

'Share the knowledge,' SMA Dailey urges fellowship program grads

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Graduates from the pioneering U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy Fellowship Program at Fort Bliss, Texas, take their seats during a ceremony. Nineteen sergeants major graduated Aug. 22 with master's degrees in adult education from Pennsylvania State University. (Photo by Martha C. Koester, NCO Journal)

Eager to share what they have learned with the next generation of senior noncommissioned officers, 19 sergeants major graduated in August from the pioneering U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy Fellowship Program at Fort Bliss, Texas. The graduates, all newly armed with master's degrees in adult education from Pennsylvania State University, will perform two- to three years as senior NCO instructors in the Sergeants Major Course.

Dubbing it a major milestone for the NCO Corps and NCO education, Command Sgt. Maj. Dennis Defreese, commandant of USASMA, said the distance-learning program was "specifically designed to further our NCO Professional Development System and this should indicate ... the Army is committed to the education of our NCOs."

Advancing the Corps

Sylvester Smith, fellowship program manager, read a congratulatory letter to the graduates from Sgt. Maj. of the Army Daniel A. Dailey during the ceremony Aug. 22. Calling the graduating class an inspiration, Dailey wrote "information is a commodity" and urged graduates of the online program to share it.



Command Sgt. Maj. Dennis Defreese, commandant of USASMA, congratulates Sgt. Maj. Christopher A. Roche. Defreese called the graduation a major milestone for the NCO Corps and NCO education. (Photo by Martha C. Koester, NCO Journal)

"I firmly believe you will continue to advance the corps and the Army as you apply your newfound knowledge as instructors in our academy," Dailey wrote. "Do not hold anything back. As NCOs, we are trained if we share the knowledge then we as a corps will be able to develop and train the most versatile and effective corpsmen our Army has ever seen."

Offering his own congratulations, Smith said the "graduates represent the best of the profession in the Army and set the standard" for others to follow.

"In your search for knowledge, collectively you have increased your value to service and country," Smith told the graduates.

Though no specific military occupational specialty is sought, the cross-section of students face an advanced curriculum to better professionalize senior NCO instructors in the classroom. Under the fellowship program, fellows have one year to focus exclusively on completing a master's degree in adult education.

Guest speaker Renata S. Engel, associate vice provost for online programs at Penn State, told the crowd



Sgt. Maj. Jason B. Johnson receives congratulations after graduating from the USASMA Fellowship Program at Fort Bliss, Texas. (Photo by Martha C. Koester, NCO Journal)

she was very pleased that two historic organizations such as the university and the U.S. Army came together in a special program and praised the graduates as "risk-takers."

"You were the first," Engel said. "There was a risk involved, and I would like to think risk without preparation is folly. ... But risk with preparation, along with the confidence that comes that you're building on foundation ... what you create is a path that is more accessible to those who follow. ... It's not just what you accomplish. It's what you enable others to accomplish, and your degrees in education are actually going to elevate that even higher."

'Stick with learning'



The 19 graduates, shown with William Diehl and Renate S. Engel from Pennsylvania State University, are due to perform two- to three years as senior NCO instructors in the Sergeants Major Course. (Photo by David Crozier, U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy)

In closing her address, Engel said she wouldn't be giving the graduates any advice as graduation guest speakers often do. Instead, she offered them two wishes.

"I wish that at some point in your life as an educator you have the joy that comes from a student, a learner, someone who's following you, tell you about the impact that you have made on them," Engel said. "It's going to happen, and it's going to be amazing when it does. ... The second wish I have for you is a wish that you will always want, and I don't just mean in your profession but ... throughout life — that you love learning and find so much appreciation for it that you stick with learning."

The fellowship program offers an opportunity for qualified active-duty senior NCOs to become ambassadors of the Army in the classroom who will help develop agile, adaptive and innovative leaders of the future.

After the past year, Sgt. Maj. Timothy W. Magee and Sgt. Maj. Manuel D. Atencio said they are ready to take their talents into the classroom.

"I am hoping to impress what I have learned in school with the students, and partly the information that I have learned in school is going to help us empathize with what the students are going to be going through," Magee said. "We know from first-hand experience the pressure we felt going through a new program that we didn't know anything about. That's exactly how these students coming through the Sergeant Major Course feel. We've got recent education experience with the same anxieties that they are getting ready to experience, so I think that's going to help us [in the classroom]."

"It was a transformational process, not having been in school for a while to taking four classes at one time," Atencio said. "It was a great learning experience."

Both graduates said they would recommend the fellowship program to senior NCOs and encourage them to continue their education.

"I think it's a very worthwhile program," Magee said. "One of the amazing parts was when we all got together at Christmas time and we had just completed four classes. ... I didn't realize I had learned anything until we sat around and talked. Just listening to everybody say, 'Well we talked about this, and we learned this and we learned that,' and I'm like 'Holy cow, we actually did learn something.' It was amazing and pretty fun, too."

Fellowship program graduates

- Sgt. Maj. James J. Adcock
- Sgt. Maj. Manuel D. Atencio
- Sgt. Maj. Scot D. Cates
- Sgt. Maj. Carl B. Dwyer Jr.
- Sgt. Maj. John O. Garrison
- Sgt. Maj. Reginald R. Gooden
- Sgt. Maj. Jason B. Johnson
- Sgt. Maj. David J. Lee Jr.
- Sgt. Maj. Jason F. Leeworthy
- Sgt. Maj. Timothy W. Magee
- Sgt. Maj. Patrick D. Mason
- Sgt. Maj. Feliece Y. Murrell
- Sgt. Maj. Pedro F. Quiñones
- Sgt. Maj. Dennis M. Reynolds
- Sgt. Maj. Ryan C. Robert
- Sgt. Maj. Christopher A. Roche
- Sgt. Maj. Timothy C. Todd
- Sgt. Maj. Steven M. Townsend
- Sgt. Maj. Terry J. Wade

For more information on the program, contact Sgt. Maj. Joseph J. Hissong, director, USASMA Fellowship Program at 915-744-8827 or email him at joseph.j.hissong.mil@mail.mil (<mailto:joseph.j.hissong.mil@mail.mil>).