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UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS SPECIAL OPERATIONS OFFICER INTERMEDIATE  
AND GRADUATE LEVEL PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
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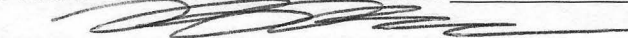
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## Executive Summary

**Title:** United States Marine Corps Special Operations Officer Intermediate and Graduate Level Professional Military Education

**Author:** Major Joseph Clemmey, United States Marine Corps

**Thesis:** Special Operations Officers lack the preparation to succeed as a joint qualified special operations officer due to the lack of special operations forces specific education at current service intermediate level professional military education programs.

**Discussion:** Military services are responsible for the professional development of its total force. Curricula within the military services' professional military education (PME) programs focus on training officers across a broad, generalized spectrum relevant to the respective service's doctrine while achieving joint PME Phase-I (JPME-I) accreditation. Although SOF-specific ILE exists, the opportunity for Special Operations Officers (SOO) attendance is severely limited. Some argue that current service PME program models adequately prepare all officers for post-ILE assignment within the Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental, Multinational (JIIM) environment and that special operations forces (SOF) are no different than any other military occupational specialty (MOS) so they do not require specifically specialized ILE. Others argue that SOF require specific education that SOCOM should provide in accordance with Title 10 responsibilities to conduct specialized courses of instruction for commissioned officers. Regardless of opinions toward SOF ILE, this study will examine if current service schools are meeting SOO needs for SOF education, and if not, are there feasible alternatives or options that could improve the education of a SOO while achieving the same qualifications as the services' resident PME school? Furthermore, this study intends to identify the correct mix of professional development and operational education of a field grade officer competing PME. Although comparison occurs between Special Operations Officer, Special Forces Officers, and Navy SEAL Officers, this study does not intend to conduct a direct comparison between service SOF due to the distinct difference in force sizes and the relative infancy of Marine Special Operations Command in comparison to sister-service SOF.

**Conclusion:** There are numerous graduate and intermediate level SOF-specific accredited institutions that exist; however, institutional barriers hinder SOO's attendance within these programs. Therefore, until Marine Corps leadership determines there is a requirement that is not being met by current venues and either new policies or exceptions to current policies are in place, SOOs must use existing programs accepted by the Marine Corps. Through existing supplementary education opportunities, SOOs can receive graduate and intermediate level professional military education that will better prepare them for service as joint qualified special operations officers in both operational and staff assignments, within the Marine Corps and SOF Enterprise, while preparing for post-military employment.

## List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronym	Definition
ACSC	Air Force Command and Staff College
ARSOF	Army Special Operations Forces
CDE(T)	College of Distance Education
CGSC	Army Command and General Staff College
CISA	College of International Security Affairs
CJCS	Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
CNCS	College of Naval Command and Staff
CPIB	Commandant's Professional Intermediate-Level Education Board
CSC	Marine Corps Command and Staff College
CSCBSP	Command and Staff College Blended Seminar Program
CSCDEP	Command and Staff College Distance Education Program
DL	Distance Learning
DOTMLPF-P	Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership and Education, Personnel, Facilities and Policy
IA	Individual Augment
ILE	Intermediate Level Education
ISP	Global and International Studies Program
ITC	Initial Training Course
JIIM	Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental, Multinational
JPME	Joint Professional Military Education
JSOFSEA	Joint Special Operations Forces Senior Enlisted Academy
JSOMA	Joint Special Operations Master of Arts degree
JSOTF	Joint Special Operations Task Forces
JSOU	Joint Special Operations University
KU	University of Kansas
MAGTF	Marine Corps Air-Ground Task Force
MARSOC	United States Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command
MCU	Marine Corps University
MMOA	Manpower Management Officer Assignments
MMS	Masters of Military Science
MOS	Military Occupational Specialty
MSOC	Marine Special Operations Company
MSOT	Marine Special Operations Team
NCSC	Naval Command and Staff College
NDU	National Defense University

NWC	Naval War College
NPS	Naval Postgraduate School
PCS	Permanent Change of Station
PME	Professional Military Education
PMOS	Primary Military Occupational Specialty
TAD	Temporary Additional Duty
TSOC	Theater Special Operations Command
SAW	School of Advanced Warfighting
SOCOM	United States Special Operations Command
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SO/IW	Special Operations/ Irregular Warfare
SOO	Special Operations Officer
SOS	Advanced Special Operations Studies
SOTF	Special Operations Task Forces
SWCS	United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School
USASOC	United States Army Special Operations Command

## Preface

Special operation forces (SOF) are a unique beast; we want to be employed and complain that general purpose forces don't understand us, but we tend to shroud our operations behind classifications and compartmentalized programs. We are constantly reminded that we are not "special", yet almost everything we do has the word "special" in front of it. The emphasis of the struggle is highlighted in a common stated phrase: "Marines are who we are, special operations is what we do." A constant reminder of the struggle MARSOC faces as it tries to emerge and define itself within SOCOM without overstepping its bounds within the Marine Corps; a struggle of a culture within cultures. This relationship plays out in numerous ways; professional development and education is no exception.

The reason I chose SOF-specific PME as a topic is because after being outside of MARSOC and the special operations community for the last five years, I feel unprepared to assume the role of a Marine Special Operations Company Commander (MSOC). Although I developed leadership and experience as an Officer in "career broadening" tours forced upon me, there were minimal opportunities to develop myself as a Special Operations Officer (SOO). I thought long and hard and wondered if this was an isolated feeling I had, but after talking with some of my peers, I realized the feeling was mutual.

Initially, I pondered, how can we better educate SOOs to produce a better prepared product? I began researching and talking with peers and senior officers. However, I quickly realized my thought process and research question were blinded by the non-attributable and norm challenging thought processes of Command and Staff. Based on initial discussions about MARSOC within the Marine Corps, I adjusted the focus of my research to the following: how can SOOs use existing education opportunities to maintain "both fully proficient special operations professionals and well-rounded Marine Corps Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) officers?"<sup>1</sup> This may sound cynical, but the truth is that the Marine Corps pays, selects officers for special programs and command, promotes, and retains, not SOCOM. At full growth, MARSOC will have sixty-three billets within the USMC -TBS, EWS, CSC, MCCDC, MCWL, etc and only twenty-one within SOF Enterprise.<sup>2</sup> It is important to remember that SOOs are not bigger than the Marine Corps; however, SOOs must fight for SOF-specific education or they become general MAGTF Officers with nothing worthwhile to offer the Marine Corps. In the end, it's not how we can make Marines better special operators; it's what the SOOs give back to the Marine Corps.

By choosing SOF-specific PME as a research topic, I wanted to identify what we, the officer community of MARSOC, could do to better prepare our future SOOs so that we remain competitive with our sister-service SOF while remaining capable of serving as the connecting file between the Marine Corps and SOCOM. Thus, the outputs of this research are twofold: 1) provide recommendations based on research and the experience of our senior SOOs, and 2) provide a menu of educational options that SOOs can choose from based on personal and professional goals.

I'd like to thank my MMS Mentor, Dr. Wineman, for providing the right level attention toward me during this endeavor that kept me dedicated and focused. Lastly, and most importantly, I am appreciative of the love, understanding, hardship, and sacrifices my family makes so that I can remain on active duty.

## **Introduction**

Ten years after United States Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command's (MARSOC) activation, and with considerable deliberation, the Marine Corps approved and implemented the primary military occupational specialty (PMOS) 0372, Critical Skills Operator, for enlisted Marines in October of 2011, and subsequently, the PMOS 0370, Special Operations Officer (SOO), in July of 2014. Although Marines have a long history of participating in special operations, the formation of MARSOC solidified the Marine Corps' ties to SOCOM. While the organization charts its path into the future it is important to refine MARSOC's roles and responsibilities within SOCOM and ensure Marines are properly educated and trained to meet expectations.

MARSOC continues to break barriers and achieve monumental accomplishments in its relatively short existence. Initially, MARSOC units were employed under sister-service SOF task forces; however, as the organization's institutional experience increased, so did its scope and span of responsibilities. Majors and Lieutenant Colonels that were once employed under the command of sister-service SOF now conduct independent operations, command Special Operations Task Forces (SOTF), and serve as deputy commanders of Joint Special Operations Task Forces (JSOTF) and Theater Special Operations Commands (TSOC). It is imperative that MARSOC consistently evaluates the education and training opportunities afforded to its officers to ensure it is commensurate with the scope and span of responsibilities the officers will fulfill as MARSOC continues to evolve and expand throughout the SOF Enterprise.

