

# STRUCTURED SELF-DEVELOPMENT

U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command gives program final review

Story and photos by Stephanie Sanchez

After three years in the making, a program designed to continue a Soldier's education between formal courses and operational assignments is closer to becoming reality.

U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command officials are giving the final review to the Structured Self-Development program. Once the five-level program has been approved, it will be mandatory for every enlisted Soldier.

"Everything is current and relevant. It's going to help the Soldiers in between their NCOES (Noncommissioned Officer Education System)" courses, said Joy Jacobs, an instructional systems specialist with Interactive Media Instruction at the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy, Fort Bliss, Texas. The academy's personnel – in charge of designing the Warrior Leader Course, Sergeants Major Course and the common-core phases of other courses – created the program's lessons and transformed them into multimedia



"I'm glad they are looking at furthering training and education for sergeants major once they leave the academy. I was under the belief that once you left, that was it. It does make me feel better to know that they're looking at the senior leadership to still broaden their minds, education and training."

– Sgt. Maj. Ruben Stoeltje

instruction.

"We're a nation at war; things are constantly changing," Jacobs said. "We're trying to keep up with that rapid pace to keep our Soldiers ahead of the game, so they're well-prepared for what they need to know."

The courses cover everything from NCO history to recognizing signs of

post-traumatic stress disorder and mild traumatic brain injury to supervising ceremony setups to understanding the Army's systems of record. Sergeants major will learn about employing nation-building operations and resolving conflicts between civilian employees and the military.

Soldiers will be automatically enrolled in the first level after completing the Initial Entry Training, and the courses will continue throughout their careers. Each

level is no more than 80 hours long, will be offered online and should be completed by the student within two years.

It has not been determined when the program will be released. How-

ever, during an NCO academy commanders' workshop in April, program creators suggested the first level be implemented as soon as October and the final course in October 2012.

TRADOC "will just tell us, 'We're ready to go live,' and we'll be prepared," Jacobs said. "We'll get guidance from TRADOC; the Institute [for NCO Profes-

sional Development] will make its adjustments to lessons and things of that nature. Whatever comes back from higher, we'll make happen."

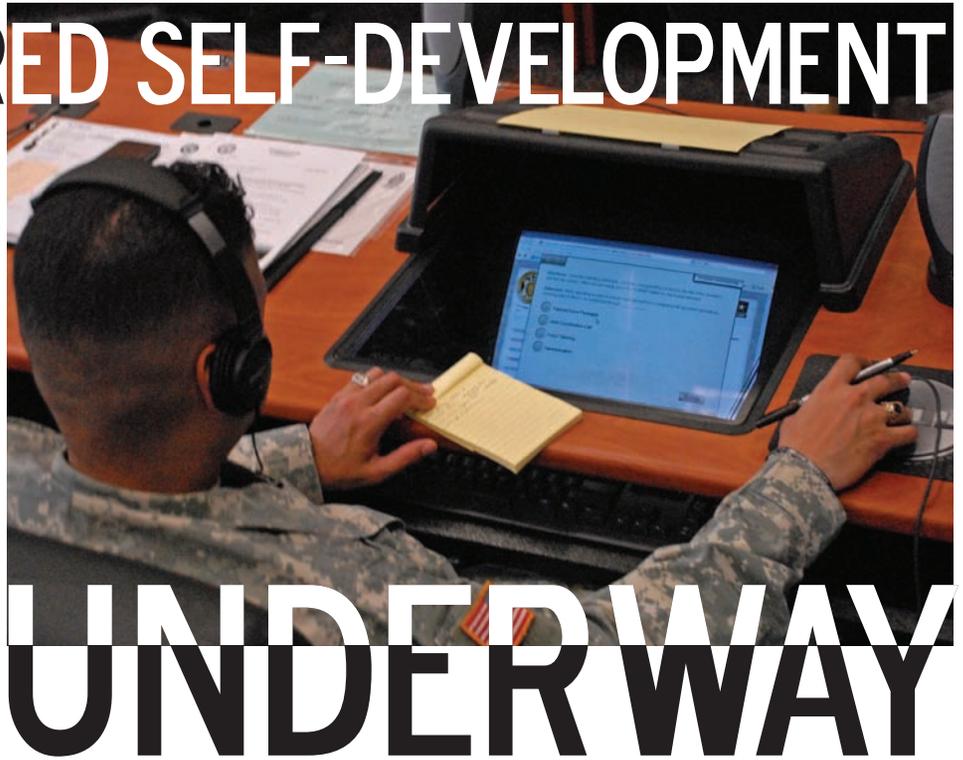
Some tweaks have already been made to the program. Since the beginning of the year, TRADOC officials have selected Soldiers from across the country to review all levels (SSD I, SSD III, SSD IV and SSD V) at USASMA. SSD V was reviewed in late April.

