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House Armed Services Committee

STATEMENT OF
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BEFORE

THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE ON
OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS

CONCERNING

ENLISTED PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION

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Good afternoon Chairman Snyder, Ranking Member Whitman and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. I greatly appreciate this opportunity to address the Subcommittee in order to discuss the accomplishments of the professional military education on the Marine Corps' enlisted force.

Transformation Initiative-

During July 2009, then Brigadier General Spiese addressed this committee on the history and progress of the Marine Corps' professional military education. Our intent is not to readdress those historical aspects, rather it is to lay out the transformation efforts that were begun under our 33rd Commandant, General Michael W. Hagee and continue today.

During General Hagee's tenure, it became evident that the professional warfighting development of our enlisted force had not evolved to meet the changing and dynamic nature of the operational environment associated with the current contingency operations. To ensure our enlisted warriors could meet the challenges of distributed operations and hybrid warfare, it was necessary to reevaluate the enlisted education continuum as a means to empower our Marines to become adaptive to the changing battlefield, think critically, and take action. Developing and executing a professional development continuum provides the means to achieve the *Strategic Corporal*¹ envisioned by General Charles Krulak in 1999.

To achieve this effort, then Colonel Melvin Spiese, Director, Expeditionary Warfare School; acting under guidance by Major General Thomas Jones, Commanding General, Training and Education Command, began to outline the processes that would

¹ Gen, Charles C. Krulak, "The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War," *Marines Magazine*, Jan. 1999.

transform Enlisted Professional Military Education (EPME). The first action was to overhaul the outdated programs of instruction which focused on common skills training that were largely the responsibility of unit commanding officers and typically addressed by annual training actions at the unit level. At the time, this was a radical, but necessary, step to reduce redundancy in training efforts and leverage the professional climate of Marine Corps University. The end result was to develop the warfighting skills that unit commanders desired, and need, in their enlisted force.

Secondly, the transformation effort looked to the unit commanders and the Marine Corps' centers of excellence to determine the warfighting skills that were expected of their Marines, at their specific grade, and at their level within the Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF). This step, as radical as the first, ensured that the commanders became stakeholders and were involved in the professional development of the enlisted force. It also ensured that enlisted Marines who attended and successfully completed resident professional military education did so with the skill sets that allowed the Marines to become force multipliers for the unit commander.

The result of empowering enlisted Marines to be efficient warfighters, with critical thinking and adaptability skills, has allowed them to understand the consequences of their actions well beyond the tactical level of war.

Educational Philosophy-

As with the outdated programs of instruction, the delivery of course content was directly linked to basic delivery techniques, such as lectures and step-by-step training with strict oversight. While these techniques are effective for some entry-level activities, these techniques are largely ineffective for experienced learners who are *digital*

*natives*². EPME has also learned that curriculum design fell along the same antiquated lines as our delivery methods. The combination of outdated delivery and curriculum design promoted an environment for Marines attending courses to narrowly focus on learning objectives that would allow them to pass multiple choice exams via rote memorization, and then purge the information.

Since the transformation effort began, EPME has, for the most part, distanced itself from lecturer-based delivery, learning objective curriculum design, and multiple choice exams. The educational philosophy challenges the curriculum developers and course faculty advisors to develop interactive, relevant curriculum that can be facilitated by faculty advisors, using alternative teaching strategies such as small-group discussions, Socratic questioning, and scenario-based interactivity. Thus, challenging students to apply critical thinking skills necessary to solve complex problems respective to their level of the operating environment. We have also largely eliminated the preponderance of low-level cognitive tests and instituted performance evaluations designed to link many of the learning outcomes into a series of events that replicate what they may encounter in the operating forces. This allows Marines who attend the Staff Noncommissioned Officer (SNCO) Academies to fully realize the importance of mastering the learning outcomes.

