

# Progress on the Evolution of the Warrant Officer Education System and an Uncertain Future

Dr. Leonard S. Momeny, Ed.D., CW5 (Ret), U.S. Army, Aviation

***Editor's note: Thoughts and assessments in this work are those of the author and are not meant to reflect the organizational opinions of the US Army Warrant Officer Career College, the U.S. Army Aviation Center of Excellence, or the U.S. Army.***

## Introduction

In issue one of *Strength in Knowledge: The Warrant Officer Journal*, Colonel McHugh and Chief Warrant Officer 5 Momeny discuss a modernization effort that was ongoing within the common core military education for the Army Warrant Officer (2023, p. 6-8). The authors discussed the coming modernization of Warrant Officer education as a byproduct of the Army introducing a new keystone doctrine, Field Manual (FM) 3-0 Operations (2022), better known to all by now as multidomain operations. However, the authors were unable to discuss at the time what this modernization might look like in a definite sense and eventual impacts on the development of current and future students undertaking the Warrant Officer Candidate Course. Additionally, the authors were unable to articulate the implications that changing the foundational course would have on the greater Warrant Officer Education System and the cohort in general. The following article outlines what has changed in the Warrant Officer Candidate Course, from class content to capstone, and how those differences can impact the future of the Army Warrant Officer, the Warrant Officer Education System, and the subsequent holistic development of students.

## Origins of a New Beginning

The recent call for change in the nature of Warrant Officer education did not initially begin with Warrant Officer Candidates and instead was originally focused on Warrant Officer Senior Service Education (WOSSE), specifically curricula and assessments. The question was posed in an issue of the Newsliner, the magazine of the US Army Warrant Officer Association, on whether or not the design of the course was effective, or more specifically did the course meet the needs of both the senior Warrant Officer and their commanders with respect to evolving operational needs:

“If nothing else, the WOSSE course must achieve relevance to both the future CW5 and meet the needs of both current and future commanders. WOSSE must continue to educate an officer to create value for senior leaders and organizations by enabling highly effective mission execution. The current course meets the needs of senior Warrant Officers employed by current senior leaders. Does it prepare senior Warrant Officers to meet the needs of future senior leaders, within future multi-domain operations, when the Warrant Officer cohort must do better to attain appreciable relevance with respect to the prescribed vision from the Joint Chiefs of Staff” (Momeny et al, 2022, p. 8).

The authors of the article *Reimagining Warrant Officer Senior Service Education* (2022) were referencing the call by the Joint Chiefs of Staff (2020) to ensure the “need for PME (Professional Military Education) and other talent management systems to work in unison to better identify and develop strategically minded joint officers...capable of strategic thought, which includes holistic critical, creative, and systems thinking” (Momeny et al., 2022, p. 8). Achievement of this sort in PME has been

identified to require curriculum and experiences that are “creative, self-guided learner experiences” (Momeny et al., 2022, p. 8). Similar research has been formally presented elsewhere by Khachadoorian, Steen, and Mackenzie (2020) in their article, “Metacognition and the Military Student: Pedagogical Considerations for Teaching Senior Officers in Professional Military Education.” Those authors and researchers reported on coursework at the War College level that produces opportunities for student-driven activities focusing on self-awareness, decision-making, and critical thinking (Khachadoorian et al., 2020). However, while strong presentations of such concepts are compelling, they hardly naturally extend toward the outcomes-based education of an entry-level course such as the Warrant Officer Candidate School, or WOCS. After all, the WOCS course attempts to both educate and acculturate the former enlisted Soldier into the ranks of the Officer.

Now, WOSSE has yet to undergo a full modernization, save for the eventual capstone event that has ultimately resulted in the creation of the journal, *Strength in Knowledge*, and the subsequent publication of rarely heard and cultivated ideas from senior Army Warrant Officers. The additional inspiration provided at this point brought about a more concerted approach to explore outcomes-based education focused upon developing an eventual WO1 that could better matriculate to the eventual battalion-level position. After all, before you adjust the highest level of education within a specific system it is necessary first to address gaps in the foundational course. Qualitative and quantitative research determined key points about the nature and level of appreciation for WOCS curriculum prior to modernization. This resulted in relevant and current data informing any and all adjustments to the curriculum and ultimately led to the course that is present today.