## **Project Background and Setting**

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI) 1800.01E establishes the framework for Officer Professional Military Education (PME) and Joint Professional Military Education (JPME). CJCSI 1800.01E directs Services to provide Service-specific PME and JPME to “develop officers with expertise and knowledge” appropriate to their rank and PMOS, while other organizations “enhance the education of selected officers” in national security strategy, resource management, information resources management, counterterrorism, information operations, cyberspace operations, and joint and multinational campaign planning, and warfighting.<sup>3</sup> In short, Services provide core officer development while other institutions provide Department of Defense-wide enhanced and broadening education beyond the core officer requirements through specialized organizations. Service schools focus on developing service-specific specialists to achieve PME requirements while incorporating national military strategy, joint planning, joint doctrine, joint command and control, joint force and joint requirements development, and operational contract support to meet JPME-I requirements.<sup>4</sup>

CJCSI 1800.01E outlines five military education levels that establish the PME continuum:

1. Pre-commissioning education programs focus on preparing officer candidates to become commissioned officers. Curricula focus on the defense establishment and the candidate’s chosen military service.
2. Primary education programs are service oriented and primarily focus on the tactical level of war, for officers in grades 0-1 through 0-3, and provide education in MOS, specialty schools, and primary PME courses. Service schools for the 0-3 pay grade provide career level education and should develop an understanding of joint warfighting relevant to the rank.
3. Intermediate education programs are service command and staff colleges and equivalently recognized institutions concentrated at the grade of 0-4. These courses focus on warfighting and leader development within the context of operational art while gaining a better understanding of joint perspectives. Students are also introduced to JPME-I requirements defined above.

4. Senior education programs are service war colleges and JPME institutions for students in the grades 05 or 06. Senior education provide JPME-II accreditation and focuses on preparing officers for positions of strategic level leadership and advisement striving to achieve a broader educational experience.
5. General Officer (GO)/ Flag Officer (FO) education prepares officers for high-level joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational leadership responsibilities.<sup>5</sup>

The focus of this discussion is on intermediate level education (ILE); however, the concern for professional development spans the range of an officer's career between primary and senior education.

As the Unified Combatant Command for Special Operations, SOCOM is assigned responsibility for all SOF in the United States, and at times, may exercise command of a selected special operations mission if directed to do so by the President of the United States or the Secretary of Defense. SOCOM's principal function is to prepare SOF to carry out assigned missions. Specified tasks include training assigned forces and conducting specialized courses of instruction for commissioned and noncommissioned officers.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, by law, Services' provide core skills and standardized equipment while SOCOM provides SOF-peculiar skills and equipment. Services man, train, and equip SOF within the framework and requirements of each respective Service's mission. The relationship between the Services and SOCOM equates to SOCOM employing the force it has, not always the force it wants.

Finally, MARSOC continues to progress through many of the same challenges that sister-service SOF encountered during activation and formative years. The Marine Corps continues to gradually accept and support MARSOC. Although not always popular and sometimes it is difficult to comprehend, the Marine Corps must make decisions based on what is right for the institution. A thorough and detailed review of the organization using qualitative and quantitative data may produce skewed interpretation since MARSOC is only eleven years old and it is less

than three years since the implementation of the 0370 primary military occupational specialty (PMOS). In this regard, there are officers that executed a permanent change of station back to their original PMOS, before the implementation of the PMOS 0370, that have yet to return to MARSOC as a SOO. This factor, and many others resulting from the creation of a new PMOS, are not completely understood or accounted for yet; as MARSOC and the PMOS 0370 stabilize, historical and statistical data will be available for analysis and quantitative study. With this mindset, there will be no statistical analysis between sister-service SOF and MARSOC conducted in this research. Additionally, no analysis between officer populations and attendance at PME will occur due to significant differences in available and eligible population sizes. For example, only eighteen SOOs were screened on the FY17 CPIB; of the eighteen, only five SOOs were screened for Naval Postgraduate School's Special Operations/ Irregular Warfare (SO/IW), Special Operations Strategic Planner (MOS 8870).<sup>7</sup> In comparison, Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF) screened a significantly larger population of officers within the Special Forces, Civil Affairs, and Psychological Operations Branch to fill approximately fifty student openings in the same program.

### **Special Operations Officer**

Although SOOs and non-SOF officers are both Marine Corps Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) officers, there are significant differences between education and career progression. Non-SOF officers move through a traditional accessions pipeline that begins with The Basic School, MOS training, and progression through a "career roadmap." The first phase of the officer's career starts by applying the education received in the PMOS school at the officer's first billet. It is here the officer translates education to action applying his PMOS at the "tactical" level. Normally, the officer remains within his PMOS through the first duty station,

approximately three to four years, and then transitions to the second phase, a B-Billet (Recruiting, Recruit Depot, Reconnaissance, career broadening or special program), for another three to four years during which time the officer is promoted to captain. Following the B-Billet tour, the officer moves to the third phase, which is either selection to attend Career-level Education or the return to his PMOS for company level command or a key billet assignment. Generally, the cycle repeats itself, officer completes key billet, transitions to career broadening or special assignment, possibly gets selected for Intermediate-level Education, and transitions back to PMOS or staff assignment. Generally speaking, non-SOF officers receive education and then transition to the following assignment. While the career progression provided for non-SOF is generalized and there are exceptions to it, the path remains fairly similar and consistent. However, the “career roadmap” for a SOO is significantly different from that of a non-SOF officer.

The accession pipeline into SOF normally begins after the officer completes his first assignment prior to transitioning to a B-Billet, during assessment and selection as a first lieutenant or junior captain. After passing assessment and selection, the officer transitions to either Career-level Education or the Individual Training Course (ITC), which upon successful completion, earns the officer the PMOS 0370 Special Operations Officer. ITC’s focus is to train enlisted and officers in basic skills demanded of a Marine Special Operator at the Marine Special Operations Team (MSOT) level. Although students learn and conduct collective events, training culminates at the MSOT level without enablers. Upon graduation from ITC, officers attend the four-week long Team Commanders Course and learn to employ the MSOT as a SOO. Additionally, students may attend specialty schools, insertion training, or language training upon graduation from ITC. Following ITC, the SOO serves as a MSOT Team Commander and then

transitions to either a company or battalion staff assignment, or another billet within MARSOC designated for a post-MSOT Commander. Following this assignment, the SOO is a senior captain, major select, or junior major, and there are many career tracks the SOO may be placed into: selected for Intermediate-level Education or a special program, assignment to a TSOC or higher level staff, a key billet, or MSOC Command. No matter what billet assignment the SOO receives, the educational preparation medium is Intermediate-level PME from a Service-recognized institution.

In comparison, infantry officers attend the Infantry Officer Course to prepare to serve as platoon commanders (second lieutenants through first lieutenant) while SOOs attend the ITC to prepare to serve as team commanders (first lieutenant through junior captain). Both officers then complete some version of a staff assignment or career broadening tour. However, infantry officers attend Career-level Education to prepare for company command, which is tactically focused according to Service orientation in accordance with the PME continuum, while SOOs may or may not attend ILE, which is focused on warfighting at the operational level according to the PME continuum, prior to assuming company command. However, under the current model, the last SOF-specific education and training a SOO receives is focused on the individual and collective events at the MSOT unit level. The remainder of education and training for the vast majority of SOOs occurs throughout their career as on-the-job training during pre-deployment workup or through non-standardized, informal training; there is no formal training or education that prepares a SOO to serve as a MSOC Commander responsible for multiple MSOTs and enablers. Surprisingly, the last, and only tactics and employment based formal professional education and training a SOO receives prior to deploying as a command slated lieutenant colonel responsible for a SOTF is provided at the rank of captain during the ITC.

SOOs are categorized as either “pioneer” or “production;” pioneer SOOs served in MARSOC prior to the PMOS (pre-FY 15) without a SOO pipeline and production SOOs came to MARSOC through ITC with the intention of gaining the PMOS 0370 (FY 15 and beyond).<sup>8</sup> Future projections identify the first pioneer MARSOC Commanding General and first production 05 Commanding Officer in approximately FY 24 - FY 26; the first production MARSOC Commanding General is not expected until approximately FY 40.<sup>9</sup> According to a presentation provided to SOOs in 2015 on the status of the PMOS 0370, projections estimate approximately 252 SOO billets among the ranks of captain through colonel: 115 captains, 88 majors, 49 lieutenant colonels, and 14 colonels.<sup>10</sup> SOO billet projection equates to 140 at MARSOC, 63 within the Marine Corps, and 21 within SOCOM with defined billets within the SOF Enterprise at the ranks of lieutenant colonel and colonel.<sup>11</sup> SOO billets are categorized as “Key Billets” or “Breakout Billets” aligned with the continuum of PME (career, intermediate, and top level schools). Key Billets consist of command at all levels and Battalion Operations/ Executive Officer. Breakout Billets consist of TSOC and Joint Staff tours, Recruiting Station Commanding Officer, Marine Expeditionary Operations/ Executive Officer, and higher level staff tours.<sup>12</sup> In order to prepare the future Commanding General of MARSOC, he must be trained today.

### **Education Opportunities**

Assignment to Service PME and special education programs for Marines occurs through the Commandant’s Professional Education Board. The purpose of this program is “to select the best and fully qualified eligible officers for PME, graduate-level education, and select special duty assignments.”<sup>13</sup> Manpower Management Officer Assignments (MMOA) identifies eligible officers for the education board based on an officer’s projected permanent change of duty station (PCS) date. Once the eligible population is determined, MMOA Officer Monitors publish the

eligibility roster and gather each officers educational program preferences. Eligible officers then compete on a non-statutory board for selection. Officer Monitors assign selected officers to either a Fellowship, attendance at Foreign or Sister-service military ILE, the International Affairs Officer Program, Special Education Program, or the Advanced Degree Program. If the officer is not selected for Commandant's Professional Intermediate-Level Board (CPIB) during the first period of eligibility, screening occurs during consecutive CPIBs as long the officer is eligible. Officers that are not selected by CPIB and do not attend the Command and Staff College Blended Seminar Program (CSCBSP) must enroll in a DL ILE PME program in order to obtain ILE credit and JPME-I accreditation.

