



# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

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MBA PROFESSIONAL PROJECT

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## LEADERSHIP TRAITS FOR NAVAL WARFARE

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December 2021

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**LEADERSHIP TRAITS FOR NAVAL WARFARE**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
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# **LEADERSHIP TRAITS FOR NAVAL WARFARE**

## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this inquiry is to evaluate several leadership traits and their impact on future naval warfare. The Navy recognizes the continuing need to develop warfighters' ability to lead effectively in a dynamic, changing environment. This study conducts a comparative analysis of the key leadership traits associated in the literature with successful leadership, the place of traits such as integrity, accountability, and humility and the leadership traits currently emphasized in the Navy Desired Leadership Attributes (NDLA) and Navy's Division Officer Leadership Course (DIVOLC). The objective is to help leaders understand what key leadership traits are associated with successful leadership and to identify the strengths and any potential gaps in the current DIVOLC.

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—LCDR Gabe Caldwell

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—LCDR Frederik J. Auliveld

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. BACKGROUND

The development of naval leadership is critical to effectively prepare warfighters to lead in the most demanding and ever-changing environments. As power competition increases, the need for strong leadership traits within the Navy becomes crucial. This research examines the Navy's Division Officer Leadership Course CIN P-7C-0100, and the leadership traits that are emphasized throughout the course. The leadership traits learned in the leadership course are vital for future growth and effective leadership of naval officers.

There are numerous leadership traits that can be attributed to effective leaders; however, this report focuses on three: integrity, accountability, and humility. In our approach, we review multiple resources, to include the *Navy Desired Leader Attributes* (Office of the Chief of Naval Operations [CNO], 2017) books on leadership traits such as *Humility is the New Smart: Rethinking Human Excellence in the Smart Machine Age* (2017) Hess and Ludwig and *Harnessing Dynamic Knowledge Principles in the Technology-Driven World*, Nissen (2013), as well as articles that focus on leadership characteristic traits.

This research aims to identify the leadership traits most associated with success. Our methodology includes a comparative analysis of the successful leadership traits in the literature with the traits taught in the Division Officer Leadership Course (DIVOLC) to identify areas of strength and gaps in the Navy leadership training. The research findings can assist in addressing gaps or shortfalls that may exist in the current training program. Additionally, identification of other tools and traits to implement into the leadership course could prove beneficial in enhancing future leader development. This research will assist in answering the following questions:

- What leadership traits does the Navy value for successful leadership?
- How do the leadership traits of integrity, accountability, and humility impact leaders?

- How does the Navy's DIVOLC contribute to the development of these leadership traits within the Navy and what are some of the gaps?

## **B. BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH**

The research analyzes the key leadership traits that contribute to effective leadership in meeting mission goals. The study provides recommendations that can help strengthen the overall development for division officers. This research can assist in improving the tools, knowledge and training that division officers receive before embarking on and during their naval careers. In addition, division officers can be armed with the leadership traits necessary to improve their leadership capabilities resulting in increased operational readiness and overall ability to lead in any type of environment.

## **C. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS**

The scope of this study is assessing the key leadership attributes desired in future naval officers. The characteristics are compared with current NDAs and DIVOLC to identify strengths and potential gaps in training provided to new naval officers. This report has limitations on the number of leadership traits that is addressed. Moreover, the leadership training used in comparative analysis is limited to the DIVOLC and does not discuss other leadership training programs that exist. Information obtained from the course and other resources is used without collecting other information or data.

## **D. METHODOLOGY**

The methodology involves analytic comparison that can aid in the enhancement of the current DIVOLC. The comparison involves assessing key leadership traits within the NDLA as well as new traits such as humility. The approach also includes a literature review conducted using several different resources consisting of books, articles, and studies on effective leadership. The analytical effort focuses on comparing the traits in the literature as a map compared to what's being taught and what the Navy lists in the NDAs. This is utilized to create a matrix to identify potential gaps in the current DIVOLC.

