

Tracking the Learning Integration Division

INCOPD's LID incorporates directed NCO leader development

Part four of the INCOPD series. Read the first three at <https://usasma.bliss.army.mil/NCOJournal/>.

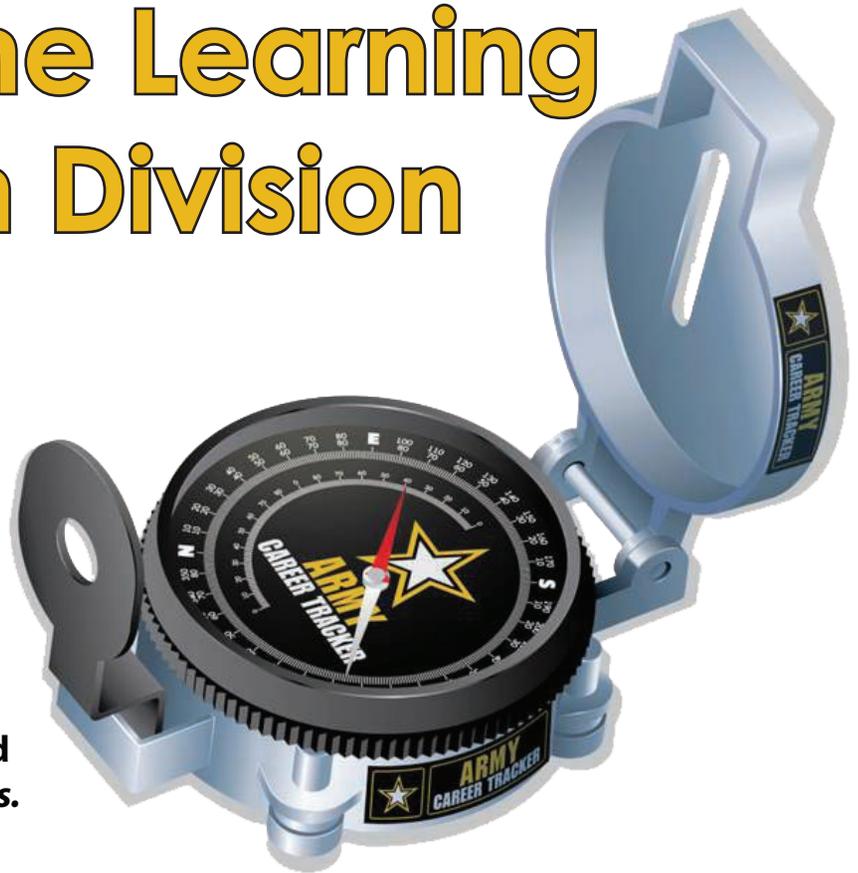
By Linda Crippen
Graphics Courtesy INCOPD

Getting an education and keeping track of training is about to get much easier for U.S. Army Soldiers. The Learning Integration Division under the Institute for Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development, Fort Monroe, Va., is working to ensure enlisted Soldiers have the best opportunities available.

With several initiatives underway, this division focuses on incorporating new learning initiatives and supporting technologies into the current concept of INCOPD. Presently, the major taskings include the Army Career Tracker, Structured Self-Development (in conjunction with the proponent, the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy, Fort Bliss, Texas), College of the American Soldier (includes Army degree programs and integrating civilian education into some programs of instruction), technical certifications for certain military training, POI evaluations by the American Council of Education and the Army Correspondence Course Program.

Jeff Colimon, LID's chief, and Sergeants Major Course Class 47 graduate, said that some of these initiatives have been in the works for almost 10 years. He describes his division as the point of entry at the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command for education coordination with INCOPD. "We are always looking at new ways to infuse education within the institution," he said.

It used to be that college education was something you did on your own time, if you had time, Colimon explained. "The good old sergeant major would say, 'If you want to be a college graduate then you're at the wrong place.' I remember those days,



but now, you'll find that the mindset has changed drastically. We want educated Soldiers in the Army," he said. LID's programs tend to foster an environment that encourages Soldiers to further their education. "It's a win-win."

As what prompted the transformation within the NCO Education System in general, the Army's Review of Education, Training, and Assignments for Leaders (RETAL) study indicated the necessity for these initiatives. "The College of the American Soldier and the Army Career Tracker are results from the RETAL study. We are merely the integrators and implementers of what the Soldiers are saying is useful to them, the gaps that they perceive," Colimon said, explaining that LID's job is to try to resolve the gaps. "Education for the Soldiers is a big issue now, and off-duty education may not provide a glide path for a lot of Soldiers. [Studying during off-duty] does not always provide many opportunities, so we're trying to change the rules of engagement to see if we can infuse additional educational opportunities," he added.

