

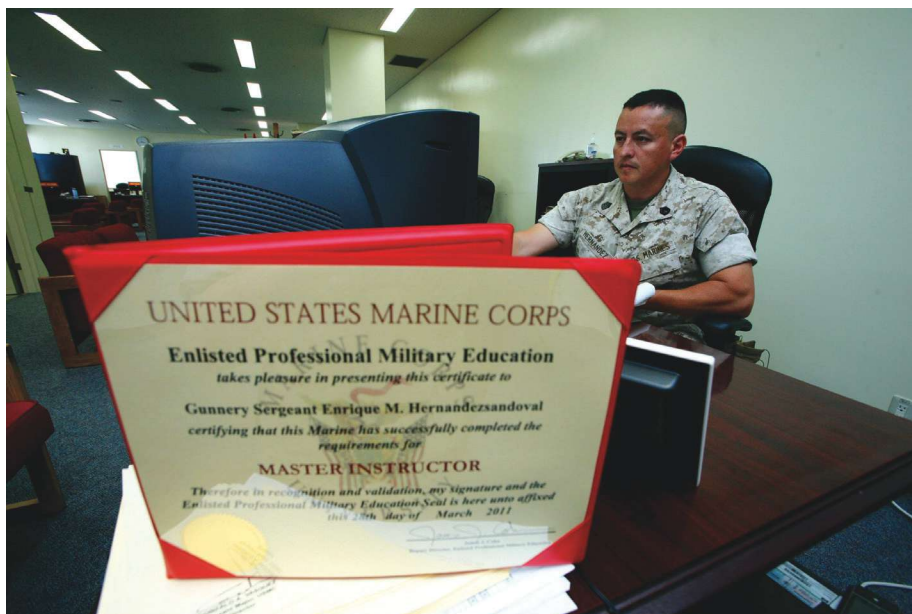
Educating to Fight and Win

PME prepares Marines for the peer-level fight
by the Leaders of the Marine Corps University

The 38th Commandant's Planning Guidance (CPG) was a clear call for change. Gen David H. Berger tasked us with designing and building a Marine Corps capable of fighting and winning in a future where rapid change, uncertainty, and near-peer competitors will present security challenges we have not faced for several decades. He emphasized that we would have to accomplish this task while also continuing to meet our responsibilities as a naval expeditionary force-in-readiness. He also emphasized the vital importance of PME in preparing Marines to accomplish this task and best contribute to our Nation's combat readiness. He called for

an information age approach [to training and education] that is focused on active, student-centered learning using a problem-posing methodology where our students/trainees are challenged with problems that they tackle as groups in order to learn by doing and also from each other.¹

Marine Corps University is contributing to this effort by educating over 100,000 officers and enlisted Marines, members of our sister Service, as well as international and inter-agency partners in 23 different resident, distance, and blended programs each year. Since the publication of the CPG last summer, we have examined in depth the educational opportunities we afford our students with an eye toward improving an already successful model. We are doing this by increasing rigor and accountability, modernizing enlisted education, developing a robust wargaming capability, fostering innovation, deepening our commitment to the Navy-Marine Corps



The continuing effort is providing the best possible education for our Marines. (Photo by Cpl Aaron Hostutler.)

Team, and supporting lifelong learning. With these and other efforts, we will increase and enhance educational opportunities for all Marines and better prepare them for success in the current and future operating environment.

Increasing Rigor and Accountability

In response to the CPG, we directed our schools to enhance PME's contribution to combat readiness by making our programs as academically rigorous as possible with clear accountability for student performance. As noted by the Commandant, our officer and enlisted PME programs have made great strides over the past five to ten years; the improvements we have undertaken this year will build upon this strong foundation and must first do no harm when it

comes to the hard earned civilian and joint accreditation and certifications of our various programs. This effort is linked to our mindset of continuous assessment, which allows us to anticipate, articulate, and respond to change.

Part of improving rigor and accountability is tying Marines' performance in school with their career progression. In coordination with Manpower & Reserve Affairs, we are developing a balanced, flexible, and realistic solution to meet the Commandant's guidance regarding observed academic fitness reports. The intent is to use Marines' time in PME as one additional means to evaluate their suitability for performance and command.

Just as Marine Corps PME programs must be continually assessed and im-

proved to best prepare Marines to meet the demands of the future, the tools and methods used to measure and document academic performance must be improved in ways that help us better manage our talent. Our most precious asset is our people; we have to ensure we accurately assess their potential and assign them where they will contribute the most. Taken in combination, these improvements will enhance PME's return on investment.

