

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. **PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.**

1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY)		2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED (From - To)		
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE			5a. CONTRACT NUMBER		
			5b. GRANT NUMBER		
			5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER		
6. AUTHOR(S)			5d. PROJECT NUMBER		
			5e. TASK NUMBER		
			5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER		
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER		
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)			10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)		
			11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)		
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT	b. ABSTRACT	c. THIS PAGE			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code)

United States Marine Corps
Command and Staff College
Marine Corps University
2076 South Street
Marine Corps Combat Development Command
Quantico, Virginia 22134-5068

MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

**HIGHER EXPECTATIONS:
EVOLVING STAFF NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER EDUCATION**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

DANIEL E. MANGRUM

AY 2017-18

Mentor and Oral Defense Committee Member: Dr. Bradford A. Wilsman

Approved: 

Date: 16 April 2018

Oral Defense Committee Member: Dr. Nathan M. Packard

Approved: 

Date: 17 April 2018

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DISCLAIMER	ii
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
INTRODUCTION	1
HISTORY OF ENLISTED EDUCATION	1
CURRENT LEGISLATION	3
CURRENT ENVIRONMENT	5
WHY IS MORE BETTER?	7
CURRENT COURSES	9
ELEMENTS COMMON TO ALL COURSES	10
SISTER SERVICE EXAMPLES	14
TEN-MONTH MODEL	15
26-WEEK BLENDED MODEL	16
TEN-WEEK MODEL	17
ANALYSIS	19
CONCLUSION	20
END NOTES	22
BIBLIOGRAPHY	24
OFF-DUTY EDUCATION OF ELIGIBLE STAFF SERGEANTS	APPENDIX A
SNCO COURSE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	APPENDIX B
SNCO CURRENT AND PROPOSED COURSE SCHEDULE	APPENDIX C

DISCLAIMER

THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

QUOTATION FROM, ABSTRACTION FROM, OR REPRODUCTION OF ALL OR ANY PART OF THIS DOCUMENT IS PERMITTED PROVIDED PROPER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT IS MADE.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: Higher Expectations: Evolving Staff Non-Commissioned Officer Education

Author: Sergeant Major Daniel E. Mangrum, United States Marine Corps

Thesis: The purpose of this paper is to discuss why SNCOs should receive more education, review the current courses being taught to SNCOs, and offer three models in which the Marine Corps can evolve in increasing the education of SNCOs.

Discussion: The Marine Corps has made a determined effort to educate its SNCOs in formal PME schools since the 1970s. It has evolved from a single course at Quantico, Virginia, to several courses at locations including California, Hawaii, North Carolina, and Japan. While the courses and instruction have improved over the years, the current and future operating environment demand that the Marine Corps consider evolving its education of its SNCOs. Taking a look at examples of what sister services teach to their SNCOs, this paper offers three models that the Marine Corps can adapt its PME courses to meet the current and future operating needs. The first model increases the current courses to ten months each. The second model is a 26-week blended resident/non-resident course. The third and preferred model is a ten-week course.

Conclusion: Although all three models will require the Marine Corps to increase spending in the education of its Marines, investing in the education of SNCOs will ensure that the Marine Corps remains at the forefront of military superiority in the world.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As a lifelong learner, I have always had a passion for education as I have served in the Marine Corps. This passion grew as I educated Marines while assigned as an instructor at Marine Security Guard School. While writing this paper, my passion grew. It grew not just from the research that I conducted, but from the people that I interacted with along the way and I would like to acknowledge their contribution to this paper. First and foremost, Dr. Bradford Wineman for his consistent challenging of me to answer the tough questions. There were many times I felt that this was a lost cause, but his perspective helped to push me through. Next is Mr. James Cohn, Dean of Academics for Enlisted PME for his accurate and timely information of what is currently taught to SNCOs. Finally, and most importantly, Rick Hawkins and Kelly Scanlon. I first met these two stellar Marines in 2009 when I attended the First Sergeant's Course. While we have not regularly kept in touch over the years, I have learned much of what I know about being a SNCO leader from them. I am eternally grateful for both the professional relationship as well as the friendship they both show to me.

“The society that separates its scholars from its warriors will have its thinking done by cowards and its fighting done by fools.” - Thucydides

Introduction

The education of all Marines has been a priority of the Marine Corps since General John A. Lejeune was Commandant of the Marine Corps. Despite this focus on developing all Marines through education, Staff Non-Commissioned Officers (SNCOs), still do not receive an adequate amount of education. With the current enlisted education system in place, by the time a Marine has reached the paygrade of E-8, the Marine Corps will have invested approximately 22 weeks of professional military education to this Marine. Comparing this to the officer side, by the time a Marine has reached the paygrade of O-5, the Marine Corps will have invested approximately 30 months of professional military education to this Marine. The purpose of this paper is to discuss why SNCOs should receive more education, review the current courses being taught to SNCOs, and offer three models in which the Marine Corps can evolve in increasing the education of SNCOs. In order for the Marine Corps to face the complexity of the current and future warfighting environment, it is critical that the education of its enlisted Marines continues to evolve and increase towards the education level of its officers.

History of Enlisted Education

The education of enlisted Marines dates back to the creation of the Marine Corps Institute on February 2, 1920 at the Marine Barracks in Quantico, Virginia.¹ The Marine Corps Institute was designed “for the purpose of offering free of charge to all members of the U. S. Marine Corps an educational system embracing both academic and vocational subjects, that was adaptable to all conditions of the Marine service and would not be an excessive or wasteful drain on the public treasury.”² Commandant of the Marine Corps, Major General John A. Lejeune and

Brigadier General Smedley Butler were among several Marine officers associated with the founding of the institute.³ The Marine Corps Institute provided vocational type diplomas to all Marines, both enlisted and officer, and continued until its absorption into Marine Net on 30 September 2015, in accordance with MARADMIN 209/15.

