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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

CIVILIAN EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND THE ARMY WAR COLLEGE PROGRAM

An Individual Study Project
Intended for Publication

by

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Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013
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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Mr. Charles W. Cartwright, Jr.

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The USAWC is actively seeking the participation of civilian Federal executives as students. The non-defense agencies are reluctant to commit their dollars and the time of their senior leaders to a curriculum that may only minimally benefit the individual in future management and leadership of the agency. The experiences of one non-defense agency student show that a majority of civilian developmental needs can be met by the Army War College curriculum.



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Federal organizations have become complex, diverse and decentralized. To remain effective, they need a skilled corps of well-trained, broadly educated senior managers. To acquire and maintain this corps, agencies are constantly looking for opportunities to further educate their senior leaders. No longer can Federal executives succeed with narrow, specialized training and education. Decreasing budgets, increasing demands for services and challenging organizational environments call for skilled, well-developed executives to take on these difficult high level management positions.

The executive education program of the U.S. Army War College (AWC) can satisfactorily provide the specialized training and education. I am a civilian executive in the Department of Agriculture. This article documents my future needs and expectations and compares them with the experiences I have received at the War College. I will show that the AWC compares favorably with the curriculum and developmental opportunities offered by other federal executive training programs.

I am a GM-13, professional forester, with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service. My 17 years of federal service include a variety of challenging resource managing activities. As a young GS-7 Forester Trainee, I learned and applied silvicultural techniques to the nurturing of the Virginia and Florida pine forests and to the layout of harvesting systems for the giant

Oregon firs. Then I advanced to crewboss timbersale layout. As a journeyman forester, I designed complex timber harvesting systems for mountainous terrain. I learned to protect wildlife and fishery habitats while developing public recreation facilities. At the field level, I worked alone, as a member of a crew, and as a crew leader. During midcareer, as a GS-11 and GS-12, I supervised large projects and workforces. In future grades, I will be charged with the responsibility for managing, enhancing and protecting millions of acres of forests for millions of people. I must develop expert skills in balancing wants, needs and desires of all users and policy-makers with our national forests' capacity to sustain several uses.

To date, I have developed skills and knowledge in the fundamentals of practical supervision and management. I understand the value and the techniques of communicating with others. From the metropolitan urban life of Portland, Oregon to the rural ranchlands of Eastern Washington, I have learned to deal satisfactorily with people and cultures different from my own. I daily demonstrate my high standard of personal ethics and integrity both in the office and in the community. I grew up in the Forest Service system and know its history and culture, its myths and stories. I understand the values and principles of this history, which provide the foundation for the agency's direction. I now foresee myself in positions of regional and national leadership where policy development, instead of policy application, will be the daily norm. These positions will require

polished skills and give me little room for error. Flaws in character and ability will be amplified and deadly. As a growing professional, I need to understand this future environment and develop personal strategies to survive and prosper as I manage and lead in my organization.

In the next two decades, the Forest Service will be challenged more often and with greater intensity than ever before. The general public desires economical wood products in increasing quantities; at the same time they demand solitude, clean air and clear water from the same limited, forested lands. As the Forest Service becomes more open and responsive to citizen participation in the land management process, the agency's leaders will confront the frustrations of meeting the needs of the majority as well as those of the vocal minorities. My response to these complex situations must be quick yet thorough. I will have to perceive the issue and take timely action. The Service expects me to understand the dynamics of power and authority and to effectively organize subordinates to get the job done. Doing so requires me to create a broad vision for the National Forest under my care. This vision will guide the strategic planning for the subunit Ranger Districts. My vision will reflect the overall mission of the Forest Service, the health of the National Forest and my own role as leader. Mission accomplishment will need both a healthy and productive forest and forest personnel. The Service expects me to reflect in mind and body that health and energy.

Qualification for senior level leadership positions requires a firm foundation. The major competency areas--the building blocks for this development--are external relations, communications, leadership, environmental awareness, management functions and interpersonal relations. They are the focal areas for development of grades GS-11 to GM-14. ¹ At present, while I can demonstrate proficiency in these areas, I feel that I need to broaden my qualifications for future jobs.

