



The NCO Leadership Center of Excellence held a graduation for Sergeants Major Course Class 69 at the Abundant Living Faith Center in El Paso, Texas, June 21, 2019. (Photo courtesy of NCO Leadership Center of Excellence Public Affairs)

# Bachelor of Arts Now Attainable at USASMA

*By Staff Sgt. Jarred Woods*

NCO Journal

**S**tudents at the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy (USASMA) now have an opportunity to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree in Leadership and Workforce Development.

The NCO Journal spoke with students and faculty as part of a June 21, 2019, Podcast:

## What it Means

**Q:** What does this accreditation mean for USASMA?

**A:** “It’s a monumental achievement that Soldiers are getting credit towards a degree plan for work they’re already doing,” said Bill Backsheider, Sergeants Major Course Executive Team member. “It is a degree program, and the Higher Learning Commission recognizes that 47 undergraduate credit hours within the Sergeants Major Course content is worthy of a particular type of degree.

“So now instead of Soldiers coming to the Sergeants

Major Academy and just being able to attend and graduate with a few credits for a non-specific degree program, they can work towards a degree in LWD [Leadership and Workforce Development].”

## How to Prepare

**Q:** How can a Soldier get an early start?

**A:** “They can simply walk into their education center and say, ‘I’d like to pursue this degree program,’” Backsheider said. “And since it is a recognized degree program, that education counselor on the installation should be able to say, ‘these are your general education requirements that you’ll need to fulfill,’ like any other type of degree program, these are the number of electives that you have to work on, and here is some core content that you have to work on so they can keep their focus the whole time.”





Sgt. Maj. Nicholas Beauchamp receives his Bachelor of Arts degree in Leadership and Workforce Development diploma from the Dean of Academics James B. Martin, Ph.D., U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, during the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy graduation ceremony held at Fort Bliss, Texas, June 21, 2019. Beauchamp is one of 105 USASMA graduates to earn their degree while attending the Sergeants Major Course (History Class 69). (Photo courtesy of NCO Leadership Center of Excellence Public Affairs)

Sgt. Maj. Nicholas Beauchamp, a graduate of USASMA, had some advice regarding how aspiring sergeants major and other NCOs can prepare.

**A:** “The biggest thing to understand is that while you’re here, there is enough time and resources at the academy to complete your general education requirements for the LWD degree.”

While there is time afforded to students for their studies, if possible, Beauchamp advises Soldiers to work on college education early in their careers and to take advantage of resources afforded to them such as the College Level Examination program, DANTES Subject Standardized Test exams, and credits earned from one’s Joint Service Transcript.

## NCO Testimony

**Q:** How does it feel to be part of the first class having the opportunity to graduate with a degree?

**A:** “I was excited both personally and professionally,” said Beauchamp upon learning he had an opportunity to earn a degree. “I knew it would provide the added value to my ability to lead and inspire by example. I also knew that having previous leadership experience, coupled with a competitive skill set in workforce development, would improve our readiness and lethality on and off the battlefield.”

A U.S. Marine NCO and a student with the International Military Student Office provide this insight:

**Q:** How would you describe your experience attending USASMA and participating in the new degree program?

**A:** “Just coming to this course was a selection process for me,” said Marine 1st Sgt. Victor Mancini. “Only three Marines were selected to come here, so it was an honor just to attend this academy.

“Then I show up, and they offer me this opportunity to possibly graduate with a degree. It was like a weight lifted off my chest. I’ve been going to college since 2008, and it felt like this rabbit hole that I was never going to reach; and then this opportunity pops up...I’m going to graduate with a degree, and it still seems unreal.”

Mancini added that he is looking at master’s degree programs and looks forward to getting back to the fleet and setting the example for other Marines.

**Q:** What was it like to attend USASMA and earn your degree as an international student?

**A:** “I’m honored and proud to be here,” said Warrant Officer Class One Marco Schinella, Italian Army. “I’m



U.S. Marine 1st Sgt. Victor Mancini, receives his Bachelor of Arts degree in Leadership and Workforce Development from the Dean of Academics James B. Martin, Ph.D., U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, during the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy graduation ceremony held at Fort Bliss, Texas, June 21, 2019. Mancini is one of 105 USASMA graduates to earn their degree while attending the Sergeants Major Course (History Class 69). (Photo courtesy of NCO Leadership Center of Excellence Public Affairs)



Warrant Officer Class One Marco Schinella, Italian Army, receives his Bachelor of Arts degree in Leadership and Workforce Development from the Dean of Academics James B. Martin, Ph.D., U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, during the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy graduation ceremony held at Fort Bliss, Texas, June 21, 2019. Schinella is one of 105 USASMA graduates to earn their degree while attending the Sergeants Major Course (History Class 69). (Photo courtesy of NCO Leadership Center of Excellence Public Affairs)

**A:** “Now I have the confidence and the know-how to continue to tackle those education requirements and pursue the next level of education,” Beauchamp said.

Mancini added, “I didn’t realize the brotherhood and the comradery that I would develop while I was here,” Mancini said. “Not just the Army students, but also the international students. We visit many of many of these countries and we work with Soldiers all the time, and having those relationships and networking to reach out to will definitely be a huge advantage in the future.”

Schinella gave his key takeaway, and offered parting advice.

“Having gained the self-awareness about education, and how important and how much education can apply to our jobs and to our profession; this will be the biggest takeaway from this experience,” Schinella said.

“As I’ve said before, ‘there’s no education without training, and there’s no training without education. I truly believe that education completes training.’”

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—Warrant Officer Class One Marco Schinella  
Italian Army

definitely proud to be the first Italian to graduate with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Leadership and Workforce Development.”

**Q:** What was the biggest difference between what you learned here and what you would’ve learned from an equivalent military academy in Italy?

**A:** “The biggest difference is the U.S. Army doctrine, and how we operate in our joint operations, joint training, and overseas during deployments,” Schinella said. “You end up having these perspectives and the awareness on what the U.S. Army does for NCOs. This is something that I will keep as an experience that I will try to share with my Army.”

## Lasting Impressions

**Q:** What will you remember most about your experience?

## Notes from the Commandant

**Q:** What are the key things to remember about this accreditation?

**A:** “This degree is very important because it’s accredited under the Higher Learning Commission, a regional accreditation, which most colleges and universities accept,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Jimmy Sellers, commandant of the NCO Leadership Center of Excellence. “I think it’s important for our Soldiers to know that as they work their way up through the ranks, and attain the rank of sergeant major by coming to this course, that a regionally accredited degree is something that you really want to look forward to.”

On June 21st, 2019, 105 of the 214 students that attended the sergeants major course earned their Bachelor of Arts in Leadership and Workforce Development. To learn more, listen to episode nine of the NCO Journal podcast and contact an Army installation education office. ■

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