

**House Committee on Armed Services
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations**

Charting the Course for Effective Professional Military Education

Thursday, September 10, 2009

Questions to Dr. John Allen Williams from Chairman Snyder:

Mission Effectiveness

1. You concluded in your testimony that, "maximum exposure to rigorous civilian academic standards will strengthen PME, better prepare the military to deal with future challenges, and strengthen the bonds between the military and society." You also noted that the military will be increasingly called upon to perform its missions among civilian elements both at home and abroad in a new "hybrid" security environment, blending international, transnational, and sub-national threats. How should civil-military relations be taught within PME curricula to optimize preparedness for civil-military future requirements?

Response:

The best curriculum for teaching civil-military relations in both the military and civilian environments begins with a solid grounding in the classics of the discipline, starting with the works of Morris Janowitz and Samuel P. Huntington. At the risk of omitting other scholars whose work I also admire, Charles C. Moskos, Sam C. Sarkesian, David R. Segal, James Burk, Peter Feaver, Richard Kohn, Eliot Cohen, Don Snider, Deborah Avant, Moshe Lissak, Bernard Boene, Christopher Dandeker, Anthony Forster, and many others come to mind as scholars who revised and supplemented this early work in important ways.

Most military officers are familiar with the theories of military professionalism of Samuel P. Huntington. These reinforce the dominant internal narrative of a professional military occupying a distinct and somewhat separate position with respect to civilian society. There should also be a deeper understanding of work of Morris Janowitz, especially his view that the military is closely related to society – growing out of it and sharing its values.

The discipline of civil-military relations is well developed and has a rich literature. Much of the best work is found in the pages of *Armed Forces & Society*, an interdisciplinary and international scholarly journal dedicated to the study of military professionalism and the relations between the military and society. (This journal, edited by Patricia Shields, is the official journal of the Inter-University Seminar on Armed Forces and Society, which I have the privilege to chair.)

Prior to this detailed study, however, officers need to be educated in such a way that they are intellectually curious, able to analyze complex and ambiguous situations, understanding of foreign cultures, and capable of expressing themselves clearly. These are core competencies not only of budding strategists, but anyone who will conduct military operations in situations where the human terrain is a factor and victory is not based on firepower alone. These competencies are best developed in highly demanding academic programs based on the social sciences and humanities.

2. Is the only way to achieve the Skelton Panel Report's recommended joint (and now increasingly interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational) acculturation through in-residence education or should distance or blended learning opportunities be more broadly embraced by the Services?

Response:

There is no substitute for in-residence educational experiences of the highest quality as early in an officer's career as feasible given the requirement for specialty training at that stage. Education and training go hand in hand, and in-residence training is irreplaceable for education. The acculturation recommended in the Skelton Panel Report requires face to face interactions with members of the groups with whom officers will be called upon to serve. Only in that way can members of the various institutions get to know one another and understand their respective institutional cultures. It is not always true that "where you stand depends on where you sit," but institutional factors powerfully affect the attitudes and positions of otherwise similar individuals. It would be best for officers to have a visceral understanding of these before they work together in a crisis environment.

From a budgetary perspective, distance learning makes a great deal of sense; from an educational perspective, it makes less – especially in the humanities and social science courses required to develop critical analysis and communications skills. Whatever the budgetary implications, distance learning does facilitate access to the far-flung military population. One could imagine some kind of blended program in which fact acquisition – as opposed to acculturation and socialization – is performed outside the traditional classroom, but the ratio of in-class interaction to online actions should be as high as possible. Of course, a great deal of individual self study is required for professional development before, during, and after formal educational experiences.

Leadership and Officer Development

3. Your testimony was very encouraging of increased civil-military interaction, especially in the academic arena. Would you please elaborate on how specific types of scholarly interactions might benefit the PME system, and the officer corps as a whole?

Response:

There are many opportunities for the sort of civil-military interactions that would benefit both the PME system and the officer corps as a whole:

- Broadly based ROTC programs at our best universities are an important link with civil society and provide a diverse infusion of new officers.
- Civilian graduate education brings the most talented military and civilian students together in the most demanding educational settings; it also exposes high-potential officers to civilian academic ways of thoughts and to the highest intellectual standards and puts a human face on the military for future civilian leaders. It goes without saying that the selection process for these assignments must be based on individual merit and potential for distinguished future service.
- Highly qualified civilian instructors in military PME institutions, either on a permanent or rotating basis, bring a bit of the civilian education experience inside the military PME system.
- Participation in appropriate academic conferences promotes meaningful professional interactions between the civilian academic community and the military, to the advantage of both. It also stimulates officers to write papers and eventually publish their work.
- Membership in scholarly societies such as the Inter-University Seminar on Armed Forces and Society provides important professional interactions and a network of professional contacts.
- Publication in rigorously reviewed scholarly journals ensures a wide audience of expert civilians for the authors' work and the publication process generates a great deal of useful intellectual feedback.

4. The Skelton Panel Report considered faculty as the determinant factor in quality education. What policies would you suggest be implemented to ensure that the highest quality civilian and military faculty and senior leaders are assigned to the Service and joint PME institutions?

