Patrick Kelly.

The Uzbek team left with a better understanding of U.S. Army NCOPDS.

The NCO Leadership Center of Excellence is responsible for developing, maintaining, teaching, and distributing five levels of Enlisted Professional Military Education – Introductory, Primary, Intermediate, Senior and Executive. Each level best prepares the soldier to fight and win in a complex world as adaptive and agile leaders and trusted professionals of Force 2025. The Center routinely works with our partner nations to help educate and develop their noncommissioned officer corps.

Educating Today's Leaders For Tomorrow!

Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development System

Distributed Leader Course

Scope: The Distributed Leader Courses, formally known as Structured Self-Development (SSD), are a series of enhanced distance learning courses directly tied to, and prerequisites for, resident NCO PME. The DLC will consist of six levels averaging 40 academic hours of curriculum delivered through the Army Learning Management System. The DLC are designed focusing on six Leader Core Competencies (LCC) formerly known as Common Core. The LCC consist of: Readiness, Leadership, Training Management, Communication, Operations (Army and Joint), and Program Management. The legacy SSD will remain in PME for those Soldiers currently enrolled in and have not completed their course. SSD I is projected to be terminated by May 2020 with each subsequent level removed every two to three months thereafter until October 2021. The projected delivery of DLC I for newly enrolled Soldiers is Summer/Fall 2018, and DLC II to follow a few months later. DLC Levels III, IV, V, and VI will activate sequentially in two to three month increments from October 2018, which brings all six levels Online by 1 October 2019. The enrollment policy will also change. Currently, Soldiers are auto-enrolled in SSD I upon completion of Initial Entry Training. Under the new policy, Soldiers will be auto-enrolled when they reach the zone of consideration for promotion to sergeant and subsequent promotion zones of consideration thereafter.

Basic Leader Course

Scope: The Basic Leader Course is designed to prepare Soldiers for promotion to Sergeant.

It's the first of five resident NCO Professional Military Education (PME) courses. BLC is executed at 32 NCO academies worldwide and also focuses on the six leader competencies of Readiness, Leadership, Training, Communications, Operations, and Program Management. The BLC is a 22-day program of instruction (17 days for Reserve Component) consisting of 169 academic hours. The redesigned BLC is to launch in June 2018, under an intermediate operating capability (IOC) and full operating capability (FOC) by January 2019. The fundamental change in the BLC is the experiential learning model (ELM), which is learner centric. It reinforces application based practical exercises and scenarios which promotes learning and knowledge retention. The new BLC teaches students how to think and train instead of what to think and have them being trained on skill level 1 tasks. Students attending the BLC will work collaboratively in small groups, solve complex problems, and practice adaptive, creative, and innovative thinking. As a result, BLC graduates will be better leaders, trainers, communicators, and thinkers.

Advanced and Senior Leader Courses (ALC/SLC)

Scope: The Advanced Leader Course (ALC) is designed to prepare students for promotion to Staff Sergeant while the Senior Leader Course (SLC) prepares students for promotion to Sergeants First Class. There are 18 proponent schools and centers that teach ALC and SLC including Special Operations, U.S. Army Medical Command, Recruiting Command, School of Music, and the Judge Advocate General School. Both courses contain 55 academic hours dedicated to leader development and also focus on the six leader core competencies (LCC). These courses support the sequential and progressive learning continuum design which starts at DLC level I and BLC and runs through the SMC and DLC level VI. The LCCs have students examine management techniques, analyze mission command, builds on creating expert trainers and emphasizes the impact and importance of leadership and readiness in organizations. The learning experience is further enhanced by each center and school's technical and tactical tasks requirements which results in a total NCO learning continuum.

Master Leader Course
Resident and Nonresident

Scope: The Master Leader Course is delivered via resident and nonresident. The resident course is delivered at 11 NCO academies from all three components (Active, Reserve and National Guard). The nonresident course is delivered by exception through The NCO Leadership Center of Excellence, Fort Bliss, Texas. The MLC was created to fill a significant leader development gap that existed between the Senior Leader Course and the Sergeants Major Course. MLC also follows the leader core competencies (LCC) model. The resident MLC is a 15-day program of instruction consisting of 112 academic hours. It challenges students with intensive and rigorous curriculum. MLC prepares sergeants first class for leadership and staff assignments as master sergeants. Students will develop skills in written and oral communications, critical and creative thinking, and complex problem solving. They will discuss contemporary leadership issues, examine training management strategies, and apply both the Joint Operations Planning Process (JOPP) and the Military Decision Making Process (MDMP). As a result, students will be able to plan training, lead Soldiers, properly advise their officer counterparts, and conduct operational planning in support of unified land operations at company level and above.