Officers that completed or are currently enrolled in non-resident DL education programs, such as CSCDEP are still screened by the CPIB. Students that completed or are currently enrolled in CSCBSP are not screened by CPIB, however, they can volunteer for screening. Those students that volunteer for screening are only eligible for second year intermediate level PME such as the School of Advanced Warfighting (SAW), School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS), Navy Maritime Advanced Warfighting School (MAWS), School of Advanced Airpower Studies (SAAS), and other select graduate-level education and special programs.<sup>14</sup>

Common factors in any decision are conducting a cost-benefit analysis and identifying the opportunity cost between available choices. Although SOOs can weigh personal and professional factors to indicate their preferences for slating on CPIB, the final decision rests with MMOA and the Officer's Monitor. From a point of perspective, positive and negative factors can present different outcomes from the SOO's and Monitor's point of view. Numerous factors contribute to a SOO identifying preferences to CPIB slating: location, personal and professional education, family time, or some combination thereof. Although the SOO may identify Army

University's Command and General Staff College (CGSC) as the first preference due to location and SOF-specific education track, the Monitor may decide that Marine Corps Command and Staff (CSC) is the best choice for the Marine Corps due to any variety of reasons. Although SOO's cannot definitively determine the outcome of CPIB slating, a summary of resident PME options will follow. Detailed information for available PME options can be found in Appendix A: Resident Professional Military Education Options.

As discussed previously, resident PME slating preferences differentiate between SOOs for a variety of reasons, therefore, summaries of resident PME options will be discussed strictly on the basis of SOF-specific PME availability. Naval Postgraduate School (NPS), National Defense University (NDU), and the Army University's CGSC provide the best opportunity for SOF-specific PME. NPS offers an 18-month curriculum in Special Operations/ Irregular Warfare (SO/IW) with a master's degree while CGSC offers a SOF Studies track and the opportunity to enroll in the Global Interagency Studies track of the Master's of Arts in Global and International Studies Program (ISP) at the University of Kansas (KU). Additionally, the NDU, through the College of International Security Affairs (CISA), offers SOF-specific graduate education through the SOCOM sponsored Joint Special Operations Master of Arts degree (JSOMA). Policies exist to assign SOOs to NPS and CGSC, however, no policies exist for assignment to CISA's JSOMA program.

Marine Corps Command and Staff (CSC), Naval War College (NWC) College of Naval Command and Staff (CNCS), and Air Command and Staff College (ACSC) all provide students with a general overview of SOF education and an opportunity to enroll in a master's degree program; however, CNCS provides increased options for SOF-specific electives. Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) provides numerous SOF-specific education opportunities that fill

gaps in SOF-specific education; however, currently there are only options for graduate level credits and certificates, not graduate level degrees.

SOOs possess full control over whether or not they enroll in non-resident PME and what program they choose, regardless of CPIB selection or slating. The following information provides a summary of non-resident PME. Detailed information pertaining to non-resident PME can be found in Appendix B: Non-resident Professional Military Education Options. JSOU is the only opportunity for SOF-specific non-resident education; however, courses are limited and there is no opportunity for a master's degree. Only ACSC and CNCS provide the option for a non-resident master's degree program. The NWC's College of Distance Education (CDE) CNCS Fleet Seminar program and ACSC Distance Learning (DL) provide SOOs the opportunity to complete a non-resident master's degree. ACSC DL provides a concentration in Joint Warfare and is more accessible due to the program's execution occurring completely online while the CNCS Fleet Seminar program is only available at certain locations requiring face-to-face interaction. When evaluating non-resident PME options, at a minimum, SOOs should weigh the following criteria to identify the program that best meets their needs: transferable graduate level degree credit to a civilian university, program method (online or blended), program length, maximum amount of time to complete the program, and enrollment eligibility (captain meeting time in grade requirements, major select, or major).

### **Survey Analysis**

This section focuses on survey data collected to examine the research question. SOOs with O-5, and or, O-6 command were the target population for analysis. The population sample queried for this survey was 20 officers; however, only five officers completed the survey. Although the sample size may not be large enough to provide a sample sufficient to warrant

statistical analysis of the population, nonetheless, the data will provide a representative sample. Data was anonymously collected in an attempt to solicit honest and candid feedback. Participants had the author's contact information in case they had further information to contribute or any additional questions or comments.

The survey was developed through Survey Monkey and emailed to the target population. It consisted of ten questions focused on the respondents' experiences and opinions toward graduate level education and ILE. Questions focused on: identifying how effective existing PME options are to prepare SOOs; if gaps are present, are there remedies; is a graduate degree required for field grade SOOs; and optimal career timing for ILE. The complete survey is available for review in Appendix C.

### **Perceptions of Current Service PME**

60% of the officers surveyed stated current service PME schools partially prepare SOOs to serve in SOF-specific service or joint billets and 80% think current service PME schools partially prepare SOOs to serve on higher level staffs or as a member of the command deck to effectively employ special operations units. 80% of the officers stated it takes at least approximately four to six months for a SOO to become effective upon assuming a new SOF-specific billet (operational or staff).

Respondents identified the lack of SOF-specific education at Service ILE PME schools and the generalist nature of the curriculum as the primary reason for the lack of preparation. Data suggested establishing a SOF track at service schools, a resident "SOF-like SAW school" that focuses on case studies and emerging trends, or implementing SOF-focused education that prepares a SOO for staff assignment within a TSOC. Respondents also commented on the lack of education provided outside of major combat operations, and the lack of education and

detailed planning for theater security planning through Phases 0 and 1. Additionally, the majority of comments focused on what SOF contribute to the non-SOF population by attending service schools, and intangible aspects such as friendships and networking, rather than what perceived learning outcomes were suggesting the intangible benefits resonated with them more than the education. While the majority of respondents identified that service schools partially prepare SOF for SOF-specific staff and command, the majority of comments focused on how service schools were beneficial instead of providing a detailed critique of how to implement improvements to improve SOO preparation.

### **Education: Generalized versus SOF-Specific**

80% of the officers surveyed agreed there is a requirement for SOF-specific PME; however, there were split-decisions on whether SOF-specific PME is supplementary education or should replace existing service schools with a resident SOF-specific school. Respondents were also split on whether SOF-specific PME should be completed in either a resident or non-resident format. Surprisingly, 80% of the officers also stated that a graduate degree from a civilian or military university is “nice to have” but not required.

Although the majority of the officers surveyed stated service schools partially prepare SOOs, the majority of respondents thought SOOs should attend service schools to check the box of critical career path goals. Survey data identified the requirement for additional SOF-specific PME, academic and SOF capabilities-based employment, so that all field grade officer education is not on the job training. The respondents identified critical concerns of opportunity cost to follow-on and non-resident SOF-specific education. While education and development were acknowledged as important, lack of available family and dwell time, compressed pre-deployment cycles, consistent attendance to episodic resident TAD trips, and lack of a tangible benefits

(graduate certificate vs. graduate degree or credits) must be balanced and actioned on when the opportunity is right.

Survey data generally identified a desire for the Marine Corps to vet and recognize non-standard education, such as JSOU and Interagency Courses, as PME; comments alluded to the creation, and Service-SOF acceptance, of a JSOU course similar to the Joint Special Operations Forces Senior Enlisted Academy (JSOFSEA). JSOFSEA provides standardized SOF-specific education to E-8s and E-9s across the SOF Enterprise that dynamically evolves the curriculum to meet the fluid nature of the global environment while meeting the service components requirement for senior enlisted PME.<sup>15</sup>

### **Education and Career Timing**

The final question focused on identifying the optimal career timing for a SOO to attend ILE. The surveyed officers were asked to identify, from best timing to least favorable, of when a SOO should attend ILE. Career timing choices were: Captain selected to Major; Prior to key billet (MSOC CO, Battalion Ops O, Battalion XO); Prior to staff billet (Joint or Service); After key billet or staff, prior to selection/ promotion to Lieutenant Colonel; and Whenever CPIB slates the officer.

Respondents identified the best timing for SOOs to attend ILE as “Prior to key billet (MSOC CO, Battalion Ops O, Battalion XO),” the determined least favorable timing was, “Whenever CPIB slates the officer.” The optimal career timing model, from best timing to least favorable, was defined as: Prior to key billet (MSOC CO, Battalion Ops O, Battalion XO); Captain selected to Major; Prior to staff billet (Joint or Service); After key billet or staff, prior to selection/ promotion to Lieutenant Colonel; and lastly, Whenever CPIB slates the officer.

## **Analysis**

The data gathered from perceptions of current service ILE PME highlight two factors: the lack of SOF-specific education for SOF and non-SOF officers; and although service ILE PME schools generally lack SOF-specific education, SOF officers add value to non-SOF officers education, and SOOs benefit attending service schools through intangible benefits such as gaining family-time and networking. While SOF-specific education was deficient, each service school provides the baseline doctrine, introduction to the interagency environment, and the theory and nature of conflicts that every officer requires. Service schools provide education that is beneficial and common to all; however, SOOs require additional SOF-specific education oriented on SOF core tasks, Phase 0 and 1 planning and operations, and increased incorporation of interagency planning and employment considerations.

