

# Fostering Instructor Competencies through Army University's Faculty Development Program

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## Abstract

The U.S. Army has made a concerted effort since 2011 to change the way it views training and education. The *Army Learning Concept* shifted the focus to a learner-centered approach based upon adult education principles and learning theory. Essential to this change is ensuring instructors and curriculum developers have a common understanding of adult learning; allowing curriculum to be developed within the guidelines of the theories and principles, and instructional methods are appropriate for the learning environment. To achieve this goal Army University, working with colleagues across the Army Learning Enterprise, developed the Common Faculty Development Program (CFDP) comprised of four areas. Foundational to the program are the instructor and curriculum developer courses, which are built upon internationally recognized competencies. The courses and the CFDP are described; followed by an example of how this may be realized in a traditional college or university setting.

The U.S. Army first published the *Army Learning Concept (ALC)* in January 2011, and subsequently revised and republished in April 2017.<sup>1</sup> The 2011 version introduced the key notion that the Army is a learning organization continuously training and educating soldiers across three domains—operational, institutional, and self-development.<sup>2</sup> This document changed the way Army instructors approached training and education by shifting to a learning-centric approach. Included in the *ALC* was evidence of adult education principles and theories grounded in John Dewey's reflective practice, Malcolm Knowles' tenet of andragogy, and David Kolb's experiential learning methodology.<sup>3</sup> The *ALC* emphasized the faculty's role in creating the learner-centric environment and established a need for world-class faculty.

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The discussion that emerged across the Army following the publication of the *ALC* led to the 2012 Army Learning Summit. Participants at the summit confirmed a suspicion that efforts and standards of practice across the Army's curriculum developer and instructor communities varied by installation, and they realized the need for a standardized approach to training development. The U.S. Army Command and General Staff College's Faculty and Staff Development Division was charged with developing an instructional design course that subsequently was taught at Army centers of excellence and schools during the summer of 2012.

Subsequently, in 2014, the Army published the *Army University Strategic Business Plan* outlining three lines of effort for the Army learning enterprise—increased academic rigor, greater respect and prestige, and improved management practices and institutional agility.<sup>4</sup> These lines of effort provided the guiding principles for developing world-class faculty. Later that year, Headquarters, Department of Army released Execute Order (EXORD) 214-15 that established Army University.<sup>5</sup> The EXORD defined seven Key Tasks for Army University, with the first key task of “Develop World-Class Faculty.” Included within the task was the creation and implementation of a faculty development program across the Army learning enterprise.

### Developing World-Class Faculty

Army University leadership posit that its faculty is its center of gravity, and faculty developers could not agree more. Students see faculty as the face of Army education and training. The Army University is committed to developing, sustaining, and pro-

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moting world-class faculty who are critical and creative thinkers, subject-matter experts, and promoters of collaborative learning and reflective practice. To honor this commitment, Army schools have faculty development offices whose faculty developers have the formal education and experience to implement the required faculty development qualification/certification program.

The evolution and dynamics of faculty development at Army University anchors back to the mid-1980s when the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC) adopted a small-group seminar methodology. This change to small-group instruction was the beginning of a faculty and staff development program that intended to focus on small-group methodology and small-group facilitation—adult classrooms where “everyone teaches and learns” and that mirror C. Roland Christensen’s perspective.<sup>6</sup> The CGSC’s small-group seminar methodology pioneered and shaped what Army University’s faculty development program continues to build upon today.

The departure from the 1980s one-to-sixty instructional approach, largely dependent upon the direct instruction method of lecture, required a change to the curriculum, educational philosophy, and instructional methodology. The CGSC added small-group facilitation methods to its faculty development program. This initiative laid the foundation for today’s four-phase faculty development program that CGSC and other Army schools and centers of excellence model. With the establishment of Army University in 2016, its Faculty and Staff Development Division began to design the Common Faculty Development Program (CFDP) for all Army centers and schools. This new program is very similar to the successful faculty development program that CGSC implemented in the late 1990s and that has evolved into a four-phase program: foundation, technical, certification, and continuing professional development.

The *ALC* and its tenets were the catalysts for designing a CFDP that would support faculty who teach and develop curriculum in both training and education school settings. Its influence is found in the Common Faculty Development Instructor Course (CFD-IC) and the Common Faculty Development Developer Course (CFD-DC) where the purposeful change from lecture, PowerPoint-based methods to a learner-centered experiential base provides faculty with the confidence and competence to engage learners and to develop their critical and creative thinking skills.

