



From the SMA

Structured Self-Development will propel NCOs to success

In this new era of technology, Soldiers gather and process information differently today than they did even 10 years ago. With advancements on the Web and the invention of collaborative sites like Facebook and Twitter, the youth of today are able to glean information instantaneously via computer screens and cellphones. Understanding how our potential recruits learn is critical to our success as an Army. We cannot force our Soldiers to learn by using outdated methods of content delivery.

Structured Self-Development is many things: It is planned, goal-oriented learning that reinforces and expands the depth and breadth of an individual's knowledge base, self-awareness and situational awareness.

It complements institutional and operational learning. It enhances professional competence and meets personal objectives. It is required learning that continues throughout a Soldier's career and is closely linked to training and education in the NCO Education System. It promotes lifelong learning. It also sets conditions for continuous growth as a warrior and a warrior leader. All Soldiers are required to participate in SSD. It will also be a prerequisite for attending NCOES courses and will affect future promotions.

SSD 1 prepares Soldiers for the Warrior Leader Course. Soldiers are automatically enrolled upon completing Basic Combat Training or One-Station Unit Training. SSD 1 tasks are focused primarily on the team and squad levels and center on common leader and tactical skill sets. Privates through command sergeants major can self-enroll.

There is no SSD 2. The Advanced Leader Course Common Core, or ALC-CC, is taken in lieu of SSD 2. Enrollments are selected by Headquarters, Department of the Army.

ALC-CC focuses on preparing unit and subordinate elements for peace and wartime missions and contingencies, and replaces the old Basic Noncommissioned Officer Course.

SSD 3 focuses on tasks at the platoon level and prepares sergeants through sergeants first class for the Senior Leader Course, previously known as the Advanced Noncommissioned Officer Course. It offers lessons on implementing measures to reduce combat stress, developing a physical security plan, supervising the NCO's professional development, supervising ceremony setups, and applying ethical leadership decisions at the small-unit level. Soldiers will be automatically enrolled in SSD 3 after

they have completed all phases of ALC. Senior enlisted leaders — master sergeants through command sergeants major — may self-enroll.

SSD 4 focuses on tasks at the battalion level and prepares staff sergeants through command sergeants major for attendance at the Sergeants Major Course. Soldiers may start SSD 4 upon completing the Senior Leader Course. The U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy recommends completing SSD 4 prior to assuming duties as a first sergeant. Graduates of the SLC are automatically enrolled. Current graduates of the SLC may self-enroll.

Although the SMC is the capstone of the NCOES, learning does not stop after graduating the course. Soldiers must complete SSD 5 after they have completed the SMC. It focuses on nominative- and joint staff-level tasks, and prepares Soldiers for the strategic levels of Army leadership. It offers lessons on employing nation-building operations and resolving conflicts between civilian employees and the military. Master sergeants through command sergeants major are automatically enrolled after they graduate from the SMC. SSD 5 will become a prerequisite for nominative and joint assignments.

To date, 52,597 Soldiers have been registered for SSD 1. Yet, at this point, only 671 have completed the course.

Even though Soldiers have three years to complete SSD 1, I find these numbers disturbing. Less than 15 percent are currently on track to graduate before WLC. Leaders at all levels must ensure our Soldiers are taking these modules and not trying to "cram" them all in before ALC. SSD is both an individual and first-line leader responsibility.

One of the biggest complaints I hear about SSD is a lack of computers at units, especially in the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve. Guard and Reserve command sergeants major are actively seeking a resolution to this problem.

I require your help to ensure that we embrace this new learning tool. SSD will be the key link in the Army Career Tracker and will improve Army readiness by integrating self-development into a lifelong-learning strategy. I charge all leaders to give their Soldiers time throughout the week to work on their SSD courses.



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