Forging Iron Majors to Win in a Complex World

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Abstract

The Command and General Staff School (CGSS) plays a vital role in preparing mid-level officers for the demands of the operational environment. CGSS must develop leaders who can, as described in the Army Operating Concept "win" in a complex world. This requires developing leaders to be agile, adaptive, and innovative. The CGSS is adjusting its program to provide the cognitive foundations supporting these attributes but at the risk of other learning objectives. Feedback from various perspectives suggests the need to lengthen the course and increase academic discipline. The problem that CGSS faces is that while educational requirements expand or change the time allocated for CGSS does not. While modifications to the current 44-week program over the years have been helpful, meeting the intent of the AOC requires a change in the CGSS program structure. Expanding the current CGSS program is the best way to prepare majors to meet the needs of the Army in 2025. For many officers, CGSS represents the last formal military education opportunity. The benefits of preparing majors and future lieutenant colonels for success in the operational environment should be worth the cost of a longer CGSS program.

Forging Iron Majors to Win in a Complex World

The two years I spent at Leavenworth were the most difficult years of my training.... I studied upstairs and downstairs, often far past midnight, and my disposition at home became as mean as that of a starving prairie wolf, or—as one of my friends suggested—a cobra without a convenient snake charmer….

—Ernie Harmon, CGSC Class of 1933[1]

Since 1881, the Command and General Staff College (CGSC)[2] at Fort Leavenworth has prepared officers to meet the United States' security challenges. Beginning as the School of Application for Cavalry and Infantry, it has evolved greatly over the years. Reforms in the Army, wars, and changes in doctrine have all left their mark on the institution.[3] Today, the Command and General Staff School (CGSS) must develop leaders who can, as described in the new Army Operating Concept (AOC), "win" in a world that is complex and uncertain with diverse threats and changing characteristics of warfare.[4] Such an environment demands unique skills and attributes of military officers. This paper will address how the CGSS can best contribute to the development of junior field grade officers so that they are prepared to meet the needs of the Army in 2025.

One of the toughest transitions in the career progression of U.S. Army officers is that from company-grade to field-grade officer. This transition is difficult because officers move from less complex direct leadership challenges to "seeing the entirety of the field."[5] As mid-level career officers, majors manage various systems within the Army and typically serve in key staff positions at the battalion, brigade, and division level. "Iron Major" is a term that describes these officers because of the extent of dedication, mental toughness, and skill required for success in these positions. Majors are hardened over time as they manage many of the tactical and operational level problems

within the Army.[6] CGSS plays a critical role in preparing officers for the next ten years of their career. Majors completing CGSS become the lieutenant colonels who lead battalions and serve in other key roles within Army.[7] CGSS provides officers theory, doctrine, and other developmental concepts that are essential at the field grade level. CGSS is also the last formal military education opportunity for roughly 80% of the officers who attend.[8]

This paper begins by examining key concepts to explain the skills and attributes desired from attending CGSS through the context of PME. Next, the paper reviews the CGSS' current program to understand how CGSS accomplishes its mission. The third section evaluates the CGSS program. The final section provides recommendations based on the previous portions of this paper. This paper contends that expanding the current CGSS program is the best way to prepare majors to meet the needs of the Army in 2025.

<div align="center">Key Concepts</div>

The manner in which the Army defines the operational environment influences the skills and attributes required of junior field grade officers. The "increasing velocity of global instability" is likely to continue to present multiple security challenges that create "an increasingly dangerous and unpredictable operational environment."[9] An important theme within the AOC is the importance of understanding the "continuity" of the nature of war coupled with "changes in the character of armed conflict."[10] The AOC, therefore, identifies individual and organizational capabilities needed for success within the operational environment. The AOC codifies these capabilities in twenty warfighting challenges. The warfighting challenge relating to leader development and education is Warfighting Challenge 10:

Develop agile, adaptive, and innovative leaders who thrive in conditions of uncertainty and chaos, and are capable of visualizing, describing, directing, leading, and assessing operations in complex environments and against adaptive enemies.[11]

Many of the concepts within this warfighting challenge are not new. The terms visualizing, describing, directing, assessing, and complexity have resided in Army doctrine for several years. However, the definitions of agile, adaptive, and innovative are less clear. These terms frequently appear throughout Army doctrine and other educational documents. What do they mean and what are the learning fundamentals that underpin them? The following sections apply Army doctrine and non-military sources to explain select terms and concepts that relate to PME.

Agile

The Army refers to agility as the ability to adjust rapidly to changes and applies the term to being flexible regarding thinking and problem solving. Frequently, this term is in concert with adaptability, critical thinking, and problem solving.[12] Adam Mitchinson and Robert Morris from the Center for Creative Leadership, refer to agility as an internal frame of mind. Leaders who possess mental agility are open to new ideas, are not afraid to challenge assumptions, and continually look for new ways to solve problems. Mitchinson and Morris assert the first of several "enablers" to foster mental agility is to present a broad range of perspectives and competing ideas so that leaders see different solutions. Encouraging active reflection, learning from experiences, and being comfortable with risk taking are important educational aspects to building agility in leaders.[13]

<u>Adaptive</u>

As with agility, the Army combines various competencies in describing adaptive leadership. The AOC refers to adaptability as "responding to new changes without a loss of functionality."[14] From an education standpoint, the Army creates adaptable leaders through instruction in critical thinking, prudent risk taking, understanding complexity, and decision making with less than complete knowledge. The goal is that all aspects of learning and training include the concept of adaptability.[15] Interestingly, the term "adapt" occurs 149 times in various forms throughout the 2015 Army Learning Concept. The Center for Technology & National Security Policy (CTNSP) suggests that educating adaptability is more about teaching leaders how to understand concepts and think as opposed to what to think. In addition, the CTNSP asserts "high-order cognitive skills such as the ability to infer and evaluate" occur through expanded lessons in critical thinking. This is in opposition to merely "recall or comprehension" methods of instruction during classroom learning or evaluation.[16]