Modernizing Enlisted Education

An educated and intellectually agile enlisted force is key to winning the future fight. While other nations may have highly educated officers and cutting-edge technology, no country invests in its enlisted force like the United States. Still, commitment to continued improvement is a hallmark of professionalism, and we must constantly adjust to provide relevant, timely, and effective educational opportunities to our enlisted Marines, NCOs, and SNCOs. The College of Enlisted Military Education, or the Enlisted College, began its efforts to modernize enlisted education in 2017 after the 37th Commandant of the Marine Corps published his *Institutional-Level Task List for Deputy Commandants and Commanders*. Specifically, Task 15 outlined the need to reinvigorate the enlisted professional military education enterprise to better prepare our enlisted forces to effectively operate during distributed operations and to "assume leadership responsibilities that were once the sole purview of an officer."² Meeting this need requires Marines and Sailors who are critical thinkers, creative problem solvers, and effective communicators.

In 2018, the Enlisted College completely redesigned the Sergeants School using a student-centered learning model to facilitate discussions and activities across an array of topics and subject matter. The school culminates with its Small Unit Leadership Evaluation to test each sergeant's ability to lead in stressful situations fraught with friction and uncertainty. The Enlisted College designed each of these elements to promote critical thinking

and creative problem solving among Marines while testing their ability to communicate effectively.

The modernization effort continued with the redesign of the Career School in 2019. This school has incorporated group dynamics into the communications course to further enhance the students' ability to function in and lead groups of Marines. The Career School has also incorporated wargaming and a battle study elective into the curriculum to meet the vision and intent of the 38th Commandant's direction as outlined in his CPG.

These professors have introduced gaming—and connected educational gaming to the larger analytic demands of the Marine Corps—within their respective schools.

As part of the modernization effort, the Enlisted College will also redesign the Advanced School, expanding on the lessons learned in Sergeants and Career Schools to further prepare our enlisted Marines for the increased responsibilities they may face throughout their careers. The Senior Enlisted Academy has revised the Regional Master Sergeant/First Sergeant Seminar from an information brief into a forum in which students address and propose solutions to challenging problems facing the Marine Corps.

Developing a Robust Wargaming Capability

There has been a push across the DOD to harness the power of educational and analytical wargaming. The University has embraced that effort with a multi-year program to develop a robust wargaming capability that will enhance student learning at each of MCU's resident and distance programs. We are partnering faculty with gaming experts to identify the best tabletop and virtual games to enhance student mastery of program-specific learning outcomes. We are also working with industry and game developers to create a

cloud-based gaming system that will allow students to play educational games from any device, anywhere, and allow faculty to assess student performance on those games through MCU's Learning Management System.

The University is working closely with the Marine Corps Warfighting Lab's (MCWL) Wargaming Division to ensure that our educational efforts nest appropriately with the analytical wargaming that is used to support force design and force development efforts. We see an important partnership developing between our two organizations

to allow for the "reps and sets" Marines complete during school to feed into the analytical work MCWL is conducting. Likewise, we will expand our offerings to the broader Marine Corps as the program matures, so Marines who are not enrolled in MCU's programs can use our virtual gaming platform to continue to hone their warfighting skills as part of the Fleet Marine Force.

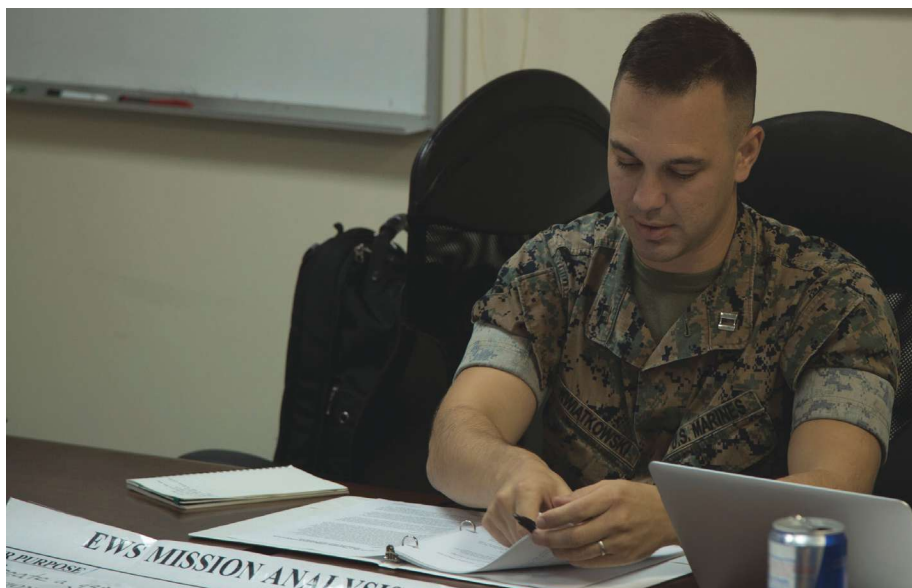
This larger effort builds upon important work in wargaming already underway across the University. The Marine Corps War College's Dr. James Lacey is one of the leading voices in wargaming in PME, along with Dr. Benjamin Jensen from the School of Advanced Warfighting. These professors have introduced gaming—and connected educational gaming to the larger analytical demands of the Marine Corps—within their respective schools.

