

CCME



Advisory Committees on Military Education (ACMEs): of Renewed Value to the Department of Defense (Part Four)

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REJUVENATION: A GAMEPLAN

As noted in the last of my three articles CCME published last year about the rise and fall of the influence of ACMEs across the country, it was my intent to publish one last article on the subject upon conclusion of the 2005 CCME Conference. My plan was twofold. The first was to cover the outcome of a series of meetings and planning sessions at that conference which focused on the rejuvenation of the ACME movement. The second was to address the aftermath and impact of those meetings.

RENEWED FOCUS

The CCME keynote presentation set the tone for present and future ACME leadership. The theme of the 2005 keynote presentation acknowledged the ongoing departure of key leadership which would leave a void that must be filled by dynamic understudies who have been waiting in the wings for years. This departure presents a crisis in that the continuity of leadership within DoD voluntary education as a whole, and the ACMEs in particular, was fading at the same time it was providing others the opportunity to step forward to fill that void and to bring new ideas, vibrancy, enthusiasm and productivity to the scene.

Numerous challenges await this new leadership. Among them are:

- providing in-state tuition for military personnel and their families
- adjusting to new concepts of accreditation
- simplifying the MIVER process
- establishing quality criteria for issuance of military tuition assistance for distance education programs in which service members are participating in record numbers

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- centralizing some of the backroom operations of the voluntary education program
- bringing down the cost of books for those participating in the DoD education program
- expanding scholarship opportunities for military spouses
- reinvigorating the many support organizations critical to DoD and the Services fielding the largest continuing education program anywhere on the planet

The challenge to government and institutional representatives alike was to “get proactively involved, not just with installation education programs, not just with professional organizations, not just at DoD WorldWide, but by also becoming an advocate for the service members and the military families in their states.”

REKINDLED INTEREST

The call to rekindle the ACME movement did not fall on deaf ears. Many more attending the 2005 CCME conference took the call to heart than could be anticipated. Following the initial keynote on ACMEs, and the ACME Presidents Panel, DoD sponsored several concurrent sessions to help with the process of rejuvenation. Each session was very well attended by institutional representatives, installation education office leadership, state education leaders, and senior military.

The first concurrent session was organized for those interested in forming a state ACME. So many attended that session that some states had to select a point of contact to which follow-on material could be forwarded and then redistributed to others throughout the states. In some instances that responsibility was shared between institutional and installation representatives. Participants from Alaska, Colorado, Kansas, Massachusetts, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, and Washington State

all expressed interest in forming an ACME upon their return home.

Participants wanted to know what an ACME would be expected to do. The obvious response was for members to determine what could be done to benefit service members and families interested in pursuing a higher education within the states involved. That could range anywhere from working to provide in-state tuition for those serving and residing within the state to establishing special scholarships for the spouses and children of those wounded or killed in Iraq or Afghanistan.

KEY PARTICIPANTS

Several attendees unfamiliar with the military education program wanted to know who should be ACME members. By the time discussion concluded, it was apparent that, at a minimum, education officers from across the state or the region, directors of college programs on the installations involved, senior military leadership, as well as representatives from state education agencies or state legislative committees, need to be included. Leadership from each of these groups either provided, or could provide, some type of educational support to the military and their families. To that end, each need to be involved; each has the ability to help provide a full range of educational programs and services on or near a military installation.

Those programs and services could include everything from a full range of accelerated degree programs offered right on base, accompanied by a permanent on-site staff, to classes available at centers or campuses off base, or the “traditional” distance programs, offered to their traditional constituency within the state or around the world. The mission of the installation, as well as the needs and desires of the on-base constituency could

serve as the bellwether for what could successfully be offered to the military personnel and their families. The installation education director, in coordination with the educational providers selected to offer those programs, should obviously provide the basic framework around which the ACME would form and congeal. They above all else would know what the needs of their unique constituency would be.

Senior leadership from within the state educational community, as well as applicable legislative functions within the state, not to mention the senior military leadership with whom many of those offices already have a working relationship, add the focus needed to ensure the access ACMEs require is actually realized. Without their participation and commitment, much of what an ACME can and should do may have little possibility of having much visibility or impact. Education directors must keep senior military leaders engaged in representing the best interests of their personnel. Deans and Directors of Continuing Education must keep leadership in local and state institutions of higher learning aware of the needs of military students in the states.

WAYS TO ORGANIZE

After determining who should be a member of the ACME, questions always come up about who should take the lead in forming an ACME. Potential leadership in one state noted that their institutional hierarchy did not want to appear to be the focus of or official sponsor of an ACME. Senior Education Officers in another state insisted they should be the focus around which an ACME should be formed. In yet another instance, senior military leadership in one state with few military installations wanted to limit participation to in-state installations and institutions, although some of their major educational providers were from out of state.