<u>Innovative</u>

Innovation brings new ideas to solving problems. Innovative leaders develop new tools, systems, or methods of dealing with the complexity of the environment. The AOC states, "Innovation is the result of critical and creative thinking and the conversion of new ideas into valued outcomes."[17] Instilling innovative thinking also involves fostering team-building skills during problem-solving exercises. From a leadership perspective, this attribute requires understanding how to set direction, maintain healthy work climate, and encourage divergent thinking.[18]

Within the PME structure, training and education are essential functions. Few terms follow each other more frequently than the words train and educate in Army publications. These terms, however, are not synonymous. Training refers to learning processes and practicing concepts to develop specific skills or competencies. Training is typically a learning activity that relates directly to specific tasks. Education differs from training in that it is not necessarily a practical exercise, rather a process to understand concepts. Education also stresses how to think whereas training focuses on what to think or do.[19]

The difference between these terms sparks disagreement in how the Army approaches PME. On one side of the argument, there are those who believe that organizations like CGSS should focus heavily on education. Others contend that PME should include balanced levels of both training and education.[20] The problem for CGSS and other PME institutions is that military personnel require both technical training and educational development. This is due to the nature of the military profession. The "skill of an officer" as described by Samuel Huntington, comprises both technical and intellectual abilities. Like other professionals, officers need both rigorous training and effective education to maintain their professional standards.[21]

Army Leader Development Model

Officer Professional Military Education Policy (OPMEP) from the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) establishes PME guidelines for the Army and the other services. OPMEP focuses intermediate level PME on the operational and tactical levels of warfare.[22] The guidance within OPMEP shapes the Army's methodology of leader development. The Army Leader Development Program (ALDP) identifies three domains

in which leader development occurs. Over time, operational, institutional and self-development domains combine to achieve Army leader development objectives. Each domain prioritizes leader development through the application of training, education, and experience. For example, the institutional domain prioritizes education, experience, and then training. In contrast, the operational domain prioritizes training, experience, and then education.[23]

Leaders achieve the attributes and skills listed within Warfighting Challenge 10 from all three developmental domains. In the institutional domain, specific lessons and exercises provide students the cognitive foundations for agility, adaptability, and innovation. Individual improvement in these areas requires a career-long pursuit of knowledge, competence, and experience. Balanced development within each of the three domains enables leaders the ability to adapt and succeed regardless of the situation.[24]

The role CGSS plays in developing agile, adaptive, and innovative leaders begins with a curriculum that provides the cognitive foundations of these attributes. The CGSS program necessarily includes both training and education to ensure graduates gain proficiencies required at the operational level. CGSS builds on an officer's previous experience and leverages the institutional domain to meet the developmental needs of junior field grade officers.

CGSS Current Program

Several factors guide the CGSS program. Curriculum and instructional practices conform to Army guidance listed within TRADOC Regulation 350-70 under the Accountable Instructional System (AIS).[25] Though developing and approving curriculum may be a complicated process, curriculum is simply the "means and materials with

which students will interact for the purpose of achieving identified outcomes."[26] Internally, CGSS examines practices, structure, and content of instruction on a yearly basis. Externally, the Department of the Army and Joint Staff provide guidance, review, and validate the CGSS curriculum. The North Central Association of Colleges & Schools accredits the program as a Master's Degree Granting Institution, and CGSS is a member of the Higher Learning Commission.[27]

The CGSS is a 44-week long course (CGSOC) with the following mission statement:

> The Command and General Staff School educates and trains field grade level leaders to be agile, innovative, and adaptive, who think critically, communicate effectively, can build teams, and lead organizations under mission command to conduct land operations in Unified Action while in complex and uncertain environments.[28]

To accomplish this mission, CGSS integrates strategic, operational, and tactical curriculum into three sections.[29] The first section, or Common Core, includes strategic and operational levels of instruction within five blocks of instruction: Foundations, Strategic Context of Operational Art, Unified Action, Army Doctrine and Planning, and Operational Art and Planning. Leader development, ethics, and military history courses also occur within this section. The Common Core consists of 329 hours of classroom instruction.[30] This section also includes JPME 1 or basic joint qualification education.[31] It builds the skills and attributes required to prepare majors to be "critical and creative thinkers who can adapt and thrive in ambiguous and ever-changing environments."[32]

Lessons that specifically build the attributes of agile, adaptable, and innovative leaders begin in the Common Core section. The 2016 program includes increased instruction on critical and creative thinking and problem solving in a ten-hour module covering three lessons (C121 Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, C122 Creative

Thinking, Logic and Decision-Making, and C123 Assessment). The module introduces students to the concepts of complexity and analyzing solutions. [33] Critical and creative thinking skills learned early in this module apply to other lessons throughout the rest of the CGSS program.

The second section of the CGSS curriculum is the Advanced Operations Course. This section focuses on preparing field grade officers to assume battle staff positions at the operational level. It builds on the lessons within the Common Core and provides a practical application of the skills and attributes required at the tactical level. It consists of three blocks, Coalition Forces Land Component Command Planning, Decisive Action Division Operations, and Decisive Action Brigade Operations. In addition, contracting, applied leadership, and additional military history courses occur to complete 304 classroom hours of instruction. [34]

Electives make up the final section of the CGSS curriculum. The electives program provides students the opportunity to broaden their knowledge through additional instruction that satisfies graduation requirements. Students select eight elective courses that total 192 hours of classroom instruction. Electives include a broad range of subjects such as interagency studies, regional studies, and history. Students may also participate in specialized programs with permission from the CGSS. [35]

CGSS faculty members develop lessons to accomplish the 825 contact hours of curriculum within AIS guidelines. The majority of instruction is in small groups usually consisting of 16 students. [36] In the classroom, the Socratic and Adult Learning Model methodologies guide instruction. CGSS describes classroom instruction as a "learning-centered methodology that relies on collaboration, reflective practice, critical reasoning,

creative thinking, and the practical application of adult learning theory."[37] Guidance from the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), Army leadership, and expectations from the field shape learning objectives of the course. The CGSS uses Bloom's Taxonomy[38] as the foundation for establishing learning objectives, and course outcomes. Applying this taxonomy links lesson development to desired outcomes.[39] Many of the outcomes listed in the CGSS curriculum are at the higher end of the taxonomy.[40] CGSS uses a standard grading policy[41] and does not publicize class standings. Comprehensive exams or research papers are not conditions for graduation. Students receive standard Academic Evaluation Reports[42] to reflect their achievement of course objectives.