The cornerstone for leadership development of GM-15's and above is the Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program (SESCDP). Successful course completion of the SESCO DP would prepare me for entry into the Senior Executive Service. Competition for SESCO DP selection is intensive and difficult. The better prepared I am for meeting the Senior Executive Service qualifications, the greater my chances of being selected. Any future education that I receive should emphasize the competencies and effectiveness characteristics found to be essential for Federal executive and management success as modeled in the SESCO DP, including:

- o Integration of internal and external program/policy issues.
- o Organizational representation and liaison.
- o Direction and guidance of programs, projects, and policy development.
- o Resource acquisition and administration.
- o Utilization of human resources.

o Review of implementation and results. 2

The GM-14 and GM-15 grade levels are the thresholds of my future. Each educational step I take to prepare myself for this senior position closes other options. It is critical that I make the right educational choices now. My first major decision was whether to attend the U.S. Army's senior leadership school - the U.S. Army War College (AWC).

I was attending an Executive Seminar Program, sponsored by Lewis and Clark College, when the War College opportunity arose. There are no formal educational relationships between the U.S. Army and the Department of Agriculture. The Department lacked first hand knowledge of the AWC; infact, I would be the first Agriculture employee to attend this resident program. The resident program was highly acclaimed for its senior leader education by the Army and the Department of Defense (DOD). DOD civilians are represented in every class. If I went, I would be one of the few non-DOD civilians. The few phone calls I made to the administration offices in the AWC did not overwhelmingly encourage me to accept the offer. There was risk involved. I was in consideration for a new job and promotion. This would be delayed. AWC officials encourage students to bring their families. Attendance at the AWC would involve a short term family move with a subsequent move after graduation. My major concern was whether the course of instruction would be of future benefit to my career. I received acceptable responses to these issues.

But it was the growth potential, the anticipated intellectual stimulation of doing something new, that was the deciding factor. My previous experiences with university-based courses had been positive, so I was willing to attend.

Thus, I would be the guinea pig for the Department of Agriculture and I was determined to experience and gain all that I could. I expected the program to be academically challenging, and with a defined purpose. My fellow students would be the best that the military services had to offer. I anticipated learning as much from their influence as I would in the classroom. I saw myself competing equally with them and being accepted as a peer. I expected to return to the Forest Service a more well-rounded leader than I left. I entered with positive expectations. I was ready to do my part; the unknown was the part the AWC program would play.

My Forest Service peers jokingly called my upcoming USAWC the 'bazooka school'. They expected (how could I tell them otherwise?) that I would study the principles, techniques and tools involved in leading others to kill people and destroy things. My first physical view of the War College shattered that expectation. On the front gate there is a statement that reads "not to promote war, but to preserve peace...".³ The only firearms that I have seen are those carried by the military police and the few ceremonial cannons on the post grounds. Amidst the required security, the installation has a campus-like atmosphere

similar to many formal academic universities. The 288 students in the class are divided into 18 person seminar groups cloistered in comfortable rooms equipped with cushioned chairs, computers, audio-video equipment and wall-to-wall map displays. The seminar groups themselves are a composite of senior officers (Lt. Colonel and above) from all services, with a sprinkling of government civilians (GS-13 to GM-15) and international officers.

It is through this mixture of backgrounds, experiences and perceptions that the real learning takes place. The course of study educates senior leaders to link strategic planning with operational and tactical uses of forces. The focus is on the higher levels of strategic thought in the preparation for war if deterrence fails. National security policy, joint services planning and the application of all instruments of power are areas where there was frequent provocative and reflective discussion.

My agency background did not fully prepare me to deal effectively in this environment. I had a whole new language and data base to learn, yet I found striking similarities in the backgrounds of my fellow students who came from a variety of agencies. The career profile of the military student was close to mine. Like the officer student, I have had comparable line and staff experience in well-defined positions. Up to now most problems had one best solution, and I mostly carried out policy rather than made it. Both the U.S. Army and the Forest Service are highly complex, people-based and service-oriented. We are responsive to the politics of Congress and the will of the people

we serve.