The Marine Corps Institute was the sole provider of institutional education to SNCOs until the early 1970s there was recognized a “need for an advanced general school for enlisted Marines.”⁴ The discussion for creating a school for SNCOs was prefaced around the education that officers received. In describing Quantico’s Staff NCO Academy in a 1980 article for *Leatherneck Magazine*, Herb Richardson argued “the officers had a progression of career schools – war college and advanced schools – but the formal education process, except for technical training and local NCO Leadership Schools, began and ended in boot camp for enlisted Marines.”⁵

Senior Marine Corps leadership recognized this issue and the 24th Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Leonard F. Chapman Jr. directed Officer Candidate School to create what would become the SNCO Academy.⁶ The SNCO Academy was to begin teaching classes in September 1971 at four field locations in addition to Quantico with “the possibility that the Quantico facilities be used as a high-level (E-7 and E-8) college.”⁷

The SNCO Academy was founded on 15 December 1970 with its first director, Lieutenant Colonel George Waters stating:

For years we have, through their leadership and professional knowledge, relied upon the SNCO to be the backbone of the Marine Corps, but we have failed to provide him with a proper education to meet the varied and demanding tasks. It is the purpose of this school, to graduate the Marines who have the education, military knowledge, and leadership skills required of Staff and Gunnery Sergeants regardless of assignment.⁸

After approval of the curriculum and organization, the Marine Corps announced that the first class of the SNCO Academy would begin on 16 February 1971. Initial quotas for the six-week class was limited to 50 seats with nominations selected via a “special selection board which convened at HQMC.”⁹ The goal was to fill the classes with “high caliber noncommissioned officers of demonstrated potential for increased responsibility and advancement. Successful completion of a SNCOA course will henceforth serve as prima facie evidence of individual merit.”¹⁰

Since then, the SNCO Academy has grown to include locations at Quantico, Virginia; Camp Geiger, North Carolina; Camp Pendleton, California; and Camp Butler, Okinawa teaching the Sergeant’s Course, the Career Course, the Advanced Course and the E-8 Seminar. There are also satellite academies located at MCAS Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii and MCAGCC Twentynine Palms, California that only offer the Sergeant’s Course. Additionally, the Marine Corps University in Quantico, Virginia teaches the Senior Enlisted PME (known as the Senior Enlisted Academy) to Master Sergeants and First Sergeants as well as the Commander’s Course to newly promoted Sergeants Major.¹¹

Current Legislation

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is responsible to the Secretary of Defense for certain aspects of military education in Title 10 of the US Code. Some of these responsibilities include: 1) “Formulating policies for coordinating the military education of members of the armed forces” and 2) Advising and assisting the Secretary of Defense to “promulgate a uniform cost accounting system for use by the Secretaries of the military departments in preparing budget

requests for the operation of professional military education schools.”¹² The first bullet directs the Chairman to publish Enlisted Professional Military Education (EPME) Policy (CJCSI 1805.01B of 15 May 2015).

The policy outlines “objectives, enlisted desired leader attributes (EDLAs), and responsibilities of the education that comprise EPME and EJPME programs.”¹³ In alignment with Joint Force 2020 and as a result of years of lessons learned fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, the EDLAs for the Joint Force are as follows:

- 1) The ability to operate on commander’s intent and enable mission command at all levels.
- 2) The ability to make sound and ethical decisions based on the values and standards of the profession of arms.
- 3) The ability to utilize available resources to enhance the discipline, readiness, resiliency, and health of the total force.
- 4) The ability to anticipate, communicate, and mitigate risks.
- 5) The ability to operate in joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational environments.
- 6) The ability to think critically and develop agile and adaptive leaders.¹⁴

The intent of this policy is to outline requirements of the services in the education of their enlisted personnel. Enclosure A of the policy states “As enlisted personnel grow in experience and assume greater responsibilities, individual training is enhanced with professional education (how to think) opportunities.”¹⁵ Again, focusing on the SNCO ranks, the policy outlines the EPME continuum. The intermediate education level is designed for the grades E-6 to E-7 with an emphasis on the tactical level of war. The main focus is “advanced leadership and management skills, advanced tactical warfighting skills, introduce the operational level of war, and unit/organizational leadership.”¹⁶ The senior education level is designed for the grades E-8 to E-9

with an emphasis on the operational level of war. The main focus here is “advanced leadership and management skills in a joint environment, expand the operational level of warfighting, introduction to interagency and multinational operations, and organizational and command senior enlisted leadership.”¹⁷ The executive level is designed for the grade of E-9 with an emphasis on the strategic level of war. The main focus at this level of education is “advanced leadership and management skills in a joint environment, introduction to strategic theater level of warfighting, expand interagency and multinational operations, and command senior enlisted leadership.”¹⁸

Current Environment

In 2006, a study group consisting of four retired Marine generals and two “distinguished military scholars and authors” published the US Marine Corps Officer Professional Military Education 2006 Study and Findings, also known as the Wilhelm Study named after the chairman of the study, General Charles E. Wilhelm, USMC (Ret).¹⁹ The study mentions the “changing environment” in which “the United States and its Marines Corps [must] confront an environment of accelerating political, economic, technological, social and military change.”²⁰ As this changing environment relates to Professional Military Education, the study states “Professional Military Education represents the most important investment the Marine Corps can make in addressing the challenges of the young century.”²¹

This statement, while focusing on the education of Marine officers, holds the same weight with SNCOs as well. Conclusions of this study found that while fiscal constraints limit budget availability to Professional Military Education, “the Marine Corps has traditionally believed that people and qualities such as honor, courage, commitment, and intellect are more important than the material accouterments of war.”²² As such, Marine Corps University “must

make *major* investments in the human and capital resources dedicated to Professional Military Education” if it is “to reach the status of “world-class” education institution – as first envisioned by the 29th Commandant.”²³ Again, while this study focused solely on Officer Professional Military Education, Enlisted Professional Military Education is part of Marine Corps University as well and should also receive “world-class” education.