## **WOCS AND OTHER COURSE DESIGN EVOLUTIONS**

WOCS today looks nothing like that of past iterations. Students are no longer assessed via multiple-choice tests and instead find themselves writing. The development of written communication skills has been identified as critical as it allows for a more holistic assessment of a student’s ability to understand and apply learned information. Additionally, this move to more writing assignments aligns well with the Chief of Staff of the Army’s (CSA) initiative to once again invest in the Army’s ability to better write about the profession of arms, also known as the Harding Project. Other opportunities afforded to WOCS students are more in-depth education on doctrine, deeper sessions on military decision making process (MDMP), knowledge management, and organizational development. There has also been an effort to cultivate a reasonable approach toward a student-led course, seeking to put future officers consistently in a decision-making space. The process is still evolving, but the Warrant Officer 1 coming to the Army’s current units is far better prepared in the realm of common core knowledge than ever before.

The next major evolution currently underway at the Warrant Officer Career College is the adjustment of modern courses and topics to the new WOPME continuum. Name changes aside, e.g., Intermediate Level Education to Advanced Course, the curriculum found within each element of common core education courses, to include elements of distance learning, are being modernized. Courses will start to discuss topics such as technical writing, research, data literacy, and application of emotional intelligence in the context of leader communication. The reality is that all aspects of the Warrant Officer Career College are striving to modernize and better educate the cohort on critical aspects of common core education. Still, a large swath of these efforts continue and so remains the uncertain future within the greater context of Warrant Officer Professional Military Education.

## AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

Why state there is an uncertain future? In a move comparable to the Special Forces branch so many years ago, the Aviation branch recently separated from common core PME in an effort to establish their independent courses external to the proponent for Warrant Officer common core education. Aviation Warrant Officers will still attend the Warrant Officer Candidate Course prior to flight school, but the move to avoid attending the other levels of current common core PME is fraught with drawbacks. Three potential drawbacks are the gap in shared experience from the members of the movement and maneuver warfighting function, the absence of aviators in discussions on Force Management and Acquisitions, and the inability to learn from highly educated and seasoned faculty. Whether realized or unrealized, the separation has already sent ripples across the entirety of the cohort and potentially cast doubt upon the efficacy or value of the education received at the Warrant Officer Career College.

First, the act of attending PME with members from outside your branch is critical in the Warrant Officer Cohort, and not just for aviators. All Warrant Officers in attendance have an opportunity to learn in-depth aspects of operations from representatives external to their war fighting function. It seems irrelevant, but even something as simple as meeting other Warrant Officers is critical to the development and education



of the cohort as a whole. After all, our PME courses are quite short. The current ILE is only 5 weeks in duration, while SSE is just 4 weeks. Part of the reason the courses are allowed to be so compact is due to the benefit of so many diverse backgrounds coming together and sharing knowledge during exercises and student presentations. One of major positives identified, without fail, by all attending the ILE and SSE course is networking, as it helps supplement the course material with the shared experience of others.

Aviators are sure to be seen as a significant absence in the SSE course. One of the areas commonly discussed in the SSE curriculum is Force Management and Total Army Analysis. Aviators at the CW4 and CW5 ranks likely benefit greatly from discussions in this course, as the Aviation Branch is currently experiencing notable evolution due to the Army Future Vertical Lift (FVL) program and changes to unmanned aircraft technology as a

result of the war in Ukraine. Aviators, no matter their compo, will miss discussing the nuance of the acquisition process, force tailoring, and DOTMLPF-P matters with officers from assignments such as the Pentagon, the National Guard Bureau, and Army Futures Command. After all, when an aviator hits CW4 or 5, they prefer to remain in a Combat Aviation Brigade, but can easily serve in positions at Human Resources Command, the Pentagon, Army Futures, Directorate of Training and Doctrine, and PM Offices. Learning from the experiences of others can supplement the aviator's vast operational knowledge before moving into key positions in force generation, advisement on policy, and acquisition.

Lastly, the Warrant Officer Career College is staffed with professional instructors with various levels of expertise from across the Army and the associated branches hosting Warrant Officer positions. The experienced faculty have become well versed in contextualizing the standard topic areas of common core officer education into relevant discussion for Warrant Officers. Some have taught at civilian universities, the Command and General Staff College, and schools at various Centers of Excellence

across the force. These faculty are currently diligently working to update curriculum across the common core portfolio and are certain to introduce phenomenal updates in each course, just as experienced in recent WOCS development.