Structured Self-Development

While LID is the lead for Structured Self-Development, they work closely with USASMA for implementation. The collaborative efforts include courseware and content as well as the policies regarding implementation, for example, whether it would provide promotion points and fulfill pre-requisites for attendance to professional military educational training.

"Prior to two years ago, the Army had institutional training, unit training and self-development," explained Peter Kakel, LID's training initiatives analyst. "Recently, self-development

was divided into three different levels: structured (meaning mandatory), guided (suggested), personal (completely on your own). This office is trying to focus on the structured and guided pieces,” he said.

SSD-1 was initially introduced Armywide in January, and the program is still undergoing tweaks. Overall, there are five levels of training in the SSD program that span a Soldier’s entire career, from post-basic training to post-graduation from the Sergeants Major Course. The Web-based training is mandated according to a Soldier’s rank. For example, SSD-1 will prepare Soldiers to attend the Warrior Leader Course. Subsequent levels will prepare NCOs for each progressive step in their military career, totaling approximately 400 hours of self-development studies.

Additionally, Colimon said that it is necessary to “build some rules of engagement for SSD.” It is imperative that the system is a secure environment, especially considering the value it offers in the form of promotion points. “We’re working with USASMA to provide resources to assist them in building a test instrument for SSD,” he said. These measures will help prevent problems with potential cheating.

College of the American Soldier

According to division information, the focus of this initiative is to “redefine learning as a dynamic construct that incorporates both training and education.” So, what’s the difference between training and education? The answer depends upon whom you ask.

USASMA commandant Command Sgt. Maj. Raymond Chandler and academy staff describe training as being what Soldiers do to prepare for elements that are known. Alternatively, education prepares them for dealing with the unknown.

Training Soldiers is at the core of what NCOs do, Chandler said. “But when you get into education, understanding experiences — that is a new and higher level of learning than what we’re used to,” he said.

And as Colimon suggested too, today’s Army needs educated Soldiers; the Army needs adaptive thinkers and problem solvers. Programs like College of the American Soldier will help enable NCOs to achieve a degree within their first four-year enlistment, if Soldiers elect to pursue it.

Dianne Moses, a senior training analyst and retired NCO, is in charge of the Career NCO Degree Program with LID, and one of her biggest goals is to infuse college courses into military schools.

College of the American Soldier was initially created in 2007 to help Soldiers in the maneuver and fires fields complete degree programs despite multiple deployments and frequent moving. As the past few years have shown, almost any military occupational specialty will deploy at some point, making CAS an ideal program for

most Soldiers Armywide.

Currently, about 10 colleges and universities participate with CAS. The program also operates in collaboration with the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges program, which includes more schools. “CAS is constantly looking to expand its program to support advanced leadership development and provide additional degree options to Soldiers,” Moses said. She added that soon, college credits may also be earned through other military training such as the Army Correspondence Course Program.

CAS staff is working toward instituting the Career NCO Degree Program, which will provide flexibility in completing a degree while serving on active duty. “The program will offer broad degree options in the business and management-related fields that are not tied to any specific MOS,” Moses explained. Furthermore, the program intends to “maximize transferability of credits between colleges, offer credit for military training and education as well as minimize residency requirements so Soldiers can earn degrees within a reasonable amount of time,” she added.

Army Correspondence Course Program

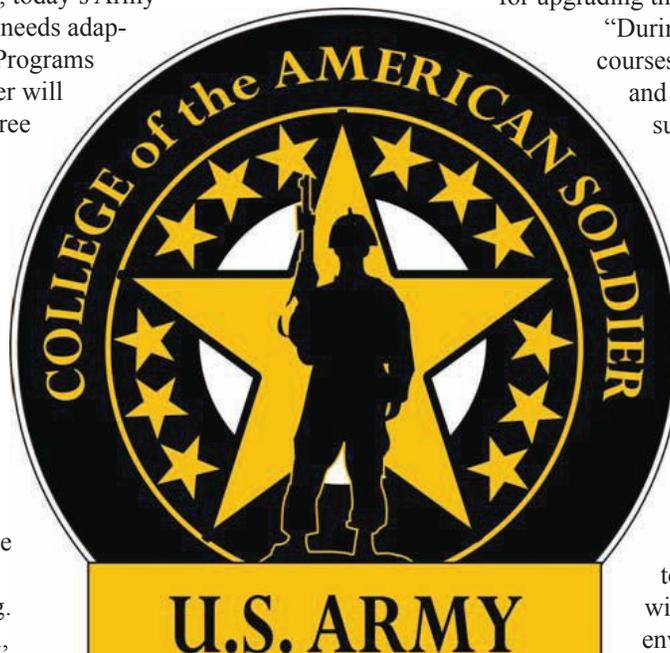
Underwater basket weaving will no longer be offered through the Army Correspondence Course Program, so say goodbye to the legendary “free” giveaway promotion points. Waiting for the big packet and booklet to arrive by mail — also gone. Getting the answers from a friend who took underwater basket weaving last month so you can breeze through the course — over. Value added by implementing higher standards for a more meaningful program — priceless.