While the majority of officers surveyed identified concern that it generally takes a SOO approximately four to six months to become effective in a new billet, this research lacked the depth to define whether or not the length of time is comparatively significant to non-SOF officers transitioning into new billets. In order to provide context to the value SOF-specific education adds in decreasing the amount of time it takes a SOO to operate in a new billet, further research must be conducted to gather data on billet effectiveness for SOF and non-SOF officers, with and without specific preparatory education.

The data indicates that 80% of the officers surveyed stated a graduate degree from a civilian or military university is “nice to have” but not required should not be construed or meant to devalue the importance of graduate level education or a graduate degree; both the education and degree are valuable for numerous reasons. Furthermore, a graduate degree improves the competitiveness of an officer for selection by statutory and non-statutory selection boards.

Ultimately, as data indicated through direct feedback and indirect comments, survey respondents were keen to note that SOOs must continue to attend Service ILE PME and accepted Marine Corps career paths to maintain competitive against peers and non-SOF officers.

### **Discussion**

Upon approval of the SOO PMOS, Major General Mark A. Clark, then Commanding General of MARSOC stated, the PMOS “allows the Marine Corps the ability to develop Marine special operations officers, over a course of a career, as both fully proficient special operations professionals and well-rounded Marine Corps Air-Ground Task Force officers.”<sup>16</sup> SOOs are receiving adequate education to produce a well-rounded MAGTF officer through Service ILE; however, SOF-specific education is lacking. The Marine Corps' limited SOO population that requires and benefits from SOF-specific education does not warrant significant investment of resources, nevertheless, this does not negate or diminish the requirement.

Data collected from the survey noted only 20% of respondents stated current Service PME schools properly prepare a SOO to serve in a SOF-specific Service or Joint billet while an alarming 80% of respondents stated current Service PME schools only partially prepare a SOO for service on a higher level staff or as a member of the command deck to effectively employ a special operations unit.

The discussion then turns to SOF-specific education opportunities. Table 1 compares resident ILE education opportunities and three programs stand out: NPS' SO/IW, CISA's JSOMA, and the CGSC's SOF Track. CISA's JSOMA program at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, provides SOF-specific ILE PME, JPME-I, and a master's degree; however, only one Marine has ever attended the program. According to the JSOMA Program Chair, numerous Marines have applied and were approved for enrollment; however, speculation eluded that they were not able

to attend because the Marine Corps did not approve the PCS for the 10-month program,<sup>17</sup> which is the exact same length as CSC and sister-service ILE PME lengths.

FY 16 CPIB slated three SOOs; two assigned to CSC and one to NPS SO/ IW. No SOOs received slating to Foreign PME or the CGSC despite the potential for a SOO to engage international partners or enroll in the CGSC SOF Track. However, three Infantry Officers received slating to Foreign PME and five Infantry Officers to CGSC.<sup>18</sup>

Since 2014, four SOOs participated in NPS' SO/IW curriculum limited to the fact that the Marine Corps only has one seat per FY to the SO/IW program because there is only one Strategic Operations Planner billet within MARSOC to fulfill the utilization tour.<sup>19</sup> Within this framework, the Marine Corps would only be required to fulfill one seat every other FY as depicted in Figure 1. By sending a SOO every FY, there are a surplus of trained SOOs as the FYs progress and the population stabilizes; excess population must be effectively managed.

There are a plethora of DL opportunities presented for comparison in Table 2, and while none of the options specifically provide SOF-specific education that achieve ILE and JPME-I accreditation, there are sister-service programs that provide better options and opportunities than the Marine Corps CSCDEP. If timing is an issue and the SOO must complete ILE and JPME-I quickly, the Air Force's ACSC DL 6.0 can be completed in as soon as seven months, and the Navy's CD-ROM based is generally completed in 12 months or less. Additionally, if the SOO is seeking additional personal and professional development, the Air Force and Navy both offer opportunities to enroll in DL master degree programs from their respective service run universities.

Survey data highlighted the majority of SOF-specific education was occurring through on the job training. Additionally, survey data identified the lack of education led to SOOs requiring

approximately four to six months to become familiar with a new billet, whether it was an operational or staff assignment. For SOF-specific education outside of service provided education, SOOs must take advantage of JSOU. In September 2000, the Commander, SOCOM, established JSOU to prepare SOF to shape the future strategic environment by providing joint special operations education and research<sup>20</sup> and as a “focal point for meeting the unique educational needs of special operations forces and enhancing the understanding of the utility of special operations to national security decision makers outside of SOF.”<sup>21</sup> As SOCOM’s Academic Center of Excellence for Special Operations Studies and Research, JSOU serves to fulfill SOCOM’s Title 10 responsibilities to prepare SOF to carry out assigned missions and increase combat readiness by conducting specialized courses of instruction not offered in other PME programs.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, JSOU is the proponent of joint special operations education throughout the special operations community and is specifically chartered and organized to function as a College of Special Operations to provide accredited post-secondary education through graduate-level SOF-specific curricula.<sup>23</sup>

JSOU courses such as the TSOC Staff Preparation Course or JSOTF Level 1 focus on examining irregular warfare, C2 and each directorate's capabilities and concerns and explore how to work across joint, interagency and international communities with a culminating exercise that integrates plans and campaign design.<sup>24</sup> Through blended learning, SOF or non-SOF officers can receive this education in two weeks of TAD which could reduce the amount of time it takes a SOO to adapt to a new billet. JSOU offers a variety of SOF-specific education, officers must conduct a cost-benefit analysis to determine when attendance to these types of courses is feasible and optimal.

## **Recommendations**

### **Recommendation I: MARSOC and SOO Management**

Respondents to the survey identified the best timing for SOOs to attend ILE was “Prior to key billet (MSOC CO, Battalion Ops O, Battalion XO)” and the least favorable timing as, “Whenever CPIB slates the officer.” MARSOC, in coordination with MMOA, must formalize a disciplined SOO career management process that provides some level of control over the SOO population. By projecting and slating SOO billets ahead of CPIB, MARSOC can attempt to position Major selects so they are eligible for screening on CPIB and post-ILE SOOs can be slated to move into MSOC command. While MARSOC cannot control who CPIB selects, it can attempt to manipulate the available population and control when the SOO moves into a key billet, thereby attempting to achieve the best timing for a SOO as identified by survey respondents. Additionally, by SOOs completing ILE early in their career it provides more time in grade for a SOO to attend a secondary ILE program, such as SAW, and still have enough time to complete a key billet in grade. Although this is not a fail-safe measure due to numerous variables, it would provide some level of management and predictability.

MARSOC should evaluate the potential for incorporating Special Operations Strategic Planner MOS 8870 billets at TSOCs or as Individual Augments (IA) to Special Operations Task Forces (SOTF) to manage the excess population identified in Figure 1. Additionally, consideration should be given to creating additional 8870 and 0505 (MAGTF Planner) billets at within MARSOC and major subordinate commands as identified in Figure 2. Sister-service SOF typically fill Operations Sections with 8870 and or “SAW-like” equivalents. Adding this additional structure within MARSOC would improve SOTF’s abilities while matching sister-service SOF equivalent SOTF capabilities.

Above-average SOOs must be identified and positioned for valuable opportunities through proactive career management. CSCBSP must be leveraged to maximize the benefits it presents and how it can be used to manipulate career timing and movement into key billets. Similar to Special Operations Strategic Planner billets, MARSOC should evaluate the potential for a SAW MAGTF Planner, MOS 0505, at TSOCs. By adding a MAGTF Planner billet at a TSOC, the Marine Corps would be able to capitalize on USMC-SOF interoperability and experience through difficult operational and planning challenges. Placing these two billets at TSOCs could benefit the Marine Corps by rotating through TSOCs and back into conventional Marine Corps units improving experience, education, and interoperability.

Although it would be extremely difficult due to numerous factors, MARSOC should consider some form of SOF-specific education for incoming MSOC Commanders to establish a common baseline. Survey respondents overwhelmingly identified the lack of preparation and the four to six months it takes to become effective in a new billet. Time is the one resource that cannot be replenished. Taking four to six months from a 12-month workup and taking another portion of time, however reduced, away from a six to seven month deployment significantly reduces the amount of effective employment time for the MSOC. Additionally, SOOs will have varying levels of experience and relevancy based on the billet held before taking command of an MSOC. For example, a SOO rotating from the J3 or J5 of a TSOC will have more relevancy than a SOO rotating out of The Basic School or another Marine Corps non-SOF-specific staff billet.

Using the MARSOC Training and Readiness Manual as a baseline to compare against a workup and deployment, a working group should propose education and training requirements to provide to a MSOC Commander, and key company staff, in order to bridge the identified gap in

SOF-specific education. Education could be in the form of vignettes, lectures, seminars, panel discussions via VTC, multiple week shadowing of a MSOC currently in the later phases of a workup or deployed, cross-SOF JSOU integration, or any combination thereof. Ultimately, MSOC Commanders and staff must be educated and trained to maximize employment capabilities so that limited resources are not ineffectively managed and employed.