Of note, there is access to specific assignments where faculty coach SSE students through the crafting of professional papers, allowing them to submit for a peer-review from others in the class, and finally submit for publication into *Strength in Knowledge: The Warrant Officer Journal*. That work submitted to that journal is then shared via Army University with the whole force. Readers from outside the course can submit for publication. However, the act of topic and thesis shaping, peer-review from fellow CW4s and CW5s, and the dedicated time to simply write a paper in a learning environment while surrounded by diverse experience is absent from those not in attendance at the course.

## **Closing Thoughts**

The purpose of this article is to provide an overview on current efforts shaping Warrant Officer common core education. The faculty at the Warrant Officer Career College continue to make improvements to WOCS curriculum, all the while working on updating and modernizing course materials for the Advanced Course (soon to be Intermediate), ILE, and SSE. The coming absence of aviators from ILE and SSE, while only now occurring, promises to detract from the experiences of other officers in the cohort and potentially host drawbacks to their own development. Warrant Officer education clearly remains an area experiencing fluctuation and change, but the most important element to discuss is how we sustain and potentially even invest greater effort into the education of our cohort. The future fight of Multidomain Operations is systems-centric, and the success of the Army may be directly tied to the technical experts and integrators of those systems. Investing in Warrant Officer education is necessary and cannot continue to be overlooked. Warrant Officers remain a critical link to victory on the battlefield.

Finally, Warrant Officer professional military education must be viewed in a positive light by both members of the cohort and greater officer corps. Topics currently taught at all levels of education have been assessed as valuable and necessary to study in other courses across the officer corps portfolio, and thereby perceived as being just as valuable for Warrant Officer development. As members of the greater officer corps, and subject to the same laws that govern education of those considered regular line officers, Warrant Officer education must maintain rigor, relevance, and value to all in attendance and those that benefit from student development. An educated force is a professional force and even common core education is necessary in the development of excellent Warrant Officers. If for some reason you do not like the curriculum or model being utilized, I encourage you to become a faculty member at the college and become the change that might be needed.

## **About the Author**

Leonard Momeny, Ed.D., U.S. Army, is a Chief Warrant Officer 5 is senior faculty at the Warrant Officer Career College, Fort Novosel, Alabama. He is currently transitioning from active duty to retirement and will finish with over 26 years of service on 30 September 2024. Leonard holds degrees from Central Texas College, Southwestern College Kansas, American Military University, and Liberty University. Leonard finished his doctorate with Liberty University in 2020 and currently serves as adjunct faculty with Liberty University and Purdue Global. Leonard is a Master Army Aviator and a graduate of Ranger School. To read more from this author, visit <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5002-3919>.



## REFERENCES

- Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (15 May 2020). Officer Professional Military Education Policy (OPMEP).
- Khachadorian, A. A., Steen, S. L., & Mackenzie, L. B. (2020). Metacognition and the military student. Pedagogical considerations for teaching senior officers in professional military education. *Journal of Military Learning*.
- McHugh, K. E. & Momeny, L.S. (2023). Modernizing Common Core Military Education for the Army Warrant Officer. *Strength in Knowledge: The Warrant Officer Journal*, 1(1). <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/WOCC-Journal/2023-Journals/Strength-in-Knowledge-Volume-1-Issue-1.pdf>.
- Momeny, L.S, Parker, C., & Mathews, K. (2022). Looking Through Athena's Shield: The Case for the Missing Philosophy of Army Education. 2022 Army University Learning Symposium. (researchgate.net)
- Momeny, L.S., Steddum, J., & Grandinetti, T. (2022). Reimagining Warrant Officer Senior Service Education. *Newsliner*.
- U.S. Department of Army. (2022). *FM 3-0, Multidomain Operations*.

***Editor's Note: Strength in Knowledge: The Warrant Officer Journal congratulates Dr. Leonard Scott Momeny, Ed.D, on his retirement from the U.S. Army after 26 years of faithful military service. Dr. Momeny is the founding editor the journal; his lasting contributions to this journal, the U.S. Army Warrant Officer Career College, the Aviation branch, and the United States Army will continue to shape the greater body of knowledge, military expertise, and honorable service for many years to come.***

***Thank you for your service!***