In addition to active learning within classroom instruction, students conduct self-study preparation prior to classroom discussion and participate in exercises or simulations within the lessons. The CGSS calculates student preparation requirements on the 1+1 principle. This equates to allocating one hour of preparation for every hour of classroom instruction.[43] The concepts of education and training hold equal value within the method of instruction. Students train in doctrinal principles to gain the skills they require as staff officers. At the same time, they are educated so that they may apply cognitive skills to manage problems in the operational environment.[44]

The CGSS program relies on the synchronization of individual blocks of instruction that over the duration of the course combine to produce graduates. CGSS is adjusting its program to meet AOC guidance; thus, the attributes of agility, adaptability, and innovation are now central within CGSS' mission statement. CGSS is modifying its curriculum to include these attributes as desired outcomes. These changes are within

the current constraints of existing teaching departments, length of course, and student prep-classroom instruction ratio.

CGSS Program Review

As a military education institution, CGSS is not in the same category as civilian colleges and universities. Civilian institutions, for example, receive rankings based on a number of factors, such as entrance exam scores, retention of first-year students, faculty salaries, student ambitions, and graduation rates.[45] CGSS is different. The completion and graduation rate for the academic years 2013 and 2104 was 100%. All 404 students enrolled in the Master of Military Arts and Sciences Degree Program graduated. All students enrolled in both the Common Core and Advanced Operation Courses graduated CGSS with a 100% completion rate.[46] Reasons for these graduation rates lie in the differences between the purposes of civilian colleges and universities and the purpose of CGSS. As opposed to civilian institutions, attendance at CGSS is part of the career progression process for selected officers. This also explains the lack of entrance exams found in most civilian colleges and universities. Given the unique nature of CGSS, this section reviews the program from the perspectives of the customer, the institution, and external viewpoints and then compares CGSS with other military and civilian programs.

Customer Perspective

The operational force serves as CGSS' customer. It is fitting to understand how the 'customer' rates the CGSS 'product.' In 2013, CGSC asked 404 senior level officers from the ranks of colonel-promotable to lieutenant general to assess the effectiveness of the CGSS program.[47] The Dean of Academics prepared a Commanders Survey asking leaders to respond to specific questions and provide additional written insights

on all four courses within CGSC. Survey questions followed the five-point Likert Scale[48], which labeled responses as always, usually, sometimes, seldom, and never. Upon completion, CGSS grouped responses in the always and usually categories and defined them as favorable. Responses of sometimes, seldom, and never were grouped together as unfavorable.[49]

Questions within the CGSS portion of the survey focused on understanding how often majors arrived at their organization "proficient in skills and abilities relating to the objectives" of the CGSS program.[50] Specific questions within the survey covered ten CGSS directed outcomes: "Planning Tactical Operations, Leading and Integrating a Staff or Section to Work as a Team, Conducting Research to Solve Problems, Managing Training, Communicating, Using Doctrine, History, Theory and Experience, Working with Joint, International, Multinational (JIIM) and other partners, Integrating Operations and Logistics, Thinking Creatively, and Planning Campaigns."[51]

The survey resulted in 589 responses from 59 officers who replied to the CGSS section representing 14% of those invited. In general, the report expressed a positive response from the field toward CGSS. Report analysis indicated that CGSS produces officers who meet the needs of the force. The survey, viewed holistically, showed 416 (71%) favorable responses to the CGSS program. There were 173 unfavorable responses in the combined categories of sometimes, seldom and never. A specific question relating to creative thinking and innovation recorded 61% of responses as favorable. There were not any specific questions pertaining to agility or adaptability. Two response categories worth noting are usually and sometimes as they represent the preponderance of responses (447 of 589 total responses).[52]

Another way to view the data collected in these categories is that 56% of CGSS graduates arrive usually prepared and 24% arrive sometimes prepared.[53] In practical terms, a division commander who receives ten CGSS graduates receives one major fully prepared, six mostly prepared, and three who are minimally prepared. This paints a somewhat different perspective of the CGSS product. The expectation from the force, while overall favorable within the construct of this survey, needs further clarification. Does usually or sometimes prepared upon arrival equate to officers who have achieved the goals in the CGSS mission statement?

Beyond the ten survey questions, officers were asked to write responses to three questions: what is "missing from, should be added to, or should be removed from the CGSS Curriculum, what else would you like to say about CGSS Graduates, and is there anything else you wish to say about CGSS?"[54] Of the 59 officers contributing to the survey, 38 commented on one or more of the above questions. None of the respondents recommended removing any portions of the curriculum. Whereas many of the comments were overall positive about how CGSS prepares officers, there were also negative comments. Constructive negative comments included: "The biggest issue with majors is that they lack imagination and innovation. They are normally waiting for guidance....Should be more focused on fundamentals—training management, property accountability, etc....I also think we suffer from poor communication skills—clear concise presentation ideas (I am not talking about PowerPoint)."[55] These comments usefully provided clarity beyond the terms listed in the survey questions. The written responses also highlighted potential gaps in the curriculum requiring additional instructional time and increased levels of academic rigor.