Grappling with and resolving these variables can actually impede meaningful progress toward forming an ACME. But they must be addressed and resolved. Education Officers should not attempt to control formation of an ACME; neither should institutions of higher learning within the state involved. The ACME is not “their” organization and should not be used to benefit one party or the other. The whole purpose of an ACME is to form a collaborative effort that includes ESOs, representatives of schools offering programs

on or immediately off the installation, as well as educational and military leadership within the state.

The intent should be for all parties concerned to form an organization that generates interaction between all providers with one purpose in mind. That would be to determine what they can all do together to provide a sound and affordable educational experience for the military personnel and family members stationed at the installations they serve. It’s all about the need to provide educational and career development opportunities for their military constituencies, so that they become productive members of their military and local communities.



DETERMINATION AND PLANNING

Following the 2005 CCME conference, numerous educational leaders returned home determined to establish an ACME. To kick off their efforts within their states or regions, the first thing they discovered they had to do was determine whether they had the basic support mechanisms in place to warrant establishing an ACME. They had to decide whether they had sufficient installations within their state to go it alone, or whether they should form a regional ACME with a broader organizational base that pooled the efforts of two or three states. They needed to determine how many in-state and out-of-state institutions offering programs on these installations were interested in participating.

Once these decisions had been made, those interested worked hard to pull together a cadre of leaders representing the installations served, as well as the institutions providing educational programs on those installations. They had to decide who had the initiative, the time and the support to



take the lead. It was not always the same group who took the lead in each instance. In some states, ESOs and local college directors took the lead and pushed for development of the ACME. Senior military leadership helped in some instances, discouraged the standup in others. The same went for senior state educational and institutional leaders unfamiliar with the intent and scope of what ACMEs do and what participation implied. Each group was feeling its own way in implementing an organization few had any experience with.

EARLY SUCCESS STORIES

To ensure they were headed in the right direction, they consulted the leadership of existing ACMEs; some called DoD for ideas and suggestions. They wanted to make sure they invited the right players so they could get off the ground in good form. They eventually established organizational meetings of key players across their state as well as institutions offering programs on or near bases around the state. They grappled with who should participate and what their roles should be.

In Virginia, state leadership interested in the long-term well being of military serving within the state, took the lead in formation of a Virginia ACME. Regional leadership of Navy's Voluntary Education program buoyed that interest by stepping into the leadership of the effort upon departure of the state official who kick-started it in the first place. To date, a couple of well-focused and well-thought-out organizational meetings generated a draft charter and a focused cadre of professional educators interested in establishing an ACME dedicated to serving the educational best interests of military personnel and families stationed, living and working in Virginia. Next on its agenda is selecting officers and establishing a proactive agenda for the group to address.

North Carolina's interest in forming an ACME evolved a little differently. Senior academic leadership from one of the major provider institutions within the state took the lead in establishing its state ACME. State and institutional concern initially dampened the enthusiasm of those working to set up the ACME. The institution was concerned it might end up being responsible for providing the organization space and funding for the activities and meetings of any ACME that might be formed, which is not the case. ACMEs are volunteer organizations with officers and agendas separate from that of the member institutions or installations that incidentally provide planning or meeting space for officers and periodic meetings. With that concern behind them, North Carolina educators continue to work on forming an ACME conceptually comfortable to in-state and out-of-state institutions that provide degree programs to the military and their families.

ESO and educational leaders in Alaska, Kansas and New York have also worked on forming an ACME within their states, all with differing levels of progress and success to date. Alaska determined that its military baseline may be too small to justify forming an ACME like those in Florida or Texas. Kansas, through the efforts of the ESO at Fort Riley, is trying to determine the potential scope and nature of any ACME formed to benefit their service members. New York hosted an initial organizational meeting and continues to determine the need for and configuration of an ACME in the State of New York.

TYPICAL EVOLUTION

Once a new ACME gets its feet on the ground, its leadership begins to outline its next steps, which appear quite similar in focus, form and outcome.

After an organizing committee develops a draft charter, they tend to invite a wide spectrum of educational leaders to an organizational kick-off meeting. They invite education officers from across the state, institutional on-base directors, senior military leaders, representatives of applicable state agencies and legislative committees, senior leaders of institutions with on-base programs to the charter meeting. Participants eligible for membership in the new organization review, revise and adopt a charter and then elect officers. The officers and leaders representing key segments of the statewide military education community sign off on the charter that commits their organizations to the interrelationships needed to provide a quality and affordable college education to military personnel and their families.