### **Recommendation II: Increasing SOF-specific Education at Command and Staff College**

If implementation of a SOF Track is not feasible at CSC, there are opportunities to implement SOF-specific injects. Similar to the SOF SME interaction during Pacific Challenge III, CSC could offer a form of SOF-specific lectures and seminars that focus on the JIIM that integrates operational plans and campaign design. Additionally, SOF-specific education would provide valuable education on current TTPs and employment that would benefit SOF-MAGTF integration. Furthermore, during major exercises, including Nine Innings, the CSC students that participate in the SOF-specific education could form the planning cell from SOCPAC, that could interact with individual Conference Groupings, or serve as a SOF planning cell for the entire CSC class. Although students function as SOCPAC during Exercise Nine Innings, education, student learning, and exercise execution could improve by developing SOF-specific skills earlier in the curriculum that continue to integrate as the academic year progresses.

CSC currently provides one SOF-specific elective titled “Special Operations Studies” instructed by the JSOU Chair. Although there are other electives that address SOF core tasks and provide education that can academically relate to special operations, only one elective is specifically structured toward SOF. Additionally, the JSOU Chair to Marine Corps University does not provide any lectures to CSC students and has not hosted a SOF-specific Brown Bag.

CSC should integrate a SOF-specific elective track during the elective period. Through a working group, learning objectives and outcomes could be developed to shape a five-week curriculum focused on SOF-specific education. Although it would require significant coordination to facilitate VTCs, resident instruction, and DL education, a similar precedence exists with the Defense Acquisition University's Systems Acquisition Management elective.

Survey respondents provided feedback that alluded to a requirement for an integrated "SOF-like SAW." By incorporating CSC students into existing or new instruction and practical application that focuses on the operational art of SOF planning and employment, CSC and SAW students can benefit providing increased capability to the Marine Corps and SOCOM. Through blended learning, in conjunction with the Marine Corps University Faculty, Military Faculty Special Operations experience, the JSOU Chair, and additional instructor support, CSC could provide SOF-specific education and an elective that would benefit SOF and non-SOF students alike. Furthermore, SOF and non-officers moving into a Joint or SOF billet could be exposed to a variety of SOF experiences they otherwise would not get. Regardless, the return on investment for SOF and non-SOF officers alike would be exponential while meeting the intent of Marine Corps Operating Concept by integrating with SOF, TSOCs, and SOCOM.<sup>25</sup> Regardless, SOF-specific education minimizes the effects and impacts of a "cold start" in a new billet that can reduce transition and learning times.

### **Recommendation III: ILE Policy Review**

MARSOC should request course validation of the JSOMA program from the appropriate entity to ensure it meets Marine Corps requirements. Through either a policy review or an exception to policy, SOOs and senior noncommissioned officers could enroll in the program. JSOMA is a 10-month resident PME program that provides ILE and JPME-I to sister-service

SOF. Once accepted into the JSOMA program, SOOs should receive approval to execute a 10-month permanent change of station (PCS) to Fort Bragg, North Carolina for PME similarly to executing a PCS to Newport, Rhode Island, for a 10-month PCS. If necessary, conditions could be added such as a prerequisite to complete CSCDEP if a limiting factor is the lack of MAGTF officer generalization. Additionally, with the majority of SOOs stationed at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, the shorter PCS would save the Marine Corps money.

## **Conclusion**

MARSOC was activated in February 2006 and in just over a decade the unit implemented subordinated force structure including the Marine Raider Regiment and a Special Operations School, was granted an enlisted and officer PMOS, adopted a new insignia, and made notable contributions in support of U.S. foreign policy conducting operations around the world. The PMOS 0370, Special Operations Officer (SOO), is less than three years old and the full effects of its implementation are still being exposed. Additionally, the Commandant's Education Boards (CCLEB and CPIB) initiated in preparation for the FY 12 academic year are still transforming as the relatively new programs adapt to meet the needs of the Marine Corps. Although the Commandant's Education Boards remain, the processes and procedures in which officers are selected and slated to programs continue to change creating rippling effects through a developing PMOS and its associated programs and policies. The recommendations herein are based on research collected from a snapshot in time that will require reevaluation as the effects of the PMOS 0370 mature within MARSOC, and the Marine Corps' policies and programs as doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, facilities and policy (DOTMLPF-P) matures with the PMOS. Taking the infancy of the variables into consideration,

the recommendations should be implemented progressively to create the least amount of intrusions into an evolving ecosystem.

Recommendation #3, policy adjustment to assign SOOs to the JSOMA program via CPIB, should be staffed, reviewed, and implemented in CPIB as this appears to be the least intrusive recommendation. Concurrently, CSC should implement a phased approach to Recommendation #2, implementing SOF-specific education for SOOs and non-SOF officers. Initially, SOF-specific education should be incorporated through multiple SOF-specific Brown Bags and through progressive injections of SOF core activities into planning exercises. The Brown Bags should serve as a pilot program to develop the framework of a five-week SOF elective. SOF injects should progress in concert with current CSC planning exercises and culminate during the CSC Capstone Exercise Nine Innings. Brown Bags and planning exercises should be synchronized so the preceding education supports and integrates into the next CSC planning exercise. Based on Brown Bag attendance and student feedback, CSC can determine whether or not a SOF elective is beneficial and or worthwhile.

Lastly, but not the least important, MARSOC in conjunction with the appropriate stakeholders, should conduct a working group to evaluate SOO manpower management and assignment procedures. In addition to the adaptation and evolution of the PMOS 0370 and CPIB, FY 17 CCLEB will introduce an additional variable with the potential selection and slating of the first SOO Captain. While changes to variables affecting inputs and outputs are continuous, stakeholders must develop and maintained a disciplined manpower management process and proactively account for new variables. Additionally, MARSOC should capitalize on the working group to evaluate current force structure and determine the appropriate location to allocate the existing MOS 8870, Special Operations Strategic Planner capacity identified in

Appendix A (Naval Postgraduate School subsection) and Figure 1 while determining the feasibility of aligning MOS 0505 MAGTF Planner structure to MARSOC and TSOCs. Although adjusting tables of organization and force structure are a difficult administrative task, the opportune time may be forthcoming as discussions to increase the DoD's end strength gain traction. Currently, discussions include increasing the Marine Corps end strength to 194,000 to improve Cyber, Information Operations, and Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance capacity.<sup>26</sup> With the increased deployment tempo of SOF, it is not unlikely that SOCOM, and service SOF also increase as DoD end strength increases.

Through the phased and progressive implementation of the preceding recommendations, the Marine Corps can improve the education of SOOs and non-SOF officers with minimal impact to the total force. Through Marine Corps tailored SOF education, the Marine Corps can deliver MAGTF-SOF education to meet the needs of the Marine Corps' total force. The SOF-specific education will improve the education and performance of SOOs while also improving non-SOF officers, Marine Corps, and SOCOM integration as these topics are a mainstay to the Marine Corps Operating Concept.<sup>27</sup>

## **Appendix A: Resident Professional Military Education Options**

### **United States Marine Corps**

Marine Corps University provides ILE and JPME-I through the Marine Corps Command and Staff College (CSC) in Quantico, Virginia. The mission of CSC is to provide “graduate level education and training to develop critical thinkers, innovative problem solvers, and ethical leaders who will serve as commanders and staff officers in service, joint, interagency, and multinational organizations confronting complex and uncertain security environments.”<sup>28</sup> CSC provides no specific instruction on special operations; however, SOF planning is injected into planning exercises. Through planning exercises, students are exposed to roles and responsibilities of special operations as they pertain to the type of mission the planning exercises replicate. While this method is a great method to bridge the gap between SOF and other officers, the level of special operations integration varies. Additionally, and rightfully so, the primary focus is on Marine air ground task force (MAGTF) operations often times leading to broad brush SOF planning and implementation. CSC offers one elective focused solely on special operations; however, there are other electives that indirectly support special operations or a special operations core task.

CSC offers students the opportunity to earn a Master’s of Military Science (MMS) through the Marine Corps University. CSC does not offer any other degree through local universities. Although CSC is not directly identified to transfer graduate level college credits to specific universities like CSCDEP, administrators stated final credit validation varies based on the type of degree and the degree’s educational requirements.

### **United States Army**

The Army University provides ILE and JPME-I through the Command and General Staff College (CGSC) in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. According to the mission statement, CGSC “educates, trains and develops leaders for Unified Land Operations in a Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental, and Multinational operational environment; and advances the art and science of the profession of arms in support of Army operational requirements.”<sup>29</sup> CGSC facilitates two SOF-specific education methods: SOF Studies Program and the Global Interagency Studies track of the Master’s of Arts in Global and International Studies Program (ISP) at the University of Kansas’ (KU).

The SOF Studies Track offered through CGSC is for SOF, Psychological Operations, and Civil Affairs Officers; other officers and non-SOF officers with a follow-on SOF assignment can enroll in the SOF Studies Track with the approval.<sup>30</sup> The SOF Studies track consists of three major phases: SOF Preparatory Course, SOF Studies (Fundamental and Advanced), and SOF Electives.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, students participating in the SOF Studies track serve as dedicated special operations planners during CGSC planning exercises ensuring SOF students plan according to their disciplines while injecting special operations into the exercise to educate non-SOF students in special operations applications. This method completely integrates special operations into major ground combat operations, achieving SOF education while meeting the primary focus of the Service’s PME program.