CGSS views institutional performance through the quality of their graduates. Effective processes and curriculum lead to better graduates. The leadership and staff at CGSC apply feedback from students, faculty, and surveys to review the program. BG John Kem serves as the first provost of the recently established Army University concept as well as the CGSC Deputy Commandant.[56] In his guidance and intent memorandum, he asks several important questions relating to the effectiveness of the CGSS program. His questions range from how to implement AOC guidance to how to improve the general methodology of instruction within the CGSS program. He also highlights one of the biggest challenges within any academic institution: managing desired outcomes against available time in the curriculum. [57]

The CGSS Director's assessment of the program reflects these points. The current program has well designed individual blocks of instruction, but in some cases, they do not fully connect across the program to meet overall course objectives. Some blocks of instruction contain too much content that distracts from the students' ability to learn and retain basic concepts. He further identifies the need to create additional ways for students to demonstrate their knowledge of course material. The Director recognizes the need to organize course requirements so that students "absorb the information in a retainable manner to apply after graduation."[58] Though the Commanders Survey finds a generally favorable program, the institution's perspective is that there is a need to revise elements of the program to produce graduates who are better prepared to lead in the operational environment envisioned in the AOC.

There are also external views regarding the effectiveness of the CGSS program. Some contend that CGSS does not place enough focus on academic discipline or rigor. Others compare CGSS to civilian universities and call for extensive changes to the program. The online news agency Foreign Policy Group provides a somewhat contentious discussion. Throughout 2015, the following titles appeared on-line: "CGSC: Despite an internal report, it is still screwed up—and may become more so," "How to fix the CGSC," "Don't push me!: How being on the CGSC faculty is sending me right over the edge," and "Finally, official recognition that CGSC is broken, bust and in the ditch."[59] These internet blog entries express a variety of opinions many of which call for increased academic standards within CGSS.

One guest writer reported that his experience at CGSS was far too easy. The course did not match up with his expectations. This particular CGSS graduate states, "I never once found that I was being educated or trained to be an agile, innovative, and adaptive leader." He goes on to recommend that CGSS adopt the School for Advanced Military Studies type curriculum.[60] Conversely, another edition focused on the point that there are too many demands placed on students and that the number of contact hours and requirements within the curriculum are too high.[61] The author argues that the CGSS should follow the Higher Learning Commission policy of allocating two hours of student preparation time for one hour of classroom instruction.[62] A few months later, another blog entry discussed the importance of not adjusting instructional hours within the curriculum to achieve the intent behind the Army University.[63]

The common themes in these discussions center on the resource of time and promoting higher academic standards. Just as internal perspectives recognize the

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realities of competing demands within the CGSS program schedule, so do others outside of the institution. The opinions within media discussion appropriately do not bind the CGSS to change its program, and it is unlikely ever to please everyone. Perspectives like those highlighted are informative and worth additional discussion within the CGSS faculty.

Comparison with Other Organizations

Most U.S. military programs for junior field grade officers are comparable to the CGSS.[64] Department of Defense policy for the focus of intermediate level education is the same regardless of service. Graduates of all three programs achieve understanding at the operational and tactical levels of war, build analytic and creative thinking skills, expand understanding of joint force integration, and gain an appreciation for planning, doctrine, and strategy.[65] Similarities also exist in how some nations approach their mid-grade officer education programs.[66] One comparison worth noting, however, is how civilian institutions approach subjects that correspond to attributes listed within the AOC. Though civilian organizations are appropriately different from CGSS, they provide insights useful for military education.

Civilian universities address learning objectives similar to some of those of CGSS. The common educational link within the terms agile, adaptive, and innovative is developing critical and creative thinking skills. As an example, The University of Rhode Island offers an undergraduate critical thinking course. This three credit hour course focuses on logical analysis, evaluation of arguments, inductive reasoning, and other points of theory. The method of instruction consists of classroom discussion, practical assignments, and three formal exams.[67] The University of Massachusetts offers a master of arts in critical and creative thinking. This extended program consists of 11

courses (33 credits). The methods of instruction are similar to the University of Rhode Island. Foundation courses include critical thinking, creative thinking, advanced cognitive psychology, and foundations of philosophical thought. Electives expand on these topics and include workshops and other integrated professional discussion forums.[68] Courses in the civilian sector are typically no less than 16-week courses with 40 hours of instructional time.[69] The amount of time allocated students to understand underlying concepts in the civilian education is significantly longer than military versions.

There is not a well-established way to assess the effectiveness of the CGSS program. As external and internal perspectives provide useful insights regarding CGSS processes, the Commanders Survey provides direct feedback on the CGSS graduate and is the most appropriate tool for measuring effectiveness. Though the survey reviews program results, it lacks clarity and can be misleading. CGSS recognizes that there may be opportunities to synchronize blocks of instruction better, but modifications come at the cost of other learning objectives. Requirements change continually but time available within the course does not. Examples from other learning organizations suggest that there are additional points for CGSS consideration.

Recommendations

As educational requirements expand or change, so should the time allocated for CGSS. The ALDP calls for a balanced approach to leader development within all domains. The cognitive foundations underpinning agile, adaptive, and innovative leaders start in the classroom. Developing these attributes requires additional focus in the institutional domain. Operational and self-development domains cannot foster these attributes alone and are not sufficient. Feedback from various sources suggests that there is also need to increase levels of academic standards within the program.

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Revising and completing a new version of the Commanders Survey would help CGSS understand best what to sustain or improve in the program.

<u>Lengthen the CGSS Program</u>

CGSS represents the best return on investment within the Army PME structure. Students attending the course are mid-career officers who typically remain in the Army until retirement. Officers enter CGSS with 11 years of service in their careers.[70] The next formal education opportunity is Senior Service College (SSC) occurring around the 19-20 year mark. Selection rates for SSC average 30-35%.[71] This means that for the vast majority of officers, CGSS is the last formal academic venue in which officers develop the skills and attributes listed within the AOC.

