

"We are going on the offensive."

NCOES Conferees

By SSG David Abrams

The 1995 Worldwide Noncommissioned Officer Education System Conference opened with a challenge and a promise. Standing in the West Auditorium of the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy, COL Robert Jordan said in a loud, booming voice, "We are going on the offensive."

Thunderous applause greeted this assurance that a serious, proactive approach would be taken with NCOES issues during the conference, held at Ft. Bliss, TX, July 24-28.

Jordan, USASMA's newest commandant, also told the 415 officers, senior NCOs and DA civilians gathered in the auditorium for the biennial event that no comment made during the conference would be taken lightly when it came to shaping the future of NCO training.

"We'll take your knowledge, your expertise and shape the battlefield of the future," he told the record crowd of senior leaders. "I really believe the results of this conference have the potential to collectively shape the vision, concept and philosophy of NCOES."

This year marked the 10th gathering where officials discuss current issues in all aspects of NCO training and development. From billeting in Primary Leadership Development Courses to updates on distance learning, the seminars emphasized active participation from those in attendance.

"The curriculum allowed everyone to walk away knowing where we were headed for the 21st century," said MSG Billy Williams, action NCO for the conference.

Some of that direction was provided by SMA Gene McKinney who also greeted the conference-goers with a challenge during his opening remarks: "I want to know three things before this conference is over: *What* should we train in NCOES courses? *Where* should sol-

diers be trained? And *how* do we notify soldiers in a timely, sequential manner that they're going to an NCOES course?"

In remarks that brought the auditorium to its feet in a standing ovation, McKinney said, "We need to have one standard so that the soldier going to PLDC at Ft. Benning, GA, will receive the same standard of training as the soldier going through PLDC at Ft. Bliss. We need to get rid of the mindset where

everybody wants to put their own personal 'spin' on NCOES."

Williams said one of the most important aspects of the conference was the detailed, six-page survey given to everyone who came to the seminars. "We compiled all the raw data from those questions, put it in the after action report and sent the results up to Training and Doctrine Command as well as a copy to everyone who attended," Williams noted.

NCOES Issues, Discussion

☐ *Exceptions to policy*

Discussion: A class often won't fill to the minimum class size. Without an approved exception policy, the NCO Academy can't conduct the class. The problem is that the approval/disapproval needed immediately. Commandants would like the authority to make the decision or at least have more flexibility. This is a significant problem in low-density MOSes where there will never be enough soldiers to reach the minimum class size. If the soldier doesn't attend NCOES, he or she remains ineligible for promotion.

Recommendation: TRADOC should delegate authority to commandants to determine minimum maximum class sizes based on resource capabilities.

☐ *Leadership Assessment and Development Program*

Discussion: Due to poor resources and training, this didn't work the first time and there is no reason to believe it will work again. There's virtually no resource or doctrinal support for LADP. In these times of short money, it would seem logical to drop the program entirely. Conference-goers agreed there's a need to improve counseling skills, but leaders should use techniques they already have rather than replace them with a complicated, resource-intensive program. Don't reinvent the wheel!

Recommendation: Discontinue LADP within NCOES.

☐ *Senior Small Group Leader authorization*

Discussion: TRADOC Regulation 315-10 requires NCO Academies to have one SSGL for every four SGLs. However, manpower teams don't recognize this requirement when determining TDA authorizations.

Recommendation: TRADOC should incorporate this requirement into manpower guidance to ensure all NCO Academies get TDA authorization for proper staffing.

☐ *First sergeants as course chiefs*

Discussion: This would allow the NCO Academy to mirror the normal chain of command. There's a strong consensus to do this, using experienced first sergeants. TRADOC didn't approve a policy change because of a sudden demand for the First Sergeant Course and a congressionally-mandated limit on the number of first sergeants. This change would also require a revision of AR 611-201.

Recommendation: TRADOC should change AR 611-201, submit it to DA for consideration and modify the NCOES rank structure accordingly.

☐ *Distance Learning*

Discussion: The PLDC Chief presented the results of recent instruction conducted via TNET for peacekeeping soldiers in the Sinai. Many attendants questioned using distance learning tech-

Set Future Course

Concern ran high at the conference about repetitious tasks in NCOES courses. In answering McKinney's first question, participants gave the following response in the AAR: "We all agree that NCOES is not broken. There is always fine tuning to be done but no reason for a major overhaul... We strongly believe we should leave PLDC alone... BNCOC and ANCOC should build on the material presented in PLDC. Do not repeat subjects in BNCOC and ANCOC unless

they build on the previous instruction."

The report went on to say that the majority of attendants objected to "the numerous DA- and TRADOC-directed mandatory training subjects in all NCOES courses (such as) Risk Management, Environmental Awareness and EO/Sexual Harassment. These lessons are redundant, resource-intensive and inefficient. NCOES is not the place to repeat the mandatory training which takes place in T&OE and TDA units."

In addressing McKinney's second question as to where soldiers should be trained, the report noted the high level of discussion in the PLDC seminars about making better use of training dollars by training at the nearest location. "This works well for PLDC but not for BNCOC," the attendants said.

The final recommendation was to keep PLDC training at current locations.

When it came to notification of soldiers due to attend NCOES courses, the Reserve Component representatives felt their notification system worked well and should remain unchanged. While the active side of the house said they would continue to use the ATRRS system, the process needs to be refined in order to get notification down to the lowest (unit) level possible. "(We need to) provide better training for the (ATRRS) operators and increased command emphasis," the report said.

(See a complete list of conference issues and recommendations in the accompanying sidebar)

By the end of the conference, senior officials were glowing about the overwhelming turnout and the positive level of discussion in all of the seminars.