Unique to the Army University is the wide spectrum of training and education venues and their associated variety of instructors and faculty. Soldiers first meet a drill sergeant during Initial Entry Training and progress to functional (technical) military occupational specialty training with a technical specialist, training that is a career equivalent to civilian education in trade schools. As the soldiers continue throughout their careers, the training shifts emphasis from technical training to professional military education (PME) focusing on leader development. PME also provides soldiers the option to obtain regionally accredited baccalaureate and master degrees, depending upon the PME institution. Army education policies require all soldiers assigned to an instructor position to complete a faculty development course prior to beginning their teaching duties.

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The experience of instructors varies widely from the drill sergeants and technical instructors to faculty members at graduate-level degree-granting institutions. Likewise, the educational background spans instructors with high school diplomas to faculty with doctorates, depending upon the school. The CFDP is designed to meet the needs and provide the skills necessary across the spectrum. Army University's Faculty and Staff Development Division developed the CFDP with four areas of emphasis to meet the needs of its instructors.

**Common faculty development courses.** Two foundational courses are required for instructors and curriculum developers, along with five additional courses and course-specific instructional workshops as part of a professional development path.

**Faculty Development and Recognition Program.** Self-developmental opportunities for instructors and faculty members are available with recognition of progression and milestone achievements through the Army's formal awards program.

**Faculty selection, assignment, and promotion policies.** CFDP policies seek to stabilize soldiers in instructor assignments for thirty-six months. The effort also proposes to identify prospective instructors and faculty early in soldiers' careers, allowing successful instructors to return to the classroom in follow-on assignments.

**Continuing Professional Development Program.** This program provides enterprise and local opportunities for instructors and curriculum developers to participate in continuing education. In the past, the program has included distance learning, instructional workshops, and "lunch and learn" brown-bag sessions.

### Four-Phase Faculty Development Program

The Faculty and Staff Development Division provided the CFDP courseware, lesson plans, and additional teaching materials to faculty developers at other Army centers and schools. The curriculum for the foundational courses was developed collaboratively with colleagues from across the Army learning enterprise, and several taught the new courses as part of a validation phase with group trials. As recommended in Training and Doctrine Command Pamphlet 350-70-3, *Training and Education: Faculty and Staff Development*, schools may adjust the modules to meet local instructor experience, abilities, and preferred learning strategies.<sup>7</sup>

**Phase I: Foundation Phase.** This phase requires all military and civilian personnel who are assigned to teach or write curriculum in Army schools to successfully complete the eighty-hour CFD-IC or the eighty-hour CFD-DC before they teach.

The purpose of the required CFD-IC is to prepare new faculty to facilitate learning in an adult experiential environment. It is a competency-based course: the basis for the learning objectives are internationally recognized instructor competencies published by the International Board of Standards for Training, Performance, and Instruction.<sup>8</sup> The course introduces new faculty to Army instructor roles and

responsibilities, teaching and learning models, and professional and ethical requirements. The course also introduces classroom management techniques, the process of building learning objectives and lesson plans, and characteristics of effective communication. The faculty developers who provide this course to the faculty model the various methodologies and learning strategies throughout the CFD-IC. Throughout the course, new faculty have an opportunity to discuss and wrestle with the theories and practices of adult education, and to practice teaching while working from short, simple practicum exercises to increasingly longer and more complex ones, culminating in an end-of-course lesson presentation.

Although the CFD-IC is required, as mentioned previously, it can be adjusted to the faculty audience at the various Army schools. For example, at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, faculty have at least a master's degree, many hold doctoral degrees, and many have taught previously. Therefore, less time may be spent on particular topics.

The purpose of the CFD-DC is to introduce developers to lesson plan development using the analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation (ADDIE) process. The course includes classes on Adult Learning Principles and Lesson Development Concepts. It includes both in-class and out-of-class requirements. Participants review, revise, develop, and prescribe instructional products supporting lesson-plan development. A Faculty and Staff Development Division instructor provides formative feedback at the completion of each phase of the ADDIE process and summative feedback at the completion of the lesson-plan development. Participant developers present their final project to the class. Like the CFD-IC, the CFD-DC is a competency-based course: the basis for the learning objectives are internationally recognized instructional design competencies published by the International Board of Standards for Training, Performance, and Instruction.<sup>9</sup>

**Phase II: Technical Phase.** After new faculty successfully complete their required Foundation Phase, they enter the Technical Phase. In the Technical Phase, they combine the foundational educational methodologies with the school's technical curriculum content that they are assigned to teach (the lessons) or content (curriculum) they are assigned to develop.

