



(Photo by Michael L. Lewis, NCO Journal)

Sgt. Kevin Mulloy stands at the position of attention during his appearance before a board composed of Sgt. Maj. of the Army Raymond F. Chandler III (center) and senior command sergeants major from throughout the Army in October 2012 during the 2012 Department of the Army Best Warrior Competition at Fort Lee, Virginia.

What Will The Army University Mean for Enlisted Soldiers?

Command Sgt. Maj. Micheal Clowser, U.S. Army

The Army University is coming to you! The Army is rolling out its latest initiative to develop an institution that answers the question: How do we develop agile, adaptive, and innovative leaders of the future? One thing we have learned through the nearly fourteen years of conflict is that our

enemies are as complex and as adaptive as any we have faced in our history. They are quick to leverage technology and to capitalize on our weaknesses, and they communicate with their subordinates at a much faster rate than we normally do with ours. In the past, the Army depended on equipment to gain an advantage



(U.S. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. John R. Nimmo Sr.)

Spc. Anthony Fountain, with the Naval Ophthalmic Support and Training Activity in Yorktown, Virginia, uses a manual lensometer 5 March 2008 at Coast Guard Integrated Support Command Kodiak, Alaska. Fountain is helping to create four hundred pairs of free eyeglasses for patients during Operation Arctic Care 2008, an annual joint-service training event that provides medical, dental, optometry, veterinary, and mechanical services.

over its enemies. As we move toward the “Force 2025 and Beyond” strategy, it is obvious we must invest more in our soldiers; we must tap into their potential to become more agile, more adaptive, and more innovative than our adversaries.¹

NCO 2020 Initiative

The NCO 2020 initiative is a five-year project involving a survey of more than four hundred thousand soldiers regarding the Army noncommissioned officer (NCO) education system.² The survey identified several performance gaps in NCO education. Two of those gaps are that institutional learning often comes later than needed and that systems need to be more adaptable. Perhaps The Army University’s biggest challenge will be to become an agile and adaptive institution. In order to accomplish this requirement, The Army University will need to synchronize the learning objectives of all four cohorts in the Army: commissioned officers, warrant officers, enlisted soldiers, and Army civilians. Currently, these processes are performed by the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command and the U.S. Army Combined Arms Center. Synchronizing these learning objectives will ensure soldiers are trained and educated at the appropriate times in their careers.

Another function of The Army University will be to develop and review the professional military education curriculum to ensure it is standardized and can be quickly

exported to the Army’s twenty-two proponents when and where it is needed. In the current process, a proponent can, at times, take several years to develop and implement a curriculum it is responsible for—and that curriculum often is not shared throughout the entire Army. The Army University will be the vehicle that can swiftly push and pull curriculum Army-wide, with the ability to adapt to emerging threats when soldiers need the information quickly.

Education and Credentialing

The Army University will not look like any other university in the United States. As a whole, it will leverage

eighty-six institutions, with more than 150,000 enrolled students, and it will partner with other universities to provide more opportunities for soldiers through degree participation programs and the credentialing of soldier skills. Several Army proponent schools have relationships with nearby academic institutions close to their campuses. Under The Army University, they will be able to expand these relationships throughout the country to provide more flexibility to soldiers as they pursue higher education and degree completion.

Credentialing is a term used to identify personnel who have established their qualifications as licensed professionals. Currently, there are more than five thousand organizations that credential people in disciplines ranging from emergency medical technician to carpenter. Most of these credentialing organizations can legally certify soldiers in a state or a region in their specialties. The Army University will partner with these organizations to align them universally and to help soldiers who graduate from a military technical school acquire the recognition for their skills—as they deserve—through licensing.

Army Policy

Affecting policy can be one of the most daunting tasks in the Army. Generally speaking, changes are frequently conveyed through forums and meetings. In addition to providing a clearer link to decision makers through the forums and meetings, The Army University will have the

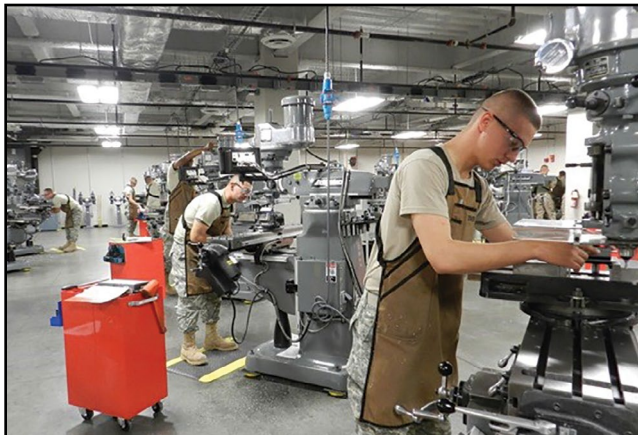
voice of twenty-two proponents, eighty-six schools, and 450,000 soldiers as it works to make positive changes for the soldiers' and Army's benefit. Sometimes it is easy to ignore one voice, but The Army University will be a voice of many—too loud to ignore.

