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INFORMATION PAPER

Subj: USMC CSC PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION “WAY FORWARD”

BLUF: The future of Professional Military Education (PME) at Marine Corps Command and Staff College will include: 1) continued emphasis on preparation for Great Power competition and conflict with peer competitors, 2) continued emphasis on developing graduates prepared to lead Operational Planning Teams in both service and joint environments, 3) increased emphasis on Operations in the Information Environment, 4) expanded opportunities for advanced students to collaborate with University Chairs and outside organizations on topics of mutual interest.

1. Purpose: To provide the J-7 with CSC’s vision for PME in preparation for the Military Education Coordination Council (MECC) October 2018 meeting.
2. Context: The mission of Marine Corps Command and Staff College is to provide graduate level education and training in order to develop critical thinkers, innovative problem solvers, and ethical leaders who will serve as commanders and staff officers with Marine Air Ground Task Forces and with service, joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational organizations confronting complex and uncertain security environments.

To do so, CSC strives to develop graduates who:

- a. Understand war, the spectrum of conflict, and the practice of operational art.
- b. Understand national policy and strategy, joint and Marine Corps doctrine, and their application within the geopolitical context.
- c. Understand the effects of culture on military operations and security matters.
- d. Think critically, make sound decisions, and develop innovative solutions to complex problems.
- e. Anticipate change, recognize opportunity and risk, and lead transitions.
- f. Lead in an ethical manner while serving as commanders and staff officers.
- g. Communicate complex ideas with clarity and precision in both oral and written forms.

Our curriculum is structured to reach these outcomes by using the first semester to build conceptual depth and the second to analyze advanced concepts and applications. We begin the academic year with a two-week course called Think, Decide, Communicate – essentially an introduction to the skills and cognitive approaches necessary for graduate education. Other courses in the first semester include The Evolution of Warfare through 1945, National Security Affairs in the International System, Joint and Marine Corps Operations, the Marine Corps Planning Process, and Leadership in the Profession of Arms I.

The second semester courses, Evolving National Security Concepts & Operations and Complex Operational Problem Solving & Design, build on the foundational understanding of the first semester content and require students to grapple with the complex and uncertain environments they will face. These courses are augmented by the continuation courses The Evolution of Warfare Since 1945 and Leadership in the Profession of Arms II.

The exercise continuum progresses throughout the year, steadily increasing in scope and complexity. Beginning with planning for Marine Expeditionary Brigade operations, it advances through Marine Expeditionary Force and functional component operations, and culminates with Combined Joint Task

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Force operations with functionally aligned components. These four exercises present the student Operational Planning Teams with complex scenarios requiring them to plan kinetic operations against a notional peer threat.

Interspersed amongst the four “peer threat” exercises are two other planning exercises. One requires the students to plan for Security Force Assistance and Counter-Insurgency operations, and the other requires students to plan for Defense Support to Civil Authorities. The resulting balance places proper emphasis on the vital efforts to plan against a peer threat while not ignoring the lessons learned through years of Counter-Insurgency operations and the regularly required DSCA. A practical application exercise on Foreign Humanitarian Assistance is also conducted during the second semester.

Fifteen assessed writing assignments are woven throughout the year, aligned with the courses taught each semester. These writing assignments not only give students a venue to display their understanding of course concepts, but iteratively build the skills necessary to become more concise, lucid, and effective writers. Coaching and feedback on these assignments are enabled by the military and civilian faculty, and augmented by the writing and communications professionals in the Leadership Communications Skills Center at Marine Corps University. Students that participate in the Masters of Military Studies program (generally 80% of the students) are also graded on their master’s paper.

Curriculum delivery methods center around the seminar method, with lectures, staff rides, case studies, wargames, and practical applications also used as appropriate to the topic and desired learning outcome.

The curriculum is delivered by 24 military officers, 20 PhDs, 2 civilian support staff, and 2 enlisted administrative support Marines. This faculty and staff supports 210-230 students who are divided into sixteen Conference Groups. This construct maintains seminars of 13 or 14 students, each led and taught by a military faculty member and a civilian PhD.

The core faculty is augmented by numerous subject matter experts including University Chairs during the College’s five week elective period. The electives all align with curriculum learning outcomes, but allow students to gain depth in subjects beyond what is offered in the core courses.

3. PME Initiatives:

a. Operations in the Information Environment. Over the past two academic years, CSC has increased the emphasis on OIE by creating two new classes, bringing in three subject matter experts to engage with the students and faculty (DC-I, CG MARFORCYBER, and CO MCIOC), and emphasizing Information as one of the warfighting functions that must be considered during all planning exercises.

b. Expanding Student Offsite Learning Opportunities. CSC has found that providing small groups of students the opportunity to participate in various activities that augment the core curriculum not only excites the students, but also enhances the seminar discussions when those students return to the classroom. Examples include a staff ride to Yorktown, a guided discussion about the Constitution at Montpelier, participation in a China Symposium at the Naval Academy, involvement in numerous service wargames, and an amphibious study at Naval Base Norfolk. These initiative helped cultivate a spirit of inquiry that inspired Ender’s Galley, a student-led group that independently studied Operations in the Information Environment in its spare time. They brought in expert speakers, collaborated with think tanks and research institutes, and brought what they learned into our exercises. Harnessing this independent desire to learn will help keep CSC abreast of emerging opportunities in a better manner than relying on faculty alone.

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c. Marrying Student Interest and the Research Needs of the Services. The Gray Scholars Program has proven to be a unique method of helping advanced students channel their energies into topics of interest to service leaders. Research lines of inquiry over the past several years have included, Manned/Unmanned Teaming, Security Implications in the Arctic, Operations in Mega-Cities, Wargaming Against Peer Adversaries, and The Study of Military Theory Through the Ages. This year's focus areas are Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, and Swarming. CSC has recently started awarding Gray Scholars graduate certificates in selected topics.

4. Challenges. In order to maintain the quality and relevance of the education we provide, we must place additional emphasis on providing the highest quality, quantity, and diversity of military instructors.

a. New faculty must arrive in time to prepare for delivering curriculum – midyear change outs are disruptive to student learning.

b. CSC is at a perpetual disadvantage in attracting the most highly qualified instructors, e.g. those who are post-command, TLS graduates, because our billets are not Joint. The MECC should consider how PME would be improved if JPME Instructor Billets became joint qualifying, thereby opening up a larger quantity of highly qualified potential instructors.

5. Conclusion. CSC remains committed to providing the services and our interagency and international partners with graduates who have the educational underpinnings and intellectual agility to find military advantage in the changing landscape. We continuously evaluate what we deliver and how we deliver it to ensure we maintain a cognitive advantage over potential adversaries.

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