The curriculum of the AWC generally focuses on the continued development of performance characteristics expected of senior level military professionals. The starting point was a student experience profile, wherein I fit fairly easily. The objective of producing a graduate who could serve in positions of broad scope in an atmosphere of high ambiguity fits my future profile also. Potentially, this curricular focus appeared highly beneficial to me. In general, the course curriculum provides a learning environment that challenges the officers to examine themselves, their services and the role of the military in accomplishing national policy. The intimate learning atmosphere of the seminar groups offers an ideal setting for discussing military professional values, ethical conduct, joint strategy and use of armed forces.

There are seven core courses in the curriculum, each course building upon the preceding ones. Of the seven courses, I have presently taken five. Course 1 is the cornerstone and deals with the professional characteristics desired of senior leaders. Through a series of self-assessment tests that I had not been exposed to before, I defined the limits of my strengths and weaknesses. I now know why I have difficulty in interpersonal relationships with personality types that are opposite my own. I now have a healthier view. For instance, there is value in having introspective personalities to balance my extroverted perceptions.

Incorporating real-time, detail-seeking members on my management teams will give a practical orientation that I have often avoided before I came here. I originally saw these types as hindrances to change and progress. The study of great leaders such as Grant, Napoleon, Marshall and MacArthur gave me insights into the dynamics and skills of leadership which extend into my bureaucratic world as well. I developed a template which compares my skills, abilities, characteristics and ethical actions with models of leadership success and failure. Most importantly, the advanced leadership course encouraged me to identify and develop an action plan to strengthen my weaker areas.

The value of course 2, which dealt with war, national policy and strategy, allowed for considerable broadening of my views. I was not a real student of domestic and global affairs before my arrival here. This course of study encouraged me to analyze U.S. national security policy and to reflect on how the various instruments of power--diplomatic, socio-psychological, economic and military--should be used. The most obvious instrument, the military, could be the most harmful. In many seminar discussions the debate on which solution was the "correct" one never ended. Occasionally, I was required to brief a subject area (that I knew little if any about) with only a 12 hour notice. This provides a strong learning experience. The ambiguity and uncertainty of the environment in which senior level policy decision takes place is universal. It is not unique to the military. It exists in my agency as well. As a result of completing this course, I am not

always comfortable in dealing with the complexities of policy. I am, however, more skilled in analyzing and looking for policy relationships and in using effective oral or written communication to support my recommendations.

Course 3 on Joint Forces, Doctrine and Planning gave me more difficulty. The heavy use of acronyms, functional organization charts and my lack of operational familiarity with war planning hampered my participation. But using the computer as a simulator for operational level wargaming intrigued me. If simulations for theater war can be programmed for minicomputers, so can ranger district-sized resource manipulations and their consequences. The major point that I got from this course is the need to understand the relationships, missions and doctrine of all organizations that I am working with, especially those with whom my organization competes. Success or failure hinges on that understanding.

There were more similiar agency parallels in Course 4, which dealt with the various supporting systems that aid in getting the Army's job done. Personnel, training, research, and installation management systems all have their parallels in the Forest Service. We even have some of the same challenges. (It was refreshing to see the Army also struggling about how to manage a large organization in a constantly changing environment.) These systems were complex and had multiple systems within themselves. The amazing thing is that each is integrated with the other. Knowing how the many systems of the organization all fit together allows

you to make it work better.

Course 5 allowed me to consolidate the academic learnings from the previous courses and examine U.S. interests and strategies in an international environment. In a team effort, strategies to protect and develop U.S. interests were formulated. My team discovered that we often differed with current U.S. policy in our region. We discovered that U.S. interests are not necessarily the other country's interests and that developing policy to support those interests is often complex and confusing. This portion of the curriculum had no 'case study' but used real-time information supplied by the international fellows who live in the regions. It underscored once again the difficulty we as senior leaders will have in designing national policy to meet any given situation. It stressed the need to have as broad a perception as possible and to be willing to use all the instruments of power in accomplishing adopted policies, not just those instruments most controllable and accessible.