Talent Management

The Army needs new ways to build agile, adaptive, and innovative leaders. This will require better management of talent throughout the four cohorts. There are talented individuals nested within the force who have potential and aptitude far exceeding that of their peers. To maximize that talent, the Army must develop agile institutions that identify and accelerate development of those talented individuals rather than the old one-size-fits-all process. The Army University will develop models that emphasize career-broadening experiences by offering accelerated education opportunities for its high performers. This will include programs such as strategic broadening seminars and the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy Fellowship Program, which is scheduled to be implemented this year.

Increased nontraditional assignments provide a means to enhance understanding throughout the force of how the Army truly works, while also providing additional career enhancement opportunities to take advantage of the talents and capabilities of the senior enlisted leaders.

Exceptional soldiers identified through this new system of talent management should have the opportunity



(Photo courtesy of the U.S. Army)

Soldiers use their skills to fabricate critical parts and to repair essential equipment in September 2011 as they provide support to Company B, 563rd Aviation Support Battalion, 159th Combat Aviation Brigade, which is based out of Fort Campbell, Kentucky. The soldiers are allied trades specialists operating out of a fabrication shop at Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan. They provide critical aviation parts not readily available through accessible supply stock.

to experience these specialized assignments for professional growth, which will also serve to improve overall performance across the Army. Development of strategic leaders and thinkers does not happen overnight; it requires identification of talent and exposure to strategic leadership opportunities in order to master skills through firsthand experience.

Transitioning Soldiers

One of the foremost issues for soldiers transitioning out of the military is the translation of their experiences and education from military to civilian language. Ask civilians not associated with the military what they think the Warrior Leader Course is, and you will get a variety of different answers—but typically, you will find that nobody outside the Army knows the right answer. In part, this is due to the fact that less than one-half of one percent of the U.S. population has served in the armed forces at any given time during the past decade, so this lack of knowledge is understandable.

However, this situation is detrimental to the veteran seeking employment after leaving the Army. The Army University will begin rebranding courses and curriculum to make it easier for civilian companies to understand course content and the associated skill sets of soldiers departing the service. You might see the Warrior Leader Course change its name to Basic Leader Course, or it might even become aligned with curriculum that would better reflect the credit the American Council on Education awards soldiers for the classes they take in the NCO Education System. An example might be renaming the leadership block in the Advanced Leader Course to Organization Leadership 101.

Bottom Line

The Army University is not a new concept. Many past commanders have tried to institute a similar model in their organizations because they recognized the need to synchronize efforts and to highlight the world-class education the U.S. Army provides to all soldiers. It will take some time to develop all the necessary processes and efficiencies, but in the end, The Army University will be an institution that develops agile, adaptive, and innovative leaders who are prepared for the complex fight of the future. ■

Command Sgt. Maj. Micheal Clowser, U.S. Army, is the command sergeant major for Combined Arms Center–Education and the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. He previously served as the command sergeant major for the 12th Combat Aviation Brigade in Katterbach, Germany. He has served for twenty-five years in the aviation career field. He is a graduate of the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy and Command Sergeants Major Course. He holds an MBA from Baker College in Flint, Michigan.

Notes

1. Raymond T. Odierno and John M. McHugh, "Force 2025 and Beyond—Setting the Course," U.S. Army policy memorandum, 22 July 2014, http://www.arcic.army.mil/app_Documents/TRADOC_Memo_Force-2025-and-Beyond-Setting-the-Course_06AUG2014.pdf, accessed 9 March 2015.

2. The Institute for Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development conducts and analyzes the NCO 2020 surveys. For more on NCO 2020, see the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command news website, <http://tradocnews.org/nco-2020>, accessed 4 May 2015.



(U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Jessi Ann McCormick)

Spc. Michelle Metzger, a motor transport operator with 1487th Transportation Company, Ohio Army National Guard, applies grease to her vehicle 12 August 2013 at Multinational Base–Tarin Kot, Afghanistan. Metzger, a mine-resistant ambush-protected (MRAP) vehicle driver, performs daily maintenance on the vehicle.