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President's Forum

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PRESIDENT'S FORUM



[Navy's Leader Development Continuum] marks a significant starting point for the Navy and . . . full implementation will span generations.

THE NAVAL WAR COLLEGE is a multifaceted joint military academic institution, in support of the naval profession, composed of resident education for U.S. and international officers and focused on maritime research, regional studies, distance education, war gaming, and education/programs at the operational level of war. Each of these intricate areas has unique programs and initiatives, but their common underlying theme is their ability to educate our future leaders and to teach them to think strategically and operationally. Educating leaders is conducted not only at the War College but also at our off-site locations around the country, and the research products generated are world renowned. I would like to bring your attention to a new area of focus to which the War College has significantly contributed. Although it is in its early stages, I would classify this work as potentially the greatest enhancement of our Navy's professional development since John Paul Jones helped to establish it during the American Revolution—the Navy's Leader Development Continuum (LDC).

In the fall of 2011, shortly after Admiral Jonathan Greenert became our thirtieth Chief of Naval Operations, he tasked the Naval War College (NWC) to help him in executing his vision for a more detailed and involved Leader Development Continuum. Being a visionary leader, he necessitated that the newly formulated LDC encompass all Sailors from E-1 to O-10 and that it become an integral part of a comprehensive lifelong learning strategy, aligning experience, training, education, and personal development during an individual Sailor's career.

The rigorous process used to develop the strategy was led by the NWC's College of Operational & Strategic Leadership. Initial analysis by the core group assigned to work this project, aided by faculty from the U.S. Naval Academy and

the Center for Personal and Professional Development, found that the Navy was, in effect, on a course with no well-defined plan. There was no published strategy to guide Navy leader development. Subsequent research revealed that while there had been much written on the subject of Navy leadership, the development of individual Sailors as leaders was assumed to be a naturally occurring process and was not deliberately designed to achieve the outcomes desired.

To ensure that Navy-wide input was received, the Leader Development Continuum Council was established to guide the effort. Chaired by the President, Naval War College, it was composed of flag officers at the one-and-two-star level; command master chiefs, who represented the fleet; experts from the training and education elements of the Navy; the Bureau of Naval Personnel; and several type commanders who had responsibilities for community management (such as Naval Air, Submarine, Surface, and Info-Dominance Forces). It was supported by military and Navy civilian experts at the O-6-and-below level. It also included support from a number of professional academics from NWC, the Naval Academy, and elsewhere who were experienced in leader development.

After many months of intense analysis and fleet-wide discussion, the *Navy Leader Development Strategy* was published in January 2013 as the first step in an effort to define a more deliberate methodology to develop each Sailor into a leader for the future. In publishing the document, Admiral Greenert noted: “The purpose of this strategy is to synchronize the Navy’s leadership and strengthen our naval profession by providing a common framework for leader development—regardless of community—that is comprehensive in scope and enduring.”

This strategy is based on specific outcomes that are identified for various ranks as an individual progresses through his or her career. It stresses the primacy of the profession, being a Sailor, as an individual’s first responsibility, followed closely by a focus on specialty qualifications (such as aviation, surface warfare, etc.). The overall strategy is agnostic as to designator or rating and relies on four core elements to develop each Sailor as an individual leader: experience, education, training, and personal development. Each of these core elements has a specific function:

- *Experience* is the principal means by which we develop leaders through practical application and learning. Experience builds resilience and confidence through success as well as failure, and [it] fosters adaptation and innovation, while also reinforcing what was learned through education and training.
- *Education* inculcates the fundamental tenets of Navy leadership, broadens the understanding of the naval profession, imparts advanced knowledge, enhances critical thinking, and fosters intellectual and character development. Education also serves to contextualize past experience to enable the application of new learning

to future assignments, cultivate adaptive leader abilities, and provide methods for exploring and addressing unknowns.

- *Training* develops role-specific leadership skills and builds confidence and competence.
- *Personal development* focuses attention on individual strengths and weaknesses, enables personal evaluation, furthers reflection on Navy and personal values, and contributes to lifelong learning, diversity of thought, and moral growth. Personal development also includes performance evaluation, coaching, counseling, and mentoring.

Navy leadership recognizes that this strategy marks a significant starting point for the Navy and that full implementation will span generations. It is a long-term effort, and as we enter the fourth decade of an “all-volunteer” force, the strategy recognizes the need to develop deliberately each individual as a member of the naval profession. Unlike the commercial sector, the Navy must internally grow and nurture our future leaders. It is also important to recognize that this strategy is not a contractor-generated plan but rather a program developed entirely within our Navy family.

The Navy now has the vision and clear direction to enable a comprehensive leader development plan with community leaders. This effort has become more than just a tasking; rather, it is a journey that will encompass generations to come, as the Navy's leadership is committed to developing the leaders we need to address the challenges we will face in the decades ahead.

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