At present, I have not completed the remaining courses of instruction. The remaining courses offer an examination of the real-world capabilities of the various military commands and a concluding exercise which allows students to demonstrate the use of all the knowledge and experience gained from previous courses. I expect that these courses will no doubt build on the skills and knowledges learned in preceding courses and give me further opportunity to analyze and be creative in developing strategy

using military forces to achieve national policy objectives.

It is difficult to compare this residential eleven month course of study to a similiar curriculum in the Federal sector, for there are none. A national civil service academy whose purpose would be to prepare civilian executives for senior federal service does not exist. What is available for my continued development is the SES Candidate Development Program, which I mentioned earlier in this document. This program is administered by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management and provides a series of intensive developmental experiences, including academic education. It is an eighteen month part-time program in which participants hold their regular jobs except while they are attending formal training or while on developmental work details. Like the AWC program, the SESCO DP participants are involved in clarifying values, understanding broad Federal program issues and policies, and performing current issue analysis. Competencies which relate to the complex and dynamic social-political-economic environment in which the executive will work are also addressed. Like the AWC program, the SESCO DP uses examples, case studies, and leadership models that are of direct relevance to the Federal sector and issues that are of immediate concern to their particular focus. ^o Structurally both programs are designed similiarly.

Overall the AWC program is meeting my expectations. As could be expected in a specially designed program for a specific audience, some of my developmental needs have not been met. For

example, I expected that there would be some non-relevant courses of instruction that would be service-biased or of limited future use. I once asked to not participate in such a course but to design instead an independent study for leadership development. As expected, my request was disapproved. Nonetheless, there were many rewarding experiences and few unpleasant surprises.

I realize that I am not a typical member of the student body. And currently, the program is not structured with enough flexibility to fully satisfy the needs of all civil servants, especially non-DOD civil servants. It could be easily modified to do so by allowing certain course deviations by the civilian students.

As I return to the Forest Service, AWC experiences and lessons will go with me. A major portion of the AWC academic program is concentrated on the need to integrate internal and external programs and policy. One of my first duties will be the implementation of the Forest Plan. The principles studied in developing the mission, being responsive to the needs of other services and agencies, and maintaining currency with the relevant social, political, economic and technological developments are all very applicable to this effort. The numerous student briefings, group presentations, and cross-examination sessions that required me to inform, sell, persuade and negotiate my point of view (while at the same time requiring me to maintain positive interpersonal relationships) taught very transferable skills. The use of the computer as a diagnostic tool for decision and information

management is featured at the AWC; I see clear civilian applications in the simulation of long range planning and work force structuring. The physical fitness and mental conditioning program that I started will go with me and be a focus for a healthier life. Most of all, the academic discipline that I was subject to encouraged me to reflect on and gain insight into my work habits and personal style of leadership. The AWC program encourages renewal. It has sensitized me, enabling me to develop an openmindedness for problems and opportunities I will encounter in the future.

The opportunity to attend the AWC has provided a unique learning experience that has contributed greatly to my self esteem as well as my education. I have been both a student and a teacher. I have learned the value of broadening my perspectives. The opportunity to live, teach and learn with other senior executives, even though they wear a military uniform, is a great advantage to both the military and any civilian agency. The academic atmosphere encourages high performance, and the curriculum differs only slightly in focus and flavor from what the Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program provides. Even with the distraction of much of the instruction being only indirectly related to my profession, my time here as a resident student has been very rewarding. Overall, I believe the curriculum would provide an appropriate experience for other non-DOD civilians in which to participate, to grow, and to return to their home agencies better prepared to deal with future

uncertainties in Federal service.

ENDNOTES

1. U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, Management Excellence Task Force Report with Proposal and Recommendations, Washington, D.C. June 17, 1987.
2. U.S. Office of Personnel Management, Developing Executive and Management Talent, Washington, D.C. August 1980, p. 11.
3. U.S. Army War College, Curriculum Pamplet: Academic Year 1988, May 1987. p. i.
4. Ibid., p. 2.
5. U.S. Office of Personnel Management, pp. 34-35.

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