As the Commanders Survey indicates, there are no recommendations to remove any elements of the current curriculum. Therefore, as requirements increase, the Army should expand the program accordingly. There have been periods when CGSOC was a two-year course. In the 1920's and 1930's, CGSC Commandants argued for a longer course based in no small part on the U.S. Army experience during World War I. They felt that changes in the character of warfare required increased levels of preparation for staff officers.[72] During times of war, it was natural to shorten the course to support operational needs. In 1935, the Army maintained the learning objectives of a two-year course but reduced it to one year to increase officer throughput.[73] The duration of the course has not changed significantly since then.

The 1920s post-war era is certainly different from today, but there are similarities in the challenges facing the Army. Like other post-war periods, the Army is reviewing and adjusting many aspects of the organization. From equipping to doctrine, the Army is refining practices to address the operational environment. Refining Army PME

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structures should be part of this process. Reviewing current CGSS educational and training practices against the desired outcomes listed in the AOC requires a longer CGSS program. Two main areas inform this increase. The first area is a review of the number of hours dedicated toward learning enablers promoting the leadership traits listed within Warfighting Challenge 10. The second is to re-examine time allocated for student self-preparation and study outside the classroom.

Increasing focus on critical and creative thinking for the 2016 academic year is a good start but may not go far enough.[74] Increased focus may not necessarily result in students achieving synthesis on these subjects. Critical and creative thinking blocks of instruction should be at least 15-20 hours each, based on examples from civilian institutions. Through increased instruction followed by faculty-led exercises, students gain a deeper understanding of the two foundations that support the attributes listed within the AOC. Currently, the CGSS program allows for 10 hours over a three-day period for both subjects. An increase of this nature would add roughly ten days to the current program. Four hours per day during a typical two-week period yields 20 hours for each subject. Other course subjects that relate to Warfighting Challenge 10 may also require increased time for instruction. Each learning block within both the Core Curriculum and Advanced Operations Course requires review to ensure desired outcomes are achievable and synchronized with overall learning objectives. Supporting any increase in the curriculum also requires determining an adequate number of hours outside the classroom.

Student preparation and self-study time should more closely follow the Higher Learning Commission's formula of two hours of student preparation time for every hour

of class contact time. Increased time for reflection and self-study is an important

component of the CGSS program. CGSS identifies the value of blended learning

(additional educational experiences outside the classroom) as an important method to

achieve higher levels of learning. The CGSS Director also recognizes that blended

learning does not result from merely adding more homework to students.[75] Increasing

self-study time enables students to reach higher levels of understanding and cognitive

thinking. Even a modest increase to the current 1+1 (one hour of preparation for each

hour of classroom instruction) model to 1+1.5 results in 1,237 hours, which is an

increase of 412 from the 825 hours currently allocated within the schedule. This

translates roughly to adding another 10 weeks to the CGSS program.

Lengthening the course could cause resistance from various sources. Army

leadership may agree with an initiative that produces more proficient officers, but there

may be disagreement in how to accomplish this goal. Some may believe that the time

officers spend away from the force is already too long. Others may contend that the

best way to build agile, innovative, and adaptive leaders is not at the schoolhouse, but

in the field. A longer course would require changes within the CGSS structure with clear

budget implications. A change of this nature would also require restructuring of the

Army's officer development model. Producing graduates who are best prepared to meet

the needs of the Army in 2025 should be worth the costs associated with changing the

program. A longer program also enables the faculty the space to address other

academic concerns highlighted from the customer and external perspectives.

A way to mitigate potential impacts of a longer CGSS program is to create a

distance-learning (DL) program to augment leader development objectives. In times of

officer backlog through the CGSS program, officers completed the CGSS in its entirety

through self-study. In 2007, over 3,000 majors completed their intermediate learning

requirements through online and DL.[76] A new self-study course could cover basic

lessons within the program, creating more time in the schedule for increased resident

instruction. Within CGSS, the Department of Distance Education (DDE) is already in

place to make this happen. The drawback to this option is that the force may see DL as

a distraction from an officer's already full schedule of current duties. Although resident

classroom instruction is preferred, DL could mitigate the need to lengthen CGSS.

Instill Academic Discipline

Officers attending CGSS have varied opinions regarding the course. For some, it

may be a break from the operational world.[77] For others, it is the time in their career to

complete a master degree program. Regardless of the length of the CGSS course,

students must clearly understand the context of what they are doing. As in the case of

Ernie Harmon mentioned at the beginning of this paper, CGSS should be one of the

most challenging experiences in an officer's career. As future iron majors, CGSS is

critical to their preparation. CGSS could enable increased academic discipline through a

number of ways. The first is to revise pre-course student assessment practices.[78]

Replacing current survey style assessments with firmer entry exams could help ensure

that officers possess the requisite skills before attendance. An entrance exam could

occur several months prior to arrival. Officers who fail the entrance exam should

complete an online distance-learning course without any penalty to their career.

Completing this course should be a condition of enrollment. Second, officers should be

rank-ordered according to their academic standing just as they were in 1933[79] in order

to increase the student's value of academic achievement. Class standings could help

determine follow-on assignments. Better students could get more preference in their next assignments. Third, it should be possible to fail CGSS. Currently, there is a 100% pass rate to meet demands of the operational force.[80] The Army should revise academic standards and create a mechanism within the Army for officers who do not pass CGSS. These improvements could address many of the concerns expressed within external viewpoints and increase the overall worth of CGSS.

Revise and Conduct a New Commander's Survey

CGSS should initiate a new survey that encompasses the concepts within the AOC. Tailoring survey questions that specifically address the skills and attributes listed in Army Warfighting Challenge 10 could result in a better view of program success. Another way to improve feedback to CGSS is to change the nature of the questions. Asking leaders how often they receive majors with particular skills and attributes can be misleading. Instead of rating answers as always, usually, sometimes, seldom and never, answers should be more definitive. For example, "To what level do your majors identify the right problem to solve in complex situations?" Differentiating or comparing between graduates and non-graduates is another way to improve feedback to the CGSS. Low response rates as in the case of the last survey (59 out of 404) limit the overall worth of the survey. Increasing the range of respondents to include brigade and battalion commanders would also provide CGSS a more comprehensive level of feedback. The survey should increase the number of written responses and ideally not be optional.