"I've been to several of these conferences and I think this is the best one that's ever taken place," said TRADOC CSM Gilbert Paez. "This is the first time we've had such a large group involved in the destiny of the NCO Corps. We all agree that NCOES is not 'broken,' but we do need refinements in some areas. Furthermore, we have to welcome technology and simulation devices to enhance NCOES for Force XXI.

"Thanks to this conference, we have a direction in which to work," Paez added.

Abrams is senior journalist for The NCO Journal.

And Recommendations

iques to deliver a performance-oriented leadership course, saying the current ideology appears to "make TNET work 'just because it's there.'"

Recommendation: Use distance learning as a training enhancer instead of a replacement for resident instruction.

Army Physical Fitness Test standards

Discussion: A representative from the Physical Fitness School briefed proposed changes to the APFT standards and the physical fitness uniform.

Recommendations: Don't change the APFT or the PFU without prior input from the field.

NCOES College Credit Program

Discussion: TRADOC will contract an educational institution to teach selected PLDC, BNCOC and ANCOC lessons. This program allows students to receive college credit while attending NCOES. The cost for this at the PLDC level is almost as much as both BNCOC and ANCOC. Considering the low return on investment for PLDC soldiers, it might be unwise to use the program in PLDC.

Recommendation: Pursue at all levels of NCOES, but especially focus on BNCOC and ANCOC.

TABE vs. BASE

Discussion: There's a need for a tool to measure basic skills and predict a soldier's performance in NCOES. TRADOC's Education Division believes the TABE doesn't measure the soldier's basic skills. Another means is needed to measure those skills.

Recommendation: More analysis of BASE is needed. No matter which test is used, soldiers must be tested, counseled and provided an opportunity to improve early in their careers.

Change DA Form 1059 (Academic Evaluation Report)

Discussion: The TRADOC CSM briefed his proposal to eliminate the "Marginally Achieved Course Standards" on the AER. The rationale is that if a student can't meet the standards, NCO Academics give remedial training, then reevaluate. If the student then meets the standard, the correct block to check would be "Met Course Standards." While PLDC representatives at the conference opposed any changes to the 1059, the BNCOC/ANCOC group concurred with changes.

Recommendation: This proposal should be exposed to a larger audience.

Permanent profiles

Discussion: Many profiled soldiers can't perform to minimum course standards. Returning the soldier to the unit is a costly measure.

Recommendation: Current guidance is sufficient but there needs to be closer MEDCOM and unit involvement. ■

Soldiers Gain No-Cost College Credit for NCOES

By SGM John Weiske

Recently, an American Council on Education (ACE) evaluation team reviewed the Program of Instruction (POI) of all USASMA-generated NCOES courses. Each POI was analyzed for its content and depth of material as compared to college level studies and classified into major areas of concentration. The team then determined the college course equivalency and the amount of credit hours earned for the instruction.

The BNCOC and ANCOE recommended credits are from the evaluation of the Common Leader Training portion of the course, which is USASMA's responsibility. Each proponent school is responsible for the additional MOS instruction and ensuring that the entire course is evaluated by ACE.

It's important to note that the Battle Staff NCO Course wasn't previously evaluated by ACE and graduates of the course haven't been able to receive corresponding college credit for the course. Battle Staff NCO Course graduates should now consider applying for an update on their Servicemembers Opportunity College Agreement (SOCAD) to have the recommended credit from BSNCOE applied to their college transcript.

This ACE evaluation included the Sergeants Major Course nine-month POI, which will allow the present class to receive college credit upon graduation in June of 1996. Since the POI was extended from 22 weeks to 40 weeks, the course increased from 18 to 22 recommended credit hours, 11 hours of which are considered upper level (junior/senior) instruction.

All ACE-recommended credit for NCOES and other Army training courses is listed in the Guide to the Evaluation of Education Experience in the Armed Services publication. This guide is located in ev-

ery Army Education Center and provides the education counselor a means of evaluating the soldier's military training toward college equivalency credit.

Each college reserves the right to accept or reject the ACE recommendations for credit as there is no guarantee that the college will accept the credit as listed in the ACE guide. All Servicemember Opportunity Colleges will evaluate military training using the ACE Guide and will apply the recommended credit toward a degree plan. In most cases they will not transcript duplicated credit.

The soldier must complete a DD Form 295, Application for the Evaluation of Learning Experience During Military Service, at his or her servicing personnel office and provide a certified copy to the education counselor. The counselor will ensure that all information is correct and add the corresponding ACE evaluation numbers. The DD 295 is then sent to the college for evaluation. Any time a soldier is evaluated at a different college a DD Form 295 must be submitted for evaluation by that college. These hours will not transfer from one college to another as a transcript course does.

The ACE-recommended college equivalency hours are at no cost to the soldier or the government and are based strictly on the evaluation of the course POI. As a school's POI is changed or substantially amended it should be re-evaluated by ACE to ensure soldiers are receiving the maximum amount of credit as they complete their MOS or NCOES development training. ■

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At Ft. Benning...

BASE H

By SSG David Abrams

For years, soldiers on their way to NCOES courses have filed into a small room, sat at desks and filled in the bubbles on test score sheets with No. 2 pencils. The examination, the Test of Adult Basic Education, is designed to give Army school officials an idea of the soldier's general knowledge of math, reading and grammar skills. Taking the TABE has become as familiar as packing the duffel bag for PLDC.

Now there's another test on the horizon—one which may eventually replace the TABE with questions specifically designed to evaluate common military leadership skills.

The Basic Army Skills Examination goes even farther than the TABE in measuring a soldier's knowledge of skills related to the military, said Bill Kinnison, an education services specialist with