More recently, the Marine Corps Operating Concept (MOC) published in September 2016 outlined the education of the individual Marine as a critical task in “how an expeditionary force operates in the 21st century.”²⁴ Critical Task 6.5 calls for the Marine Corps to “exploit the competence of the individual Marine” with “dedicated professional military education.”²⁵ This task is accomplished through sub-tasks 6.5.3 – Developing Marines for Complexity and 6.5.4 – Developing Leaders at Every Echelon.²⁶

In sub-task 6.5.3, Developing Marines for Complexity, individual Marines must display “cognitive capabilities, especially critical thinking-based approaches such as negotiating skills and problem-solving methods.”²⁷ In order to develop Marines for complexity, the MOC requires us to: “Review our education and training curricula to ensure we are developing Marines with the agility and perspectives to manage uncertainty, think critically, and solve complex problems. Expand collective training opportunities at all levels, incorporate greater complexity in training constructs and leverage Combined/Joint opportunities to increase warfighting effectiveness.”²⁸ An example of this occurs during nearly all of the most recent Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) deployments. During a deployment with the 24th MEU in 2012, Battalion Landing Team 1/2 deployed several small groups of Marines to remote areas in East Africa, each led by a SNCO.

In sub-task 6.5.4, Developing Leaders at Every Echelon, “all leaders – from junior NCOs to senior officers – will need critical thinking skills to continually assess and navigate complex engagements characterized by blurred boundaries between military and civilian concerns, differing objectives between allies and partners, and the frustrating effects of adaptive adversaries.”²⁹ To accomplish this, the MOC stresses that we “train and educate Marines in decision-making skills to help them avoid information overload in a rich situation awareness environment or compensate for the lack of information when C2 and ISR systems are degraded or denied.”³⁰ An example of this occurred frequently during deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan where SNCOs were the most senior Marine present at patrol bases throughout each country.

From the Wilhelm Study in 2006 to the Marine Corps Operating Concept in 2016, “modern requirements of enlisted leadership have outgrown the minimum education requirements historically in place for the SNCO.”³¹ And more recently with Commandant of the Marine Corps General Neller’s testimony before the House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee: “demanding and challenging Professional Military Education (PME) is the best hedge against uncertainty and its purpose is to prepare for the unknown.”³² Not only does the current environment require more educated SNCOs, today’s SNCOs are much more capable to absorb more education and are eager to receive more education than ever before.

Why is More Better?

The first question that comes to mind when discussing the education of SNCOs and the current process of educating them is “what is broken about the current system?” When MARADMIN 521/14 announced that attendance at the SNCO Academy was mandatory for promotion to Gunnery Sergeant and Master Sergeant/First Sergeant, the challenge that the SNCO

Academy faced was ensuring that every Marine had the opportunity to attend their required course. The length of the course was condensed and more courses were offered, increasing throughput. The problem here is by condensing the courses, the SNCO Academy sacrificed its ability to educate SNCOs effectively. It gave the perception of desiring quantity over quality.

On many occasions SNCOs look at completing their required PME as a “check in the box” and do not entirely embrace the learning that is provided at the SNCO Academy enough to adequately apply it to themselves or their unit upon their return. Gunnery Sergeant Jay Barnard, a former instructor at the SNCO Academy, makes a similar argument lamenting that “prospective students see the academy as nothing more than a barrier between them and an increase in pay and responsibility.”³³ By increasing the length of time that SNCOs spend at the SNCO Academy will give them more time to more proficiently absorb the education they are receiving. This will lead to a more confident SNCO that will not only aggressively employ this new education to his/her performance, but also increase the aptitude of the unit as well.

If giving SNCOs more education is the answer to aggressively defeating the adversaries of the current and future environment, how does the Marine Corps know SNCOs are capable of assuming the responsibilities of overcoming these challenges? Taking a look at the SNCO selection board debriefs compiled on the HQMC Manpower website, it is easy to see that SNCOs have a much greater intellectual capability than ever before. Appendix A is a graph that contains Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 through 2017 of eligible Staff Sergeants competing for promotion to Gunnery Sergeant using the MOSs with a large number of promotion allocations.

What this graph shows is that although there no Marines from the Admin Chief, Intelligence Chief, or Infantry Unit Leader MOSs with off-duty education (associates degree or above) in FY 2015, this quickly rose to 24% for Admin Chief, 28% for Intelligence Chief and

7% for Infantry Unit Leader. And while the Infantry Unit Leader MOS saw a decline in off-duty education from FY 2016 to FY2017, three out of the four MOSs showed an increase. Moreover, taking the average percentage of Marines with off-duty education between these four MOSs over the three fiscal years, this percentage rose from 8.5% in FY 2015 to 17.3% in FY2017.

On the other end of the rank spectrum of SNCOs is the population of Master Sergeants and First Sergeants competing for promotion to Master Gunnery Sergeant and Sergeant Major respectively. Additional data pulled from the HQMC Manpower website shows that across all MOSs, the percentage of Marines with off-duty education rose from 37% in FY 2016 to 39% in FY 2017. What the data shows is that today's SNCO is smarter and much more capable of absorbing a greater amount of education needed in order for the Marine Corps to confront the challenges it will face in the very near future.

Current Courses

Prior to making recommendations to increase what is being taught to SNCOs, it is important to first review what is currently being taught to SNCOs with the focus on the two main resident courses taught at the SNCO Academies and the Senior Enlisted Academy. The first course is the resident Career Course.

The Career Course is taught to Staff Sergeants and Staff Sergeant selects at each of the five main SNCO Academies. According to the Marine Corps University website, the goal of the Career Course is to prepare Staff Sergeants to:

- 1) Serve as *ethical leaders*, educated in the obstacles that affect Marine cohesion and compliance with organizational values and ethics, who recognize the responsibility of their grade to mentor junior enlisted as well as junior officers.
- 2) Serve as *professional warfighters*, educated in the Marine Corps warfighting doctrine with an emphasis on preparing for war and the conduct of war, who are introduced to operational planning and possess knowledge on national military capabilities and the foundations of joint operations.