Conclusion

The CGSS plays a significant role in forging iron majors for their demanding roles in the operational force. It will remain a critical element within the Army PME structure.

This paper explains the skills, attributes, and other concepts in relation to recent Army leader development guidance. It also highlights the current CGSS program and provides a review from customer, institutional, external, and outside perspectives. As a result, this paper suggests that CGSS best contributes to the development of majors by extending the length of its current program. Increasing academic discipline and conducting a revised survey are further proposals to improve the CGSS.

The recommendations provided in this paper are not new. The Army University concept identifies many of the same areas for improving Army PME. Improving how the Army educates, developing entrance criteria, and increasing academic discipline are current goals for "promoting real change in Army education."[81] The long-term problem for the operational force is if these concepts will result in meaningful changes for CGSS. The Army acknowledges the need to develop leaders to win in a complex world; the institutional domain best develops the skills and attributes required to do so. While modifying course curriculum over the years has been helpful, meeting the intent of the AOC requires a change in program structure. Increasing curriculum hours to support both classroom and self-development enables officers to gain the cognitive skills necessary to meet the needs of the Army in 2025. Though this comes at a cost to the operational force in terms of additional months at CGSS, competent field grade officers are essential to their success. Developing agile, adaptive, and innovative majors and future lieutenant colonels should be worth this cost.

Endnotes

[1] Ernest N. Harmon, Milton MacKaye, and William Ross MacKaye, *Combat Commander: Autobiography of a Soldier* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1970), 50, quoted in Peter J.

Schifferle, *America's School for War: Fort Leavenworth, Officer Education and Victory in World War II* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2010), 137.

[2] The Command and General Staff College comprises all courses taught at Fort Leavenworth under the Combined Arms Center (CAC). Within the CGSC, there are four schools: Command and General Staff School (CGSS), School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS), School for Command Preparation, and the Army Management Staff College. The name of the majors' course is the Command and General Staff Officers Course (CGSOC). CGSOC is the U.S. Army's form of Intermediate Level Education (ILE). CGSOC is under the direction of the Command and General Staff School (CGSS). For clarity, this paper uses the term CGSS when referring to the resident school program. The scope of this paper does not include non-resident or other variations of the course.

[3] Boyd L. Dastrup, *The U.S. Army Command and General Staff College: A Centennial History* (Manhattan, KS: Sunflower University Press, 1982), 11.

[4] U.S. Department of the Army, *The U.S. Army Operating Concept: Win in a Complex World, 2020-2040*, TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-1 (Fort Eustis, VA: United States Army Training and Doctrine Command, October 31, 2014), 9-16.

[5] James M. Dubik, "Army Echelons and Leader Development," *ARMY Magazine*, March 2010, 24.

[6] James A. Beaulieu, "The Education of Mid-Career Army Officers: Building Competency through Professional Military Education," http://www.westpoint.edu/cfe/Literature/Beaulieu_12.pdf (accessed December 21, 2015).

[7] U.S. Department of the Army, *Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management*, DA Pamphlet 600-3 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, December 3, 2014), 17.

[8] Gordon Davis Jr., and James Martin, "Developing Leaders to Adapt and Dominate for the Army of Today and Tomorrow," *Military Review* XCII, no.5 (September-October 2012): 71-72.

[9] John M. McHugh and Raymond Odierno, *A Statement on the Posture of the United States Army 2015*, Posture Statement presented to the 114th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, March 2015), 3-4.

[10] U.S. Department of the Army, *The U.S. Army Operating Concept: Win in a Complex World, 2020-2040*, 8.

[11] Ibid., 31-32.

[12] U.S. Department of the Army, *The U.S. Army Learning Concept for 2015*, TRADOC Pamphlet 525-8-2 (Fort Eustis, VA: U.S. Department of the Army, January 20, 2011), 40.

[13] Adam Mitchinson and Robert Morris, "Center for Creative Leadership White Paper: Learning about Learning Agility," 2014, http://insights.ccl.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/LearningAgility.pdf (accessed December 21, 2015).

¹⁴ U.S. Department of the Army, *The U.S. Army Operating Concept: Win in a Complex World, 2020-2040*, 21.

¹⁵ U.S. Department of the Army, *The U.S. Army Learning Concept for 2015*, 10.

¹⁶ Linton Wells II, Theodore C. Hailes, and Michael C. Davies, eds., *Changing Mindset to Transform Security: Leader Development for an Unpredictable and Complex World* (Washington, DC: National Defense University, December 2, 2013), xvi-xvii.

¹⁷ U.S. Department of the Army, *The U.S. Army Operating Concept: Win in a Complex World, 2020-2040*, 22.

¹⁸ David M. Horth and Jonathan Vehar, "Center for Creative Leadership White Paper: Becoming a Leader Who Fosters Innovation," 2014, http://insights.ccl.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/BecomingLeaderFostersInnovation.pdf (accessed December 21, 2015).

¹⁹ Mousa Masadeh, "Training, Education, Development, and Learning: What is the Difference?" *European Scientific Journal* 8, no.10 (May 2012): 63-65.

²⁰ Joan Johnson-Freese, *Educating America's Military* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 7-9.

²¹ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957), 13.

²² U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Officer Professional Military Education Policy (OPMEP),* CJCSI 1800.01E (Washington, DC: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, May 29, 2015), A-A-2-A-A-4. This document also further specifies faculty considerations, class size, joint training, and other curriculum requirements within Enclosure B.

²³ U.S. Department of the Army, *Army Leader Development Program*, Department of the Army Pamphlet 350-58 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, March 8, 2013), 2.

²⁴ U.S. Department of the Army, *Army Leader Development Strategy 2013* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, 2013), 3.

²⁵ U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, *U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Catalog*, CGSC Circular 350-1 (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, January 2016), 2-1.