The Brute Krulak Center for Innovation and Creativity has showcased and facilitated wargaming of all flavors. Digital gaming allows multiple game iterations and high levels of detail, and the Center has offered several varieties. Students and faculty from all schools have used a library of commercial off-the-shelf titles like *Command: Modern*

Air/Naval Operations. The Krulak Center, along with faculty and students from the Expeditionary Warfare School, have also used gaming to assist 12th Marines in developing naval integration concepts as part of its on-going force design efforts. The Center's annual "SEA DRAGON" intra-school wargame brought in unique PROTEUS software, which exposed students to concepts like mosaic warfare, manned/unmanned teaming, and electromagnetic spectrum operations. Alongside a library of tabletop games to complement its digital library, the Center has facilitated numerous tabletop events, including: a matrix-style game co-hosted by Bren Chair, Dr. Brandon Valeriano, and SAW faculty Dr. Ben Jensen, several faculty development sessions with partners like the RAND Corporation and Georgetown University Wargaming Society, and a two-day gaming session for Marine Corps colonels attending the Strategy and Policy Course at the MAGTF Instructional Group.

The Command and Staff College (CSC) has also leaned heavily into wargaming this past academic year by incorporating wargaming into every facet of the curriculum. For exercises, CSC is shifting from a planning-only model to one that includes planning and wargaming or simulation components, to allow students to fight their plans against a dynamic enemy—other students and faculty. In addition to incorporating traditional analogue and digital combat scenario games, CSC added decision-making games to enhance its core curriculum in areas such as ethics, leadership, diplomacy, information, and economic statecraft. Along with new ideas for wargames, the faculty have developed case studies to facilitate each of these wargames' ideas and give faculty a library of historical and current examples to augment learning.

For years, wargaming has been a line of inquiry in the Gray Scholars (advanced studies); however, this year experts from MCWL executed these programs with oversight from the Krulak Center. Working in close cooperation with the MAGTF Staff Training Program and MCWL, the staff provided the students with the chance to fight



Regardless of school, the objective is to challenge Marines through practical application and critical thinking. (Photo by LCpl Danielle Prentice.)

at the functional component and joint task force level as a capstone exercise.

Deepening Navy-Marine Corps Teaming

The University is also investing heavily to deepen our commitment to Navy-Marine Corps teaming. The Secretary of the Navy has supported us in this effort by sending one of his personal staff members to serve as MCU's Navy Chair when he learned that the University had been without a Navy captain on faculty for nearly a decade. The newly established Chief Learning Officer for the Navy has also shown his commitment to our effort by funding a Maritime Warfighting Professor of Practice to ensure that our faculty and students have ready access to current subject matter expertise related to maritime warfare, including amphibious operations. This individual will ensure that our curricula remains connected to the current and best practices developed through the Expeditionary Warfare Training Groups Atlantic and Pacific and the Afloat Training Groups Atlantic and Pacific so that when we are called to fight together, we are ready to fight together.

While all MCU schools are increasing curriculum focused on the Navy-Marine Corps Team, CSC's resident program has led in this arena. The col-

lege moved quickly to implement the CPG, bringing naval history, theories of sea power, and wargaming directly into action in key areas of the curriculum.

Roughly a quarter of CSC's post-command and top-level school graduate military faculty are products of the U.S. Naval War College at Newport, RI, so the college is well-positioned in understanding and teaching naval warfare. Likewise, a strong nucleus of CSC's civilian-doctorate professors are seasoned researchers and writers in the area of naval history, maritime affairs, and sea power, and have significant teaching experience in those fields. They also have a strong record of presenting their work in the peer reviewed settings of Naval History Symposia hosted by the U.S. Naval Academy or other scholarly and professional conferences.

In war studies, for example, a key task was to identify wars or conflicts where sea power either played a determining role in the outcome or how its failure to be applied resulted in defeat. Another point of focus was where technology had rapidly changed, leading to anomalies that the sea power theories of the moment could not account for. An example of this was the American Civil War where the newest steam powered and ironclad ships found themselves vulnerable to new and relatively cheap "David and Goliath" weapons such as

mines, torpedoes, and submarines. Naval history helps bring such moments into focus. Used as points of inquiry, they permit conference groups to examine their meaning and relevance to issues of expeditionary advance base operations, littoral operations in a contested environment, and distributed maritime operations.