Sergeants Major Course
Resident & Nonresident Course (MOD)

Scope: The Sergeants Major Course (SMC) is the capstone of the NCO PME and is delivered via resident and nonresident. The resident SMC is a permanent change of station (PCS) course consisting of 870 academic hours delivered over 10 months at The NCOL CoE. Students are comprised of active duty, partner nations, sister services and Reserve/National Guard. The sergeants major nonresident course (SMNRC) is delivered over two years with most of the students coming from the National Guard and Reserve components. The SMNRC (Modified) is a one-year course for the Special Operations community that is combined with the Joint Special Operations Senior Enlisted Academy (JSOFSEA). The SMC consist of five departments: Command Leadership, Force Management, Joint Operations, Army Operations, and Professional Studies. The SMC curriculum focuses on attributes and competencies required of an operational and strategic level leader whose sphere of influence increases significantly and is designed to enhance critical and creative thinking skills to maximize that influence.

Basic Leader Course Class 05-18 at the NCO Academy, Fort Bliss, Texas. The Fort Bliss NCO Academy was one of several who piloted the new Basic Leader Course curricula.

NCO Professional Development System

Recently an Army-wide implementation of the Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development System (NCOPDS) was directed, creating a revolutionary change to a 40-year-old NCO Education System. NCOPDS launched a series of initiatives which includes various changes in policy, a redesign of our professional military education, and creating systems, processes and procedures to enhance NCO leader development. NCOPDS is a holistic system that includes:

- Renaming the Warrior Leader Course
- Redesigning the Basic Leader Course
- Creating Leader Core Competencies for ALC and SLC
- Creating and adding the Master Leader Course to NCO PME
- NCO PME Deferment Policy
- Creating an NCO Writing Program
- Designing an enhanced digital Job Book
- Creating an NCO Talent Management System
- Revising the DA Form 1059, adding class ranking and GPA
- Creating the Nominative Leader Course
- Adding numeral 5 and 6 for the NCOPD Ribbon
- Instituting the Select, Train, Educate, Promote system
- Changes to the enlisted promotion policy
- Establishing SSD (DLC) as prerequisites to attend resident PME
- Expanding population for Command Sergeant Major/ Sergeant Major nominative selection
- Creating the Enlisted Personnel Management Directorate at HRC for SGM Management
- Establishing operational control of Regular Army CONUS NCO Academies under one organization
- Integrator for updating Soldiers Manual for Common Tasks
- Revising the NCO and Soldier Guides - creating an e-book NCO Guide
- One Army School System concept and establishing multi-component schools
- Comprehensive review of all CSM/SGM positions and define, codify and establish PDPC codes
- Revising all levels of Structured Self-Development, creating a sixth level and renaming Distributed Leader
- Course (DLC)
- Establishing the requirements for completing SEJPME
- Developing the digital rucksack
- Reinvigorating NCO Development Programs
- Creating the Expert Action Badge
- Promoting the Year of the NCO 2020

For More Information

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THE NCO LEADERSHIP CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

"Educating Today's Leaders for Tomorrow"

We do More than Just the Sergeants Major Course

About NCOL CoE

The Noncommissioned Officer Leadership Center of Excellence (NCOL CoE) will be the Army's premier institution driving innovative development for enlisted leaders, constantly focused on readiness. It is a higher-level learning "accredited" institution of academic excellence supported by world class staff, faculty and curriculum. It is committed to educating and training NCOs and Soldiers, producing the right Soldier with the right skills at the right time. Every enlisted Soldier in the Army is educated by NCOL CoE and or its products. It hosts a Hall of Honor and an International Military Student Hall of Fame. Armies worldwide seek us out as a model for their own NCO programs. We develop, integrate and deliver Education and Training Readiness.

