



Representative Ike Skelton, then Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, begins hearing on Iraq, January 2007 (U.S. Air Force/D. Myles Cullen)

Joint Professional Military Education

A Retrospective of the Skelton Panel

By Anna T. Waggener

Unprecedented levels of joint Service cooperation occurred during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. This teamwork did not come about by serendipity, but by the vision

Dr. Anna T. Waggener was Director of Institutional Assessment at the U.S. Army War College.

of the 1989 Report of the Panel on Military Education of the One Hundredth Congress (the Skelton Report) that described four elements within the joint professional military education (JPME) framework.¹ These elements would enhance the education of officers in each of the Services. Since that time, these elements have proved just as

relevant today as they were more than 25 years ago. To ensure jointness, the Skelton Panel adopted several quantitative requirements. Each requirement, monitored by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, at JPME institutions builds the framework visualized by the Skelton Panel that promotes joint education to defend America



American diplomat Richard Haass addresses senior military leadership during Strategic Studies Seminar at Eisenhower Executive Office Building in Washington, DC (DOD/Sean K. Harp)

against all threats today and well into the 21st century. To understand how best to use these requirements, we must understand what they are and how they contribute to joint acculturation.

At a time when the Nation faces threats across the globe, it is important to reflect on how JPME, envisioned by the Skelton Report, helps to ensure U.S. military officers are well prepared and developed to prevail against these threats.² Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 1800.01D (Change 1) of September 15, 2011, provides the requirements, standards, and learning areas to educate senior military and civilian leaders in strategy and policy to “produce the most professionally competent (strategic-minded, critical-thinking) individual possible.”³

A watershed moment in joint officer education occurred when President Ronald Reagan signed the

Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, which designated the Chairman as the “principal military advisor to the president, National Security Council, and Secretary of Defense.”⁴ The full title of the Goldwater-Nichols Act is “A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to strengthen the position of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to provide for more efficient and effective operation of the Armed Forces, and for other purposes.”⁵ As the title implies, accountability for ensuring jointness and education begins with the Chairman.

Three years later in 1989, then–House Armed Services Committee Chairman Les Aspin appointed then–Congressman Ike Skelton to lead a panel to conduct an assessment of military education. This panel developed the key recommendations that later became the requirements, standards, and learning

areas set in the Chairman’s policy for officer joint professional military education.⁶

The 1975 Department of Defense Committee on Excellence in Education, chaired by then–Deputy Secretary of Defense William Clements, influenced the 1989 Skelton Panel perspective with the concept that military education was to be “a broader and more balanced perspective.”⁷ With this in mind, the Skelton Panel adopted a framework that would build joint awareness, joint attitudes, and acculturation of the Services including civilians and international officers. The supporting structures to this broadened educational opportunity resulted in the rationale for four quantitative requirements as a way to ensure jointness: student-to-faculty ratio, military faculty mix, percentage of military instructors with specific previous education or experience, and class student mix.

Student-to-Faculty Ratio

The student-to-faculty ratio discussed in chapter V of the Skelton Panel report emerged as one of four quantitative requirements. The panel recommended “a relatively low student/faculty ratio overall ranging between 3 and 4 to 1, with the lower ratios at the senior schools”⁸ that would give time for faculty to participate in traditional academic duties including research and service. The student-to-faculty ratio requirement for senior-level colleges not to exceed 3.5 students to 1 faculty member has not changed since it was set as a requirement by the Chairman in 1996. Difficulties in counting the respective faculty to include in the ratio have occurred over the years. Revisions in policy have attempted to define the counting process, yet joint education accreditation and reaffirmation program reviews have shown a wide variance in counting methodology. While civilian regional accrediting agencies provide detailed counting guidance, part of the counting difficulty in a joint education institution includes identifying faculty who are “full-time equivalents” among a mostly full-time faculty population. In its April 2010 report *Another Crossroads? Professional Military Education Two Decades After the Goldwater-Nichols Act and the Skelton Panel*, the House Armed Services Committee highlighted the difficulty in counting the ratio through the lens of accreditation reviews.⁹ Afterward, the Deputy Director of the Joint Staff further explained counting faculty for the ratio in September 2010.¹⁰ The outcome of this supplementing guidance was that the counting methodology narrowed the variance among JPME programs; the ratio more closely represented the actual number of faculty performing joint education instruction.

