

# Command Sergeant Major's Corner

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## NCOES TRANSFORMS TO MEET ARMY'S NEEDS

The Army is transforming in a number of ways despite being heavily engaged in a complex fight in Iraq and Afghanistan. In this issue of *Infantry* you will learn how the Noncommissioned Officer Education System (NCOES) is transforming to meet the needs of the operational force. The Chief of Infantry describes some of the significant changes here at the Home of the Infantry and you can be assured each of our 54 courses has improved and adapted in order to maintain relevancy in the operational environment. If we are to provide our Infantrymen with the best possible training, there must be a corresponding transformation in all three training domains — organizational training, institutional training and self-development.

As the institutional training domain transforms, it is important for leaders to maintain awareness of those changes in order to efficiently develop organizational training and provide direction with regard to their Soldiers' self-development plans. Units cannot afford to waste time retraining individual skills when it may not be necessary or when refresher training may suffice. For example, a platoon sergeant may be aware that three newly arrived Infantrymen have completed all requirements for the Combat Lifesaver Course (CLS) and successfully met all requirements for GFT (Ground Fighting Techniques) Level I while in One Station Unit Training (OSUT). The platoon sergeant might decide to conduct an informal assessment of those Soldiers' skills and retrain a few skills rather than enroll his new Soldiers in two full weeks of training. Because he is aware of what the institution is training, the platoon sergeant can more effectively allocate valuable training time when and where it is necessary.

Ideally, the institutional, organizational and self-development training domains overlap and will cover everything an Infantryman needs to know. In reality, there are likely to be gaps, yet it is difficult for leaders to cover those gaps unless they are fully aware of what is or will be trained in each of the domains. The institution cannot train everything everyone would like because there are not enough training days or resources. Therefore, leaders need to know what we are training in the Warrior Leader's Course and other levels of NCOES. This will enable leaders to address any gaps in unit training or within directed self-development training. In the near future, we will append this information to the Infantry Professional Development Model (PDM) available at <https://ataim.train.army.mil>. Until then, leaders may contact the Henry Caro Noncommissioned Officer Academy (NCOA) at Fort Benning for updated information regarding the NCOA Program of Instruction (POI). Similarly, leaders should be familiar with the skills their Soldiers learn in our functional courses in order to effectively leverage their skill sets during unit training.

The self-development domain is also transforming and in the near future will be an integral part of NCOES. Soldiers will soon be required to complete a significant distance learning component before or during the resident phase of each level of NCOES. This Structured/Guided Self-Development (SSD/GSD) will vary in length with each military occupational specialty, however it will be a graduation requirement that all leaders should track to ensure their Soldiers complete it within the appropriate time. The Army Career Tracker is arguably the most significant self-development transformation initiative in the Army Leader Development Program (ADLP) today. Having submitted a Program Objectives Memorandum as required, the Army Career Tracker is approved and fully funded through FY15. The Career Tracker will empower Soldiers with career planning and goal setting tools, leader generated education/training recommendations, College of the American Soldier communications, and tools for leaders to track Soldiers' self-development. Until these initiatives are fully operational, leaders should continue to encourage Soldiers to aggressively engage in self-development within operational constraints.

Even after the SSD/GSD system is in place Soldiers will continue to engage in self-directed learning and development. Leaders should recognize that not all Soldiers are equally self-directed. When leaders establish the expectation for their Soldiers to engage in post-secondary education or other types of education, Soldiers will recognize their Army values lifelong learning. One might argue that certain degree programs are not relevant to the Soldiers duties and therefore not a priority. I submit most higher education will develop our Soldiers because they will learn how to think critically, and be better prepared to think when faced with ambiguity or in complex situations. For these reasons, as we develop Soldiers and NCOs, we should attempt to improve their readiness and capacity for self-direction in the context of the self-development domain. Once they gain the desire for lifelong-learning, and realize they are responsible for much of their own development, we will unleash their potential as agile and adaptive Warriors and Warrior leaders who can operate effectively in even the most ambiguous and complex situations. Now, as in the past, America's security is in the hands of our adaptive, broadly-skilled and lethal Infantrymen. They have never failed us, and they never will. Follow me!