LID staff explained that ACCP is being reorganized, and the improvements are noticeable. “In the past, Interim Learning Management System hosted the program out of Fort Eustis, Va.; however, it will be migrated to the Army Learning Management System,” Kakel said. Having worked for TRADOC’s Quality Assurance Office for six years, Kakel understands the necessity for upgrading the ACCP.

“During this migration, we’ve sent all courses to the proponents for their review, and the review eliminated over 600 subcourses,” he said. To date, LID has managed to whittle down the courses and sub-courses from almost 1,300 to 480. One of the main objectives in the transformation is to offer material that is relevant to today’s operational environment and Soldiers’ career fields.

For the most part, the program is being retrofitted to make it more secure, part of which will transfer from a hard-copy, snail-mail system to an online, automated program. This aspect alone will help make it a much more secure environment. Of course, peripheral materials may still be mailed to students, if necessary.

Kakel said that of the 480 courses



For more information about CAS or the Career NCO Degree Program log on to https://www.goarmyed.com/public/public_cas.aspx.

remaining, LID has contracted through IBM to help develop secure test instruments. “We’re developing test questions to get maybe three questions [or question prompts] for each enabling learning objective,” he said. Until now, there was only one answer sheet, making it easy for users to use the buddy system and offer their answer sheets to each other. The online item banks will draw questions and answers randomly. Furthermore, users will need their Common Access Card in order to take a test.

Colimon added that through CAC authentication and using secure test instruments, cheating will become too laborious; it would be much easier to just read the material and take the test in an honest manner. Of course, where there’s a will to cheat, there’s a way to cheat, but it will take considerable efforts to do so. Upon logging in, users’ first notification will be that cheating is against Army values.

“We have instituted some additional rules of engagement, where you can only be enrolled in so many courses, and there’s a waiting period after taking a test if re-testing is needed. We are scanning the database to see who is accumulating [a large] number of hours within a limited time. All of this is to make the program more meaningful,” Colimon said. “We will break the paradigms.”

Aside from making the program more meaningful, these refinements are all efforts to allow Soldiers to earn college credit hours for some of the correspondence courses. LID has proposed changes that would require Soldiers

to first take courses that relate to their job field. Once they have completed those courses, they may then take others outside of their field. These proposed changes are currently under review for possible implementation; however, if the changes were to take effect, then choosing an ACCP course might no longer be based solely on potential promotion points.

ARMY CAREER TRACKER

Navigate the New Army Career Tracker

Welcome to the Sergeants Major Academy

Path 1: Lacking Personalized Leader Guidance, Unable to track professional goals, Missed College Opportunities, No visibility on Career Path, Lack of NCOES

Path 2: Welcome to Basic Training, Structured Self-Development, MOS Training, NCOES, Functional Courses, Professional Military Education, SOCAD/College American Soldier

Path 3: Duplication of College Credits, Lack of Mentorship, Undefined Career Path, Delayed attendance at NCOES

Army Career Tracker (ACT) is the leadership development compass that will guide you from Basic Training to the Sergeants Major Academy. ACT will consolidate and organize data from the Army's existing training, education, and experiential learning systems into a single, interactive, and easy to use portal. ACT will enable Enlisted Soldiers, Officers, Civilians and their Leaders to view a common training picture and act on the information. For questions contact the ACT Team at act.now@us.army.mil

ACT is Coming Soon...ACT Now!

For more information about ACCP, contact Peter Kakel at (757) 788-5678 or peter.kakel@us.army.mil. To access ACCP courses available through distance learning, go to <http://www.atsc.army.mil/accp/aipdnew.asp>

Army Career Tracker

The Army Career Tracker is a leadership development tool that gives Soldiers the capability to track training, education and experiential learning, according to LID training materials. ACT will change how Soldiers track their own military and professional development as well as how leaders facilitate their subordinates' professional development.

As revealed during the RETAL study, Soldiers indicated they had difficulty navigating through the plethora of information — different systems, different Web sites, different user names, passwords, etc. — just to stay on top of their own development. “They had difficulties finding the information that was relevant to them,” Colimon said.

While part of ACT's function is cataloging information, or as Colimon calls it, an “integrated search catalog that pulls information from multiple systems.” ACT is not a human resources tool. Aside from serving as a central interface for past training and education, it will be the main avenue of notification for Soldiers when they are scheduled for military training or schools. For example, when a Soldier is put on the list to attend the Warrior Leader Course, he or she will receive notice for it through ACT. The Soldier's supervisor will also see the notice.

