

Army University to Improve Education in Service, Opportunities Afterward

By Clifford Kyle Jones - NCO Journal

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Staff Sgt. Hector Marrero, an information technology specialist assigned to the 80th Training Command, trouble shoots computer connectivity in The Army School System Training Center's Network Operation Command, in Grand Prairie, Texas. As part of the transition to Army University, experts such as Marrero will have an easier time receiving civilian credentials for their Army expertise. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Phillip Eugene)

Adjustments to the NCO Educational System aren't just about changing professional military education expectations and opportunities for enlisted personnel. They're part of a larger effort by the Army to align education at every level. That alignment is happening under the Army University.

Army U was among the last topics addressed at Training and Doctrine Command's State of NCO Development Town Hall 2, but it might have the furthest-reaching effect for Soldiers – extending far beyond their retirement from the Army.

Army U is intended to integrate the education already provided in the Army for enlisted Soldiers, officers, warrant officers and Army civilians of all three of the Army's components —

active, Reserve and National Guard — said Command Sgt. Maj. David O. Turnbull, command sergeant major of the Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. The CAC administers the Army U, which was activated in June 2015.

“Prior to this we were in stove pipes, we all did our own type of education, we didn’t collaborate,” Turnbull said during the town hall. Army U will “integrate over 70 internal TRADOC schools and 100 additional schools that TRADOC owns and get them under one roof. Army University is going to be the point of contact for all educational needs for inside the Army and those colleges and universities outside the Army that want to partner with us.”

One commenter during the town hall’s live chat asked whether Army U would be following the model set by the Community College of the Air Force, which is an accredited and worldwide multi-campus community college established to meet the educational needs of Air Force enlisted personnel.

Turnbull said even though Army officials had studied CCAF closely and taken many lessons from CCAF officials’ experience, the Army decided to pursue a different route.

Army U will not be a “brick-and-mortar” facility, Turnbull said. Rather, it will be a network of institutions and will increase academic rigor, create greater opportunities for accreditation and enhance the quality of the force.

One thing is for sure, though. “As we develop our NCO PME across the NCO field, ... we’ll ensure that if it’s worth college credit, we’ll ensure that Soldiers gets those credits,” Turnbull said.

Included in Army U are all the Army’s “centers of excellence”: aviation, cyber, fires, intelligence, maneuver, maneuver support, mission command and sustainment. Army U also includes the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy, the Defense Language Institute, the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, the Army Management Staff College, the Warrant Officer Career College, the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College and the Army Press.

Though not part of Army U, the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York, the U.S. Army War College, Cadet Command, initial military training, U.S. Army Reserve Schools, Army National Guard Schools, Army Medical Department Center and School, Judge Advocate General Legal Center and School, and the Special Warfare Center and School will be coordinated with, as well.

Turnbull noted that Army U will also allow the Army to extend partnerships and programs with prestigious public and private universities; dozens of those partnerships are already in place.

During the town hall, TRADOC Command Sgt. Maj. David Davenport noted that one of the key

changes Army U would bring about was the universal transcript.

“Right now, we have an ERB that tracks what schools we have,” Turnbull said, “but then we have to go to a separate system, a civilian system, to see what transcripts we have.”

The universal transcript will combine military training recorded on an Enlisted Record Brief, college credits from civilian education, military American Council on Education credits and any credentials a Soldier may have and record them all on one sheet.

“It will help in a couple different ways,” Turnbull said. One of them is “it will help in leader development. Leaders will have a snapshot of their Soldier – where they’re working and what they need to do to complete their goals in the future, whether it be more college or a credential from another organization.”

It will also improve an effort that is already well underway to get Soldiers credentialed for skills and training they get from the Army.

“Last year, we had great news with credentialing,” Turnbull said. “Almost 27,000 Soldiers across 77 MOSs were credentialed. And a credential is an industry standard recognition that they met the standards in that field. The credential is provided by a credentialing agency, a nongovernment agency, which will help the Soldier when they do transition. But it’s also, more importantly for the Soldiers [who are serving], because civilians are credentialed, our Soldiers should be, too.”