3) Serve as *sound decision makers*, educated in diverse decision-making processes used to formulate and solve open-ended problems in complex environments in support of the commander's intent and organizational values.³⁴

Additional information about the Career Course can be found in Appendix B.

The Advanced Course is taught to Gunnery Sergeants and Gunnery Sergeant selects at SNCO Academies located at Quantico, Lejeune, Pendleton, and Okinawa.³⁵ According to the Marine Corps University website, the goal of the Advanced Course is to prepare Gunnery Sergeants to:

- 1) Continue to learn, at a more progressive level, about the various aspects of ethical leadership, professional warfighting, and sound decision making.
- 2) Focus on the theories of Marine Corps command and control, the challenges of leadership development, and the fundamentals of expeditionary force at the tactical level.
- 3) Provide a better understanding of the translation of policy into action.³⁶

Additional information about the Advanced Course can be found in Appendix B.

Finally, the Senior Enlisted Academy is taught to Master Sergeants and First Sergeants at Quantico. According to MARADMIN 404/17, the goal of the Senior Enlisted Academy is to “conduct(s) an intense six-week curriculum...designed to enhance the critical thinking and adaptability skills necessary to function at the operational and strategic levels of war.”³⁷

Additional information about the Senior Enlisted Academy can be found in Appendix B.

Elements Common to All Courses

Prior to making recommendations to evolve SNCO PME, it is important to note that the content of what is currently being taught to SNCOs throughout the Marine Corps is relevant, the delivery is sound, and the instructors are of the finest SNCOs the Marine Corps has to offer. What the remainder of this paper seeks to accomplish is to offer methods to enhance the current courses in order to increase the effectiveness of SNCOs while meeting General Neller's demand

to “recognize the challenges of the future and develop an operational approach to fight and win.”³⁸ Laying the foundation of the three models that will be discussed later are subjects that are common throughout all three of the current SNCO resident courses. These should be the simplest to institute, as two subjects, to varying degrees, been part of the curriculum of SNCO courses in the past.

The first subject to reincorporate back into SNCO PME is the practical application of warfighting training. For the Career Course, this would mean field training at the tactical level, spending a week or so in the field conducting practical application of company level offensive and defensive operations utilizing the Marine Corps Planning Process (MCPPE). The Advanced Course would also mean field training, but at the operational level, spending a week in the field conducting practical application of combat operations center operations. Each academy could sync these two exercises by requiring the Advanced Course students to operate the combat operations center in which the Career Course students interact with during their exercise. The Senior Enlisted Academy would focus on MCPPE at the operational and strategic level. While the Senior Enlisted Academy conducts 46 hours in the MCPPE, spending two or three weeks immersed in the MCPPE, similar to the planning exercises that are conducted at Expeditionary Warfare School (EWS) or Command and Staff College (CSC), would ensure a greater understanding of the subject.

The practical application of warfighting will enable the SNCO Academies to give SNCOs “hands-on” experience that will meet the Joint Learning Areas (JLAs) outlined in the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction on EPME (CJCSI 1805.01B). These include “comprehend the role of and uses of Commander’s Guidance and Intent (Mission Command) to achieve mission accomplishment and comprehend the skills needed to lead a joint, interagency,

intergovernmental, or multi-national task force in accomplishing operational level missions across the range of military operation.”³⁹ Additionally, building on what the Commandant of the Marine Corps recently announced in ALMAR 046/17 (Announcement of the Battle Skills Test Program), “one of the foundational hallmarks of the Marine Corps is that any Marine of any occupational specialty can pick up a service weapon, cadre into a fighting unit, and employ that weapon in a tactical situation on the battlefield,” sending SNCOs back to train in the field would enhance their skills and confidence to successfully lead Marines on the battlefield.⁴⁰ Every Marine a rifleman is not just a “bumper sticker”, but a lifestyle that the Marine Corps needs to continue to take serious. Marines, regardless of MOS, should be prepared to engage the enemy, no matter where they are located.

The second subject is an enhancement to the Communication Skills training that is currently being taught at SNCO PME. Today’s SNCOs are expected to be effective communicators, both written and orally. This scope goes way beyond drafting a point paper, standard naval letter format, and an occasional award recommendation. In a 2011 *Marine Corps Gazette* article, while arguing for mandatory college degrees for SNCOs, Captain Henry G. Billings, Jr. states “improved communications skills, both written and verbal allow SNCOs to play a more vital role in the development of doctrine, ensuring that enlisted knowledge and experience is utilized.”⁴¹ In addition to the JLAs in CJCSI 1805.01B, SNCOs must be able to effectively communicate via written and verbal counseling, orders writing and presentation, promotion recommendation and briefing, and countless other mediums as well.

For example, introducing an English I and/or Speech I to the Career Course, followed by an English II and or Speech II to the Advanced Course. With the length of the below proposed course models increasing to ten weeks and beyond, getting the American Council on Education

(ACE) accreditation should not be very difficult, although this would require the Marine Corps to hire civilian English/Speech professors at each of the academy locations.

The Senior Enlisted Academy could then add a Security Studies course on national and foreign policy study, similar to what is taught at CSC, but more of an introductory course rather than a full course. This course would fulfill the CJCSI 1805.01B learning area for National Strategic Overview. All of these additional courses of study not only give Marine SNCOs skills not normally taught at enlisted PME courses, but also give them additional college credits towards an associate's or bachelor's degree.

The third and final subject to have common to all courses is War Studies. An example of similar instruction is the War Studies curriculum currently being taught at CSC. Using history as a guide, the Career Course would focus their studies on the tactical level of several battles throughout history, while the Advanced Course would focus on the operational levels. The Senior Enlisted Course would be the culminating point in a SNCOs career progression by studying the strategic level of a significant campaigns throughout the world's history. Incorporating this type of instruction would not only keep Marine Corps history relevant throughout a Marine's career, but also enhance the critical thinking skills in the application of warfighting. Incorporating a War Studies type of curriculum into each of the courses would fulfill several JLAs in the CJCSI 1805.01B as well as sub tasks 6.5.3 and 6.5.4 of the Marine Corps Operating Concept.