## **E. ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT**

The introductory chapter discusses the purpose and background of the research pertaining to the development of successful leadership traits for division officers. Chapter II is the literature review, which presents three key leadership traits that are instrumental to effective leadership. Chapter III discusses the methodology and program analysis. The chapter depicts the methodology used to identify the type of leadership traits desired and potential gaps in current NDAs and division officer training. The program analysis focuses on the Navy's DIVOLC and how it aligns with the three key leadership traits. Chapter IV is the closing chapter that includes recommendations, and conclusions.

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## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. INTRODUCTION

Many different leadership qualities can be attributed to a great leader. Some leaders think that they were naturally born to have good leadership however, leadership skills can be learned even if you have no experience with leading (Enfroy, 2018). Enfroy states “The most important qualities of a good leader include integrity, accountability, empathy, humility, resilience, vision, influence, and positivity” (Enfroy, 2018).

The development of naval leaders is crucial to ensure mission success in today’s operational arena. Former Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Admiral John Richardson’s guidance for the *Navy Leader Development Framework* delivers the way ahead for developing leaders in today’s Navy. The CNO believes developing leaders will remain a principal focus for the Navy. In the *Navy Leader Development Framework*, he states, “to seize this opportunity, our leaders must think more clearly and learn more rapidly than our adversaries” (CNO, 2017, sec. “Introduction”). Today, more than ever, the Navy is operating in an extremely complex and challenging security environment that requires strong leadership, where the Navy is asked to do more with less. For instance,

the president’s FY2022 defense budget proposal calls for funding procurement for only eight new ships, half of which are combat vessels, and plans to decommission 15. At that rate, should Congress elect not to find space in the budget to sustain, procure, and build more ships, the U.S. Navy’s battle force will not only fail to grow to 355 but will continue to shrink. By contrast, China tripled its navy battle force in under two decades and is projected to reach 400 ships by 2030. (Herzinger, 2021, para. 2)

Preparing Navy personnel to effectively lead the organization requires a dedicated and coherent approach. The approach must include training on day one and continue throughout every naval leader’s career with opportunities to become better leaders and to make Navy the team stronger (CNO, 2017). Honor, courage, and commitment are the United States Navy core values. Navy leaders have the ability to develop within their careers, by working off a base of humility encompassing the Navy’s three core values. (CNO, 2017). The Navy’s four core traits—integrity, accountability, initiative, and

toughness define the professional identity (CNO, 2018). These attributes complement the Navy Core Values and can be used as a guide for decisions and actions by leaders (CNO, 2018). Much emphasis is placed on leaders and their teams to take advantage of school, training, and job experience to grow personally and professionally (CNO, 2017). Findings in the literature review for this project and our twenty plus years of active-duty Navy experience recognize integrity, accountability, and humility as key leadership traits for effective leaders.

## **B. INTEGRITY**

Integrity is defined as “the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles that you refuse to change” (*Cambridge Dictionary*, n.d.). A great leader must have integrity to do the right thing, whether in private or public. This leadership trait allows for sound decision making and actions that serve as the cornerstone for other leadership traits. A great leader can be trusted and followed if they have integrity. Subordinates pay close attention to decisions made and actions taken by leaders. Leaders earn respect from subordinates by being honest and having good intentions.

In the Navy DIVOLC and the NDLA, O-1 to O-2 Junior Officers are identified as “Trusted Leaders.” A Junior Officer should set a positive personal example by exhibiting truthful, ethical, and principled behavior and displaying good military bearing. Junior officers should embody the Navy corps values and their actions should align with the oath of office they have sworn to uphold (Naval Leadership and Ethics Center, 2019). These Navy leader development outcomes are a direct result of the leadership trait “integrity.” Johnson (2019) describes “integrity as wholeness or completeness. Leaders possessing this trait are true to themselves, reflecting consistency between what they say publicly and how they think and act privately” (p. 105, para. 1). They are honest in their dealing with other people in society while staying true to their values and promises (Johnson, 2019).

## **C. ACCOUNTABILITY**

Accountability speaks to owning up for one’s actions. As military members, naval leaders not only have a duty to themselves, but also to the country as a whole. Part of the oath of commission is taking on the obligation of the duties you will perform and doing

this willingly. As naval leaders, ADM Richardson states, “We honestly assess our progress and adjust as required—we are our own toughest critic” (CNO, 2016, p. 5). Accountability is mentioned throughout leadership books and articles like Vince Molinaro’s “*The Leadership Contract*” and “*The Relationship between Leadership and Accountability: A Review and Synthesis of the Research*” by Melo, Martins, and Pereira as a desirable trait found in leadership candidates.