**Phase III: Certification Phase.** After successful completion of the applicable CFD-IC or CFD-DC, the new faculty members enter the Certification Phase, where they are assessed teaching a course as the primary instructor in a classroom or as a developer who writes curriculum to support classroom instruction. They must be observed once; however, schools can require more than one observation prior to certifying a faculty member.

**Phase IV: Continuing Professional Development Program.** This phase ensures the faculty have opportunities for continuing professional development to remain current in their subject-matter expertise and in the learning sciences. Faculty can enroll in classes offered through their designated government career

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program; attend and present at professional conferences; and attend workshops, symposia, and presentations. Oftentimes, faculty will offer a workshop or presentation to their colleagues. Fort Leavenworth's Faculty and Staff Development Division films guest speakers and, with permission, uploads the videos to Blackboard so that these sessions can be shared with other schools and centers across the Army. Presentations by notable educators such as Stephen Brookfield, Raymond Wlodkowski, and Rosemary Caffarella have provided Phase IV opportunities. In addition, faculty development offices will develop client-specific workshops for teaching departments or organizations upon request. This phase of the Common Faculty Development Program is ongoing to offer opportunities for faculty to keep current in the theory and practice of adult education.

Unique to CGSC is a Faculty Development Adjunct Program. The Army University's Faculty and Staff Development Division recruits faculty at CGSC to collaborate in faculty development. For almost two decades, faculty have willingly assisted with assessing practicum and tutorials during scheduled faculty-development classes. On many occasions, they have actually co-facilitated an entire class. This partnership between faculty developers and faculty from various academic teaching departments has helped produce a successful and effective program.

Since the majority of faculty at most Army schools is military, there is a significant turnover every two to three years. However, there are schools like CGSC at Fort Leavenworth that have approximately 60 percent civilian faculty. This allows for less turnover, and it has also been cause to require a recertification requirement. Before the completion of the fifth year of teaching, Army faculty must be recertified through an Advanced Faculty Development Course, a particular workshop, or another recertification option that the local Army school requires. Recertification is now required of the faculty at all schools throughout the enterprise.

Colleagues in traditional higher-learning institutions may question the feasibility of implementing a common faculty development program that goes beyond the lunch-and-learn format, small workshops, and grant-writing tutorials that seem to be commonplace. Army University acknowledges its good fortune to have supportive leadership and a governance structure to assist in meeting faculty development requirements. However, creating a faculty development program modeled after Army University's instructor course and developer course is possible with the support of chancellors, vice provosts, and department chairs.

First, it is recommended the Faculty Development Office be located within the Office of the Chancellor or the Office of the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs. This provides the institutional leadership as well as the governance and oversight to ensure faculty in the colleges are meeting the faculty development requirements. The investment will require four to five full-time-equivalent faculty members to teach the courses. Army University supports CGSC, and due to faculty turnover, teach approximately 250 faculty annually in the instructor course and recertification

course with class sizes planned for no more than twelve students.

Creating a learner-centered culture requires faculty development to begin early in the faculty member's time with the institution. Participation in the faculty development course should occur prior to classes beginning to minimize disruption in teaching schedules. The CFD-IC is comprised of eighty academic hours, and with few exceptions, every new faculty member attends prior to teaching in the classroom. This may manifest itself in higher-learning institutions during the summer months with the colleges and schools con-

ducting faculty development courses for new faculty in collaboration with the faculty development office and the use of adjunct faculty. As new faculty arrive at the institution, the faculty development course becomes integrated into the onboarding process. The first iteration or two may seem awkward due to timing, but course attendance will quickly become the accepted practice for new faculty.

**Table. Common Faculty Development Instructor Courses**

<b>Schedule</b>
<p><b>Day 1</b> Lesson 1: Course introduction Lesson 2: Fundamentals of Adult Teaching and Learning</p>
<p><b>Day 2</b> Lesson 2 (continued): Fundamentals of Adult Teaching and Learning Lesson 3: Foundations of Adult Learning</p>
<p><b>Day 3</b> Lesson 4: Foundations of Instruction (experiential learning)</p>
<p><b>Day 4</b> Lesson 5: Formative Practicums (experiential learning model)</p>
<p><b>Day 5</b> Lesson 6: Applied Critical Thinking Tools and Group Think Mitigation Techniques</p>
<p><b>Day 6</b> Lesson 7: Foundations of Instruction (direct instruction)</p>
<p><b>Day 7</b> Lesson 8: Formative Practicums (direct instruction)</p>
<p><b>Day 8</b> Lesson 9: The Army Instructor as a Professional</p>
<p><b>Day 9</b> Lesson 10: Formative Practicums (collaborative/interactive instruction)</p>
<p><b>Day 10</b> Lesson 11: Final Practicum (summative)</p>