The envy of civilian colleges and universities, this low ratio of 3.5 students to 1 faculty member for senior-level colleges or 4 for intermediate-level colleges as an upper limit is not without controversy among joint education institutions. Endorsed by the Chairman’s Joint Staff, the Military Education Coordination Council undertook a thorough

examination of the ratio in 2012. The council concluded that the established student-to-faculty ratios “serve as single-point quantitative proxies for a host of harder to quantify characteristics of quality JPME institutions.”¹¹ The result was to maintain the ratio based on possible increased faculty workload and possible decreased quality of education if the ratio were to be raised.¹²

Military Faculty Mix

The requirement for joint education institutions is to reflect a military faculty mix that is comprised of personnel from all the Services in the education process. This mix, defined in quantitative terms in policy, requires a split such as 60–40 percent or a proportional distribution, where the lesser percent represents nonhost military Services.

Most importantly, the lesser percent confirms the jointness of the teaching influences on the student learning experience, the main objective of the Skelton Panel. The senior-level colleges depend on nonhost military from other Services via a memorandum of agreement signed by the Service personnel chiefs and Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army for Army Operations, Plans, and Training to meet this requirement.¹³ Nevertheless, there are difficulties or delays in providing the needed nonhost mix every year among some joint institutions due to force requirements.

Percentage of Military Instructors with Specific Previous Education or Experience

The same military faculty mix is subject to a required percentage of specific education and experience. The Skelton Panel recommended that military faculty possess credentials that apply to the level of education to which they are assigned to teach with “proven records of excellence and . . . a specific area expertise.”¹⁴ Policy translated this requirement into the quantitative measure that “seventy-five percent of the military faculty should be graduates of a senior-level PME program or be Joint Qualified Officers.”¹⁵ The same

percent applies to intermediate-level PME programs with the added modification that they should be intermediate or senior-level graduates or Joint Qualified Officers.

Class Student Mix

Finally, the class and seminar mix is prescribed by policy in terms of expertise and Military Department, and like the military faculty mix, requires a split such as 60–40 percent, proportional distribution, or by a joint duty assignment list. Participating in a diverse, small group seminar of joint military, civilian, and international officers promotes the value of acculturation in the seminar. Bonds of friendship and understanding are formed during the shared educational experience that may prove critical in more than just military actions on the battlefield.

In his *2012 Army Strategic Planning Guidance*, General Raymond Odierno’s “Prevent, Shape, Win” concept highlighted the possible outcomes of acculturation to win wars when he referred to the opportunities to establish relationships across the globe.¹⁶ Civilian students representing various departments in the government enhance the education process, while learning about military culture for their own potential leadership positions. International officers from a variety of countries around the world provide other countries’ perspectives and build relationships that may help prevent future conflicts with the United States. The Skelton Panel believed that “the objective of joint education should be to change officers’ attitudes about developing and employing multi-service forces.”¹⁷

Nonresident Education Programs

Joint education online programs (nonresident education programs), while not subject to the same quantitative measures described above, must be of the same high quality as education programs where students are in residence. These programs may employ combinations of residence and online learning, may accommodate each individual student or students as a group, and to the extent

possible, include a variety of Service mix, civilians, and international officers to promote jointness and acculturation.

In online programs, the four quantitative requirements of policy are met in a qualitative way that reflects the Chairman's intent. For example, student-to-faculty ratio is determined when comparing the delivery method to the needs of students. The military faculty mix and qualifications are demonstrated by representation of the Services, including the Reserve components. Diversity of class and student mix are evident when they include an assortment of all Services and interagency civilians to the maximum extent possible. At any rate, identifying the same characteristics in a qualitative way within an online program is an indicator that students are achieving the objectives of joint acculturation.

Common Educational Standards

Each institution and program, regardless if onsite resident education or nonresident education, intermediate-level college, or senior-level college, is accountable to the common educational standards (indicators that measure or describe academic excellence) defined in the Chairman's policy. The standards are similar to guidance or criteria in civilian regional accrediting agencies in that they address students, faculty, and resources in the broadest sense.¹⁸ This education must promote joint awareness and be delivered using an effective instructional methodology focused on the adult learning model. The institution must also assess achievements of its students and overall effectiveness of the education program. Faculty members are recruited with appropriate academic credentials, assessed periodically, and participate in faculty development opportunities. Institutional resources must support the educational process.