The new ACME establishes a working agenda that addresses issues key to providing a broad range of educational opportunities to its new constituency. The ACME forms ad hoc committees from institutional, education office, legislative and state educational functions to study and come up with plans that will address issues impacting the military within their states.

Once the ACME has worked the issues and come up with solutions, they work with their peers across the military's and state's educational spectrum. The ACME president normally signs some agreements with appropriate installation, institutional and state leaders. On other occasions, depending on the significance of the issue involved, the ACME president coordinates and signs agreements for major decisions with senior military and state political or agency leadership.

TRAINING THE LEADERSHIP

How will new ACME leadership know or learn what to do and how to do it? How will they know who to approach

within the military and the state to get things done? How will they know who at DoD they could work some issues with when trying to execute the duties of their offices? Who will train them on the do's and don'ts of how to run an ACME? That is where focused and significant symbiotic professional networking comes in.

DoD leadership has met with a select number of professional education associations and ACME leaders to see if, in an expanded national role, a national organization could take on the role of "consolidator" as far as some "things ACME" were concerned. One or two of the organizations have weighed the issues at hand and have committed to consider working with DoD, in its efforts to expand the ACME process.

In outyears, if this new relationship can be accommodated, a national organization would provide a platform for professional development opportunities for ACME leadership. That platform would consist of specially constructed concurrent sessions at a national conference that would specifically focus on ACME leadership and program efforts. Since DoD is interested in helping contribute to the renewal efforts of Service-oriented professional organizations like the ACMEs, DoD would commit to help organize initial efforts along these lines for a conference in 2007 and then lateral that off to the association of choice and a special subcommittee of ACME representatives formed specifically for that reason.

Potential ACME leadership sessions could include familiarization with political structures within states responsible for educational legislation, policies and procedures. These special sessions might also focus on how to work issues within the military education community within a state, as well as with the Services and DoD. They could provide pointers on when and how to energize senior military commanders heading up large installations within a state or region, or when to raise an issue up a notch or two. The possibilities would be endless for ACMEs to individually establish a framework within which they could acquire these skills in isolation on their own.

The professional association that the ACMEs eventually affiliate with could also host major and concurrent sessions at its conferences that will focus on major issues being addressed by ACMEs across the country. Centralized concurrent

sessions of this nature would lend themselves to addressing lessons learned which worked in one state and might be applied successfully in another.

Likewise, the host organization could provide a forum for ACME leaders to meet and plan coordinated efforts across state lines that would benefit military personnel stationed in several states. There are endless opportunities where a central setting of this nature could help ACMEs with joint, as well as with individual challenges and missions.

WIN WIN FOR ALL

This new approach would generate an interrelationship that could be valuable for the ACMEs as well as the host association involved. While this expanded role would most definitely add to an association's national charter, with DoD's participation and partnership, it would free the state ACMEs from having to devote energy developing duplicative training programs and strategic planning sessions in isolation on their own. The host association, with the help of ACME leadership, would be able to produce focused agendas and analyses from a professional development perspective relevant to ACMEs' needs, while the ACMEs would continue to conduct their own state business as usual.

The ACMEs would also potentially be able to host "multi-state" meetings and planning sessions as concurrent sessions in a professional education setting as part of broader annual training opportunities provided at the national organization's meeting.

DoD and the Services in turn could use this new setting to address issues with state ACMEs and the host association to bring focus to issues impacting the education of military personnel and their families. Each party to this new collaboration would have immediate access to each other annually at a single meeting. Colleges, universities, ESOs, state legislators, state education agencies, military and institutional leadership, DoD and the Services would be in one location at the same conference and would be able to address and resolve challenges firsthand ... in a planned and structured format designed specifically for that.

THE NEXT STEP?

What's the best way to find out what comes next in the evolution of this expanded relationship between the states and groups of participants interested in benefiting educational opportunities for those serving the nation? You need to attend the upcoming CCME meeting scheduled for Reno, Nevada from January 30 through February 2, 2006.

DoD will host a panel discussion on the "Health and Well-Being of ACMEs Across the Country." The panel will consist of presidents and organizing chairs of existing and forming ACMEs. Panelists will address successes to date in rejuvenating existing ACMEs and in establishing new ones, how existing ACMEs have helped new ACMEs over the past year (what worked and what didn't), discuss the issues ACMEs are proactively addressing in the states and regions, our overall efforts in identifying a home for fielding concurrent sessions for the professional development of future ACME leadership, and where we plan to go from here ... together.

Following the panel discussion, DoD leadership will be prepared to discuss and work with ACMEs in side sessions to help leverage the dynamics of this presentation and to address the state organizations' continuing commitment to this process over the coming years. Getting from here to there should prove very interesting and very exciting. So, see you in Reno.