The SOF Studies track SOF Preparatory Course is approximately 10-days long and begins three weeks prior to CGSC. This course educates students on SOCOM’s capabilities to enhance the knowledge of SOF applications across the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of war.<sup>32</sup> SOF Studies consist of SOF-specific classes that occur throughout the academic year specifically for the SOF peer group. Lessons include: case studies in special operations; theater

special-operations command strategies and operations; the role of military liaison elements, the CIA, and special-mission units; current operations and plans special operations units; SOF authorities and funding; SOF-general purpose forces interoperability; and student briefs on current and past special operations.<sup>33</sup> SOF Electives occur over a ten-week period. During the elective period, SOF students complete eight SOF-specific electives based on either a SOF core task or area of study; students are also afforded the opportunity to continue language training that began during the SOF Preparatory Course.

Since 2009, CGSC students had the opportunity to enroll in the KU's ISP. While this option was originally implemented by United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) and SOCOM for SOF attending CGSC, the program transitioned under KU's purview in 2013 and remains open to all CGSC students.<sup>34</sup> KU's ISP is a 33-credit hour program (27 credit hours in resident at KU and six credit hours for CGSC ILE).<sup>35</sup> CGSC students enrolled in ISP attend four courses after-hours at Fort Leavenworth and five resident courses at KU. In addition to the graduate degree, students enrolled in ISP gain further exposure to international interagency studies through in-resident university education that other students at CGSC do not get to experience. Students at CGSC can use tuition assistance through their respective services in addition to other methods of student aid.

### **United States Navy**

The Naval War College provides ILE and JPME-I through the College of Naval Command and Staff (CNCS) located in Newport, Rhode Island. CNCS provides instruction in three core subject areas - Strategy and Policy, Joint Maritime Operations, and National Security Decision Making- to develop a "career continuum of PME, including leadership development and professional ethics,... [that] are operationally and strategically minded, critical thinkers,

proficient in joint matters, and skilled naval and joint warfighters prepared to meet the operational level of war (OLW) and strategic challenges of today and tomorrow.”<sup>36</sup>

CNCS offers three elective semesters during an academic year. Students must enroll in one elective per semester from either a geographic or functional area of study. CNCS offers electives that specifically address special operations and there are other electives that indirectly support special operations or special operations core tasks such as proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), irregular warfare, counterterrorism, and information operations.<sup>37</sup> SOF planning and integration is also included into capstone planning exercises.

CNCS offers students the opportunity to earn a Masters of Arts in Defense and Strategic Studies through the Naval War College (NWC). Additionally, the NCSC curriculum transfers up to 30 credit hours to a civilian university;<sup>38</sup> administrators stated final credit validation varies based on the type of degree and the degree’s educational requirements.

### **United States Air Force**

The Air University provides ILE and JPME-I through the Air Command and Staff College (ACSC) at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. The mission of ACSC is to “develop bold airpower leaders who think, communicate and collaborate in the joint environment to strengthen national security” focused on enhancing students' abilities to think critically about operational air, space, and cyber concepts in a dynamic international environment.<sup>39</sup> ACSC provides no specific instruction on special operations; however, there is SOF planning injected into planning exercises. There is one elective that specifically focuses on joint special operations and there are electives that indirectly support special operations or a special operations core tasks.<sup>40</sup> ACSC offers students the opportunity to earn a Master of Military Operational Art and Science (MMOAS) through the Air University. Additionally, the ACSC curriculum transfers up

to 30 credit hours to a civilian university;<sup>41</sup> administrators stated final credit validation varies based on the type of degree and the degree's educational requirements.

### **Naval Postgraduate School**

Naval Postgraduate School (NPS), located in Monterey, California, offers ILE in the form of a 18-month program within the Defense Analysis Special Operations/ Irregular Warfare (SO/ IW) curriculum. The SO/IW curriculum provides education on the conflict spectrum below general conventional war through studying a range of factors involved in the planning and conduct of the role of special operations and related forces in U.S. foreign and defense policy.<sup>42</sup>

CPIB screens eligible SOOs and selects one per FY for assignment to NPS. NPS eligibility requirements consist of the PMOS 0370 or 0372, a baccalaureate degree with above average academic performance, and a minimum academic profile code (APC) of 265.<sup>43</sup> The degree is 45 quarter-hours of graduate-level work with a focus in at least two disciplines. Upon completion of the curriculum the students earn the Special Operations Subspecialist, Code 2500P, sponsored by the Commanding General, Special Operations Command. Marine Corps officers, captain to lieutenant colonel, fulfill the requirements for MOS 8870, Special Operations Strategic Planner. Marine officers that graduate the SO/ IW curriculum complete a four-year utilization tour; three of which are at MARSOC Headquarters in the G5. Sister-service SOF graduates are typically assigned to: 05 Command Positions; Group Assistant Operations Officer; Staff Officers in Plans or Operations at SOCOM; Action Officers, Counterterrorism Directorate, ASD (Special Operations/ Low-Intensity Conflict (SO/LIC); Staff Officer, Plans or Operations: TSOC level; Joint Staff Action Officer: J-3, Special Operations Directorate (J-3, DDSO).<sup>44</sup>

NPS fulfills service ILE requirements, however, completing the graduate degree does not earn JPME-I accreditation. Students desiring to earn JPME-I accreditation must enroll in the

NWC's Command and Staff program. NWC, working with NPS, developed a JPME-I program that combines the students NPS degree requirements with four courses from NWC's Command and Staff program.<sup>45</sup> Through NPS and NWC, students graduate with a master's degree, service ILE and JPME-I accreditation.

### **National Defense University**

The National Defense University (NDU), through the College of International Security Affairs (CISA), offers graduate level ILE and JPME-I through SWCS at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, through the SOCOM sponsored Joint Special Operations Master of Arts degree (JSOMA). JSOMA is a ten-month program focused on the contemporary international security environment emphasizing the proliferation of security actors, complex threats and dimensions, the unprecedented scope and speed of information, a full spectrum of conflict and war, and classical and new dynamic elements of security.<sup>46</sup>

Students seeking to apply for JSOMA must complete the application requirements and submit to the Directorate of Regional Studies and Education at SWCS. Eligibility requirements are active duty officers, major selects and majors, and E7-E9 with no more than 22 years of active service; prospective students must also have a bachelor degree from a regionally accredited institution.<sup>47</sup>

### **Joint Special Operations University**

Joint Special Operations University (JSOU), located at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida. Its mission is "to prepare SOF to shape the future strategic environment by providing specialized JPME, developing SOF-specific undergraduate and graduate level academic programs, and by fostering special operations research, analysis, and outreach in support of SOCOM objectives."<sup>48</sup>

JSOU serves as SOCOM's Academic Center of Excellence for Special Operations studies and research, and fulfills SOCOM's Title 10 responsibilities to prepare SOF to carry out assigned missions and increase combat readiness by conducting specialized courses of instruction not offered in other PME programs.<sup>49</sup> JSOU is the proponent of joint special operations education through the special operations community and is specifically chartered and organized to function as a College of Special Operations to provide accredited post-secondary education through graduate-level SOF-specific curricula.<sup>50</sup> JSOU provides a variety of continuing education and special operations studies courses that will be briefly discussed; however, due to the scope of this research only the graduate certificate program, Advanced Special Operations Studies (SOS), is examined in detail.

The SOS program encompasses four blocks in blended learning format (distance learning and residence) focusing on: Evolution of U.S. SOF (14 days DL/ 14 days resident), Strategic Utility of Special Operations (five days DL/ 11 days resident), International and Interagency Special Operations (five days DL/ 15 days resident), and Employment of Special Operations Course (five days DL/ 21 days resident). Not counting time required to complete the distance learning portion of the program, the student must go temporary additional duty (TAD), funded by the unit, four times (14 days, 11 days, 15 days, and 21 days) for a total of 61 days to complete the program. Enrollment is open to military members E7–E9 and officers O2–O5. Students may attend the courses for undergraduate or graduate credit; however, SOS candidates require admittance to the program prior to attendance. There is one online prerequisite course to complete prior to enrollment and once accepted into the SOS program, course execution can occur in any sequence.

JSOU continuing education consist of a variety of courses focused on learning to support operational employment and staff assignments. Courses range from one to three weeks of resident education in topics such as Special Operations Planning, Pre and Commanders Courses, and TSOC and Joint Force Staff Education. JSOU special operation studies courses consist of blended learning (DL and resident) and include topics such as counter weapons of mass destruction (WMD), counter-proliferation, covert action and SOF sensitive activities, international and interagency special operations, and war and special operations.

