

Midgrade Learning Continuum Leaders Workshop Summary

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The Midgrade Learning Continuum (MLC) Team invited Captains Career Course (CCC) leaders to participate in a three-day workshop in April 2019 at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. The purpose of the train-the-trainer workshop was to empower course leaders to address concerns, share ideas, and return to their schools with techniques and procedures that would help improve course execution. This year, the MLC Leaders Workshop focused on providing course leaders with an update on course design, a review of pending doctrinal changes to the core curriculum, a practicum on effective student-centered teaching methods, and a forum to discuss leadership challenges and share effective course leadership techniques.


Three significant redesign efforts were essential points of discussion during the workshop. The first was the rapid rebalancing of 80 hours (approximately two weeks) of the common core curriculum to provide more time for branch-specific lessons. CCC leaders and the MLC Team discussed the impacts of rapidly shifting 80 hours of common core curricula to provide more time for schools to focus on branch-specific outcomes. The workshop also provided the opportunity for course leaders to provide feedback on the revised approach, discuss lessons learned, and recommend improvements to the doctrinally focused course design. The feedback will help improve the course design for the next fiscal year (FY).

The MLC Team also highlighted how the revised course design resulted in the integration of topics into doctrinal lessons where appropriate. Examples included how stand-alone lessons on the Army's Sexual Harassment/Assault and Response Program (SHARP) integrated into Army leadership lessons; the Denied, Degraded, and Disrupted Space Operating Environment (D3SOE) integrated into Army operations lessons; and the Command Maintenance Discipline Program (CMDP) integrated into Army sustainment lessons. Changing from a stand-alone, nonintegrated approach to an integrated design provided multiple opportunities for students and instructors to discuss SHARP, D3SOE, and CMDP issues in the context of doctrinal issues in the leadership, mission command, operations, planning, and training modules. The integrated approach also provided more opportunities for group discussion, student application, and instructor assessment of the concepts in the context of current Army doctrine.

Throughout the workshop, MLC Team instructors also modeled effective learner-centered and collaborative facilitation techniques. MLC Team instructors provided in-the-classroom examples of teaching techniques designed to enhance student par-

ticipation in the learning process. Some of the specific techniques demonstrated and discussed during the workshop included KWL (Know, Want to Know, and Learned), crowdsourcing, jigsaw, shift and share, and think-pair-share (Barkley, Cross, & Major, 2005; Wlodkowski, 2008). The workshop provided the course leaders with unique opportunities to observe and experience the techniques first-hand as “students” and discuss how they might use the teaching techniques back at their respective schools.

The regular turnover of military personnel teaching at the CCCs frequently results in changes in course leadership. For many CCC course leaders, this was their first experience leading in an academic environment. The workshop provided an opportunity for participants to share effective course leadership and management issues as well as to discuss effective techniques to enhance the execution of their respective courses. This year the workshop included discussions on using effective instructor calibration techniques, maintaining rigor in the classroom, implementing effective assessment policies, and developing meaningful program evaluation techniques.

The MLC Team will host the next workshop in April 2020. The goal of the workshop will be again to empower course leaders and enhance course execution. This workshop will focus on academic leadership and effective CCC course management techniques. The workshop will also include discussions on special topics of interest for FY 2021, including implementing the Graduate Record Exam, execution of the Career Course Cognitive Assessment Battery, the use of doctrinal pretests and posttests, integration of Army University Press’s virtual staff rides, and the use of automated program evaluation tools. The collaborative discussions and relationships established during the workshop will increase our shared understanding of course leadership challenges, enable the development of potential solutions, and empower CCC course leaders to execute their respective CCCs. 

References

- Barkley, E. F., Cross, K. P., & Major, C. H. (2005). *Collaborative learning techniques*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Wlodkowski, R. J. (2008). *Enhancing adult motivation to learn: A comprehensive guide for teaching all adults*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.