Academy Organization-

The organization of the Staff Noncommissioned Officer Academies is unique to the Marine Corps. The academies are strategically placed around the globe as a means to impact as many Marines as possible. The regional Staff NCO academies are located at, and comprised of the following:

² Marc Prensky, "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants", On the Horizon, Oct. 2001,

- Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia: houses the Corporals, Sergeants, Career (Staff Sergeant-E6), Advanced (Gunnery Sergeant-E7), and Senior Enlisted Courses (Master Sergeant-Master Gunnery Sergeant and First Sergeant-Sergeants Major-E9-E9).
- Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina: houses the Corporals, Sergeants, Career, and Advanced Courses.
- Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton: houses the Corporals, Sergeants, Career, and Advanced Courses.
- Marine Corps Air-Ground Combat Training Center, Twentynine Palms, California: houses the Corporals and Sergeants Courses.
- Marine Corps Base Kaneohe, Hawaii: houses the Corporals and Sergeants Courses.
- Marine Corps Base Okinawa, Japan: houses the Corporals, Sergeants, Career, and Advanced Courses.

While the distance between the regional Staff NCO academies does present problems, there are two specific actions to mitigate those obstacles. The first is the Enlisted PME Branch at Marine Corps University. This branch of the University is directly under my charge and my intent to the staff is that we make every effort to develop and deliver curriculum to the academies that provides a level of detail that allows us the closest measure of ensuring a consistent learning experience. Four years ago, this branch was three enlisted Marines working in the basement of Marine Corps University with no officer involvement. EPME is currently structured at 43 personnel, comprised of military and civilian education specialists led by a Marine Colonel. The current President

of Marine Corps University, Major General Robert Neller, established Enlisted Professional Military Education as the universities #1 Focus of Effort in the fall of 2009. This momentum continues in earnest.

Secondly, the success of the Staff NCO academies is the direct result of the Directors who are responsible for leading their respective academy. The Directors are Senior Enlisted Marines with at the grade of Sergeants Major and Master Gunnery Sergeant for our four large academies (Quantico, Camp Lejeune, Camp Pendleton and Okinawa) and First Sergeant and Master Sergeant for the two small academies (29 Palms and Hawaii). These Senior Enlisted Marines receive our programs of instruction and academic guidance, train their faculty, and accomplish their mission with near flawless perfection. They are hand selected and interviewed for their position by the Director of EPME and final approval is with the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, Sergeant Major Carlton Kent. Our Directors are some of the most experienced and competitive leaders within our Corps. Without the commitment to the EPME Branch and the Directors of the Staff NCO academies, the professional development of the enlisted force would not be a 'good news story.'

Professional Development Objectives-

The professional development of the enlisted force is designed on a progressive education continuum that focuses on six core areas: Leadership, Operations, Training, Communications, Joint Operations, and Administration. Briefly, these core areas are comprised of the following:

Leadership: The limited size of the Marine Corps mandates that every Marine be capable of effective leadership - this is the heart of the Marine Corps and is unique to

the organization. As such, leadership will always remain the focus of effort for the professional development of our Marines and typically comprises the majority of our programs of instruction. Topics of leadership range from simple close order drill to complex leadership issues such as ethical decision making and influencing command climate. Evaluation of these types of leadership events is largely subjective and relies heavily on the feedback provided by our faculty at the Staff NCO academies.

Operations: As with leadership, operations are also linked to the success of the Marine Corps and comprise a nearly equal amount of time in the courses' programs of instruction. Topics within the operations module include security patrols, improvised explosive device defeat measures, operations other than war, offensive and defensive operations, the Marine Corps Planning Process, and command and control. These events are typically evaluated by the use of rubrics that allow our faculty to provide feedback based upon sound doctrine, as well as, operational experience.

Training: All Marines are integral to ensuring the effectiveness of the unit. Therefore, every Marine leader must be able to apply fundamental training techniques to support the unit's readiness and mission essential tasks. Topics within this module include basic training techniques such as evaluating the proficiency level of a Marine's ability to perform specific common skills and Military Operational Specialty (MOS) tasks, to higher level requirements such as evaluating unit proficiency and managing Training, Exercise, and Evaluation Plan (TEEP). As with the operations module, these events are evaluated by the use of rubrics.