First Lieutenant Crawford (2016) stated, “Property accountability is a major undertaking, and it is an injustice for leaders not to receive proper training” (para. 10). Accountability of our sailors, and the mission we are tasked with are even more important. Our personnel are our greatest asset, and as naval leaders, we need to accept the responsibility of leading them throughout our tours. So, as proper accountability training for property is critical, personal accountability of one’s actions and decisions are equally significant.

#### **D. HUMILITY**

Humility is also an attribute found to be desirable in quality leadership. “In fact, Confucius is believed to have said that ‘humility is the solid foundation of all the virtues’” (Hess & Ludwig, 2020, p. 63, para. 2). With the majority of naval officers gaining commissions without prior enlisted experience, humility can contribute to the effectiveness that a leader would have with personnel who are performing actions never experienced before by the people in charge. Eragula (2015) wrote, “A great leader never looks out for a following though he deserves it. When we look at most of these leaders, the idealistic trait they usually possess is humility” (p. 786, para. 1). As we focus on attributes beneficial to future naval leaders, who will be leading large groups of Sailors, we would desire them to be approachable. “Peers and team members find it easier to approach someone when they know they won’t be met with arrogance” (Flood-Stith, 2018, p. 26). As leaders that will be moving from one duty station to the next at many intervals throughout their careers, approachability by new subordinates will be critical to stay on task and on mission.

As the Navy moves into the next age of technological advances, the training provided to its future leaders will also inevitably have to adapt. In the changing

environment, “we all will have to acknowledge the need to spend less time focused on ‘big me’ and instead balance competitive spirit with a collaborative spirit, because critical thinking, innovative thinking, and high emotional engagement are all team sports—‘big us.’” (Hess & Ludwig, 2020, p. 59). As we review the many topics of desirable attributes for our future naval leaders, humility has found its way into the fold of the authors’ focal lenses.

## **E. SUMMARY**

The literature review pinpoints three leadership traits consisting of integrity, accountability, and humility. The given definitions and examples provided within the literature review gives the reader the appreciation of how these three leadership traits can have significant value in the development of U.S. naval officers and their potential to successfully lead.

### **III. METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS**

The methodology involves analytic comparison that aids in the enhancement of the current division officer training. The comparison involves assessing key leadership traits within the NDLA as well as new traits such as humility. The approach also includes a literature review conducted using several different resources consisting of books, articles, and studies on effective leadership. The analytical effort focuses on comparing the traits in the literature as a map compared to what's being taught and what the Navy lists in the NDLAs. This is utilized to create a matrix to identify potential gaps in the current DIVOLC.

The next section lays out and describes the current NDLA for junior and senior naval officers. Section II describes the traits that the Navy's DIVOLC focuses on. Section III discusses findings from resources consisting of books, articles, and studies on effective leadership, as well as our own personal experience. Section IV depicts a leadership trait matrix identifying gaps between the NDLA and DIVOLC with recommended changes.

#### **A. ANALYSIS SECTION I**

“The NDLA contributes to the growth of Navy leaders by describing the character qualities, behaviors, and skills expected throughout their careers” (CNO, 2017, p. 1, para. 1). Listed on the next page is the current NDLA for officers. This visual framework breaks down the foundational elements consisting of core values, moral character, judgement, and leadership for each paygrade throughout their career development from O-1 to O-10 (Figure 1).

