

TRADOC Leader Sees “Major Step Forward” In NCO 2020

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NCO 2020

As technology, the environment, and the strategies and complexities of warfare continue to evolve in the new millennium, national defense leaders are preparing what is widely regarded as the foundation of that security – the Noncommissioned Officer Corps – with 50 initiatives designed to help NCOs meet those evolving challenges. These key initiatives to the nation’s defense in the modern operational environment are known as NCO 2020.

The NCO-driven plan will serve as the lynchpin of the nation’s defense.

The NCO Professional Development System will be the vehicle that drives the NCO 2020 strategy through human performance optimization in the areas of leader development, talent management, and stewardship of the profession. More than education and knowledge, it is a system of professional development based on substantive concepts that matter, delivered in an efficient and effective way, with each and every part of the system integrated with the others, according to U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command’s “NCO 2020 Strategy: NCOs Operating in a Complex World.”

“We are talking about no less than a paradigm shift in NCO development,” TRADOC’s Command Sgt. Maj. David S. Davenport Sr. said.

Davenport envisions “a continuum of learning” for NCOs, where training designers look at content, how the training is delivered and how to make it matter.

“At times in the past, we’ve had training NCOs completed, but it didn’t really mean anything,” he said. “We want training that has value, that leads to something, and that matters.”

Credentialing is a big part of plan for NCO 2020. Leaders working the initiatives are looking for ways to show affirmation or evidence that NCOs’ training is meaningful and relevant ways. Grading is another tool being considered by the NCO 2020 contingent. Assigning grades to courses and other training may make them more meaningful for NCOs. Moreover, where does the training lead? Does it have a purpose? Does it have a direction? NCO 2020 is implementing an integrated, comprehensive approach to NCO development.

Some of the NCO 2020 initiatives are reviews of structured self-development, curriculum relevance/rigor, skills/qualification/certification, training with industry, professional writing/reading, character development and update Army Career Tracker.

With character development, sergeants major are working on a plan to make Army Values a part of NCOs' inner being, so when they are in a complex environment they have a foundation of trust.

"NCOs should be an example of honor and integrity because as they progress they are given more and more authority, making the way they handle that authority all the more important," Davenport said.

The NCO 2020 board is looking at the rigor and relevance of structured self-development and how germane it is to NCO duties and responsibilities, including the provision of self-paced learning allowing NCOs to either take more time with course instruction and material or, for quick-learning NCOs, to test out of NCO training programs.

The board has already decided the Skill Qualification Test, a staple of NCO military education in the 1980s, will not be coming back.

"The more we can encourage NCOs to research, write, and convey their thoughts the better," Davenport said of the professional writing initiative.

This initiative is actually already underway in the form of the Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth O. Preston NCO Writing Excellence Program. Submission dates, themes and guidelines can be found at <http://armyupress.army.mil/Journals/NCO-Journal/NCO-Journal-Writing-Excellence-Program/> (/Journals/NCO-Journal/NCO-Journal-Writing-Excellence-Program/)

In fact, Davenport said he wholeheartedly agrees with Sgt. Maj. of the Army Daniel A. Dailey making Army University and Soldier education in general a top priority, adding he has every confidence NCOs can "handle any educational challenge and operate at any and every level of the Army."

Training with Industry has real value and should not be seen by promotion boards as a promotion stopper, Davenport said.

"Those who downgrade Soldiers because they've participated in a Training with Industry program do not understand AR 600-25," he said, adding, however, that Soldiers should not participate in back-to-back programs of that nature – and that Soldiers' branches have a role in ensuring they are given assignments that help them progress in accordance with their career map.

Extensive planning, effort and innovation are being applied in many other NCO 2020 initiatives.

The NCO Corps has the support of Army leadership, and the initiatives are being carefully planned and put together to ensure they are solid, enduring programs, Davenport said.

The key to the overall plan of NCO 2020 is "an understanding by all parties of what we are doing here and the integrated, sequential way we are making this relevant development happen." Davenport said.

"I think NCO 2020 will have a very lasting impact," Davenport said. "These 50 initiatives are the azimuth to take the Corps a major step forward in NCO development."

Editor's Note: To review "NCO 2020 Strategy: NCOs operating in a complex world," click on the following link:

<https://actnow.army.mil/communities/service/html/communityview?communityUuid=fa6e7266-0b78-4b82-b6d7-bcdbff64d5e1>
(<https://actnow.army.mil/communities/service/html/communityview?communityUuid=fa6e7266-0b78-4b82-b6d7-bcdbff64d5e1>)

*(At the Army Career Tracker web site, click on "Communities" on the left side of the page, then select "Other Communities" and select the page "NCO Professional Development," and click on "NCO 2020" on the right side of the page.)