



Cpl. Lane B. Tucker of the 202nd Military Police Group (Criminal Investigation) readies to recite the Oath of the Noncommissioned Officer during his WLC graduation ceremony May 24 at the 7th Army NCO Academy in Grafenwöhr, Germany. (Photo by Pfc. Chalon Hutson)

CSM Dailey: Developing the next generation of leaders

NCOs must adapt to meet the needs of the Army of 2020

By Command Sgt. Maj. Daniel A. Dailey

Command Sgt. Maj. of U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command

Since 9/11, our Noncommissioned Officer Corps has truly lived by the NCO Creed. During more than a decade of combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, NCOs demonstrated time and again that they are the backbone of our Army. In countless small-unit actions, we proved our technical and tactical proficiency while executing our two primary responsibilities: accomplishing the mission and taking care of Soldiers. We can rightfully be proud as NCOs, leaders and American Soldiers.

Yet, there are many challenges ahead. We concluded our combat mission in Iraq and began drawing down our forces in Afghanistan while transitioning the mission to NCOs in the Afghan National Security Forces. Our nation's leaders published a new strategy, one focused on preparedness for a wide range of military operations potentially anywhere in the world.

We must be prepared to lead Soldiers and teams for humanitarian assistance missions at home or abroad. And we must be equally prepared to lead them to deter

and defeat enemy forces in the Asia-Pacific Region, the Middle East or wherever else conflict erupts. The requirement to deploy almost anywhere and execute the full range of military operations is a significantly different challenge than that of counterinsurgency in Iraq and Afghanistan — not a harder or easier challenge, just a different one.

In order to meet the challenges of the Army of 2020, we are adapting doctrine, organizations, training and leader development. We are leveraging technology for both warfighting and training, and we are evolving our procedures for readiness, deployment and operations. As we transition to the Army of 2020, we are leaning forward to prepare the NCO Corps to lead that Army. Here are some of the initiatives the Army's NCO leaders are taking to ensure that you remain the leaders our nation and our Army needs.

The NCO development timeline

To prepare our NCO Corps to lead the Army of 2020, we structured our NCO development timeline so that each NCO is proficient in the competencies necessary for the four NCO roles of leading, training, maintaining standards, and caring for Soldiers and equipment at the skill level they are entering, the leadership position they will hold and the organization they will lead. This timeline is a synchronized relationship between professional military education, promotions and assignments in a way that is deliberate, continuous, sequential and progressive. During their careers, all NCOs will progress successively through NCO Education System courses, developmental assignments, and Structured Self-Development.

The NCO development timeline is designed to ensure that each NCO is prepared for new challenges and increasing responsibilities. While it assists NCOs to understand their role in their own career progression, it more importantly signals to leaders their roles in developing subordinates.

For example, for a number of reasons during the last decade of combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, we could not always ensure our subordinates attended the next NCOES course when scheduled. But, as the pressure of short dwell time and manning deploying units eases, each leader should ensure subordinate NCOs are scheduled for NCOES courses on time and are able and prepared to attend. We must reduce our backlog of NCOs who have not yet attended the courses they need to be promoted and assume positions of greater responsibility. As leaders, that is our responsibility in taking care of Soldiers and our Army.

Warrior Leader Course

Shortly after the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, our Army recognized that the NCO Education System was not meeting the needs of our leaders in the chal-

lenging environment of warfare in the 21st Century, when any unit could be required without warning to transition to active combat against smart, capable enemy forces. One of our key initiatives was transitioning our initial NCOES course, the Primary Leader Development Course, to the Warrior Leader Course. The focus of the Warrior Leader Course was just that — preparing NCOs from every branch to be warriors leading warriors.



Command Sgt. Maj. Daniel A. Dailey is the command sergeant major of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command at Fort Eustis, Va..

WLC has served us well, as for a decade our NCOs have successfully built cohesive and effective teams and led our Soldiers to victory in combat in every imaginable situation. We continue to improve the WLC to meet the needs of our NCO Corps and our Army.

Over the past year we gathered feedback on NCOES and the WLC from units downrange, from NCO leaders, from schoolhouses and from Soldiers. Based on that feedback, we have piloted an improved course. Slightly longer, the course will add more land navigation, more physical fitness and the Army Physical Fitness Test, and will increase education in counseling and assessing subordinates. The new WLC will provide our newest and youngest NCOs the education they need to develop and lead Soldiers and teams for new missions in new locations under a variety of conditions.

Developing NCO Instructors

“Competence is my watchword,” the NCO Creed states, and we achieve such competence through quality, effective instruction. Each of us as NCOs has a responsibility as an instructor — whether in NCOES courses, in organizational training, or in individually coaching and mentoring our subordinates.