Our Mission

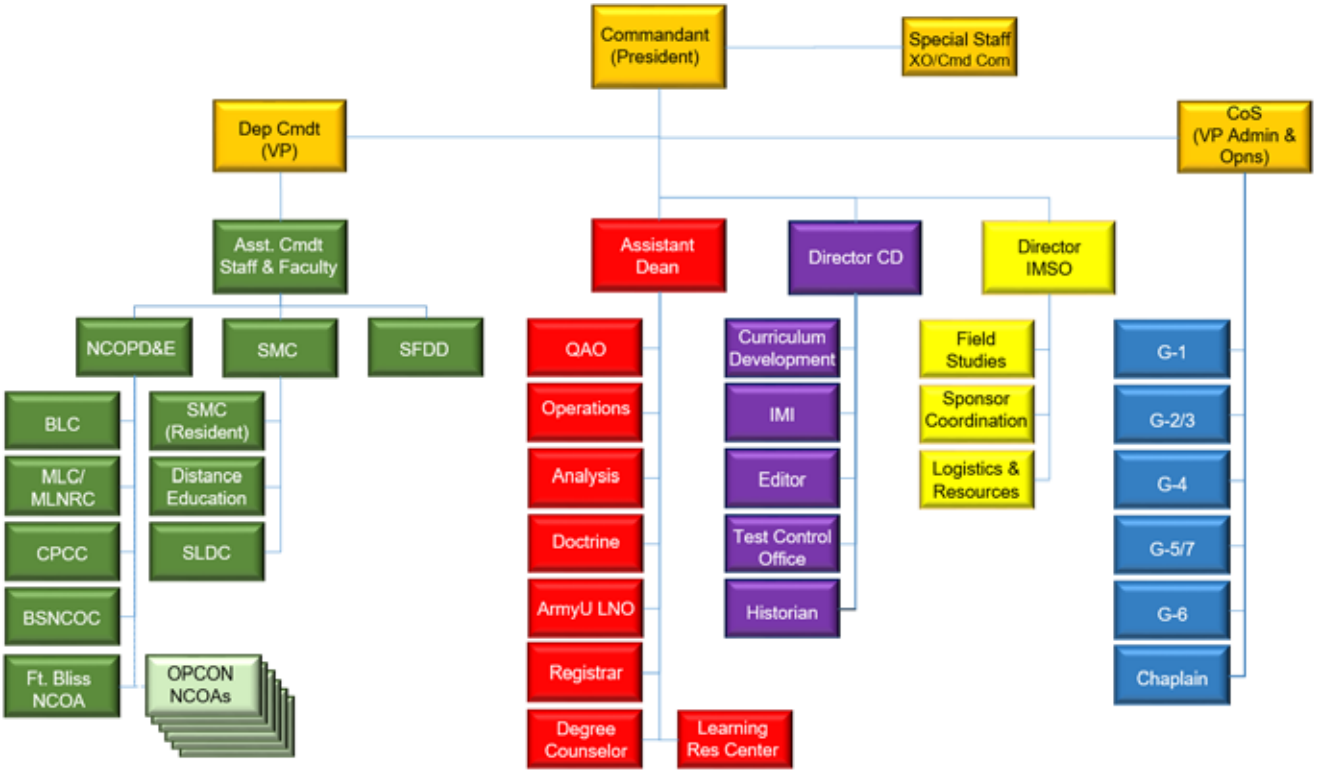
Provide Professional Military Education that develops enlisted leaders to meet the challenges of an increasingly complex world; and develop leaders who are fit, disciplined, and well-educated professionals.

Our Vision

The premier institution driving innovative development for enlisted leaders; constantly focused on readiness.

We drive NCO and Enlisted Soldier education!

Our Organization



Our Resident Courses

Sergeants Major Course (SMC) - 10 Months
SMC Dept. of Distance Education (DDE), Phase II - 2 Weeks Resident (10 Times Annually)
SMC Int'l Military Student Pre-Course
Battle Staff NCO Course (BSNCOC)
Commandants Pre-Command Course - 1 Week, 3 Times per Year
Master Leader Course (MLC) (New)
Spouse Leadership Development Course
Staff and Faculty Development - 6 Courses

Our Distance Learning Courses

SMC Dept. of Distance Education (DDE)
(includes SGM Nonresident Course)
Battle Staff NCO Course - VTC
Distributed Leader Course (DLC)
Levels I, II, III, IV, V, VI
Master Leader Course - dL (New)

Our POI Only Courses

Basic Leader Course (BLC)
32 NCO Academies Worldwide
Advanced Leader Course (ALC)
Leader Core Competencies
Senior Leader Course (SLC)
Leader Core Competencies
JSOFSEA SMC DDE Courses
1 Year, Nonresident / 2 Weeks, Resident

NCO Professional Development & Education (NCOPD&E)

Fort Bliss NCO Academy

Fellowship Program (Penn State)

TRADOC Quality Assurance Team

Military Personnel Exchange Program

Our Doctrine (Training Circulars)

The Army NCO Guide, TC 7-22.7 * iBook on iTunes
The Soldier's Guide, TC 7-21.13

NCO Heritage and Education Center

The NCOL CoE also operates and maintains the NCO Heritage and Education Center, formerly known as The Museum of the NCO, which preserves the heritage and history of the noncommissioned officer. It supports NCO education and training, conducts research, and informs the public of NCO service. It is the only Army Heritage Center dedicated solely to NCO History. It also features an NCO Induction area which is available for use by all of Fort Bliss.

Social Media

Website	http://usasma.armylive.dodlive.mil
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Twitter	@Sgt_Maj_Academy
YouTube	www.youtube.com /usarmysergeantsmajoracademy
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Develop, Integrate and Deliver Education and Training Readiness!

The NCO Leadership Center of Excellence

Driving change for NCO and Enlisted Soldier Education since 1972