

Running head: LEADERSHIP ENHANCEMENT

Leadership Enhancement and the Role of the Community

Federico J. Rodríguez, Ph.D.
Directorate of Education

24th Infantry Division (Mechanized) and Fort Riley, Kansas

Abstract

"Leadership Enhancement and the Role of the Community" examines collaborative educational and training initiatives undertaken at Fort Riley, Kansas for developing leadership traits of soldiers as they prepare to meet the challenges of today's Army. The article also addresses the role of the installation and the community as platforms from which we project beneficial programs, which not only train individuals but also focus on the well being of the entire Army family.

Leadership Enhancement and the Role of the Community

*Real leadership is being the person others
will gladly and confidently follow.*

by

Federico J. Rodríguez, Ph.D.
Directorate of Education

The Honorable R. L. Brownlee, Secretary of the Army, and General Peter J. Schoomaker, Chief of Staff of the Army (2004), wrote the "*Warrior Ethos: I am an American Soldier*" as part of United States Army 2004 Posture Statement. In it they highlight Army families and well-being:

People are the heart and soul of the Army – soldiers, civilians, family members, and retirees. Our readiness is inextricably linked to the well being of our people. The Army Family, for both the Active and Reserve Component, is a force multiplier and provides the foundation to sustain our warrior culture. (p. 1)

They go on to state that one of the core competencies is training and equipping soldiers, and growing leaders:

Our Army prepares every soldier to be a warrior. Our training replicates the stark realities of the battlefield in order to condition soldiers to react instinctively in combat. Such training is essential to building soldiers' confidence in themselves, their equipment, their leaders, and their fellow soldiers. Mental and physical toughness are paramount to the development of the warrior ethos and apply to all soldiers from private to general. Every soldier is called upon to be a leader. (p. 4)

Because we are at war, and will be for the foreseeable future, they also believe that:

Our installations are an essential component in maintaining the premier Army in the world. For the warfighter, installations are the platforms from which we project military power. Our installations perform major key missions, one of which is taking care of our families. (p. 16)

Implicit in this philosophical concept is education and building community. We must maintain our investment in the future by sustaining the highest quality leadership training and education for our Army and develop a corporate-focused installation that is focused on the well-being of the entire Army family.

With the establishment of the Installation Management Agency (IMA), a corporate-focused structure that provides efficient installation management, we should also ask how this new management model can help sustain and maintain innovative and creative educational initiatives. What changes need to be made to improve the leadership of the future? What specifically needs to be done to improve the quality of

educational leadership for the new century? How do we change today's environment to meet the challenges of tomorrow? Where do we start? We start in our own community, at our own installation.

What's Happening at Fort Riley?

At Fort Riley, Kansas, the command wanted a more dynamic and integrated educational system that provided quality comprehensive programs throughout the installation and surrounding community. The Fort Riley education model was developed to support a) the need for synchronized, integrated educational opportunities for the military and civilians, and b) the transformation to a synergistic educational model integrating the installation and surrounding community.

a. A Partnership Success Story One of the most outstanding examples of community partnership is the Education Service Directorate (ESD)-Fort Riley's Memorandum-of-Understanding with Barton County Community College to provide on-duty leadership and training classes for soldiers. In this unique partnership, all service members stationed in Kansas and their family members are considered, for educational purposes, to be Kansas residents. Therefore, Barton receives state aid funds on a credit hour basis for each soldier or family member enrolled in a Barton class. Fort Riley provides Barton the facilities, materials, equipment, office space, classrooms, counseling, and administrative support for these programs as payment in-kind for the tuition Barton would normally have charged to the students.

Through this agreement, Barton County Community College provides instruction for Fort Riley's on-duty education programs: Leadership Skills Enhancement Courses (LSEC), Functional Academic Skills Training (FAST), Language, Automation Training, and Military Occupational Skills (MOS) school classes. Particular emphasis is being placed on improving the basic academic skills, especially reading and math. The Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) is an evaluative tool used to assess the soldier's skills for program enrollment. The courses are offered during regular duty hours at no direct cost to the student or the Army. Soldiers and family members receive college credit for course completion. This provides a positive enhancement on promotion and career progression. ESD-Fort Riley offers 44 different courses, taught by Barton County Community College and is the only installation with this type of program. The partnership also results in another significant benefit—the annual cost savings for FY 2002 is estimated at over \$2.4 million!

b. Consortium of Educational Institutions: In August 2003 Education Service Directorate (ESD)-Fort Riley formed its Consortium of Colleges and Universities. A Memorandum-of-Understanding brought together educators, military leaders and the community at-large for a common cause. The members of the Fort Riley Consortium have agreed to promote team-building and collaboration through the sharing of resources, expertise, thoughts, research, and ideas whenever possible. This agreement among the membership of the Fort Riley Consortium reflects a commitment to an ethical and dynamic relationship dedicated to academic excellence, mutual

understanding, and cooperation towards a common mission and vision. The member institutions are:

Barton County Community College
 Central Texas College
 Kansas State University
 Upper Iowa University
 Central Michigan University

c. eArmyU and Mentoring Campaign: Several revolutionary instructional delivery modes have recently been introduced at Fort Riley to address the changing needs of today's Army students—among them a program called eArmyU. eArmyU brings together a unique collaboration of colleges and universities offering a broad range of educational opportunities. Through eArmyU, soldiers have the chance to earn a certificate, associate, bachelor or master's degree from a home institution while taking courses from multiple colleges and universities. eArmyU offers unique flexibility to soldiers. Web-based courses can be completed anytime and anywhere, allowing soldiers to study at times that are most convenient for them – wherever they are stationed. eArmyU provides soldiers with the tools they need to succeed in the online environment. Once enrolled, soldiers receive up to 100% funding for tuition, books and course fees, as well as a personal laptop, email account and an Internet Service Provider (ISP) account.

At Fort Riley is aggressively extending this educational program to a number of soldiers stationed at the installation, as well as to those preparing to mobilize to Iraq. A key to the program's success is mentoring--investing the time to encourage these young men and women as they juggle the great demands put on them during this critical time (Rodríguez, 2004). The mentoring initiative is a program whereby each student soldier is assigned a person who will communicate with him/her via e-mail, to offer encouragement and support in an informal manner. Morale is boosted when the students feels there is someone to talk to, especially when deployments send them far from home.

d. Community Response: Mentors at Fort Riley include Department of the Army Civilians from various Directorates, the senior NCO leadership to high-ranking officers of the Command, including the Commanding General (D. E. Hardy, personal communication, July 19, 2004) and the Garrison Commander (J. A. Simpson, personal communication, August 4, 2004), all of whom have been assigned a student-soldier to mentor by e-mail. Recently, the leadership at Kansas State University and the surrounding Manhattan area were invited to join Fort Riley's mentoring program. Scholars, educators and leaders are stepping forward. This is a typical response: "After reading your email and accompanying eArmyU Mentoring Newsletters, I have decided that I am interested in becoming a mentor... It sounds like it is a wonderful, positive program for our troops here state-side and abroad" (K. Dunkelberger, personal communication, September 15, 2004). At Fort Riley we believe that our soldier's readiness is inextricably linked to the well being of our people. Hence, the Education Service Directorate (ESD)-Fort Riley believes that its student-soldiers need to hear that

someone supports them and wants them to succeed. Mentors share themselves with others—they see the student's potential, and empower them by believing in them completely. The act of empowering others changes lives, and it's a win-win situation for mentors and the people they empower. As John C. Maxwell (2002) states in his book *Leadership 101*, "Everyone wants to feel that he counts for something and is important to someone. Invariably, people will give their love, respect, and attention to the person who fills that need."

Another outcome of the eArmyU program has been an increased retention rate. The command's reenlistment goal has been met and programs like eArmyU, which offer so many benefits to soldiers, are partly responsible.

e. Outreach and Collaboration: At the Education Service Directorate (ESD)-Fort Riley, great emphasis is placed on encouraging open communication, building trust, team building and shared decision-making, working together towards a common goal, enlightened and progressive leadership, and inter-departmental team building as recommended by Yates (1999). Spearheading a major initiative was the Deputy Garrison Commander, with a Professional Development Seminar Series designed to train the civilian leadership, and specifically supervisors, across all Directorates on critical leadership skills (H. Gough, personal communication, December 15, 2003). The topics covered ranged from team building, stress management, recognition and workforce development, to wellness, health, and physical fitness.

ESD-Fort Riley has also started an initiative to enhance relationships between Fort Riley and the surrounding community to demonstrate how citizens and civic leaders can make a difference (Chrislip & Larson, 1994). Some examples are outreach through newspaper articles and radio/TV spots being aired community-wide. The first ESD-Fort Riley Handbook has been published and "The Director's Corner", a quarterly publication, is being shared worldwide via the Internet.

In addition to ESD-Fort Riley's partnership with Kansas State University, a close association is being developed with the Manhattan Area Chamber of Commerce to promote the benefits of living, working, raising a family and retiring in the Manhattan area. The Chamber is actively encouraging military families to remain in the area after they have left active duty.

Because of Fort Riley's strategic location in the heartland of America, it is envisioned that ESD-Fort Riley will become the National Center for promoting learning, teaching, research and knowledge through a series of forums, seminars, symposiums, and conferences. Fort Riley is sharing "best practices" through a model educational program. Fort Riley's educational achievements have been disseminated world-wide via the internet and through publications in military and civilian leadership journals. The most recent article was published in *The Officer* (Rodriguez, 2004) is entitled: *The Challenge of Change at Fort Riley University*.