Encompassing each of these three courses back into the curriculum may seem more training than education, but they are all subjects that are essential to developing SNCOs that meet the leader attributes outlined in the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff EPME Policy. These courses lay the foundation on which to build the three forthcoming models that will

enhance the development of SNCOs into more confident and assertive “problem solvers” and “decision makers” that the Marine Corps demands in its PME policy.⁴²

Sister Service Examples

Before discussing model recommendations to evolve SNCO PME, there are a couple of examples of what other services offer for SNCO PME. Firstly, the Navy and the Air Force each offer courses in the SNCO realm of education that are similar in length and application to what the Marine Corps currently delivers. Additionally, the Air Force has the Community College of the Air Force that offers undergraduate classes to all Airmen. Although each of these services’ courses are quality courses, the design and delivery of them is not essential to the scope of this paper. Instead, the focus is on two examples that the Marine Corps could potentially utilize as an example.

The first example is the Joint Special Operations Forces Senior Enlisted Academy (JSOFSEA). JSOFSEA is taught to Special Operations (SOF) operators and enablers in the grades of E-8 and E-9 from the SOF community of all services and includes international and civilians as well.⁴³ The academy is located at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida. Although this academy focuses solely on the special operations community, the course structure is the most important piece to understand and could be something the Marine Corps could seek to adopt. The course consists of four classes (60 students per class) each year that each consist of 26 weeks of strictly online learning, followed by a nine-week resident course, for a total of 35 weeks of training.⁴⁴ According to the Joint Special Operations University website, “JSOFSEA enhances the critical thinking of senior enlisted leaders (SEL) as they grow their knowledge base in the strategic and operational realm. Students gain valuable knowledge and experience to successfully lead in the joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational (JIIM) environment. This course

develops students for operational and strategic level positions across a broad range of joint and special operations assignments.”⁴⁵ What makes this course significant for the Marine Corps is its blend of online followed by resident learning. With this capability, the Marine Corps could easily increase the amount of deliverable education in each of its courses.

The next example of sister service SNCO PME is the US Army Sergeants Major Course (SMC). The SMC is open to all service members in the grades of E-8 and E-9 as well as international service members.⁴⁶ The course consists of one class of approximately 250 students per year and consists of ten months of training and is located at Fort Bliss, Texas. According to the US Army Sergeants Major Academy website, the SMC “educates senior enlisted leaders from our Army, sister services, and allied militaries to be agile and adaptive senior noncommissioned officers through the study of leadership, the conduct of Unified Land Operations, and the application of Joint, Interagency, and Multi-National organizations in an era of persistent conflict.”⁴⁷ Additionally, the course prepares students to “elevate from a tactical level of thinking to an operational and strategic perspective thus preparing them for leadership positions in organizations executing unified land operations.”⁴⁸ What makes this course significant for the Marine Corps is that it is an enlisted course that is similar in length to what the Marine Corps teaches to its officers.

Ten-Month Model

The first of the three models that this paper proposes is the ten-month model. Structured much like the three main officer courses offered by Marine Corps University as well as the SMC mentioned above, this model is by far the most difficult to implement. This gives the Marine Corps the ability to fully immerse the individual SNCO in the learning environment, away from

the distractions of the everyday life of being a Marine leader and completely concentrate on making themselves a better leader.

In order to accomplish this, the Marine Corps would need to move all SNCO courses to Quantico. Additionally, similar to the selection process for officer PME, attendees would be selected through a formal board at HQMC to attend resident PME. This would fulfill former Commandant of the Marine Corps General Chapman's requirement that attendees of the SNCO Academy be "high caliber noncommissioned officers of demonstrated potential for increased responsibility and advancement."⁴⁹ Those not selected would attend non-resident PME at each of the remaining SNCO Academy locations. Since the residence course is ten months long, the non-resident course will likely last twelve to eighteen months.

26-Week Blended Model

The next model is the 26-week blended model. Similar to the Joint Special Operations Forces Senior Enlisted Academy (JSOFSEA), this model would consist of sixteen weeks of strictly online learning followed by a ten-week resident course. This would give flexibility between what subjects are taught in the classroom and what subjects are taught online. Subjects such as the previously recommended English I for the Career Course and English II for the Advanced Course could be in the strictly online learning portion of the course, while subjects such as the recommended field training for the Career and Advanced course as well as the Marine Corps Planning Process for the Senior Enlisted Academy, would not offer the same type of flexibility. This would give the SNCO Academies more time to take a more thorough examination into such areas as MAGTF operations ashore/afloat at the Career Course (aligning with EWS), Joint Warfare at the Advanced Course (aligning with CSC), and Policy and Strategy (aligning with MCWAR).

Marine Corps University already possesses the technology capable of running online courses, but a significant challenge in implementing this type of model would be the staff to run the online portion for each of the academies. With sixteen weeks preceding each ten-week resident course, there will be some overlapping of courses, potentially leading to confusion. Each academy would likely either include this on top of existing instructor duties or add additional instructor staff to facilitate the online learning portion of the course.

A non-resident course similar to Model 1 would be needed in order to ensure 100 percent attendance by all Marines. This course would also meet once per week for a one to three-hour session over the course of approximately 20 weeks. This would leave the non-resident course with the ability to run only two courses per year at each of the SNCO Academies.

Ten-Week Model

The recommended of the three models is the ten-week model. The average length of the current courses is between four and five weeks. By doubling the length of each course to ten weeks, it ensures that all three of the above-mentioned courses of study are implemented into each course without reducing the current course load and allows for more absorption of the material through time spent in critical thought.