²⁶ Edward S. Ebert II, Christine Ebert, and Michael L. Bentley, "Defining Curriculum," July 19, 2013, http://www.education.com/pdf/curriculum-definition/ (accessed December 21, 2015).

²⁷ The Higher Learning Commission, "Statement of Accreditation Status," February 19, 2016, https://www.hlcommission.org/component/directory/?Action=ShowBasic&Itemid=&instid=2036&lang=en (accessed February 19, 2016).

²⁸ *The Command and General Staff School (CGSS) Home Page,* http://usacac.army.mil/organizations/cace/cgsc/cgss (accessed December 23, 2015). This

mission statement is the 2016 revised version reflecting recent AOC (Warfighting Challenge 10) guidance.

[29] Six departments within CGSS facilitate these sections. These departments teach Army tactics, command and leadership, distance education, joint, interagency and multinational operations, logistics and resource operations, and military history. Each of these departments has military and civilian faculty who build curriculum and instruct students. For more information, see U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, *Intermediate Level Education Self-Study* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College), 4-8.

[30] U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, *U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Catalog*, CGSC Circular 350-1 (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College), 7-3.

[31] JPME I policy does not specify required hours to achieve level one certification. Rather, policy describes an educational process that incorporates joint learning objectives. See Enclosure G, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Manual 3500.03E, April 20, 2015 version for a detailed description of how service institutions achieve JPME certification.

[32] U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, *U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Catalog*, 7-4.

[33] Ibid., 7-6-7-10. The 2016 program incorporates 2015 initiatives from the CGSS Director that focus on creating agile, adaptive, and innovative leaders through increased instruction on critical and creative thinking and other subjects. Director, CGSS Colonel Douglas Cardinale, "Education Guidance/Intent for AIS Reviews and Planning for CGSS 2016/2017," memorandum for Command and General Staff School (CGSS) Faculty and Staff, Fort Leavenworth, KS, December 14, 2015, 2.

[34] Ibid., 7-11-7-15.

[35] Ibid., 7-15.

[36] U.S. Command and General Staff College, *Information Booklet for International Students*, CGSC Circular 12-1 (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Command and General Staff College, June 1, 2014), 5-9.

[37] Ibid., 5-6.

[38] Bloom's Taxonomy prescribes seven levels of cognitive learning. The first level is basic knowledge such as raw facts. Comprehending or understanding the meaning of these facts is the second level. Being able to apply learned concepts is the third level. Students reach the next level when they are able to break down the separate parts within the concepts and examine their relationships. Synthesis is important element within PME because it is at this level where students combine different ideas and create new understanding. Next, is evaluation and at the top of the list is creating which is equates to building something new from various elements. For additional information see U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Officer Professional Military Education Policy (OPMEP)*, E-A-1-E-A-2.

[39] Richard M. Meinhart, "Insights for a Committed Learning Environment," in *Innovative Learning: A Key to National Security*, ed., Ralph Doughty, Linton Wells II, and Theodore Hailes (Leavenworth, KS: The Army Press, 2015), 21-22.

[40] Director, CGSS Colonel Douglas Cardinale, "Education Guidance/Intent for AIS Reviews and Planning for CGSS 2016/2017," memorandum for Command and General Staff School (CGSS) Faculty and Staff, Fort Leavenworth, KS, December 14, 2015, enclosure 2; Memorandum provided by Colonel Douglas Cardinale, CGSS Director, email message to author, December 15, 2015. It may be accessed at: http://www.scribd.com/doc/292954107/Guidance-for-AY17-Command-and-General-Staff-Officer-Course-CGSOC . The 18 terminal learning objectives within the Common Core and Advanced Operations Courses have the following outcome expectations: synthesis 7, analysis 6, comprehension 2, and 1 evaluation.

[41] U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, *U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Catalog*, 5-1-5-4. Students must achieve a "B" or satisfactory grade to meet coursework and graduation standards. Students who receive a "C" or less on assignments enter Academic Probation. Formal counseling and remedial actions follow for underachieving students. Continued underperformance can lead to a student's dismissal.

[42] The U.S. Army uses the Academic Evaluation Report to document a Soldier's participation in military courses. It is the civilian equivalent to a report card. For additional information, see U.S. Department of the Army, *Evaluation Reporting System*, Army Pamphlet 623-3 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, August 13, 2007), 54.

[43] Director, CGSS Colonel Douglas Cardinale, "Education Guidance/Intent for AIS Reviews and Planning for CGSS 2016/2017," memorandum for Command and General Staff School (CGSS) Faculty and Staff, Fort Leavenworth, KS, December 14, 2015, 10.

[44] U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, *U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Catalog*, 1-3.

[45] Robert Morse, Eric Brooks and Matt Mason, "How U.S. News Calculated the 2016 Best College Rankings," *Newsweek*, September 8, 2015, 1-2.

[46] U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, "CGSC Student Achievement," http://usacac.army.mil/organizations/cace/cgsc/achievement (accessed December 26, 2105).

[47] U.S. Command and General Staff College, *CGSC 2013 Commanders Survey 2013* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Command and General Staff College, June 2013) 1-2. This survey is available online at the CGSC SharePoint Site: https://combinedarmscenter.army.mil/orgs/lde/doa/qao/QAO%20Special%20Reports/CGSC2013DivCdsSrvyRpt.pdf

[48] "Likert Scaling," October 10, 2006, http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/scallik.php (accessed February 20, 2016).

[49] U.S. Command and General Staff College, *CGSC 2103 Commanders Survey 2013*, 1-2.

[50] Ibid., 2.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., 25.

⁵³ Ibid. The other category percentages were 14% for always, and 3% seldom prepared for their duties upon arrival.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 3.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 4. The survey lists several comments taken from the responses of the officers who elected to add additional comments. This paper lists comments that refer back to the concepts introduced back in section one.