Communications: Effective communications is an essential ingredient to successful leadership within the Marine Corps. As such, the ability to write and speak

clearly is a critical component of programs of instruction; whereby students are required to develop solutions to problems and defend them in a written or oral medium. Topics for the communications module include delivery of an oral presentation, public speaking, writing an after action report and a letter of instruction. Evaluation of these skills is typically tied to the other modules within the programs of instruction and is included in the rubrics associated with those modules.

Joint Operations: Since 9/11, battlefield operations have become inherently a joint effort between the services. With this understanding, the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff developed the Joint Enlisted Professional Military Education Policy³. This policy outlines the joint learning areas (JLA) and objectives (JLO) that all service members should be exposed to during their military career. The JLAs and JLOs within the policy focus on providing an understanding of the joint environment by assigning learning outcomes focused at the Basic, Career, and Senior levels of service within the Department of Defense. Topics within the policy encompass the spectrum of the joint services from basic understanding of the National Military Capabilities to National Security Strategy. The EPME staff is currently working to fulfill the JLAs and JLOs within the programs of instruction and has established supporting relationships with the Sister Services to fully develop relevant courseware to support the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff vision for joint education.

Administration: Foundational administrative skills are linked back to effective leadership and unit readiness and are grounded in our leadership principle of “Know your Marines and look out for their welfare.” To ensure success across the spectrum of leadership, Marines must be able to perform routine administrative skills commensurate

³ CJCSI 1805.01, 28 Oct 05

with their rank and level of leadership. Topics within this module include recommending personnel evaluations, the senior enlisted advisor's responsibilities as the command reviewer, and assessing command climate. The preponderance of topics in this module is either scenario-based or linked directly to the evaluation modules with the respective course's program of instruction.

Based upon these brief overviews, it may not be evident that the curriculum is progressive and challenging, but I can assure you as the Director, of enlisted education, it is my mandate that we develop and deliver curriculum that is commensurate with a Marine's rank, is linked to challenges that they will encounter in the operating forces, focuses on skills that are relevant to the distributed and hybrid natures of the operational battlefield, and promotes critical thinking that empowers our Marines to think beyond the tactical level of war.

Values, Ethics, and Culture-

Along with robust, challenging curricula for each course, we are now enhancing all aspects of the programs of instruction to address touchstone ideals such as values, ethics, and culture. While Marines are forged into a new culture during boot camp and entry-level training, there has been no structured effort, outside of annual training opportunities and commanders' prerogative, to continue to reinforce our Core Values of Honor, Courage, and Commitment. The university, under its previous president, retired Major General Donald Gardner, and his successor, Major General Robert Neller, began to institutionalize values, ethics, and culture across the entire professional military education continuum. The efforts within the enlisted education continuum have resulted in deliberate approaches to these ideals, as well as, notional or hypothetical references to

these same ideals within the curriculum; combined with feedback mechanisms from our faculty advisors. The end result is a dynamic interactive learning experience.

Deliberate approaches include the design and development of courseware materials and dedicated time within a course of instruction that address values, ethics, and culture. Much of the work the courseware writers develop is in conjunction with the Lejeune Leadership Institute. The combination of the experienced curriculum developers and the core representatives charged with leadership development for the entire Marine Corps, results in curriculum that is meaningful and relevant to the students attending a respective course. Examples of these include lessons on Ethical Decision-Making, Suicide Prevention, Combat Stress, Mentors in Violence Prevention, and Operational Culture. The majority of these topics, facilitated at the small-group level and largely driven by scenarios, are representative of our current operational posture and enhanced by the experience of our faculty advisors. While evaluation of these events is subjective in nature, it provides the faculty advisors with a unique opportunity to impart their leadership styles and experience to further mold the values and ethics of our Marines as another opportunity to reinforce our Core Values.