Sixteen master sergeants and sergeants major from various military occupational specialties experienced SSD V within a week. They then offered their opinions on the lessons.

"They said it was good to learn the information [in SSD V], but some of them aren't going to a division, a brigade or those strategic-level positions. They said, 'It's good to know this stuff, but if I'm not going on to that level, then why do I have to do it?'" Jacobs said. "We knew [SSD V] was going to be our most challenging level because [the Soldiers] are at the pinnacle of their careers."

Among the Soldiers who reviewed the SSD V was 1st Sgt. Ross Coffee.

Coffee, who is with C Company, 1st Battalion, 11th Aviation Regiment, Fort Rucker, Ala., said he didn't know most of the content in the course. But, he said, it's important to know the information.



# UNDERWAY

“A lot of it was information above my level. But, it was a lot of information that is good to know. It gave me a better understanding of what is expected at my level,”



“I think it’s a very important part of the lifelong learning program. For years, the Sergeants Major Academy and NCOES have needed a way to continue education and learning for our noncommissioned officers, keeping them on par with our officer corps in terms of being professionally developed and continuing to hone the skills of our Soldiers.”

– Sgt. Maj. Stephen Stott

he said. “I think [the program] is going to be helpful for all levels. It’s geared toward the professional development of the rank. At that rank, you should be able to perform certain tasks and have an understanding of certain tasks.”

Sgt. Maj. Ruben Stoeltje, sergeant major of the directorate of explosive ordnance disposal, Fort Lee, Va., said he wished the course would have been offered to him as a sergeant first class. At that rank, he said he became part of the coalition task force for explosive ordnance disposal.

“This training would have definitely helped me then,” he said. “It’s a lot of good information. We have some sergeants major who probably are in certain officer positions” who can use the course.

Sgt. Maj. Stephen Stott, chief of personnel preponency at the U.S. Army Chaplain School, Fort Jackson, S.C., said it is important that the lessons from SSD

V are incorporated into the Sergeants Major Course, something that has been put into the new program of instruction for Class 61, because sergeants major

can learn from the examples of strategic thinking.

“Once you get above the brigade level, that’s what you do. As a senior enlisted advisor to a command, you’re providing input that impacts not only the Soldiers on the ground, but the overall

development of the commander’s mission,” he said. “The commander needs you to think outside the box, and needs you to think in other ways than just making sure the daily supply,

equipment or training is done. That’s really lower-NCO-level stuff; we’re thinking outside of the box and bigger.”

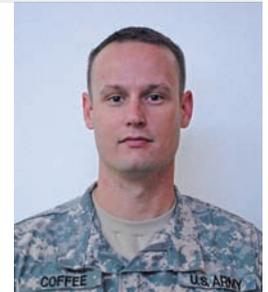
The program is a progressive step to ensure Soldiers are continuously learning because the war puts a strain on the time a Soldier has for institutional learning, he said.

“I think the war has had a big effect on this. An Army trains – that’s our primary mission when we’re not fighting. Right now, we’re fighting. It’s hard to get a balance between training and fighting on the ground,” he said. “A lot of Soldiers think, ‘Well, now that I’m fighting, I’m doing the everyday job of fighting. That should take care of what I need to know.’ But there is important balance. . . . It’s doctrine, it’s training that helps us learn and understand the professional Army that we are.”

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“I think it’s a good program they’re implementing for self-development and distance learning. It pushes us forward to the future of the NCOES and professional development. It’s the future of learning.”

– 1st Sgt. Ross Coffee



## Breakdown of Structured Self-Development

**SSD I** – Prepares Soldiers for the Warrior Leader Course. SSD I course offers lessons on the Army’s style of writing, NCO history, leading troops, recognizing signs of post-traumatic stress disorder and mild traumatic brain injury, implementing habits to increase health and fitness, and understanding Army customs, courtesies and traditions.

**SSD II** – The common-core portion of the Advanced Leader Course is in lieu of SSD II.

**SSD III** – Prepares Soldiers for the Senior Leader Course. SSD III offers lessons on implementing measures to reduce combat stress, developing a physical security plan, supervising NCOs’ professional development, supervising ceremony setups and applying ethical leadership decisions at the small unit-level.

**SSD IV** – Prepares Soldiers for the Sergeants Major Course. SSD IV offers lessons on understanding the Army’s system of record, relating to media and public affairs, and the significance of portraying and maintaining a positive image for the Army.

**SSD V** – Prepares Soldiers for the strategic levels of Army leadership. SSD V offers lessons on employing nation-building operations and resolving conflicts between civilian employees and the military.