## **Appendix B: Non-resident Professional Military Education Options**

### **United States Marine Corps**

Marine Corps University, through the College of Distance Education and Training (CDET), provides two options for completing non-resident PME and JPME-I credit for ILE: Command and Staff Distance Education Program (CSCDEP) and Command and Staff Blended Seminar Program (CSCBSP). The mission of CSCDEP and CSCBSP is the same as CSC, additionally, “in conjunction with the application of Marine air-ground task force [(MAGTF)] doctrine and techniques for the changing conditions of warfare, this program provides the tools necessary to defeat a full spectrum of opponents.”<sup>51</sup>

Officers eligible for enrollment in CSCDEP include: captains selected to major, captains that have completed Expeditionary Warfare School (EWS) and have 36 months time-in-grade, and majors. CSCDEP offers four types of seminar schedules that provide flexibility to meet each officer’s individual needs. The weekday seminar option meets on-site one night per week for two to three hours with the requirement to complete additional online coursework throughout the week. The weekend seminar option meets on-site one weekend per month. Online seminar adheres to a weekly schedule, however, students work online in a collaborative environment rather than meeting in person. Weekday and weekend seminars hosted at: Camp Lejeune, North Carolina; Camp Pendleton and Miramar Air Station, California; Fort Worth, Texas; Marine Corps Base, Hawaii; Pensacola, Florida; Quantico, Virginia; and Camp Foster, Okinawa, Japan. The weekday, weekend, and online curriculums take two academic years to complete, however, students have up to three years to complete the course. Additionally, students have the flexibility by being able to transition between weekday, weekend, and online blocks of instruction as availability changes in order to remain enrolled in non-resident courses while completing duty

requirements. Non-resident enrollment is on a first come-first serve basis and does not require funding, therefore, there are no limits to the amount of officers who enroll so long as enrollment criteria is met and there is space available.

The blended seminar program, known as CSCBSP, is available for major selects and majors, and consists of a combination of resident and online distance learning. Students complete two resident blocks of instruction that precede and follow an online seminar block. The first block of resident instruction is four weeks long and conducted regionally at Quantico, Virginia, Camp Pendleton, California, and Okinawa, Japan. Upon completion of the first period of resident instruction, the student returns to the primary duty station and participates in an online collaborative learning environment for 28 weeks. Finally, the student returns to the regional location for the final six weeks of resident instruction and graduation. Students will either attend a local course or travel to regional location via temporary additional duty (TAD) funding from Training and Education Command (TECOM). MARSOC was allocated one seat for two different classes totaling two seats for both fiscal year (FY) 15-16<sup>52</sup> and FY 16-17<sup>53</sup> at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

Neither CSCDEP or CSCBSP provide instruction, elective education, or practical application exercises that focus on special operations related topics. CSCDEP and CSCBSP do not provide students with an opportunity to enroll in a graduate degree program; however, various civilian universities provide credit toward graduate level degrees. For example, American University grants six graduate level credits toward a Masters of International Service while New England College will grant a total of 14 graduate level credits toward a degree in either a Masters of International Relations or a Masters of Business Administration (MBA) in Strategic Leadership.<sup>54</sup> Students can choose a degree from a university that has pre-certified

CSCDEP for graduate level credits or they can submit transcripts to a university of choice and request an academic evaluation to identify how many credits they can receive. Administrators stated final credit validation varies based on the type of degree and the degree's educational requirements.

## **United States Army**

Through the Army University, The Army School System (TASS) provides Marines the opportunity to enroll in PME through the Command and General Staff College's (CGSC) Department of Distance Education (DDE). Although there are numerous options for Army officer to enroll in non-resident PME, there are limitations that would hinder Marines from participating in a course other than the distance learning (DL) option; therefore, only the DL option will be discussed. The DDE offers sister-service officers enrollment in the Command and General Staff School (CGSS) distance learning (DL) ILE program. The mission of CGSS is to "educate field grade officers to be agile, innovative, and adaptive leaders within increasingly complex and uncertain environments. Contemporary field grade officers are those who communicate effectively, think critically, and are able to build and lead organizations under mission command in Unified Land Operations."<sup>55</sup>

In order to enroll in CGSS DL ILE, Marines must meet the following eligibility requirements: captains that completed in-grade PME requirements and have a minimum of three years time-in-grade, captains selected to the rank of major, and majors that have not completed their seventh year time-in-grade.<sup>56</sup> Additionally, non-Army officers must complete CGSC Form 59-R (Command and General Staff Officer Course Enrollment Form) and receive a nomination letter endorsed by the parent command. DL ILE is online in a collaborative environment similar

to CSCDEP. CGSS meets the requirements for ILE PME and JPME-I. DL ILE requires completion within 18 months, however, 80% of students finish within 14 months.<sup>57</sup>

DL ILE provides no specific instruction, elective education, or practical application exercises that focus on special operations related topics. DL ILE does not provide students with an opportunity to enroll in a graduate degree program, however, various civilian universities provide credit toward graduate level degrees. For example, Park University grants up to 15 graduate level credits toward various graduate degrees while Norwich University offers up to 12 credits toward one of its graduate degrees.<sup>58</sup> Students have the same option to submit transcripts for graduate level credit toward various degrees at other universities as described above in the CSCDEP section. Administrators stated final credit validation varies based on the type of degree and the degree's educational requirements.

### **United States Navy**

The Naval War College, through the College of Distance Education (CDE), provides three options for completing non-resident College of Naval Command and Staff receiving PME and JPME-I credit for ILE: CD-ROM based, Web-enabled, and a Fleet Seminar program. College of Naval Command and Staff provides students studies in each of the Naval War College's three basic core subject that the senior students enrolled in the College of Naval Warfare receive (Strategy and Policy, Joint Maritime Operations, and National Security Decision Making); however, individual courses are tailored to the experience level and career needs of the College of Naval Command and Staffs mid-grade officers.<sup>59</sup>

Captains and major are eligible for enrollment in all of CDE's College of Naval Command and Staff programs. The CD-ROM based program is for students with intermittent internet access and completion normally occurs within 12 months or less, however, the

maximum time allowed to complete the program is 24 months. Enrollment in the CD-ROM based program does not require funding, therefore, there are no limits to the amount of officers who enroll so long as enrollment criteria is met. The Web-enabled program is normally completed in 18-24 months. Web-enabled program enrollment is on a first come-first serve basis and does not require funding; however, limited enrollment is available to sister-service officers based on available space.

The Fleet Seminar program consists of three core courses, meets onsite one night per week, and usually takes 18-24 months to complete. Although there are 19 different locations for the Fleet Seminar program, the only location near a MARSOC command is near San Diego, California. Fleet Seminar programs course size is 18 students for each course. Students seeking enrollment into the Fleet Seminar program must submit an application to Naval War College and compete in a competitive selection process. Furthermore, students must separately apply for admission and compete for acceptance to each of the three core courses.

The CDE's Fleet Seminar and Web-enabled Programs offer irregular warfare electives and geographic areas of study that support special operations learning objectives. Students participating in the Fleet Seminar Program are eligible to participate in the NWC's Masters of Arts in Defense and Strategic Studies degree program. Students participating in the graduate degree program can take courses at other institutions or conduct directed research projects to fulfill degree requirements as long as it meets NWC graduate degree requirements. Students have up to seven years to complete degree requirements; however, under certain circumstances a student may request a leave of absence in order to postpone the seven-year requirement. Additionally, within the non-resident Graduate Degree Program of CDE, students may transfer

up to nine credit hours from another institution upon approval by the Associate Dean of Academics for Electives and Directed Research.<sup>60</sup>

The Web-enabled and CD-ROM based programs do not provide students with an opportunity to enroll in a graduate degree program; however, various civilian universities provide credit toward graduate level degrees. For example, University of Maryland University College grants up to 18 graduate level credits toward a Master of Science in Management with a specialization in Naval Operations and National Security.<sup>61</sup> Students have the same option to submit transcripts for graduate level credit toward various degrees at other universities as described above in the CSCDEP section; administrators stated final credit validation varies based on the type of degree and the degree's educational requirements.

### **United States Air Force**

The Air University eSchool of Graduate PME offers Distance Learning (DL) 6.0 for completing non-resident Air Command and Staff College (ACSC) earning PME and JPME-I, and an Online Master's Program (OMP). ACSC develops bold airpower leaders who think, communicate and collaborate in the joint environment to strengthen national security focused on enhancing students' abilities to think critically about operational air, space, and cyber concepts in a dynamic international environment.<sup>62</sup>

ACSC DL 6.0 is conducted online, through peer-to-peer interaction and collaboration similar to CSCDEP with no requirement to attend an onsite location at any time. Average completion times vary, ranging from as soon as seven months, out to the maximum allotted time of five years. DL 6.0 is provided to major selects and majors on a first come-first serve basis and does not require funding; however, limited enrollment is available to sister-service officers based on available space. OMP provides students with ILE PME, JPME-I, and a Master's in Military

Operational Art and Science (MMOAS) with a concentration in Joint Warfare. Enrollment is open to major selects and majors, that have not completed both ILE and a master's degree; a student may have completed one or the other and still be eligible for enrollment. However, only a limited number of sister-service officers can enroll into each program. Students have the same option to submit transcripts for graduate level credit toward various degrees at other universities as described above in the CSCDEP section; however, the American Council on Education (ACE) recommends transfer of up to 21 graduate credit hours for completing ACSC.<sup>63</sup>

OMP also offers two additional variations of the MMOAS that are not available to sister-service officers. However, these variations provide background for options presented with the final findings of this study. Two MMOAS degrees, with concentrations in either Operational Warfare or Leadership, are eligible for captains that have completed in-grade PME, have six or more years of active federal commission service, and do not have a master's degree. Completion time for the degrees varies between 12-24 months; the MMOAS with a concentration in Operational Warfare is normally completed in 12 months if the student has completed the Weapons Instructor Course after 2009.<sup>64</sup>

### **Joint Special Operations University**

JSOU offers a variety of non-resident distance learning (DL) courses that focus on continuing education and special operations studies courses. While JSOU primarily supports SOF-specific education requirements, it also provides education to non-SOF officers, Department of Defense (DoD) civilians, and contractors. Many of the DL courses are also offered as resident courses. In addition to enduring DL courses, JSOU introduces pilot DL courses to meet emerging SOF requirements. As such, JSOU is currently testing pilot courses for Introduction to Irregular Warfare and Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF) (Level

1). Through JSOU DL courses, students can complete DL computer based training (CBT) to meet prerequisite course requirements or achieve educational goals prior to reporting to follow-on duty assignments. For example, JSOTF Level 1 is for personnel supporting or being assigned to JSOTF or TSOC headquarters.<sup>65</sup>

## **Appendix C: Survey Questionnaire**

Interview questions in support of Major Joseph Clemmey's Thesis

Marine Corps University, Command and Staff College

Quantico, Virginia

**Research question:** Is the Marine Corps, and consequently MARSOC, properly preparing field grade Special Operations Officers (SOO) for service in the Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental, Multinational (JIIM) environment through current service Intermediate Level Professional (ILE) Professional Military Education (PME) and non-JPME-1 accredited continuing education programs.

