

OCS History

During the summer of 1940 General George Marshall recognized the absolute importance of establishing rigorous training facilities for new officers. His vision for this officer training was first put into action at Fort Benning, Georgia. Brigadier General Asa L. Singleton, Commandant of the Infantry School, established the plan for the modern Officer Candidate School for Infantry. His plan went into effect in July 1941 as the Infantry, Field Artillery, and Coastal Artillery Officer Candidate Schools. Other branches later followed with their own Officer Candidate Schools. The first Infantry OCS class began with 204 candidates, and on September 27, 1941, graduated 171 second lieutenants. General Omar Bradley, former Commandant of the Infantry School, is credited with establishing the foundation of training still used in OCS today.

General Bradley emphasized rigorous training, strict discipline and efficient organization. These tenets remain the base values of today's Officer Candidate School. After World War II, Infantry OCS was transferred to Fort Riley, Kansas as part of the Ground General School. Subsequently all other Officer Candidate Schools were discontinued to include the Infantry OCS which was eliminated on November 1, 1947.

A shortage of officers during the Korean conflict caused the Department of the Army to re-open Infantry OCS at Fort Benning on February 18, 1951 and lengthen the course from 17 to 22 weeks. The Infantry Officer Candidate School became the First Officer Candidate Battalion, Second Student Regiment. The strength of OCS increased rapidly. As one of eight branch programs, Infantry OCS included as many as 29 companies with a class graduating every week. During the Korean War, OCS commissioned approximately 7,000 Infantry officers. On August 4, 1953, the Department of the Army reduced OCS from eight to three programs: Infantry, Artillery, and Engineer, and with the onset of the Vietnam conflict, further reduced the OCS program to only 2 branches: Infantry and Field Artillery. During the height of the Vietnam Conflict, Infantry OCS produced 7,000 officers annually from five battalions. Towards the end of the conflict, Female OCS was established and operated at Fort McClellan, Alabama. A Branch Immaterial OCS was additionally established at Fort Benning in April 1973. The two programs merged in 1976 to produce a program very similar to the modern OCS consisting of a 14 week training cycle.

OCS has continued to grow and adapt to meet the needs of the Army. The addition of C Company in June 2000, and D Company shortly after increased the Battalion strength to four line companies. The most recent addition, E Company, was activated in October 2005 and began training in January of 2006. Each company trains up to 160 officer candidates during a class and conducts up to three classes a year. This increased operational structure is a reflection of OCS' ability to transform and execute its mission to meet the needs of a fast pace and changing Army. The mission of OCS will always remain constant: train selected personnel in the fundamentals of leadership, basic military skills; instill professional ethics, evaluate leadership potential, and commission those who qualify as second lieutenants in all sixteen basic branches of the Army.