*Please visit our Web site for the
latest draft of the symposium agenda*

WWW.CCMEONLINE.ORG

Deadlines are approaching!

HOTEL INFORMATION

If you have not made your reservations yet for Reno, please do so right away to insure you have a room for this year's symposium! The CCME Symposium will be held at the Nugget Hotel in Reno, Nevada, 30 January through 2 February, 2006. You will be delighted to know that we have negotiated a very favorable rate of \$80 per night plus the usual taxes. While the hotel does not have a government rate per se, the negotiated rate is tremendous, given the location and the facilities available for the Symposium.

Please contact the hotel identifying CCME when you call for your reservations. The number is 800.648.1177. This information will also be posted on the Web site at www.ccmeonline.org.

BOARD OFFICE - OPEN POSITIONS

We have three Board positions that will become open this year. They are: President Elect (Institutions), Vice President (Institutions), and Assistant Secretary. We encourage you to run and/or nominate someone for these positions. Full details along with the nomination form are available at www.ccmeonline.org. Please send the nomination forms and specific questions to Mebane Harrison at mebane.harrison@navy.mil.

Pre-Conference SOC College Workshop

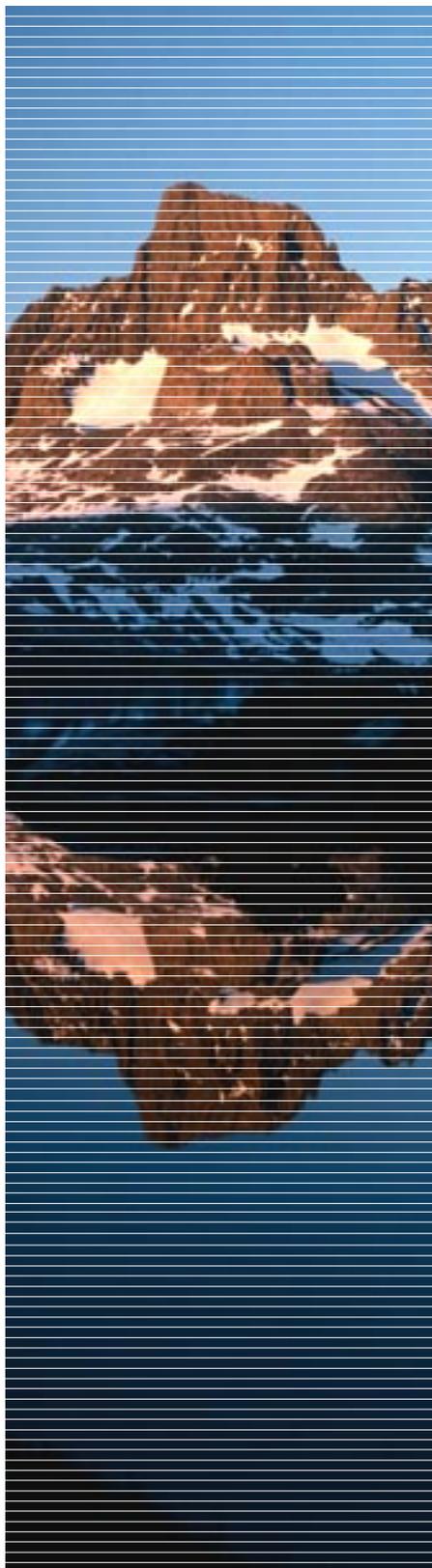
Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) will conduct a College Workshop for member institutions on January 30 in conjunction with the Council of College and Military Educators' (CCME) 2006 Annual Symposium in Reno, Nevada. The SOC College Workshop will run from 9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. on Monday, January 30, at the Nugget Hotel at 1100 Nugget Avenue, Reno, Nevada. The SOC College Workshop has two goals. One is to bring college representatives up-to-date on service-specific SOC programs. The second is to highlight ways colleges can use all SOC programs to recruit and retain students in a military market consisting of active duty service members, reserve component members, and veterans.

There is no cost to attend the SOC College Workshop. Round-table discussions on selected topics will occur after the lunch break. Due to space limitations, workshop registration is required. Additional workshop information and the workshop registration form are available on the SOC Web site (www.soc.aascu.org) or by calling SOC at 1.800.368.5622.

SYMPOSIUM REGISTRATION

We now have an online payment page at https://www.ccmeonline.org/online_application.shtml where you can register for the annual symposium. If you have any questions or problems with the webpage contact Larry Dempsey at ldempsey@webster.edu. If you have questions about the form or its information contact Barbara Bockman at bockman@chapman.edu.

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