Response:

Others are better positioned to comment on specific assignment policies, but I would note that training future strategists and implementers has implications for recruitment, future assignments, and promotion. The most appropriate officers must be selected for PME positions as both students and faculty. All must utilize the competencies they develop in their future careers, which must be long enough for the Services to benefit from their educational experiences. In addition, time spent in educational institutions must not be in itself a negative factor in subsequent promotion decisions.

Developing Strategists

5. Considering the demands of the twenty-first century security environment, does the United States need more theoretical strategists (i.e., idea generators) than the few contemplated by the Skelton Panel Report? Do we need more applied strategists (i.e., practical implementers) than we did twenty years ago? If so, what percentage of the officer corps would need to exhibit these skill sets?

Response:

As the question implies, both idea generators and practical implementers are needed in an increasingly complex and ambiguous security environment. Both benefit from highly rigorous training in a broad humanistic curriculum. This is especially useful because the future grand theorists may not be identifiable early on, but they will sort themselves out during the course of study proposed here. What the precise ratio should be is impossible to predict in the abstract, but it is not possible to have too many idea generators. Those officers would likely also have the ability to implement policies, although the reverse cannot be assumed.

6. How might the PME system better enable strategists to become fluent in geopolitical trends and potential causes for conflict in the next quarter century?

- Trends in: demographics, globalization, comparative economics, energy supply and demand, food production and distribution, water scarcity, climate change and natural disasters, pandemics, cyber connectivity, and the utility of space; and
- Contexts for conflict like: competition with conventional powers, regional influences, weak and failing states, non-state and transnational adversaries, the proliferation of WMDs, technological advancements, strategic communications, and rampant urbanization.

Response:

Despite the importance of technological sophistication in the early part of some officers' careers, especially in the Navy and Air Force, there is no technical education that will produce strategists able to deal with the complexity described above. The only solution is a comprehensive education broadly based in the social sciences and humanities with an emphasis on history, such as Admiral Stansfield Turner instituted over great opposition at the U.S. Naval War College in the early 1970s.

This does not seem to be the path the Navy, at least, is taking. Recent Navy policy to require that 65 percent of midshipmen at the Naval Academy and in NROTC programs have technical majors seems shortsighted, especially in view of the heavy technical course requirements required of all midshipmen, regardless of major. Indeed, all USNA midshipmen graduate with a Bachelor of Science degree anyway. This is not a new trend in the Navy, and was accelerated under the otherwise beneficial influence of ADM Hyman G. Rickover and with the assumption that a high proportion of the U.S. Navy fleet would be nuclear powered. There does not seem to be a significant constituency inside the Navy (or perhaps the Air Force, which I know less well) to combat this trend successfully. Its reversal will not occur without outside inquiry and direction.

For a more detailed exposition of these points, the Subcommittee may wish to consult ADM James Stavridis and CAPT Mark Hagerott, "The Heart of an Officer: Joint, Interagency, and International Operations and Navy Career Development," *Naval War College Review*, Spring 2009, pp. 27-41, and RADM (Ret.) Jacob Shuford, "Re-

Education for the 21st Century Warrior,” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, April 2009, pp. 14-19.

7. How should rigor be defined within the PME system in the future? Should the Skelton Panel Report's notions of rigor (*i.e.*, challenging curricula, student accountability, and measurable student performance) be updated or expanded?

Response:

I cannot improve upon the Skelton Panel Report's criteria for academic rigor. The challenge will be to operationalize these criteria so they can be the basis of an effective program. The most important student outcomes – developing innovative strategists and effective implementers – may not be apparent for years. I would offer the caveat that an overemphasis on achieving measurable outcomes will increase the focus on the technological issues that can be measured most easily but which contribute the least to developing strategists. Fitness/efficiency reports for periods of academic study should be used to help determine future assignments.

8. Are there elements of rigor that should be standardized among all PME institutions? How much discretion would you afford each individual institution in defining rigor?

Response:

Different programs should be alike to the extent that they provide a challenging and intellectually open environment in which officers can develop their cognitive and expressive skills as effectively as possible. They will differ in the ways in which they go about achieving this result. Too much standardization is not desirable, as it stifles initiative and experimentation. I would allow a great deal of discretion to the educators and administrators at the various PME institutions, subject to a common understanding on the importance of academic rigor as stated above.

Organization and Resources

9. Each PME school has a different internal organization. Is a unique organizational character necessary at each of the schools to optimize the PME mission? What, if anything, should be standardized among the schools with respect to their organization?

Response:

I can think of no particular organization of the schools in the PME system that would further the goals of the Skelton Committee Report most effectively. Standardization should be at the level of a common understanding of the educational purpose and the seriousness with which it should be pursued, not at the level of organizational details. There is also much to be said for maintaining the unique character of the various schools.

10. What are your views on the current military and civilian leadership and academic

requirements for: Presidents, Provosts, Commandants, Deans, CAOs, Deans of Students, and Chiefs of Staff? Should we adjust any of these requirements?

Response:

The leading academic officers of PME institutions must have strong administrative skills, but they must also understand the academic process and support its goals. I am not sufficiently familiar with the details of current statutory requirements or administrative regulations in this regard to have an informed opinion on specific guidance. It is imperative, however, that appointees to these key positions have strong academic qualifications and are committed to promoting a rigorous educational program in their institutions. Continued Congressional interest in this issue will be helpful to focus attention on these criteria and ensure that appointees are of the highest quality.