Notional references within the courses of instruction are addressed in two unique processes. The first lies within the curriculum developers at the Enlisted PME Branch. This is their opportunity to infuse the ideals of values, ethics, and culture into the curriculum, whereby these topics become relevant to the learning experience encountered by the student. Examples of this type of process include the requirement to address cultural issues when participating in operational planning for offensive and defensive operations; discussing moral courage when assigning accurate proficiency and

conduct marks to Marines under one's charge; or determining poor ethics when conducting either a preliminary inquiry or Judge Advocate General Investigation assignment.

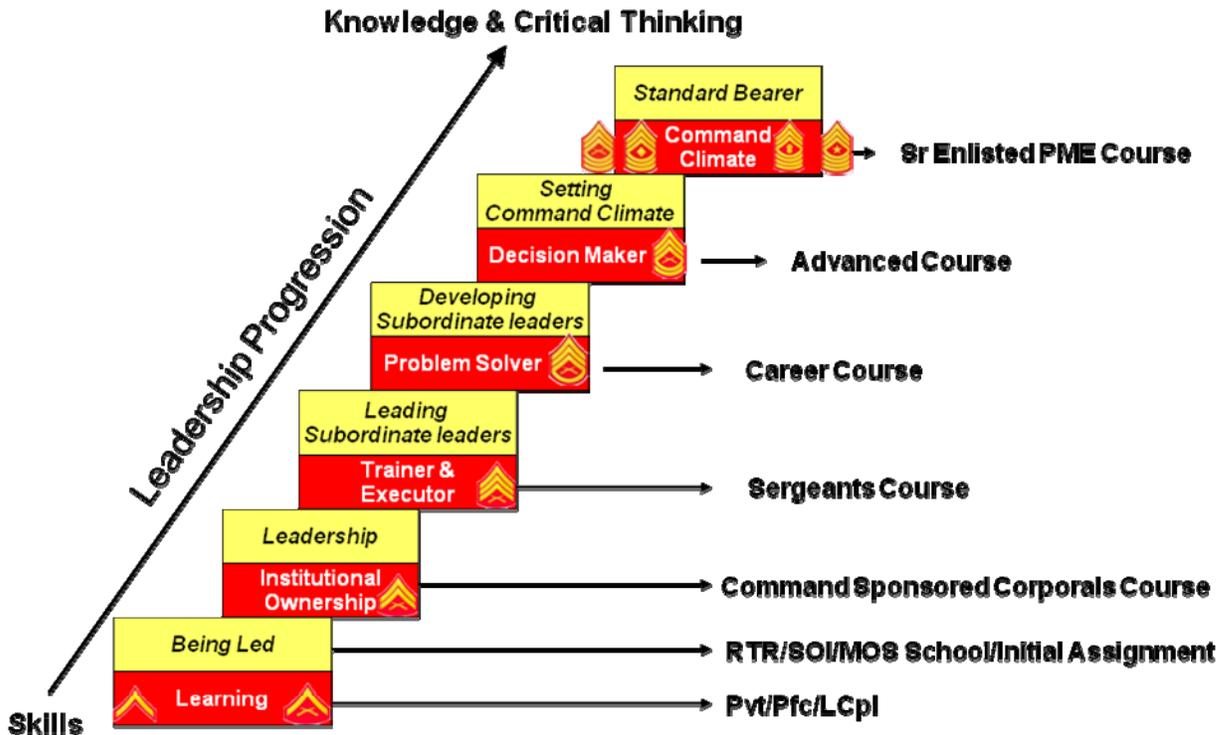
Secondly, during their interaction with the students, our faculty advisors are constantly vigilant to find *teachable moments* that are directly linked to values, ethics, and culture. Whether conducting formal lessons, small-group discussion, combat conditioning, or informal discussions, our faculty advisors seize any moment when students either make poor decisions, discuss behavior opposite of our Core Values, or conduct themselves counter to the Marine Corps history customs, courtesies or values.

The combination of deliberate and notional actions within the programs of instruction makes for a powerful approach to reinforcing ethics, values, and culture. We will continue to refine our efforts as a means to further enhance the high standards America places upon the Marine Corps.