“Our goal is to attract Soldiers and provide ease of navigation so Soldiers can understand the utility,” Colimon said, explaining that ACT will streamline information and personalize it to each Soldier, hence adding value.

ACT offers a unique feature in that supervisors will be

able to ensure their subordinates' professional development stays on track. The system will alert supervisors when Soldiers are due for certain types of training and when Soldiers have fulfilled any necessary pre-requisites for specific courses.

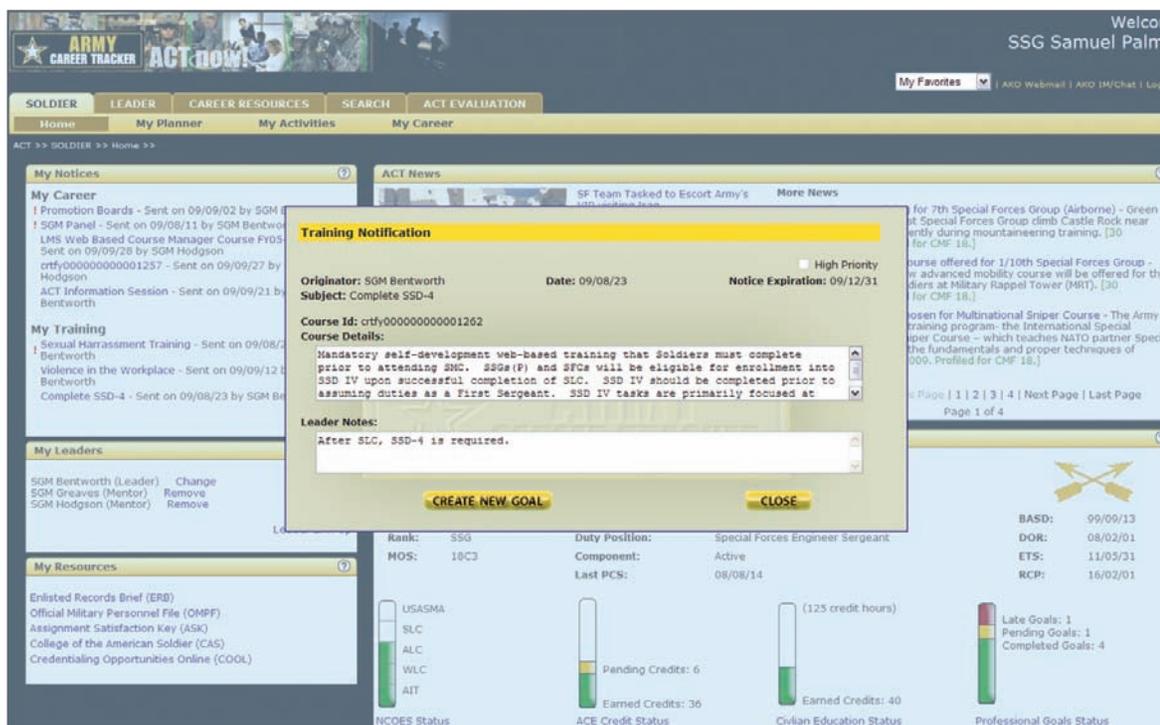
Companywide ethics training needs to be held this Friday? Very efficiently, the notification can be sent to all Soldiers through ACT. The program will revolutionize leader development within the ranks. Furthermore, ACT will allow Soldiers to take ownership of their careers like never before in the history of the Army. Soldiers will know exactly what's expected of them, when it's expected of them and what they have completed so far. Additionally, command personnel can perform talent searches using ACT.

Users will be able to see all relative information regarding their careers, and the information will prompt users to take action, for example enrolling in SSD or preparing to attend WLC. LID staff said that the information is personalized to each Soldier, and proponents can control which information is visible.

“The capabilities are great and extensive,” Colimon explained. “For example, for an 18-series [special forces] Soldier, the 18-series career management field can control the information the Soldier sees as well as ensure the proper information is disseminated based on CMF, theater, duties, etc. The profile communication is actually propagated based on the user's profile,” he said.

LID completed a demonstration of technology for ACT in November 2009, and has since built the infrastructure for the program. “We're now preparing for the full implementation, production and support for 1.35 million users,” Colimon said. According to training materials, ACT is scheduled to launch over the course of the next six years, with enlisted and officer participation beginning fiscal year 2010, Army Reserve and National Guard in FY 2011 and Army civilians in FY 2012. 

This article is the fourth in a series detailing the mission and objectives of the divisions within INCOPD. E-mail Linda Crippen at linda.crippen@us.army.mil.



Left: Sample screen shot of a training notification Soldiers will receive through the Army Career Tracker Web site.