

NCO Writing Excellence Program Aims to Tune up Communication Skills

By Master Sgt. Gary Qualls, JR. - NCO Journal

June 7, 2016



Pictured are both sides of Army University's Army Press coin for noncommissioned officer writing excellence. The winner of the program's competition each quarter will receive this encased coin and a personal note from the Army University Provost, Brig. Gen. John S. Kem. (Photo by Master Sgt. Gary Qualls, Jr. / NCO Journal)

The Army's evolving operating environment demands that noncommissioned officers hone their critical and creative thinking skills and communicate clearly and effectively. This has led the Army to make writing a priority; with Army leaders, such as Sgt. Maj. of the Army Daniel A. Dailey, speaking out about its importance. Because communication is an essential element of mission command, the Army has increased the importance of writing in the Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development System by integrating writing evaluations into the curriculum as well as using writing software to help strengthen the skill. The Army has also initiated writing programs to encourage writing among both commissioned and noncommissioned officers. The Army Press NCO Writing Excellence Program offers NCOs the opportunity to enhance their writing skills, plus have the chance to win an award.

"NCOs need to be able to communicate effectively verbally and in writing," said Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas C. Reitmeier, the Army's Mission Command Center of Excellence sergeant major. "This is a critical skill and supports one of the principles of mission command, 'Create Shared Understanding.'"

"As NCOs progress through their careers, their tasks become more complex and take an increased intellect," Reitmeier said. "We are also required to communicate with large populations of Soldiers who have varied levels of education and knowledge. This requires a leader who can communicate effectively and intellectually verbally and in writing."

The NCO Writing Excellence Program is a competition that will help NCOs to do just that. The contest challenges all noncommissioned officers across the active-duty Army, Army Reserve and National Guard to communicate clearly and articulately about a thought-provoking theme. Besides enhancing their skills, NCOs could win an encased commemorative Army University coin designed specifically for the program as well as a personal note from the Army University Provost. The winning essay will also be published in the NCO Journal. Submission guidelines can be found at <http://armypress.dodlive.mil/nco-writing-excellence-program/> (<http://armypress.dodlive.mil/nco-writing-excellence-program/>).

In April, Master Sgt. Jorge Rivera, Sgt. 1st class Edrena R. Roberts and Staff Sgt. Christopher M. Rance were announced as winners of the NCO Writing Excellence Program's first competition.

Top-level Army leaders consider writing skills vital to effectively leading today.

“In today’s operating environment, it is assured that the role of the NCO will be as critical as ever in our Army’s ability to operate and win the wars of tomorrow. No longer will the NCO be singularly concerned with the kinetic aspects of training, developing and leading Soldiers. Enhancing our NCO Corps’ reading, research and writing skills is absolutely critical to developing the type of agile, adaptable NCO who can lead in a complex world,” said Sgt. Maj. of the Army Daniel A. Dailey.

Besides the demand for NCOs to possess solid communication skills in order to effectively do their job, their ability to demonstrate these attributes is a direct reflection on the NCO Corps. Moreover, this level of professionalism not only affects the present, but also the future.

“As noncommissioned officers, we rarely put pen to paper to share our experiences – and it is a huge void in the Army book. The NCO Writing Excellence Program is meant to help with this and drive our NCOs to build their credentials and reputation,” said Army University Command Sgt. Maj. Michael H. Clowser.

Writing competitions are a quarterly event in the NCO Writing Excellence Program that have a different theme every quarter. The theme for essay submissions this quarter is: How important is a college education to Soldiers in the enlisted ranks? Is a college education more important than a military education? Why? How? The deadline for submissions for this quarter is July 1, 2016. Email submissions to usarmy.leavenworth.tradoc.mbx.army-press@mail.mil (mailto:usarmy.leavenworth.tradoc.mbx.army-press@mail.mil)