A significant challenge the Marine Corps would face with lengthening the courses is the same challenge that it faces with getting all of its enlisted Marines to attend their PME. It is difficult enough for commands to give up their SNCOs for four weeks, but to increase the school to ten weeks would put units in an even greater quandary. A potential solution for this is to model the SNCO PME process in similar fashion to the officer PME process. In order to complete their individual PME, a Marine officer must complete either the resident or non-resident course. The Marine Corps could require SNCOs to do the same. The requirement for

SNCOs to complete resident PME for promotion (Currently on the Career and Advanced Courses) to the next grade is a topic that has been rigorously discussed at the highest levels of Marine Corps leadership over the past several years. While the scope of this paper does not allow for a further discussion into the resident requirement for promotion, if the Marine Corps were to relieve this requirement, any one of the three proposed models in this paper could be implemented more seamlessly.

For example, a Staff Sergeant in a low-density, high demand MOS is unable to go to the resident Career Course to attend his/her PME. Instead, he/she would attend a local Career Course non-resident course over an extended period of time. Similar to the officer PME non-resident course, the SNCO would complete work online during his/her off time and meet once per week for a one-hour to three-hour seminar. The course could be in the range of twelve to thirteen weeks long in order to meet all the requirements and still run four classes per year. The Career Course seminar is currently being administered through the SNCO Academies, but there is not currently a similar one for the Advanced Course or the Senior Enlisted Academy. The selection of which Marines attend resident and which Marines attend non-resident would be determined at the Major Subordinate Command (MSC) level, as is the current process for Marines attending the Senior Enlisted Academy.

Finally, there is the issue of having enough classes to educate the amount of SNCOs per year needed to ensure 100 percent PME completion. Even with increasing the length of classes to ten weeks, the four largest SNCO Academies (Okinawa, Lejeune, Pendleton, and Quantico) should have no problems offering four classes per year at their current capacities. This is no change for the Career Course or Advanced Course at these locations, but the Senior Enlisted Academy would be reduced by one class. This includes two week breaks between all classes and

a four week break between classes in the summer. Additionally, it is recommended that the Senior Enlisted Academy stand up another location at Pendleton in order to double the efforts of training Master Sergeants and First Sergeants. Appendix C shows a comparison between the current SNCO output at each of the academies and what the ten-week model would produce without changes to the existing capacities.

Analysis

First and foremost, none of the three models proposed above is an attempt to make enlisted Marines more like their officer counterparts. Although the ten-week model is the preferred model, each of the three models is meant to compliment what is taught to officers at each of their three main schools. Throughout the history of the world, there has been a distinct difference between officers and enlisted in terms of education and responsibility. The 21st century battlefield, with distributed operations and combat outposts far from their higher headquarters, has encroached on the responsibility differences between enlisted and officers. To again quote Thucydides, “The society that separates its scholars from its warriors will have its thinking done by cowards and its fighting done by fools.” While there will undoubtedly still be a significant difference in many of the responsibilities that officers have, increasing the education of enlisted Marines in order to meet their new challenges is key to the success of the Corps in the 21st century.

The Marine Corps will need to ensure that both resident and non-resident attendance of the courses hold equal weight when being evaluated for promotion. This can be accomplished by ensuring that the precepts for each promotion board include language highlighting equal satisfaction of completed PME for both resident and non-resident courses. This will ensure that

Marines attending the non-resident course are not viewed as “second class” citizens within the enlisted ranks.

The next point to bear in mind when considering making proposed changes to SNCO PME is manpower. All of the proposed models will undoubtedly require an increase of manpower in order to facilitate the increase in education. This could be as small as adding an English professor at each of the SNCO Academies or as large as standing up the ten-month courses at Quantico with a robust civilian faculty similar to EWS, CSC, or MCWAR. This will be a challenge for the Marine Corps to source and would force it to look to the civilian sector in order to supplement the education of SNCOs.

With an increase in manpower to present the education to SNCOs comes an increase to the cost of the education to SNCOs. All of the proposed models will undoubtedly require an increase of money in order to fund even the minute changes. With today’s shrinking budgets and increased spending in technologies and equipment, it may seem difficult to justify an increase in spending on the education of individual Marines. The Marine Corps should not shirk this responsibility. Leveraging the Wilhelm Study, “the Marine Corps has traditionally believed that people and qualities such as honor, courage, commitment, and intellect are more important than the material accouterments of war.”⁵⁰ Furthermore, “wars are won by enduring powers of human spirit and intelligence, as opposed to ephemeral technologies and the weapons systems of the day.”⁵¹ The Marine Corps’ most precious asset is the individual Marine, an asset that the Marine Corps should not shy away from investing in.

Conclusion

The current and future warfighting environment that the Marine Corps is involved in is complex and requires a new breed of intelligent and confident SNCOs that are capable of

critically thinking and leading their Marines into this environment. The three models offered in this paper represent a stepping stone in the discussion of the education that Marine SNCOs need and deserve in order to keep the Marine Corps as the most feared fighting force in the world's history. As the Wilhelm study pointed out in 2006, "Professional Military Education represents the most important investment the Marine Corps can make to meet the challenges that the 21st century will bring."⁵² An enlisted version of the Wilhelm study would represent a great start in evolving enlisted education to meet 21st century challenges. With the current fielding of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, the development of the Amphibious Combat Vehicle, and countless other initiatives that the Marine Corps is investing in, it is important to not forget about the investment in the individual Marine. All new equipment and technology is useless unless you have SNCOs with more education to lead the employment of it.

