

NCOES to undergo scrutiny at April workshop

By Spc. Jimmy Norris

More than 170 key staff members from NCO academies worldwide will discuss changes to the NCO Education System (NCOES) at the 2003 Commandants Workshop at the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy, Fort Bliss, Texas, April 8-10.

The workshop will be an opportunity for commandants, assistant commandants and training specialists from NCO academies throughout the Army to discuss important issues pertaining to NCOES and make a difference in policy and doctrine.

"If NCOs are the backbone of the Army, then the NCO academies are the backbone of the NCO Corps," said Col. Michael Enneking, USASMA commandant. "We are concerned with keeping doctrine current and keeping in touch with the soldiers in the field. The doctrine developers at the Sergeants Major Academy are constantly in touch with leaders from all components. This workshop is designed to help us develop training that's viable in the Army's contemporary operating environment," he added.

The event's coordinator, Sgt. Maj. Brian Lawson, who works in USASMA's Directorate of Training and Doctrine (DOTD), said there are a number of reasons for holding the workshop.

"The purpose of this event is to increase our customers' voice and input to better understand their needs and expectations. [We will] respond with value-added solutions and present current and relevant information that [will] aid them in their job performance," said Lawson, who serves as the chief of the Course Management Division.

Lawson said while USASMA's commandant has

previously hosted similar events, the events were conferences, not workshops.

"As opposed to having a conference and directing information, we're going to make use of the assets we have. There's a huge knowledge base out there at the academies. We have some really smart people who've been doing this a really long time," he said.

Attendees will be broken into 11 groups of 12 people. Each group will discuss a single topic. The topics range from "military history as a common-core subject in NCOES" to "developmental counseling." Each group will generate a list of recommendations they will present to the workshop's panel.

Among the panel members are the command sergeants major for the Army National Guard, Training and Doctrine Command and the Combined Arms Center.

According to Lawson, the previous conferences have been fairly effective. "We are hoping for even better results from the workshop format," he said.

"Last year about half of the suggestions made by conference attendees were implemented," he said. As an example, he cited the excerpts from Army field manuals now found in NCOES study materials. The attendees also recommended allowing more time for instructors to counsel and mentor students. The revised NCOES will allow for that, according to Lawson.

"This is a chance for those who train our noncommissioned officers, whether they're active duty, reserve component or National Guard, to help make decisions that will affect the training for the whole Army," said Lawson.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class (Ret.) Phil Tegtmeler

The U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy will host the 2003 Commandants Workshop slated for April 8-10.