Each program is qualitatively and quantitatively assessed in view of these standards during the onsite accreditation visit. Civilian regional accrediting agencies accredit the institution as a whole as they look at the educational processes and outcomes. On the other hand, the Process for Accreditation of Joint

Education evaluation site visit considers each program as unique and reviews it compared to law and policy.¹⁹ Both accrediting agencies, however, assist the institution and program in evaluating achievement of its mission, vision, goals, objectives, and strategic plans within the lens of its accreditation standards. The more each institution engages in the self-study process, the more it can improve student learning and achievement.

Joint Learning Areas and Learning Objectives

As prescribed by the Skelton Panel and later included in policy, joint institutions offer curricula based on prescribed learning areas appropriate to the level of education. For instance, unless an institution is specifically addressed in policy, senior-level colleges will study defined areas that include:

- National Security Strategy
- National Military Strategy
- Joint Warfare, Theater Strategy, and Campaigning in a Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental, and Multinational Environment
- National and Joint Planning Systems and Processes
- Integration of Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental, and Multinational Capabilities
- Joint Strategic Leadership.²⁰

Subordinate learning objectives give more specific descriptions to the overall learning area. Courses are taught by both active and passive learning methods using readings with doctrinal emphasis, seminar dialogue, case studies and historical vignettes, lectures, and experiential learning opportunities that may span the entire program of study.

One of the requirements of the military onsite review for accreditation or reaffirmation of the program is to provide a mapping of each prescribed subordinate learning objective to each lesson taught. This matrix supports the evaluation site visit team in determining the extent to which the program meets the criteria of policy. The U.S. Army War College also maps learning areas to Bloom's Taxonomy levels of learning achievement

to show the hierarchy of learning required on each topic.²¹

Peer Accreditation Reviews

Inherent with the responsibility of joint education review, the Chairman publishes the accreditation charter in policy. Similar to site visit teams for civilian regional accreditation evaluation, the teams prescribed by the Chairman's charter ensure the appropriate mix of peers based on key characteristics of the individuals to form an evaluation site team. Again, similar to civilian regional accreditation and reaffirmation, the program under review provides a self-study that describes how it meets the requirements in addition to standards and learning areas. The evaluation site team provides a review of findings that includes a recommendation to the Chairman regarding the status of accreditation at the end of the onsite evaluation visit.

Influences on Joint Education Policy

There are no doubts the National Defense Authorization Act of 2013 review of JPME research institutions and the study on overall joint military education processes will impact the next revision of the Chairman's policy.²² In fact, in the October 2013 report to congressional committees, *Actions Needed to Implement DOD Recommendations for Enhancing Leadership Development*,²³ the Government Accountability Office accepted the Military Council's study on joint education and recommended setting timelines to implement the findings. Additionally, the Chairman's *Desired Leader Attributes for Joint Force 2020* will assist institutions in keeping joint learning areas and learning objectives aligned with his intent.²⁴ Other considerations certain to impact policy revision include a multitude of issues that have arisen since 2009, such as the military drawdown, constrained resources, online educational opportunities and student learning, knowledge management within an educational environment, and educational support technologies.

Conclusion

Of the four requirements to promote joint education—student-to-faculty ratio, military faculty mix, percentage of military faculty with specific previous education or experience, and class student mix—each measure is as important as the next. Combined with the specified learning areas and objectives, they build the framework visualized by the Skelton Panel that guides an officer throughout the remainder of a career and into the future. Dan McCauley’s article “JPME: The Need for Foresight” offered a pointed observation when he combined policy with the Capstone Concept for Joint Operations. He repeated the call for “leaders capable of succeeding in fluid and perhaps chaotic operating environments” and compared this capability to the military’s teaching on “nonlinearity, complexity, and uncertainty.”²⁵