<b>Navy Desired Leader Attributes</b>					
<i>Officers</i>					
		<b>O-1 to O-2 <i>Trusted Leader</i></b>	<b>O-3 to O-4 <i>Motivational Leader</i></b>	<b>O-5 to O-6 <i>Inspirational Leader</i></b>	<b>Flag <i>Visionary Leader</i></b>
<b>Foundational Elements</b>	<b>Core Values</b>	Understands and lives relationship of Oath to Navy Core Values	Instills Navy Core Values in others	Infuses Navy Core Values in command culture	Guardian of Navy Core Values
	<b>Moral Character</b>	Personal values consistent with Navy Core Values	Fosters ethical behavior in others	Moral arbiter for the command	Exemplar for the Navy
	<b>Judgment</b>	Practices sound judgment; enforces rules, regulations, and procedures	Anticipates requirements and acts independently	Exercises discernment and acts both boldly and prudently	Embraces forward-thinking, strategic perspective
	<b>Leadership</b>	Valued team leader  Fosters loyalty up and down chain of command	Adaptive leader and team builder  Exercises morally responsible, credible leadership	Command leader  Embraces authority, responsibility, and accountability of command	Steward of the naval profession of arms  Conveys highest standards of the Service with strength, determination, and dignity

Figure 1. Officer Leader Development. Source: CNO NDLA (2017).

Navy core values of honor, courage, and commitment are one of the foundational elements listed by the NDLAs. At the division officer level, or trusted leader as depicted in the NDLAs these officers are expected to comprehend the meaning of the Navy Core values and implement them into both their professional and personal conduct. For the motivational leader or department head level of officers, they are charged with not only leading by example with the Navy core values in their actions but to encourage the Sailors under their charge to do the same. At the commanding/executive officer leadership level or the inspirational leader as shown in the NDLAs he/she would be relied on to impart the values of honor, courage, and commitment throughout the command by way of personal example and through their command philosophy set when taking charge of the command. The flag officer or visionary leader sets these values on a fleet or force level, setting the environment for multiple commands across their purview.

The next foundational element of moral character also falls in line with the Navy core value of honor. The division officer sets a positive personal example displaying honorable behavior both on and off duty. At the department head level, naval officers should instill principled behavior in the sailors they lead. The executive and commanding

officers are righteous in actions and decision-making, setting ethos for the command that align with the Navy core values. Admirals embody the best characteristics of the Navy.

Judgment is the third foundational element listed in the NDAs. As a trusted leader, division officers learn and enforce rules, regulations, and procedures. They utilize these standards to make sound decisions when leading their personnel. The department head utilizes critical thinking to anticipate requirements and approaches the administration of his/her department sensibly. The inspirational leader practices discernment in sensible decision-making while considering possible risks. Flag officers are adaptable when applying policies. They welcome forward thinking assessments and understand the importance of their decisions.

The final foundational element listed in the NDAs is leadership. The trusted leader or division officer remains calm under pressure and puts the mission and team's needs above their own. The department head or motivational leader delegates the proper level of tasking to subordinates to develop the maximum capabilities of his/her team. Inspirational leaders create positive environments that can drive unit cohesion and unrivaled team spirit. Visionary leaders utilize resources efficiently for mission completion that minimizes potential losses.

## **B. ANALYSIS SECTION II**

The Navy provides leadership training to newly commissioned officers via DIVOLC. DIVOLC is provided to new naval officers in multiple locations as it is added to their initial designator (job/field) training. For instance, new supply corps officers are provided DIVOLC at the Navy supply corps school in Newport, Rhode Island, following their initial supply corps curriculum. This one-week course of instruction and facilitation provides a baseline foundation for junior officers to begin the development of their own leadership styles. Through lectures, case study analysis, and assigned readings in DIVOLC several traits of leadership are consistently accentuated. Communication, moral character, and teamwork are the leadership qualities that appear to be key focus areas for DIVOLC.

Communication is taught in several sections of DIVOLC. Some learning objectives for communication at DIVOLC are the different means of communication available,

communication up and down the chain of command, and communication pitfalls and best practices (Naval Leadership and Ethics Center, 2019). New division officers are instructed to think of methods or mediums for communicating. Some examples provided are email, face-to-face communication, posted watchbills /schedules, plan of the day, and briefs. New division officers are taught the importance of the same message being transmitted and received to and from both leadership and subordinates. The importance of this area is elaborated on by using the “telephone game” where students are given a message and they must pass it on consecutively to other students and ultimately; they will identify differences from the original message to that received by the last student. Some pitfalls and best practices heavily rely on how things are communicated and received. Division officers are taught how to utilize the chain of command properly, and how to use appropriate body language and tone when communicating.

