



Sgt. Maj. of the Army Raymond F. Chandler III spoke to students from Class 65 of the United States Sergeants Major Academy on Friday at Fort Bliss, Texas. (Photos by Martha C. Koester / NCO Journal)

SMA Chandler Challenges USASMA Students to Think About Army's, NCO Corps' Future

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As Sgt. Maj. of the Army Raymond F. Chandler III spoke to the incoming class of the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy on Friday at Fort Bliss, Texas, he challenged members of Class 65 to look to the future and decide what kind of Army and NCO Corps they want to have.

“What do you want your Army to be?” Chandler asked. “As you look toward the future, what do you want your NCOs or your petty officers to be able to do? You are the people who are going to lead our Army in the future. I’m retiring in five months. You will decide what the Army of 2025 will be.

“You will decide what the NCO corps will be,” Chandler said. “If you look at the many challenges that we have today within our Army, or in the future, it will be an NCO at the end of the day who will get us that last 300 yards. You will decide whether we are successful.”

Chandler warned the class that as the Army continues to build rigor across the Noncommissioned Officer Education System, they will be challenged academically at USASMA in ways they perhaps haven’t been before.

“Last year, we had several students who did not make it [academically],” Chandler said. “Now think about that. If somebody has had misconduct in your past experience in NCOES, they might have been dismissed. But did you ever know someone who got dismissed for academics? Probably not. We’re changing the dynamic. It’s not cooperate and graduate. It’s learn, grow and excel. Because the future of our Army is going to be in environments where noncommissioned officers using Mission Command will determine our success on the battlefield.”

But in addition to challenging the group of future sergeants major, he asked them to take some time during their 10 months of coursework to take care of themselves



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and their families. Chandler noted that all of the students have been under a tremendous load during the past 13 years of conflict, but that now they aren't in charge of anything but learning and developing as leaders.

"Some of you have physical or invisible wounds that you need to get taken care of," Chandler said. "You are at the right place, at the right time, to get them taken care of. Don't squander the opportunity. As a person who spent two years in behavioral health here at Fort Bliss, Texas, on a twice-a-week basis, I know you can get help. Get the help that you need, so that you can be a better leader and an example to your Soldiers."

Chandler also took the time to give Class 65 students some historical perspective on just how far USASMA has come since its first class more than 40 years ago.

"What a lot of people don't know is that in 1973, half of the staff and faculty were officers. They were not noncommissioned officers or retired noncommissioned officers, they were officers. And if you think about our education system since 1973 and today in 2014, the strides of those who have come before us, to get us to a point now where the academy has no assigned officers ... the trust between noncommis-

sioned officers and officers, I don't believe is anywhere more manifest than at the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy.

"This is the center of the NCO Corps," Chandler said. "Anything that applies to an NCO is either touched or developed or reviewed or approved through this location."

After speaking to USASMA Class 65, Chandler took time to address a story in this week's Army Times about a recent promotion board saying too many E-8 Soldiers were coming in overweight. The board also took to task those Soldiers' raters for sometimes incorrectly annotating Soldiers'

height and weight. Chandler said raters, like all NCOs, must be dedicated to meeting Army standards and helping those who don't meet those standards to take action.

"It's a mark of your commitment to the Army profession," Chandler said. "If you're unwilling to abide by the Army values and ensure that person is measured by what is the truth, then I question your ability to be committed to the Army overall. It's a very simple thing. It's a twice a year check, as part of a PT test to see that a person can meet the Army standard. And if a person cannot meet the Army standard, we've got a duty to uphold that standard. That means taking the appropriate actions to ensure that Soldier is monitored and evaluated in the Army Weight Control Program."



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Soldiers spending more time in garrison now and in coming years shouldn't be an excuse for NCOs to allow standards to slip, Chandler said.

"First of all, I don't like the term 'garrison Army' because we're not going to sit around and paint rocks," Chandler said. "We are going to be a more home-stationed Army, a training Army and an Army of preparation. We're still an Army that is going to deploy, whether that's toward a hostile environment or to help partner

nations, or to show our readiness across the world. People have struggled with the Weight Control Program for as long as we've had one. The issue at hand now is, are we enforcing an Army standard? Yes, I've seen people who are overweight, but I'm trusting that their leaders are enrolling them and monitoring them and leading them toward meeting the Army standard. When that doesn't happen, we have a challenge in our Army about our commitment to the Army profession." ■



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