Students-

Students attending the resident courses of instruction are primarily in the grades of corporal (E-4) to gunnery sergeants (E7) and are representative of all military occupational specialties (MOS) within the Marine Corps. The opportunity to attend courses of instruction amongst one's peers across the spectrum of MOSs provides an invaluable opportunity to draw experiential learning from fellow Marines. The hierarchical structure of the courses is:

Enlisted PME Continuum



Corporals Course: A three-week course designed to provide corporals with the basic knowledge and skills necessary to be successful small-unit leaders. The University’s intent is for corporals to conclude the course with a feeling of confidence in their leadership abilities, as well as, comfort with -- not expertise in -- the content they have encountered and a belief that the course experience has prepared them for increased levels of responsibility.

Sergeants Course: A six-week course designed to provide sergeants with skills necessary to plan and conduct training for their Marines and to provide the warfighting skills, core values, and mindset necessary for effective leadership of a squad size unit and subordinate leaders. The curriculum is designed around the six core areas previously

outlined. It focuses on developing skills necessary to clearly articulate thoughts in both oral and written communication; inspire and guide Marines through effective leadership; implement tactical measures at the squad/platoon level; understand basic national military capabilities; conduct training within the Marine Corps Common Skills Program; and understand career progression.

Career Course: A six-week course designed to provide staff sergeants with the skills necessary to act as a "problem solver" and to supply the skills necessary to provide leadership at the platoon level, influence company grade officers, lead and develop subordinate leaders in warfighting, core values, and preserve time-honored traditions. Like all of the courses of instruction, the six core areas for this course are focused to enhance our staff sergeants with the skills necessary to clearly articulate thoughts in oral and written communication; understand and model the mindset of a SNCO; develop and mentor character-based leadership in noncommissioned officers, foster ethical leadership; advise the commander/officer in charge (OIC) on operational requirements; understand the joint environment; assist the unit commander in obtaining training goals, and effectively manage personnel and assets.

Advanced Course: A six-week course designed to provide gunnery sergeants with the skills necessary to act as a "decision maker" and designed to provide the skills necessary for senior leadership in a company level organization to independently supervise processes and procedures, influence officers, and function in an operations center. The six core areas are focused on providing the gunnery sergeants with the skills necessary to clearly articulate thoughts in both oral and written communication; influence command climate; be prepared to act as the senior enlisted advisor; understand the unit

training management process and provide the commander input; understand MAGTF operations; understand basic unit deployment concepts, requirements, and methodology; and develop courses of action based on planning guidance.

The diverse nature of students who attend resident PME further enhance the course content by providing their experiences that directly relate to the learning outcomes; thereby providing further relevance to the student population. This experience is further enhanced by sister service and foreign military students who attend these professional development courses.

Over the last three years, EPME courses have opened its doors to the sister services and international military. To date, we have provided professional military education to 37 sister-service students, predominately from the Navy and Air Force, and 96 international students from various countries. As mentioned above, their contribution to the courses is invaluable and supports the Commandant's vision to enhance leadership within the Joint, International, and Multi-national environment. We will continue to market our courses to the sister services and the international community and will make every effort to ensure their contributions are emphasized.

Expansion of the Education Continuum-

Historically, the programs of instruction were limited to the professional development of corporals through gunnery sergeants. However, that perspective leaves a large population of Marines without any professional development opportunities. This specifically impacted lance corporals (E3) and Marines in the grades of master sergeant, first sergeant, master gunnery sergeant, and sergeant major (E8 – E9), a significant and influential population within the enlisted force.

Once the transformation process had begun and full-scale development of the courses was undertaken, the President, Marine Corps University determined the necessity to establish a program that focused on the professional development of the Marine Corps' junior Marines, specifically lance corporals. These Marines, generally accountable for the leadership of a team of three Marines, typically use leadership examples from their drill instructors or from other encountered experiences. These leadership styles and approaches typically resulted in the application of observed skills that were neither clearly defined, nor understood and therefore resulted in poor leadership practices. Additionally, the promotion of a Marine from lance corporal to corporal often resulted in having a close relationship with one's peers one day and the next day, literally being thrust into the responsibility of leading those same Marines.