⁵⁶ Stephen P. Kretsinger SR., "Brig. Gen. Kem Named First-Ever Provost of Recently Launched Army University," August 31, 2015, http://www.army.mil/article/154710/Brig__Gen__Kem_Named_First_Ever_Provost_of_Recently _Launched_Army_University/ (accessed December 26, 2015). For more information on the Army University, see U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, *The Army University White Paper: Educating Leaders to Win in a Complex World* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Command and General Staff College, February 25, 2105).

⁵⁷ Provost, U.S. Army University, BG John S. Kem, "Education Guidance/Intent for AIS Reviews and Planning for CGSS 2016/2017," memorandum for Assistant Deputy Commandant, Dean of Academics, and Director, CGSS, Fort Leavenworth, KS, November 16 2015; Memorandum provided by Lieutenant Colonel Andrew McIntyre, CGSS Director of Academic Operations, e-mail message to author, December 22, 2015.

⁵⁸ Director, CGSS Colonel Douglas Cardinale, "Education Guidance/Intent for AIS Reviews and Planning for CGSS 2016/2017," memorandum for Command and General Staff School (CGSS) Faculty and Staff, 3.

⁵⁹ Thomas E. Ricks is a defense columnist writer for Foreign Policy. The headlines quoted in this paper are from his blog titled "Best Defense." See http://foreignpolicy.com/channel/best-defense/ to access any of the entries.

⁶⁰ Thomas E. Ricks, "How to Fix the CGSC," *The Best Defense: Tom Rick's Daily Take on National Security*, blog posted April 7, 2015, http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/04/07/how-to-fix-the-cgsc/ (accessed October 10, 2015).

⁶¹ Ricks, "CGSC: Despite an Internal Report, it is Still Screwed Up—and May Become More So," *The Best Defense: Tom Rick's Daily Take on National Security*, blog posted March 30, 2015, http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/03/30/cgsc-despite-an-internal-report-it-is-still-screwed-up-and-may-become-more-so/ (accessed October 10, 2015).

⁶² Higher Learning Commission, "Policy Book," November 2015, http://download.hlcommission.org/policy/HLCPolicyBook_POL.pdf (accessed December 26, 2015), 26.

⁶³ Nicholas Murray, "Finally, Official Recognition that CGSC is Broken, Bust and in the Ditch," *The Best Defense: Tom Rick's Daily Take on National Security*, blog posted September

25, 2015, http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/09/25/finally-official-recognition-that-cgsc-is-broken-bust-and-in-the-ditch/ (accessed December 19, 2015).

[64] The other services do not possess enough unique characteristics for useful comparison within this paper. Information regarding other service ILE programs is at the following sites: *Marine Corps University Home Page*, https://www.mcu.usmc.mil/csc/SitePages/Home.aspx (accessed December 26, 2015). The Marine Corps Command and Staff College mission statement closely matches the Army CGSS' statement. For the Naval College see U.S. Naval War College, "Resident Curriculum," https://www.usnwc.edu/Academics/Resident-Curriculum.aspx and for the Air University see United States Air Force Air Command and Staff College, "Air Command and Staff College Leadership," http://www.au.af.mil/au/acsc/about.aspx.

[65] U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Officer Professional Military Education Policy (OPMEP),* A-A-4.

[66] Several international military programs are similar to CGSS. The Defense Academy of the United Kingdom conducts a shorter, 30-week course called the Intermediate Command and Staff Course. Likewise, the Australian Defence College conducts a 46-week Australian Command and Staff Course. For more information, see Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, "Intermediate Command and Staff Course (Land)-ICSC(L)," http://www.da.mod.uk/Courses/Course-Details/Course/148 (accessed December 26, 2015); Australian Defence College, "About the Australian Command & Staff Course (Joint)," http://www.defence.gov.au/ADC/ACSC/Course/ (accessed December 26, 2015). A different example is the German General Staff Officer Course (GSOC). The two-year GSOC is the final academic venue for only about 15% of German Officers within their twelfth to thirteenth year of service. Due to the differences in structure and purpose, it does not serve as a good comparison to CGSS within the scope of this paper. For more information see, German Armed Forces Command and Staff College, "Technology in Operation for Security," http://www.fueakbw.de/fileadmin/user_upload/attachment/Broschuere-FueAkBw-englisch.pdf (accessed December 26, 2015).

[67] University of Rhode Island, "Critical Thinking," http://www.uri.edu/personal/szunjic/philos/critthink.htm (accessed December 27, 2015).

[68] University of Massachusetts, "Master of Arts in Critical and Creative Thinking," http://www.umassonline.net/degrees/online-degree-master-arts-critical-creative-thinking (accessed December 27, 2015).

[69] University of Central Oklahoma, "Credit Hour Definition and Application to Courses," https://www.uco.edu/academic-affairs/files/policiesandguidelines/2instructionandcoursework/2.11CreditHrdefinition.pdf (accessed December 26, 2015).

[70] U.S. Department of the Army, *Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management*, 15.

[71] Ibid., 18.

[72] Jörg Muth, *Command Culture: Officer Education in the U.S. Army and the German Armed Forces, 1901-1940, and the Consequences for World War II* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2011), 122-123.

[73] Schifferle, *America's School for War*, 78-82. Beginning in the 1920's the length of the course changed several times over the next twenty years.

[74] Director, CGSS Colonel Douglas Cardinale, "Education Guidance/Intent for AIS Reviews and Planning for CGSS 2016/2017," memorandum for Command and General Staff School (CGSS) Faculty and Staff, Fort Leavenworth, KS, December 14, 2015, 8.

[75] Ibid., 4.

[76] U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, *Non-Resident Intermediate Level Education (ILE) Self-Study* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, January 8, 2008), 1-3.

[77] Ricks, "How to Fix the CGSC".

[78] U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, "Course Catalog," 32.

[79] Schifferle, *America's School for War*, 137-138.

[80] U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, "CGSC Student Achievement."

[81] U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, *The Army University White Paper: Educating Leaders to Win in a Complex World*, 10-12.