To express the importance of moral character, DIVOLC assigns the following readings to division officer students: *Ethics in the U.S. Navy* (Carter, 2015), *Navy Code of Ethics* (Department of the Navy, 2005), and former Secretary of Defense Mattis’ *Ethics Memo* (Mattis, 2017). Following the student’s reading of the material, instructors facilitate meaningful discussions on how ethical principles develop their moral characters and play a part in their everyday critical thinking and decision-making processes. Different case studies are also supplied to the students that entail real leadership events involving a predicament where moral character or ethos were in play. In addition to the above readings mentioned and case studies, students are also introduced to Dr. Jack D. Kem’s “*Ethical Decision Making: Using the “Ethical Triangle.”*” The ethical triangle, “is designed to provide a methodology for coming to an answer to an ethical dilemma that is well-thought out and supportable” (Kem, 2006, p.11).

Teamwork is presented in DIVOLC by way of the relationship a division officer has with their leading chief petty officer (LCPO) and the relationship with their peers and higher-ranking officers within the wardroom. The LCPO is the senior enlisted sailor within their division. DIVOLC instructors provide insight on how the LCPO may have more experience and technical knowledge and are charged to develop the new officer. This

instruction creates an appreciation for the future team created by the new division officer and their LCPO.

Within the wardroom officers are taught to work together as a team. DIVOLC introduces division officers to the Thomas Kilmann Conflict Modes (Figure 2).

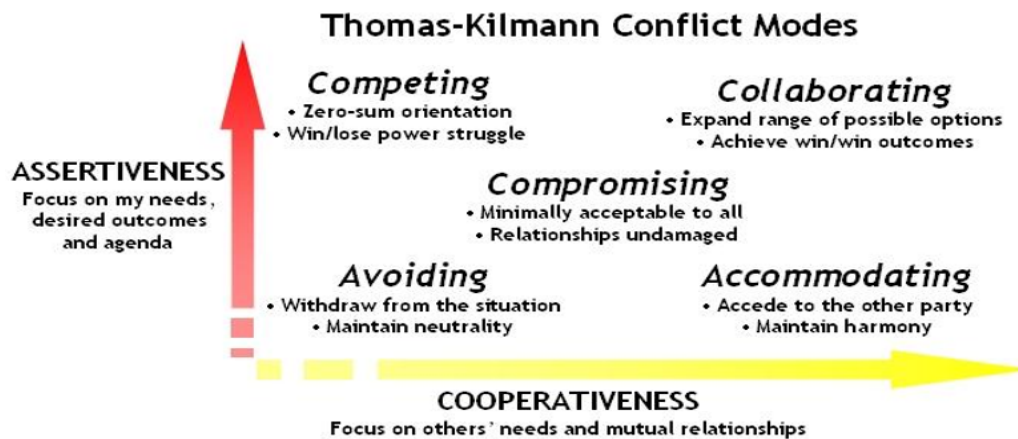


Figure 2. Thomas Kilmann Conflict Modes. Source: Naval Leadership and Ethics Center (2019).

This model helps division officers visualize the give and take nature of relationships with their peers and the overall impact it has on the mission.

### C. ANALYSIS SECTION III

Other than the leadership attributes emphasized in the NDLAs and DIVOLC, this project specifically focuses on the trait’s integrity, accountability, and humility. These three leadership characteristics were selected as a focal point for the project after reading various articles and books in addition to our own experiences as enlisted sailors and now commissioned officers. After over 20 years of active-duty naval service, we recognize these to be the most significant attributes in leaders that we admire.

Leading by example is one of the leadership mandates mentioned by Nissen. Influential people “repeat philosophical tenets to others and apply to their own decisions and actions” (Nissen, 2014, p. 153, para. 1). Leading by example is a function of integrity and displaying sound moral judgment in an ethical manner consistently. Admiral

Richardson says, “Our conduct must always be upright and honorable. We will actively strengthen our resolve to act consistently with our values” (Office of the CNO, 2018, p. 7).

Integrity is imperative for a division officer’s credibility and influence as a leader and their ability to successfully lead and manage their personnel. From our experience when leading divisions we both agree that integrity is the cornerstone of leadership. The moment a division officer makes decisions that are not aligned with integrity, their personnel will not trust them, nor will their division operate effectively or efficiently. “Ethical leadership is considered important, because together with leader integrity, it promotes effective interaction between leaders and their followers” (Engelbrecht et al., 2017, p. 369, para. 6).