As NCOs we develop our subordinates in six major areas: the Army as a profession, comprehensive fitness, professional competence, adaptability, team building and life-long learning. Yet, the environment in which NCOs instruct and Soldiers learn has changed considerably in recent years. Formal and informal simulations, social networks, and learning communities affect how we conduct instruction and achieve learning. Each of us as NCOs must master these instructional tools.

To improve these capabilities, we proposed developing a cadre of expert instructors through an Instructor Development Program. We will formally select NCOs for participation; develop those selected to achievement at three levels: instructor, senior instructor and master instructor; continuously assess instructor abilities; and manage our instructor cadre to ensure the Army’s instructional needs are met in both the institutional and operational force.

Army Career Tracker

The Army Career Tracker enables Soldiers, NCOs, officers, and Department of the Army civilians to understand and map out their individual career path, and helps supervisors to assist subordinate’s self-development.

The ACT supports individual NCO development by providing a framework for the creation and management of an Individual Development Plan. The system allows leaders, supervisors and mentors to make recommendations for the next step in each Soldier or NCO’s career. The ACT supports planning and managing individual training, both mandatory and suggested training opportunities.

Beyond training, the ACT supports each individual’s management of their education and life-long learning, to include transition to civilian life without loss of educational credits. The ACT truly is one-stop shopping for each Soldier and NCO to manage their own training, education and development throughout their career.

Structured Self-Development

The NCO development domain in which we have made the greatest progress is that of self-development. Though improvements have been made to NCOES in the institutional domain, and our NCOs are gaining incredible depth of experience as leaders in the organizational domain, it is the self-development domain where our NCOs can broaden their knowledge base and competencies.

The first initiative I’d like to address is Structured Self-Development. We’ve known for a long time that there were gaps or delays in our individual development — primarily the years spent in between schools, such as the gap between completion of One Station Unit Training or Advanced Individual Training and attendance at the Warrior Leader Course. SSD enables us to fill those gaps while developing knowledge and competencies that build the confidence of our Soldiers to lead at the next higher level.

Soldiers and NCOs conduct SSD entirely online. It is self-paced to account for different schedules based on MOS, duty position, rank and unit schedules. We deliver SSD to each individual through interactive multimedia instruction, accessed via the Army Learning Management System. SSD topics range from combat operations to administration and logistics to training and leadership.

For example, SSD-1 for Soldiers preparing for WLC, consists of 36 distinct distance learning packages totaling 80 hours of instruction. We fielded SSD-1 in October 2010 and SSD-3 in May 2011 for NCOs who have completed the Advanced Leader Course and are preparing for the Senior Leader Course.

Thus far, over 21,000 Soldiers have completed SSD. Our current rate of completion is over 2,000 Soldiers and NCOs per month. But we can and must do better.

SSD is self-paced, but it must be completed in order to attend the next level NCOES course. Online instruction at first may seem challenging, but those who have completed SSD demonstrate for all of us that it can be done. For further information on SSD contact the Institute for Non-Commissioned Officer Professional Development at (757) 501-5637/5446 or www.tradoc.army.mil/INCOPD/contact.html.

College of the American Soldier

A second initiative in the self-development domain is the College of the American Soldier. It provides the opportunity for virtually all training and education in an NCO’s career to be translated into college credits at colleges across the nation. Examples of training and education that can be converted into college credits include Initial Military Training, NCOES courses, Army correspondence courses, functional courses, self-development and, under certain circumstances, experience in operational units.

Today, almost 40 civilian colleges and universities are integrated into CAS, and NCOs can earn degrees in management, business administration, organizational development, human resources management and organizational leadership. CAS provides opportunities to earn college degrees despite the incredibly busy schedule our NCOs encounter, whether deployed or at their home stations.

Conclusion

NCOs have achieved much during the past decade, accomplishing missions and taking care of Soldiers. Yet, our job is never done. We must continue to adapt ourselves and our teams for new challenges in new environments.

As we transition to the Army of 2020, the initiatives discussed above represent our path to strengthening and

adapting our NCO Corps. Each of us must continuously strive to develop ourselves and our subordinates in the three domains of organizational experience, professional military education, and individual self-development. I look forward to serving and working with you as we provide outstanding leadership to each and every Soldier. ■



NCO JOURNAL

<https://www.armypress.army.mil/Journals/NCO-Journal/>

<https://www.facebook.com/NCOJournal>

<https://twitter.com/NCOJournal>

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the NCO Journal, the U.S. Army, or the Department of Defense.