These requirements, combined with the professional content and educational standards advanced by the Skelton Panel, build the framework for advancing the professional careers of the officer corps and the security of the Nation. JPME graduates meet the intent of the Chairman’s vision to ensure “that officers are properly prepared for their leadership roles at every level of activity and employment, and through this, ensure that the U.S. Armed Forces remain capable of defeating today’s threat and tomorrow’s.”²⁶ Strategy and policy will continue to adapt and change. The current drawdown and a possible follow-on sequester will make sustaining the current level of jointness more difficult to some degree. While we welcome the end of two significant military engagements, the return to a garrisoned force comes at the risk of a return to Service-oriented forces. In short, both the four elements and the spirit advanced by the Skelton Panel have served JPME and the joint force well. We need to sustain these elements and for good reasons. Joint education is the foundation upon which our national and military security strategies are learned, understood, and initiated. To guarantee that our military stands ready to defend America against

all threats and challenges, we need to retain the cultural advancements initiated by the Skelton Panel more than 25 years ago. JFQ

Notes

¹ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Armed Services, *Report of the Panel on Military Education of the One Hundredth Congress*, 101st Cong., 1st sess., 1989, no. 4, available at <<http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/007602201>>. Hereafter, the Skelton Report.

² Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) Instruction 1800.01D (CH 1), “Officer Professional Military Education Policy (OPMEP),” September 15, 2011, available at <http://dtic.mil/doctrine/education/officer_JPME/cjcsi1800_01d.pdf>.

³ *Ibid.*, A-1.

⁴ H.R. 3622, Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Skelton Report.

⁷ Richard L. Davis and Frank P. Donini, eds., *Professional Military Education for Air Force Officers: Comments and Criticisms*, Defense Technical Information Center, 9, available at <www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA421950>.

⁸ Skelton Report, 143.

⁹ House Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, *Another Crossroads? Professional Military Education Two Decades After the Goldwater-Nichols Act and the Skelton Panel*, H.R. 111-4 (Washington, DC: House Committee on Armed Services, April 2010), 121, available at <http://democrats.armedservices.house.gov/index.cfm/files/serve?File_id=d4748d4a-b358-49d7-8c9a-aa0ba6f581a6>.

¹⁰ “The Joint Staff Memorandum for PAJE Team Members, Subject: Standing Operating Procedures (SOP) for Counting Faculty and Student Ratios during Process for Accreditation of Joint Education (PAJE) Assessments,” September 8, 2010.

¹¹ Military Education Coordination Council Working Group, *Rationale for OPMEP Student-to-Faculty Ratio Standards for Joint Professional Military Education*, Student-to-Faculty Ratio Study—Final Report, February 8, 2012.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ “Memorandum of Agreement: Assignment of Military Faculty at Service Senior Level Colleges,” signed December 30, 2005, by Deputy Chief of Staff G-3/5/7 (U.S. Army), Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (U.S. Navy), Deputy Chief of Staff Personnel (U.S. Air Force), and Deputy Commandant, Manpower and Reserve Affairs (U.S. Marine Corps).

¹⁴ Skelton Report, 3.

¹⁵ CJCS Instruction 1800.01D (CH 1).

¹⁶ *2012 Army Strategic Planning Guidance* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, 2012), available at <<http://us-army.vo.llnwd.net/e2/c/downloads/243816.pdf>>.

¹⁷ Skelton Report, 57.

¹⁸ Middle States Commission of Colleges and Schools, New England Association of Schools and Colleges, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

¹⁹ CJCS Instruction 1800.01D (CH 1).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, “Service Senior-Level Colleges Joint Learning Areas and Objectives (JPME Phase II),” E-E-1.

²¹ *Ibid.*, “Bloom’s Taxonomy, the Cognitive Domain: Evaluation, Synthesis, Analysis, Application, Comprehension, and Knowledge,” E-A-1.

²² Leon E. Panetta, *Review of Joint Professional Military Education Research Institutions* (351808), February 19, 2013, and *Joint Professional Military Education* (351810), February 20, 2013.

²³ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Actions Needed to Implement DOD Recommendations for Enhancing Leadership Development*, Report to Congressional Committees, Joint Military Education, GAO-14-29, October 2013, available at <www.gao.gov/assets/660/658527.pdf>.

²⁴ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Education White Paper* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, July 16, 2012), available at <http://www.jcs.mil/content/files/2012-07/071812110954_CJCS_Joint_Education_White_Paper.pdf>.

²⁵ Dan McCauley, “JPME: The Need for Foresight,” *Small Wars Journal*, May 24, 2013, available at <<http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/jpme-the-need-for-foresight>>.

²⁶ CJCS Instruction 1800.01D (CH 1).