“Accountability is as important as the concept of leadership, and those who are granted power must be held accountable” (Gardner, 1990, p. xiv). The leadership characteristic of accountability is commonly associated with high performing and effective leaders. Substandard outcomes occur when leaders fail to take ownership of their responsibilities and actions. Mission readiness and operational capabilities are derogated when there is a lack of accountability. “If you have a weak leadership culture with unaccountable leaders, you will have a difficult time driving industry-leading performance in your company” (Molinaro, 2016, p. 42). Accountability is vital to employing management policies and programs successfully (Melo et al., 2020).

Hess and Ludwig the authors of the book “*Humility is the New Smart*” write about the importance of the smart machine age with a focus on changing behavior and mindset change. Hess and Ludwig say that in the new age of technology, quieting ego, managing self, reflective listening, and otherness are foundational behaviors of a humility mindset (Hess & Ludwig, 2020). This has much to do with focusing more on others vice self, being a good listener, and excepting our strengths, weakness, and mistakes. In Admiral Richardson’s, *Navy Leader Development Framework 3.0*, he states, “We work from a foundation of humility, embracing our core values of honor, courage, and commitment” (Office of the CNO, 2019, p. 2). We find in our experience that humble, servant leaders are extremely effective and successful when managing at multiple levels of the Navy.

#### D. ANALYSIS SECTION IV

Analysis of the leadership characteristics highlighted in DIVOLC and the NDLA identifies potential opportunities to expand on the training provided to newly commissioned naval officers. The matrix in Figure 3 presents the leadership attributes reviewed in this study correspondent to both the NDLA and DIVOLC.

NDLA / DIVOLC ATTRIBUTES MATRIX		
ATTRIBUTES	NDLA	DIVOLC
<i>Core Values</i>	X	
<i>Moral Character</i>	X	X
<i>Judgement</i>	X	
<i>Leadership</i>	X	
<i>Communication</i>		X
<i>Teamwork</i>		X
<i>Accountability</i>		
<i>Humility</i>		

Figure 3. NDLA/DIVOLC Attribute Matrix

As both DIVOLC and the NDLA are introduced to new naval officers, shown in the matrix is a gap in the traits of accountability and humility. Although integrity is not specifically mentioned in our analysis of the leadership traits focused in DIVOLC and NDLA, we believe that the emphasis of moral character provides the foundation to building a new officer’s integrity. As per the definition of integrity provided in the literature review, “the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles that you refuse to change” (*Cambridge Dictionary*, n.d.), we do not see a gap in the training offered to new officers with regards to the attribute of integrity. The gap in training the development of accountability and humility characteristics offers an opportunity to modify the current curriculum to include these two positive leadership traits. Introduction and development of these additional two leadership traits for newly commissioned officers would serve them well as they begin their roles as future naval leaders.

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## IV. CONCLUSION

The project's analysis of the leadership traits currently emphasized in division officer training has provided insight into possible gaps in beneficial attributes for newly commissioned officers. The NDLA focus on core values, moral character, judgement, and leadership. These attributes serve to provide a solid foundation for new commissioned officers. DIVOLC introduces the characteristics of communication, moral character, and teamwork as primary traits for the division officer to carry in their leadership toolbox.

Research for this project identifies integrity, accountability, and humility as principal characteristics in effective leaders. Through our analysis, we determine that there are potential gaps in the current leadership curriculum offered to division officers at DIVOLC. The addition of course lessons that highlight the attributes of accountability and humility may address the gaps identified in this project.

We conclude that DIVOLC could potentially address the gaps found by this analysis with course work that include case studies, role playing, and additional reading that emphasizes importance of accountability and humility. As the Navy continues to progress with technological advancements, the Navy will increase its dependence on leaders as they will have to do more with less. The addition of accountability and humility to the leadership foundation provided to new officers will aid in the development of leaders that can succeed in the future environment of naval warfare. As the battlespace is ever-changing, continuous research into traits of successful naval leaders would be beneficial in the development of newly commissioned officers.

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