END NOTES

-
- ¹ Anonymous, “The Marine Corps Institute for 1922,” *Leatherneck* (pre-1998), January 6, 1923, 6, 1; Military Database pg. 1.
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ Herb Richardson, “Quantico’s Staff NCO Academy,” *Leatherneck* (pre-1998), Jun 1980, 63, 6; Military Database pg. 40.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ *Staff Noncommissioned Officer Academy History*, Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, History Division, 2017, 1.
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ Anonymous, “Staff NCO Academies are Given Equal Academic Status,” *Marine Corps Gazette* (pre-1994), Jun 1977, 61, 6, Military Database pg. 8.
- ¹¹ *Staff Noncommissioned Officer Academy History*, Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, History Division, 2017, 2.
- ¹² 10 USC, Section 2162(a)
- ¹³ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Enlisted Professional Military Education Policy*. CJCSI 1805.01B, 15 May 2015, A-1.
- ¹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁵ Ibid, A-2 – A-3.
- ¹⁶ Ibid, A-A-A-1.
- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁹ US Marine Corps Officer Professional Military Education 2006 Study and Findings. *Report to the Commanding General, Marine Corps Combat Development Command* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University, 2006), i.
- ²⁰ Ibid, 1.
- ²¹ Ibid.
- ²² Ibid, 41.
- ²³ Ibid.
- ²⁴ Headquarters US Marine Corps. *The Marine Corps Operating Concept: How and Expeditionary Force Operates in the 21st Century*. (Washington, DC: Headquarters US Marine Corps, September 2016).
- ²⁵ Ibid, 24.
- ²⁶ Ibid, 25-26.
- ²⁷ Ibid, 25.
- ²⁸ Ibid.
- ²⁹ Ibid.
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ Henry G. Billings, Jr. “Low Expectations of Enlisted Leadership,” *Marine Corps Gazette*, April 2011, 57.

-
- ³² *The Commandant's Posture of the United States Marine Corps President's Budget 2017: Hearing before the House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee*, (March 1, 2016) (Statement of General Robert Neller, Commandant of the Marine Corps).
- ³³ Jay Barnard, "Educational Value," *Marine Corps Gazette*, March 2018, 46.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*
- ³⁸ Headquarters US Marine Corps, *The Marine Corps Operating Concept: How and Expeditionary Force Operates in the 21st Century*. (Washington, DC: Headquarters US Marine Corps, September 2016), i.
- ³⁹ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Enlisted Professional Military Education Policy*. CJCSI 1805.01B, 15 May 2015, E-B-2, E-C-3.
- ⁴⁰ Commandant of the Marine Corps, *Announcement of the Battle Skills Test Program*, ALMAR 046/17, December 21, 2017. <http://www.marines.mil/News/Messages/Messages-Display/Article/1402333/announcement-of-the-battle-skills-test-program/>.
- ⁴¹ Henry G. Billings, Jr. "Low Expectations of Enlisted Leadership," *Marine Corps Gazette*, April 2011, 58.
- ⁴² Commandant of the Marine Corps, *Professional Military Education*. MCO 1553.4B, January 25, 2008. <http://www.marines.mil/Portals/59/MCO%201553.4B.pdf>
- ⁴³ Joint Special Operations University, "Joint Special Operations Senior Enlisted Academy," *Joint Special Operations University*, accessed December 19, 2017, <https://www.socom.mil/JSOU>.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁶ US Army Sergeants Major Academy, "Sergeants Major Course," *US Army Sergeants Major Academy*, accessed December 19, 2017 <https://www.usasma.armylive.dodlive.mil/smc>.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁹ Anonymous, "Staff NCO Academies are Given Equal Academic Status," *Marine Corps Gazette* (pre-1994), Jun 1977, 61, 6, Military Database pg. 8.
- ⁵⁰ US Marine Corps Officer Professional Military Education 2006 Study and Findings, *Report to the Commanding General, Marine Corps Combat Development Command* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University, 2006), 41.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁵² *Ibid.*

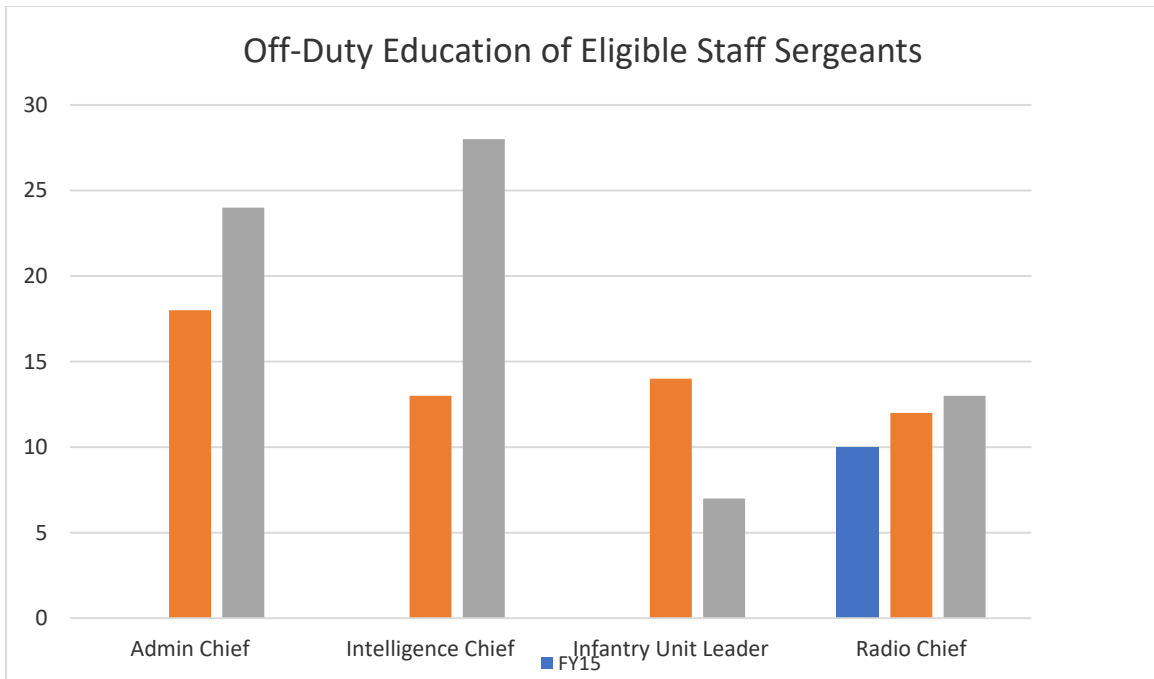
BIBLIOGRAPHY

-
- Anonymous. "The Marine Corps Institute for 1922." *Leatherneck* (pre-1998), January 6, 1923, 6, 1; Military Database.
- Anonymous. "Staff NCO Academies are Given Equal Academic Status." *Marine Corps Gazette* (pre-1994), Jun 1977, 61, 6, Military Database.
- Barnard, Jay. "Educational Value." *Marine Corps Gazette*, March 2018
- Billings, Jr. Henry G. "Low Expectations of Enlisted Leadership." *Marine Corps Gazette*, April 2011.
- Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Enlisted Professional Military Education Policy*. CJCSI 1805.01B, 15 May 2015.
- Commandant of the Marine Corps. *Announcement of the Battle Skills Test Program*, ALMAR 046/17, December 21, 2017. <http://www.marines.mil/News/Messages/Messages-Display/Article/1402333/announcement-of-the-battle-skills-test-program/>.
- Commandant of the Marine Corps. *Professional Military Education*. MCO 1553.4B, January 25, 2008. <http://www.marines.mil/Portals/59/MCO%201553.4B.pdf>
- Headquarters US Marine Corps. *The Marine Corps Operating Concept: How and Expeditionary Force Operates in the 21st Century*. Washington, DC: Headquarters US Marine Corps, September 2016.
- Joint Special Operations University. "Joint Special Operations Senior Enlisted Academy," *Joint Special Operations University*, accessed December 19, 2017. <https://www.socom.mil/JSOU>.
- Neller, Gen. Robert B. *The Commandant's Posture of the United States Marine Corps President's Budget 2017: Hearing before the House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee*, March 1, 2016.
- Richardson, Herb. "Quantico's Staff NCO Academy," *Leatherneck* (pre-1998), Jun 1980, 63, 6; Military Database.
- Staff Noncommissioned Officer Academy History*, Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, History Division, 2017.
- US Marine Corps Officer Professional Military Education 2006 Study and Findings, *Report to the Commanding General, Marine Corps Combat Development Command*. Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University, 2006.
- US Army Sergeants Major Academy, "Sergeants Major Course," *US Army Sergeants Major*

Academy, accessed December 19, 2017 <https://www.usasma.armylive.dodlive.mil/smc>.

10 USC, Section 2162(a)

Appendix A



Source: Marine Corps Manpower Website

Appendix B

SNCO Course Additional Information

Course	Training Days	POI Hours	Classes per FY	Total Students per FY
Career Course	33	270.25	16	1,600
Advanced Course	33	260.5	14	1,180
Senior Enlisted Academy	25	216.5	5	260

Source: Marine Corps University Website

Appendix C

SNCO Current and Proposed Course Schedule

Current Career Course							
	Course #	1-18	2-18	3-18	4-18	Seats Per Class	Total
Okinawa	Dates	10/3 – 11/22	1/3 – 2/22	2/26 – 4/13	7/9 – 8/24	75	300
Pendleton		10/3 – 11/22	2/7 – 3/28	4/2 – 5/18	5/23 – 7/12	120	480
Lejeune		10/3 – 11/22	1/3 – 2/22	2/26 – 4/13	7/9 – 8/24	120	480
Quantico		10/11 – 11/30	2/14 – 4/4	8/9 – 9/27		100	300
Hawaii		1/3 – 2/22				40	40
Total SSgts Per Fiscal Year 1600							

Source: Marine Corps University Website

Proposed Ten Week Career Course							
	Course #	1-18	2-18	3-18	4-18	Seats Per Class	Total
Okinawa	Dates	10/3 – 12/15	1/3 – 3/16	4/4 – 6/15	7/9 – 9/17	75	300
Pendleton		10/3 – 12/15	1/3 – 3/16	4/4 – 6/15	7/9 – 9/17	120	480
Lejeune		10/3 – 12/15	1/3 – 3/16	4/4 – 6/15	7/9 – 9/17	120	480
Quantico		10/11 – 12/22	2/14 – 4/27	5/16 – 7/27		100	300
Hawaii		1/3 – 3/16				40	40
Total SSgts Per Fiscal Year 1600							

Current Advanced Course							
	Course #	1-18	2-18	3-18	4-18	Seats Per Class	Total
Okinawa	Dates	10/3 – 11/22	3/15 – 5/2	6/12 – 7/27	8/9 – 9/27	40	160
Lejeune		10/3 – 11/22	3/15 – 5/2	6/12 – 7/27	8/1 – 9/19	120	480
Quantico		1/10 – 3/1	4/25 – 6/13	8/9 – 9/27		60	180
Pendleton		1/3 – 2/22	4/2 – 5/18	8/9 – 9/27		120	360
Total GySgts Per Fiscal Year 1180							

Source: Marine Corps University Website

Proposed Ten Week Advanced Course							
	Course #	1-18	2-18	3-18	4-18	Seats Per Class	Total
Okinawa	Dates	10/3 – 12/15	1/3 – 3/16	4/4 – 6/15	7/9 – 9/17	40	160
Lejeune		10/3 – 12/15	1/3 – 3/16	4/4 – 6/15	7/9 – 9/17	120	480
Quantico		1/10 – 3/23	4/4 – 6/15	7/9 – 9/17		60	180
Pendleton		1/3 – 3/16	4/4 – 6/15	7/9 – 9/17		120	360
Total GySgts Per Fiscal Year 1180							

Appendix C

Current Senior Enlisted Course								
	Course #	1-18	2-18	3-18	4-18	5-18	Seats Per Class	Total

Quantico	Dates	10/11 – 11/17	1/10 – 2/16	3/7 – 4/13	5/23 – 6/29	8/15 – 9/21	52	260
Total 1stSgt/MSgts Per Fiscal Year 260								

Source: MARADMIN 404/17

Proposed Ten Week Senior Enlisted Course							
	Course #	1-18	2-18	3-18	4-18	Seats Per Class	Total
Quantico	Dates	10/3 – 12/15	1/3 – 3/16	4/4 – 6/15	7/9 – 9/17	52	208
Pendleton*		10/3 – 12/15	1/3 – 3/16	4/4 – 6/15	7/9 – 9/17	52	208
Total 1stSgt/MSgts Per Fiscal Year 416							

*Proposed additional Senior Enlisted Course location