Recognizing this gap in professional development, Marine Corps University began the expansion of the enlisted education continuum to include the lance corporals. The Enlisted PME branch developed the *Leading Marines* correspondence course that addressed the professional development needs of the Corps' most junior leaders. This course replaced the outdated *Fundamentals of Marine Corps Leadership* correspondence course, with a targeted program of instruction that provided the fundamental guidance and skills necessary for lance corporals to understand the challenges of leadership, effective leadership styles, and the application of those skills to promote effective leadership. This course was further enhanced by ensuring that, before a Marine could take their final exam, their mentor was required to validate that their Marine understood the material and its application to leadership challenges within the organization. The course, instituted in June 2007, has received positive feedback and is currently under

revision to ensure the content remains relevant to the Corps' future leaders. The completion of the *Leading Marines* course is a requirement for all Marines desiring promotion to corporal.

Continued expansion of the enlisted education continuum was realized with the implementation of the Senior Enlisted PME Course. Envisioned by the current Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, Sergeant Major Carlton Kent, the Enlisted PME branch developed a five-week course of instruction designed to equip senior-level Marines with the critical thinking and adaptability skills necessary to function at the operational-level of war and to enhance their abilities to act independently as enlisted assistants to their commanders in all administrative, technical, and tactical requirements of their organizations.

The course is designed around five core areas: MAGTF Command and Logistics; the Marine Corps Planning Process (MCPPE); Command, Control, Communications, Computer, and Intelligence (C4I); Communications; and Administration. To date, the University has conducted two pilot courses during 2008 and 2009, and three courses in 2010. We plan to be full operations capable with this course beginning in fiscal year 2011 and will conduct five courses per year that will further the professional development of 250 senior enlisted Marines annually.

Facilities and Resources-

As previously discussed, the regional Staff NCO academies are the *tip of the spear* for providing the resident professional development opportunities of the enlisted force. All of the facilities are adequate to achieve the educational objectives; each academy is complete with large classrooms able to hold the entire student body and

individual conference group rooms. In most cases, they present a professional appearance to students and guests alike, as well as, a quiet and collegiate environment for academic study and professional development. I should note that those facilities that do not necessarily promote the desired academic environment are either slated for renovation and/or replacement or are in the planning stages of the same.

The regional Staff NCO academies are recognized as an extension of the Marine Corps University and representative of a world-class educational institution.

Unfortunately, the limited infrastructure of the regional Staff NCO academies limits the ability to allow all enlisted Marines to attend resident professional military education. In fact, our annual combined attendance of approximately 8,000 Marines is well short of allowing us to make resident PME a requirement for promotion for all Marines, with the exception of gunnery sergeants.

The Future-

To mitigate the shortage of resident professional development opportunities, the Enlisted PME branch and the Marine Corps University have taken several steps to ensure *no Marine is left behind* in relation to their professional development.

As discussed, the *Leading Marines* correspondence course is a promotion requirement. The Marine Corps Institute at Marine Barracks, Washington D. C is the administrator of the course and does a magnificent job at ensuring the course is distributed to the enrolled Marines in an efficient and timely manner.

The Corporals Course is primarily a command sponsored course conducted at the unit level. This not only allows unit commanders to administer the course to a larger population of Marines that our institution could ever reach, but it also allows the

commander's to add content to the course that is specific to the unit's needs and mission essential tasks. The inherent nature of conducting a course at the command level creates additional stakeholders in the curriculum and provides enhanced opportunities for Marines at the unit level to tailor the learning experience based upon seasoned members of the unit.

The president, Marine Corps University, has recently charged the College of Distant Education and Training (CDET) to develop robust, on-line courses of instruction that will either compliment the existing courses or serve as a course prerequisite. To meet this intent, the CDET has assembled a supporting staff and initiated the front end analysis process necessary to determine course structure and build the respective distance education courses.