(Table by authors)

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The CFD-IC is designed with eight lessons and three practicums interwoven into the curriculum. The curriculum may be tailored to the audience and institution, and the table (on page 50) depicts the layout of the course. It is recommended the course focus on the praxis of teaching, as too often administrative “requirements” compete with developmental opportunities.

The use of adjunct faculty developers for the formative and final practicums is a productive approach to gain support of colleagues. Faculty offering to serve as adjuncts for the practicums may be considered based upon their demonstrated ability to teach using the experiential learning model and their reputations within their departments. The advantage of adjunct faculty participation is the buy-in among peers, which is then carried back into the departments, offices, and classrooms.

A final consideration is the recertification of faculty. Faculty in the Army’s learning community have a requirement to recertify every five years. The purpose of the recertification is to ensure faculty members remain current and proficient with educational methodologies and practices. Locally, Army University’s recertification is a three-day class emphasizing the experiential learning model, facilitated discussions on classroom best practices, and a recent book examining the scholarship of teaching and learning.<sup>10</sup>

### Conclusion

Feedback has been very positive over the years for the faculty development program. Faculty span the spectrum of educational experience and teaching experience. Of course, skeptics arrive in the classroom on occasion. However, over the last ten plus years, there have been very few that do not acknowledge the theoretical foundation of the course and the practical insights provided for faculty members. Even the “seasoned” and curmudgeonly faculty, who enter the course full of pessimism, often come away from the course with positive comments or at worst a neutral position toward the course and its value.

Army University’s four-phase CFDP uses common and unique competencies and learning objectives to develop, sustain, and promote world-class faculty. The program prepares all assigned faculty to engage the learners by implementing methodologies that are learning-centered, experiential, and effective. Army University faculty embody the scholarship of teaching and learning, and manage an educational environment that is collaborative and that promotes learning that lasts. The CFDP supports faculty so that they are more self-aware, have the requisite skills to perform their roles, and are increasingly more learner-centered in their philosophies and approaches. Its phases allow newer faculty and true subject-matter experts to discover (or rediscover) how learning happens and what role they can play in that process so that their students become more adaptive and more able to reason critically in an ever-changing operating environment. ❧



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## Notes

1. Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Pamphlet (TP) 525-8-2, *The U.S. Army Learning Concept for 2015* (Fort Eustis, VA: TRADOC, 6 June 2011, obsolete); TP 525-8-2, *The U.S. Army Learning Concept for Training and Education: 2020-2040* (Fort Eustis, VA: TRADOC, 13 April 2017), accessed 30 January 2018, <http://www.tradoc.army.mil/tpubs/pams/tp525-8-2.pdf>.
2. TP 525-8-2, *The U.S. Army Learning Concept for 2015*, App. D.
3. John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (New York: Free Press, 1997); Malcolm S. Knowles, Elwood F. Holton, and Richard A. Swanson, *The Adult Learner: The Definitive Classic in Adult Education and Human Resource Development* (New York: Routledge, 2012); David A. Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1984).
4. TRADOC, *Strategic Business Plan for the Army University* (Fort Eustis, VA: TRADOC, 16 March 2015).
5. Execute Order 214-15, "Establishment of the Army University," Headquarters, Department of the Army, 8 June 2015.
6. C. Roland Christensen, David A. Garvin, and Ann Sweet, *Education for Judgment: The Artistry of Discussion Leadership* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1991).
7. TP 350-70-3, *Training and Education: Staff and Faculty Development* (Fort Eustis, VA: TRADOC, forthcoming).
8. James Klein et al., *Instructor Competencies: Standards for Face-to-Face, Online, and Blended Settings* (Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing, 2004).
9. Tiffany A. Koszalka et al., *Instructional Designer Competencies: The Standards*, 4th ed. (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2013).
10. Aaron S. Richmond, Guy A. Boysen, and Regan A. R. Gurung, *An Evidence-Based Guide to College and University Teaching: Developing the Model Teacher* (New York: Routledge, 2016).