### **Interview Questionnaire Boundaries**

In order to support data collection for the above research question, it is necessary to conduct interviews with officers within senior SOOs. The information collected through these interviews and surveys will provide the framework for analysis of the research question. Feedback is important in order to assess education requirements and performance from multiple perspectives. The target population of the survey and interview is SOOs with 05, and or, 06 command.

### **Background**

Military services' are responsible for the professional development of its total force. Curricula within the military services' professional military education (PME) programs focus on training officers across a broad spectrum relevant to the respective service's doctrine while achieving joint PME Phase-I (JPME-I) accreditation. Except for the Naval Postgraduate School's Special Operations/ Irregular Warfare curriculum and non-JPME-1 accredited continuing education courses, the opportunity for graduate level SOF-specific education is scarce. Some argue that current service PME program models adequately prepare all officers for post-ILE assignment within the Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental, Multinational (JIIM) environment and that special operations forces (SOF) are no different than any other military occupational specialty (MOS) so they do not require specifically specialized ILE. Others argue that SOF require specific education that should be provided by SOCOM in accordance with Title 10 responsibilities to conduct specialized courses of instruction for commissioned officers. Regardless of opinions toward SOF ILE, this study will examine if current service schools are meeting requirements for SOF education, and if not, are there feasible alternatives or options that could improve the education of a SOO while achieving the same qualifications as the services' resident PME school. Furthermore, this study intends to identify the correct mix of professional development and operational education of a field grade officer competing PME. Although comparison will be conducted between Special Operations Officer, Special Forces Officers, and Navy SEAL Officers, this study does not intend to conduct a direct comparison between service

SOF due to the distinct difference in force sizes and the relative infancy of Marine Special Operations Command in comparison to sister service SOF.

Data was anonymously collected in an attempt to solicit honest and candid feedback. Respondents were provided the author's contact information in case they had further information to contribute or additional any questions or comments.

## **Survey Questions**

1. What Intermediate Level Education (ILE) program did you attend? (Resident / Non-resident; USMC, USA, USAF, USN, or NPS). Looking back, what do you think best prepared you to assume future billets within the SOF enterprise? Are there things you wish were taught to you that were not?
2. Do you think current service PME schools properly prepare SOF officers to serve in SOF-specific service / joint billets? If partially, can you provide recommendations on how to better prepare SOF officers.
3. Do you think current service PME schools properly prepare future special operations officers to serve on higher level staffs or as a member of the command deck and effectively employ special operations units?
4. In your opinion, what is the appropriate balance of SOO ILE education. Should SOOs receive generalized PME within service institutions, should they receive focused education to employ company and task force sized elements reinforced with enabler packages, or some balance in between? Please provide your thoughts on what SOO ILE should include.
5. Based on your experience, on average, approximately how long does it take for a SOF officer to become effective upon assuming a new SOF-specific billet (operational or staff)?
6. Do you think a graduate degree from a civilian or military university is a requirement for a SOF field grade officer?
7. Do you think there is a requirement for SOCOM provided intermediate/ graduate level PME?
8. Historically, officers within MARSOC or special operations billets fill a 1 of 1 billet and there is little "depth on the bench" for officers to go TAD for extended periods. For CY 17, JSOU is hosting a graduate certificate program titled "Advanced Special Operations Studies." The program encompasses four blocks in blended learning format (distance learning and residence). Not counting time required to complete the distance learning portion of the program, the student must go TAD, funded by the unit, four times (26 days, 26 days, 18 days, and 26 days) for a total of 96 days within a year. If funding was not an issue, do you think it is beneficial and worth the risk to your unit in order to send officer(s) to this program?
9. JSOU offers a range of courses that provide graduate level SOF-specific education and other courses designed to prepare SOF for SOF-specific billets such as TSOC and JSOTF Staff

Preparation Courses, SOF Resource Management Course, and Joint Special Operations Forces Pre-Command Course (<https://www.socom.mil/JSOU/Pages/Courses.aspx>). Do you feel these types of courses are mission essential, enhancing or critical? Please provide an assessment of JSOU provided education based on experiences you have attending a course or the performance of your subordinate(s) after completing a course. How much emphasis did you/ do place on sending your officers to JSOU provided education?

10. What do you think the career timing of ILE should be? Please answer the following questions using a scale of 1 through 5, with 1 being the best timing and 5 least favorable timing to attend PME.

Captain selected to Major

Prior to key billet

Prior to staff billet

After key billet or staff, prior to selection/ promotion to Lieutenant Colonel

Whenever CPIB slates the officer

## Appendix D: List of Illustrations

Figure 1. Current MARSOC Naval Postgraduate School Model

FY 14	FY 15	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20	FY 21
12 Months (CPIB)	12 Months (CPIB)	12 Months (CPIB)	12 Months (CPIB)	12 Months (CPIB)	12 Months (CPIB)	12 Months (CPIB)	12 Months (CPIB)
18 Months (NPS)	36 Months (Utilization Tour)						
	18 Months (NPS)						
		18 Months (NPS)					
			18 Months (NPS)	36 Months (Utilization Tour)			
				18 Months (NPS)			
					18 Months (NPS)		

Figure 2. Proposed MARSOC Naval Postgraduate School Model

FY 14	FY 15	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22
12 Months (CPIB)	12 Months (CPIB)	12 Months (CPIB)	12 Months (CPIB)	12 Months (CPIB)	12 Months (CPIB)	12 Months (CPIB)	12 Months (CPIB)	12 Months (CPIB)
18 Months (NPS)	36 Months (Utilization Tour)							
	18 Months (NPS)	36 Months (Utilization Tour)						
		18 Months (NPS)	36 Months (Utilization Tour)					
			18 Months (NPS)	36 Months (Utilization Tour)				
				18 Months (NPS)	36 Months (Utilization Tour)			
					18 Months (NPS)	36 Months (Utilization Tour)		

## Appendix E: List of Tables

Table 1. Resident Professional Military Education Institutions

	<b>U.S. Marine Corps Command Staff College</b>	<b>U.S. Army Command and General Staff College</b>	<b>U.S. Navy College of Command and Staff</b>	<b>U.S. Air Force Air Command and Staff College</b>	<b>Naval Postgraduate School</b>	<b>National Defense University College of International Security Affairs</b>
<b>Location</b>	Quantico, Virginia	Fort Leavenworth, Kansas	Newport, Rhode Island	Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama	Monterey, California	Fort Bragg, North Carolina
<b>Course Length</b>	10 months	10 months	10 months	10 months	18 months	10 months
<b>JPME-I</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Optional. JPME-I can be earned through U.S. Navy War College concurrently with NPS degree requirements	Yes
<b>Master's Degree</b>	Optional. Masters of Military Science	Optional. Masters of Military Art and Science	Optional. Masters of Arts in Defense and Strategic Studies	Optional. Masters of Military Operational Art and Science	Yes. Masters of Science in Defense Analysis, Special Operations/ Irregular Warfare	Yes. Joint Special Operations Master of Arts Program.
<b>SOF Curriculum</b>	No	Yes. Approximately 20 SOF Officers are allotted to enroll.	No	No	Yes. Special Operations/ Irregular Warfare	Yes. 40 SOF and Interagency Personnel (NCOs, Officers, Civilians)

Table 2. Non-resident Professional Military Education Institutions

	<b>U.S. Marine Corps Command Staff College</b>	<b>U.S. Army Command and General Staff College</b>	<b>U.S. Navy College of Command and Staff</b>	<b>U.S. Air Force Air Command and Staff College</b>
<b>Location</b>	Distance Learning and Satellite Campuses	Distance Learning and Satellite Campuses	Distance Learning and Satellite Campuses	Distance Learning
<b>Course Length</b>	Two academic years	10-14 months	18-24 months (CD-ROM version is self-paced)	7-14 months
<b>JMPE-I</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Master's Degree</b>	No. Possibility of transferring credits to civilian university.	No. Possibility of transferring credits to civilian university.	Optional, Master's in National Security and Strategic Studies. Possibility of transferring credits to civilian university.	Optional, Master's in Military Operational Art and Science. Possibility of transferring credits to civilian university.
<b>SOF Curriculum</b>	No	No	No	No

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