



From the Desk of the Field Artillery CSM

Readiness Depends on Growing Future Leaders

Development of leaders is paramount to readiness. If we are to grow FA experts who are technically, tactically and morally prepared to lead Soldiers in large scale ground combat operations against a near peer threat, across multiple domains in the current operational environment through unified land operations, it must be done with a holistic approach encompassing the institutional, operational and self-development domains. The process requires investment, presence and commitment on the part of the institution, leaders and the individual Soldier – not a onetime investment, but a prolonged, continuous process which the dividends are reinvested over time perpetuating sustained development of effective future leaders.

We must first acknowledge that development will occur, even in the absence of presence but it may not be the development we are looking for. If a Soldier is not provided proper guidance, opportunity and supervision as required, they will revert to their personal values and experience to determine what they should and should not do. They will still develop in this environment, but it is not necessarily conducive to becoming a leader. What we truly desire is growth. Whether individual or organizational, growth does not occur without presence and involvement of leaders. In the contemporary environment, where there is a proliferation of technology, the challenge of presence becomes apparent. We have generations of folks in society, and in our Army who view technological connections as personal. There's a significant difference between physical presence and electronic connection when it comes to growth; the former will facilitate the growth we need with regard to future leaders while the latter may be beneficial to reach and

influence the larger formation. This is not an indictment of the use of technology or society at large, but something that we must be cognizant of in the leader/led relationship. We must coach junior leaders when necessary that being where your Soldiers are/doing what your Soldiers do is irreplaceable in their own and their Soldiers' development.

Across the Army, we're at an all-time low in growing future noncommissioned officers; we just don't develop future leaders like we used to. Within our branch, our skill level one populations are near or over 100% across all MOSs. We've been showing some improvement in our skill level two populations, but not nearly what we need. 13J (130%) and 13R (109%) being the anomalies, the remaining MOSs range from 76% to 91%. Our skill level three populations are all below 84% with the exception of 13B (106%). It doesn't take a math professor to figure it out, we have the inventory to get the branch healthy... what are we doing with it?

There have been improvements within the institutional domain to invest in the development and growth of future enlisted leaders through a number of unprecedented changes; improved career guidance (revised DA PAM 600-25, Professional Development Models or 'career maps'), revolutionary changes to the Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development System (NCOPDS) from Basic Leader Course through the Nominative Leader Course, and increased opportunities and guidance for self-development ranging from suggested reading to accreditation to functional courses.

The changes implemented within the institu-

Continued on Page 7, See From the FA CSM



From the FA CSM ... Continued from Page 6

tion are only part of the solution. We (leaders at all echelons, across all cohorts – enlisted, warrant and commissioned officers) need to coach, teach and mentor our Soldiers and leaders down to the squad/section/platoon level in how to create, sustain and LEAD (presence) through proactive methods to build future leaders. As you all know, I have been adamant about improving our development of future leaders in order to increase the promotion opportunities for quality Soldiers, which ultimately increases our SGT and SSG populations to appropriate levels across the CMF, directly contributing to our readiness as a branch. As of 7 DEC 17, the SECARMY has issued a directive (Army Directive 2017-28 [Sergeant and Staff Sergeant Promotion Recommended List] that directs us to do what we should have been doing all along. If you understand the defined Leader Competency ‘Develops’ it’s pretty clear what we should be doing to develop future noncommissioned officers – Organizational (SSG-1SG) “PROACTIVE in developing others through individual coach, teach and mentor subordinates; accurately and fairly ASSESS, IDENTIFIES future leaders” or Strategic (CSM) “Creates systems and adopts policies supporting professional and personal growth across the organization; stewards the Army’s interest in caring for and managing people and other resources.” However, the responsibility is not solely on the shoulders of our NCOs, it is an organizational responsibility.

The new policy outlines specific actions for commanders as the promotion authority, rescinds the Command List Integration (CLI) and outlines an “up-or-out” system. No longer can local commanders deny integration into the promotion recommended list as they could with CLI. Now, commanders must use the bar to continued service (with counseling) to identify those Soldiers who have no potential for continued service or leadership. Following the aforementioned Leader Competency responsibilities, we’ve got to put in the work - we can’t simply fall back on ‘they ain’t ready’. Through a deliberate process, we must provide opportunities and supervision to allow Soldiers to demonstrate potential or lack of potential and assess that potential (through counseling) in order to adequately determine whether the Soldier should move ‘up or out’.

Soldiers who do meet all eligibility criteria will be integrated into the promotion recommended list and compete for promotion with all earned promotion points; not unlike what we already do with Centralized Promotion Boards. If a staff sergeant is eligible for consideration to promotion to sergeant first class, no one gets to vote if they are “ready” for the sergeant first class promotion selection board. If they are not barred or flagged, their records go before the board and they are either selected or they are not. If they are not selected, the command must counsel them following the board results release as to what they must do to be more competitive. Under the new directive, a Specialist or Sergeant who is eligible for promotion, not flagged or barred (all else eligible), will go to the promotion board.

What must be absolutely clear to everyone is the new directive is NOT automatic promotion. It IS a Mandatory Board Appearance for eligible Soldiers. We need to ensure our Soldiers and Leaders understand this. It’s not so much about promoting everyone as it is about improving how we develop Soldiers to become leaders. We have to invest ourselves in a deliberate process of growing junior noncommissioned officers in our organizations well ahead of when they are eligible, so that when they near eligibility we have properly assessed their potential, and either send them to the board or remove them from eligibility by taking the appropriate administrative action (bar to continued service ([with counseling])). Some will self-identify a lack of potential by failing Army standards; we must also ensure we are taking immediate administrative action when they do so (flag). As I have stated in previous articles and through engagement discussions, the same level of command focus and tracking of promotion eligibility and board appearance should be given as we do for reenlistment eligibility. Incorporated into Command and Staff, subordinate leaders brief by name, within their organizations, who is eligible and when they’re going to the board as well as who is not and why – and have the appropriate administrative actions be taken? This simple method will provide a sustained organizational focus and appropriate command at-

Continued on Page 8, See From the FA CSM



From the FA CSM ... Continued from Page 7

tention at each level to be sure we are collectively invested in development of our future noncommissioned officers and we're in compliance with the Army Directive.

We all have a role to play in reversing the downward trend of developing our future noncommissioned officers, none of us can afford to be bystanders. The future of our branch depends on a continued holistic approach encompassing the institutional, operational and self-development domains; we've all got to do our part through increased investment, presence and commitment in developing and sustaining a continuous process maintaining constant development of effective future leaders. King of Battle!

Access <https://actnow.army.mil/communities/community/enlisted-cmf13> and join/follow the CMF 13 community to get immediate updates to anything related to enlisted development and career progression.

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 [Click here to jump to Table of Contents](#)





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