Recognizing that deepening the Navy-Marine Corps Team begins in the classroom, Expeditionary Warfare School (EWS) is pursuing some innovative ways to increase Navy student participation. Since Navy officers have different career paths and education requirements, which often make it difficult for them to attend EWS for its 41-week academic year, the school is reaching out to Expeditionary Strike Group 2 based at Norfolk Navy Base for collaboration. The goal is for a number of Navy lieutenants to attend EWS during its MAGTF Operations Afloat course and subsequent Capstone exercise in a temporary additional duty status for approximately twelve weeks from January to March each year. This would coincide with scheduled dry dock maintenance periods of ships assigned to Expeditionary Strike Group 2 when commanding officers need educational opportunities for junior officers in the ship's company.

While the goal is ultimately to have sixteen Navy students from a variety of occupational fields for the entire academic year, this alternative will enhance Navy Marine Corps integration in an educational environment bringing much needed surface warfare expertise to the EWS experience. With this step, EWS moves closer to a model of teaching and learning like maneuverists with the goal of every graduate and conference group capable of operating as part of a MEU/ARG staff.

Supporting Lifelong Learning

"Committing to Lifelong Learning" is the major theme of the Secretary of the Navy's new Education for Seapower Strategy and was reinforced in the CPG, which states, "It is your responsibility to seek PME as part of 'self-improvement.'"³ To support these directives, MCU's College of Distance

Education and Training has converted an existing concept into an enabling capability called the Continuing Education Program (CEP). The CEP offers a series of online, facilitated electives. These voluntary seminar opportunities are provided to sergeants through colonels on a variety of topics from a nine-week elective titled *Afghanistan, Graveyard of Empires* to a five-week seminar on a book from the Commandant's Professional Reading List, such as *First to Fight*.

Currently, CEP has over twenty courses in development or ready for online seminar delivery. Over 90 videos taken from lectures, guest speakers, high profile scholars, and senior leaders have been posted on MCU's seven MarineNet Video Service channels for the consumption of Marines everywhere.

CEP is looking for both officers and senior enlisted to become adjunct faculty to develop and/or teach these electives; if interested, contact College of Distance Education and Training via the MCU website or one of the eight regional directors at our major bases and stations. As planned funding becomes available over the next few years, expansion of the CEP will continue to provide these educational opportunities between formal PME opportunities and track those who avail themselves of thorough self-study for recognition by reporting seniors and inclusion in the students' official military personnel files.

For Marines looking to develop their expertise in a specific part of the world, MCU is standing up the Center for Regional and Security Studies, which will partner senior academics who focus on the great powers with foreign area officers and regional affairs officers to provide high quality, pertinent research and instruction to the Fleet Marine Force. This will occur through the Regional and Culture Studies Program. This is the successor to the Regional, Culture, and Language Familiarization Program, which will end in fiscal year 2020. This transition better nests regional and culture studies within TECOM's learning areas via an accessible, career-long program of self-

study during the time between formal PME schools. Additionally, this transition reinforces other forms of PME, generates continuity in education, and provides relevant content to support a Marine's career progression. The revised content focuses on near-peer competitors, critical thinking frameworks in the form of strategic culture, elements of the *National Defense Strategy*, and better learner engagement via case studies, hip-pocket classes, and practical applications. With 27,000 Marines either enrolled or complete for grade, the Regional and Culture Studies Program is fully developed, accredited, and ready to support the 21st Century Learning initiative.

Conclusion

Marine Corps University is working hard to ensure that the enlisted Marines, NCOs, SNCOs, and officers enrolled in our various programs receive rigorous, relevant, and responsive educational opportunities focused on improving their warfighting abilities and intellectual development. Having the best educated and best trained fighting force in the world is key to competing with peer and near-peer competitors in a distributed naval environment and maximizing our contribution to the Nation's combat readiness. With the changes underway at MCU this year, we are committed to graduating Marines and others from the joint, interagency, and multinational force ready to face the threats and challenges of today and the future; and we remain committed as always to "teaching officers and NCOs how to win in combat by out-thinking as well as out-fighting their opponents."

Notes

1. Gen David H. Berger, *38th Commandant's Planning Guidance*, (Washington, DC: July 2019).
2. Headquarters Marine Corps, *2017 CMC Institutional-Level Task List for Deputy Commandants and Commanders*, (Washington, DC: February 2017).
3. *38th Commandant's Planning Guidance*.

