



(U.S. Army photo by Danielle O'Donnell taken Feb. 7, 2020) U.S. Army Sgt. Maj. Charles Burrows a Cohort 4 fellow through the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy Fellowship program welcomes his new class at the NCO Leadership Center of Excellence, Fort Bliss, Texas, Feb. 7, 2020.

Sergeant Major: The Professional Educator

By Sgt. Maj. Timothy J. Ros

U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy

For decades, the United States has enjoyed superiority in every operational environment. However, the resurgence of long-term strategic competition, technological advances, and new concepts of warfare are eroding the U.S. military's dominance on the battlefield (Department of Defense, 2018). The key to regaining America's strategic advantage is to *out-think*, *out-maneuver*, and *out-innovate* all current and future threat actors. This begins with a high-level education taught by the U.S. Army's best educators with real-world experience in their craft – the sergeant major.

The Need

In May 2020, the Joint Chiefs of Staff stated:

“A highly professional faculty is the core of success. A world-class educational program

is not an accident, nor does it come cheap; it is the product of deliberate design, founded upon a top-notch faculty. Every PME institution must make sure its military and civilian faculty are qualified instructors and current in the fields they are teaching. The selection, development, and management of PME faculty, and military faculty in particular, demands greater emphasis. (p.7)”

The Joint Chiefs were referencing officer Professional Military Education (PME), but the same standards should apply to noncommissioned officer (NCO) PME as well. A highly professional faculty is essential to delivering the necessary education to compete and win in future conflicts.

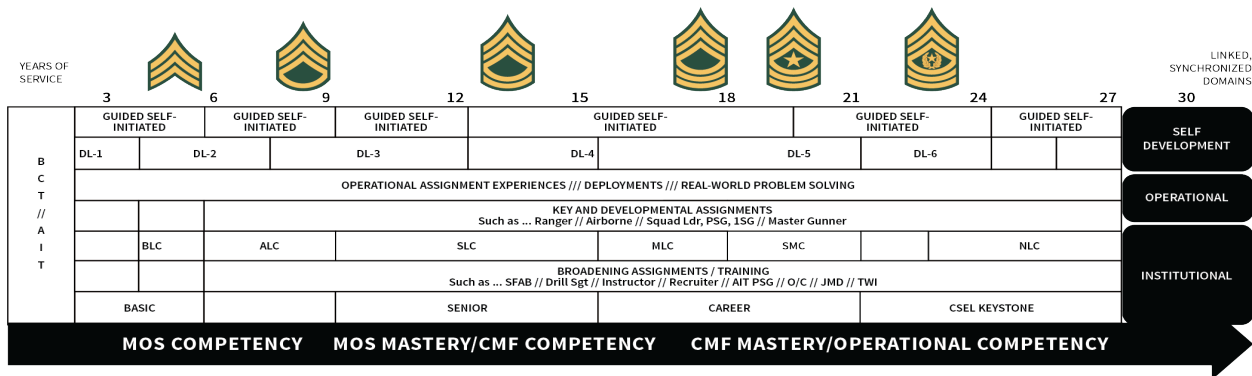


Figure 1 – Current NCO Development Model from Department of the Army Pamphlet (DA PAM) 600-25: U.S. Army Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Guide.

The Problem

Assignment to the Sergeants Major Academy (SGM-A) as an instructor should be competitive, career-enhancing, highlighted during promotion boards, and tracked to ensure high-level follow-on assignments. Figure 1 depicts the current NCO development model.

This type of Army-wide cultural reform would require leaders at all levels, especially those in brigade and nominative sergeants major positions, to collectively value faculty assignments and remove stigmas devaluing the importance of educating future sergeants major. Currently, this is not the case as many sergeants major assigned to the academy retire the following year.

To be a professor at an Ivy League university, applicants must be renowned, have published widely, and be a top talent in their field (Hodon, 2020; Madden, 2012; Muniz, 2020). In a similar fashion, the SGM-A should acquire active duty instructors who are in the peak of their careers, instead of those looking towards retirement. The SGM-A's senior enlisted advisors should bring value and foresight to their positions and a cohesion and momentum that comes with teaching over several years.

The Future

The SGM-A instructor billet should be a competitive and coveted assignment. In order to increase the amount

of interest in the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy Fellowship Program (USASMAFP), as well as make sure only the most qualified sergeants major are being selected for nominative and brigade positions, SGM-A instructor billets should be a prerequisite for those positions (“USASMA Fellowship Program,” n.d.).

Figure 2 depicts a proposed model for NCO development which highlights the necessity of a tour as an instructor to become fully qualified to be a nominative or brigade sergeant major.

The Timeline

For this new timeline to take place, graduates of the SGM-A would be placed into an operations sergeant major position at either the battalion or brigade level. Upon completion of that year, they would be eligible to compete for a battalion command sergeant major position. Following successful completion of that assignment, those sergeants major would then compete for a slot in the USASMAFP, where they will have the opportunity to complete a year of school for their master's degree, and then complete a follow-on assignment of two years as an instructor at the SGM-A. Once their SGM-A instructor billet is fulfilled, they would become the primary pool for brigade and nominative sergeants major positions. This pipeline would create success at every level of the U.S. Army.

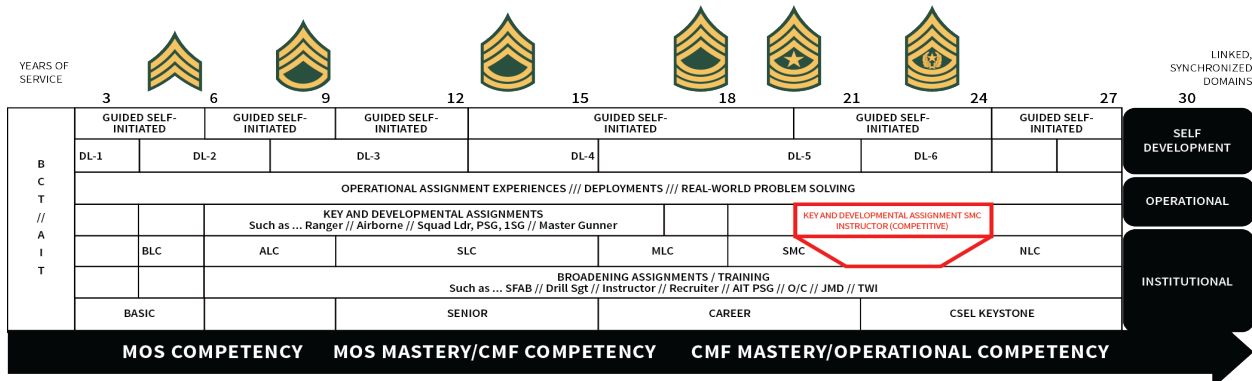


Figure 2 – Proposed NCO Development Model. (Graphic by Sgt. Maj. Timothy Ros)

Conclusion

The experience of a great teacher is invaluable. They positively influence their students and inspire them to do things they thought impossible. Re-aligning the E-9 career progression to make sure experienced sergeants major in the prime of their career are teaching brand new sergeants major will ensure proper training and passing

of knowledge is taking place. If teaching at the SGM-A is a prerequisite for brigade and nominative positions, this guarantees only the best and brightest with diverse careers are being considered for the highest leadership positions in the U.S. Army. Utilizing this system would ensure today's NCO is prepared for tomorrow's fight. ■

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