Vision, Risk and Change: Are we up to the Challenge?

The Army has moved into a new century and at the Education Service Directorate (ESD)-Fort Riley we must also change aggressively, challenging the assumptions of the past and using the entire community to become more efficient and

effective. Building community, a major leadership initiative at Fort Riley, serves as a model for recruiting and retaining a high-quality volunteer force. As educators, military and civilian leaders we must also embrace IMA's creative organizational opportunities to manage and sustain quality installations thus maintaining the well-being of the entire Army family. Everything we do must be re-thought and re-structured--to include training and education. Integrating our civilian community is vital to our Army team. One installation cannot change the entire military. IMA can play a critical role in encouraging change and providing the vision to implement that change nation-wide. History will reveal our current level of forward-thinking by the quality of tomorrow's leaders. Transformation of the Army will not occur without combining futuristic educational goals and requirements that achieve the high-speed, high-tech Army needed to defeat a wiser motivated enemy. Highly motivated, highly educated, and highly trained soldiers using the most technologically sophisticated equipment win wars. Smart equipment requires smart trainers and handlers. As we help prepare those leaders of tomorrow, we must remember that our readiness is linked to the Total Army Family--soldiers, civilians, family members, and retirees. Through education, starting with Basic Skills -- reading, mathematics, and language, we can shape all of the Army's warriors for the future. Our installations can serve as power projection platforms for our soldiers and for the Total Army Family -- the heart and soul of the Army and of the future.

References

Brownlee, R.L. & Schoomaker, P.J. (2004). The United States 2004 posture statement. Presented to the Committees and Subcommittees of the United States Senate and the House of Representatives, Second Session, 108th Congress (pp. 1-21). Washington, D.C.

Chrislip, E. & Larson, C. (1994). Collaborative leadership: How citizens and civic leaders can make a difference. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

CPOL: Training & Career Development: ACTED Plans [File: cpol.army.mil/library/train/acteds/CP_31/toc]. (2000). Washington, DC [Army Continuing Education System.

Ketelle, D. (2001, March). Leadership for public purpose: A framework for the future. Paper presented at the 24th Annual Conference of the Society of Educators and Scholars, Long Beach, CA.

Maxwell, J.C. (2002). Leadership one hundred one. Georgia: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Rodríguez, F. J. (2004). The challenge of change at Fort Riley University), The Officer, 7, 28-30.

Rodríguez, F. J. (2004, Summer). eArmyU Mentoring Campaign. Copy Editor, 1, 1-2.

Scott, M., (2004, March 9). Hunter: A vote of confidence for Fort Riley. The Manhattan Mercury, pp. A1, A8.

Yates, A. C. (1999). Good leaders must first be good people. In L. Orozco (Ed.), Educational Leadership (pp. 46-49). Chicago: Coursewise Publishing.

Federico J. Rodríguez, Ph.D.

Dr. Rodríguez is Director, Education Service Directorate (ESD)-Fort Riley, Kansas. He holds a bachelor's degree from Idaho State University, a master's degree in education from Colorado State University, and a doctorate in Educational administration from the University of Utah. He can be contacted at rodriguezfj@riley.army.mil.

As the chief educational leader within the Fort Riley community, Dr. Rodríguez is entrusted with providing the leadership and directing educational opportunities for over 20,000 active duty soldiers, Department of the Army civilians, and family members. He envisions furthering the development of creative and innovative academic activities through collaborative arrangements within the Fort Riley Consortium of Colleges and Universities. Located in the heart of mid-America Fort Riley is an excellent place for promoting learning, teaching, research and knowledge.

Author Note

Federico J. Rodríguez, Ph.D., is Director of the Education Service Directorate (ESD) at Fort Riley, Kansas 66442-6824; (785) 234-6481; e-mail: rodriguezfj@riley.army.mil.

Special thanks is extended to Kay L. Gatza, Division Chief for Student Services, Marian C. Moore, Division Chief for Academic Programs, and Jack G. Lucas, Division Chief for Military Programs at ESD-Fort Riley who served as consultants and editors for this manuscript. Their leadership and forward-thinking was instrumental in the success of the ESD-Fort Riley programs and outreach initiatives. These educators and scholars are commended for assisting in taking vision to implementation during a critical time in U.S. history.

Special thanks is also extended to Fort Riley's Garrison Commander, Colonel John A. Simpson, Jr., and the Deputy Garrison Commander, Helen Gough for their support and guidance as we continue to develop the Fort Riley Educational Model. "Vision is not seeing things as they are, but as they will be."

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Federico J. Rodríguez, ESD-Fort Riley, Kansas 66442-6824.