CDET's initial approach is to use existing courseware to develop distance education courses to support the Corporals Course and Advanced Courses. The Corporals Course will be designed as a stand alone course that will mirror, as closely as possible, the resident course. This will allow Marines to either enroll in the on-line course or attend a resident Command Sponsored program. Once the on-line course is complete and fully activated, the Marine Corps expects the completion of either course to become a qualification for promotion to sergeant.

Concurrent with the development of the Corporals Course, CDET will also develop the Advanced Course for on-line administration. Our current capability to accommodate all gunnery sergeants at our resident course, allows us to develop this course as a prerequisite to attending the resident Advanced Course. This approach has the ability to migrate lower-level cognitive tasks to the on-line learning environment,

thereby enhancing the practical application of those learned skills while attending the resident course of instruction. We are still in the design phase of the on-line course and further analysis will determine the viability of making the course a prerequisite for resident course attendance.

Upon completion of the Corporals and Advanced Courses, CDET will then develop the Career Course. The infrastructure is inadequate to allow all Staff Sergeants the opportunity to attend a resident program. This course is by far my main focus of effort to ensure we build a course that provides critical leadership skills for those Marines who have made a deliberate decision to make the Marine Corps a career. I believe that this course is so important that we must take a separate approach to how we deliver and facilitate the course material. To this end, I have requested that the CDET develop a hybrid course that leverages a robust, on-line learning management system that allows for the delivery of the course content, but is also enhanced by adjunct faculty advisors in a collaborative “face to face” seminar environment, similar to the distance learning approaches employed by major universities across the country and the Marine Corps Officers distant program. CDET has taken my intent and is currently developing the means to fulfill the vision.

The last course of instruction scheduled for conversion to an on-line learning experience will be the *Leading Marines* correspondence course. The challenge with this course will be to ensure that the mentors remain in the process of evaluating their Marines’ participation and understanding of the course material. I am confident that the CDET will develop a challenging program that will maintain the integrity of the course design.

As we continue to enhance the development of our resident courses, I have charged my staff of developers to leverage the use of modeling and simulation systems to support the execution of tactical decision exercises and practical exercises. Additionally, I want to further expand the use of these systems to challenge the student's decision-making processes by infusing ethical and cultural dilemmas into scenario-based simulations. This approach will allow the chaotic and demanding aspects of the battlefield to be closely replicated in a safe, yet challenging environment. Leveraging simulations to not only apply fundamental tactical and operational processes, but to reinforce ethics, culture, and decision-making is an area that has not been largely explored. We are excited to pave that path.

Lastly, we demand high standards for our civilian faculty. Civilian faculty are selected via a board comprised of MCU faculty and leadership. Recommendations of the board are forwarded to the President of MCU who is the ultimate hiring authority under the provisions of Title 10, USC. Required credentials for civilian faculty include a terminal degree from a regionally accredited institution, education/teaching experience, evidence of scholarly research and publications, and familiarity with current national security issues. Desired credentials include an understanding of PME and familiarity with military policies and procedures. All current faculty possess these credentials. However, Title 10 authority is limited to 10-month PME programs.

Conclusion-

The transformation of Enlisted PME is a 'good news story'; however, there is still much work to be done. While our transformation efforts have seen large successes, we

continue to press forward for the complete transformation of the entire enlisted education continuum and we expect completion of those efforts by December 2011. Nevertheless, achieving that milestone only indicates that the majority of the work lies ahead.

Marine Corps University will continue to ensure the professional and intellectual development of the enlisted force continues to evolve; commensurate with the expectations of the commanders on the battlefield, as well as, the American people. We will continue our endeavors to facilitate the professional development of the total enlisted force through traditional and non-traditional methods and to ensure that those skills allow our Marines battlefield success, not only at the tactical level of war, but also at the strategic and operational levels.

Our professional warriors are the heart of the Corps success. Every effort will be made to ensure your Marines live up to the Corps celebrated history.

Thank you Chairman, for the chance to speak with you today. I welcome the Sub-Committee's questions. Semper Fidelis.