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White Paper

The National Intelligence University's Perspective on the Future of Professional Military Education

Introduction

The National Intelligence University is the nation's only accredited university operating at the TS/SCI level and dedicated to the Intelligence mission. The NIU seeks to advance the intelligence profession through a holistic, integrative, and contextual approach to education that promotes dynamic teaching, engaged learning, original research, academic outreach, analytical problem solving, rigorous research methods, collaborative processes, and lifelong learning. NIU's unique mission frames our view of PME and allows us to speak from a somewhat novel perspective. From that perspective, we offer five observations on the future of Professional Military Education.

Observation 1: Avoid the cookie cutter approach

From a pragmatic standpoint, our first observation is that *one size cannot fit all*. Critical core competencies vary from service to service and institution to institution. These unique and varied competencies will always form the bedrock of an institution's curriculum and the PME community must resist the urge to grow prescriptive and rigid with respect to standards. Professional military education can take on many forms, and at NIU this educational diversity is a core strength of Defense Intelligence Enterprise education and underpins our approach to PME.

Observation 2: Encourage Classroom Diversity

One of the core principals of the student learning experience at NIU is diversity in the classroom. Students from the 17 different member organizations of the IC interact in a truly joint environment. NIU students are not just producers of intelligence, they are consumers as well. Similarly, PME must prepare officers to operate in a complex, whole-of-government, joint interagency environment. The US military never aspires to conduct operations in a vacuum -- disconnected from the Intelligence Community, State Department, law enforcement, or its global allies. Focusing PME exclusively on the "M" of DIME (or DIMEFIL) does a disservice to both the students and to the national-level leaders they will be serving. In the future, PME should make a concerted effort to capitalize on the benefits of a diverse classroom experience that best reflects the environment in which its students will operate.

Observation 3: Knowledge *and* Skills

PME should focus on the word education. An expertly designed and professionally implemented liberal educational experience can impart not only the knowledge that students need to take on future roles but also skills that are critical to their success in those roles. One skill that NIU focuses on developing is critical thinking. High-profile intelligence failures in the post-9/11 period drove deep introspection in the IC on issues related to our tradecraft and workforce, and this resulted in many critical reforms in the Intelligence Enterprise. Today, our students are educated on the use of structured analytical techniques and are taught to avoid analytic pitfalls in an environment that encourages students to take risks while engaging in creative problem solving. As the nation's primary institution where the Intelligence Enterprise can bank its intellectual capital (including that of our students), we emphasize the development of future leaders who seek truth at all cost while learning to examine a problem from a variety of perspectives.

Likewise, students in a PME program should – in addition to learning about the art of war or what shape the next conflict may take – develop the skills that will best prepare them to operate at more senior levels in their profession. Skills such as dealing with uncertainty, creativity, and the aforementioned ability to think critically can all be nurtured in a proper educational setting. Consider widening the PME curriculum to include subjects in the social sciences and humanities that lend themselves to skill development. In a similar vein, a more diverse PME faculty makeup could also foster important skills.

Observation 4: Inspire Lifelong Learning

All educational institutions should inspire their students to pursue lifelong learning. While there are different ways to incentivize this behavior, NIU's approach provides more curricular bandwidth for deeper exploration of fewer - but more essential - topics. In this sense we believe that less might actually be more for intelligence education. Deeper study moves students from novice scholars to journeymen to professionals - professionals who are more inherently curious within their field of endeavor or functional mission. At NIU, we believe that inspiring PME students to lifelong learning in their areas of focus and interests in the profession of intelligence, vice having a series of intermittent educational experiences, will provide a rich continuum of connected learning with many intangible benefits for DoD.

Observation 5: Engage Your Customers

NIU's tripartite mission (teaching, research, engagement) broadens and deepens our classroom experience as we pursue a robust research and engagement agenda in partnership with the Intelligence Community that we support. This takes multiple forms as experiential learning for our PME students as we engage with the IC to best utilize NIU in its role as the knowledge bank for the IC's intellectual capital. This approach keeps our faculty and students current with IC trends and topics, allows the university to partner with the IC on its hardest problems and perennial challenges – while at the same time providing a forum for independent, educational perspectives in serving as an interface between the IC, Academia, and the private sector. NIU's broad mission for the IC also provides access to the IC's most senior organizational leaders and to a broad range of SMEs and thought leaders that students might otherwise not engage with,

especially in a strategic, Chatham House environment where civil debate and discourse is the mission.

Conclusion

Too often, much like the culture of the IC, PME and other educational experiences are seen as time away from the mission. NIU believes it is time to shift this paradigm by adopting the philosophy that PME and IC education should do more than simply improve the individual. Effective education should, by design, build a continuous and connected cadre of future leaders equipped and ready to return to their organizations and communities prepared to resolve specific problems. In the end, it will be these critical thinkers and lifelong learners who will build and lead forward-leaning organizations with the speed and agility required to take on the greatest National Security challenges we face now – while maintaining decision advantage for the future.