



# Leadership Education and Development (LEAD) at the United States Naval Academy

Capt Mark Adamshick  
United States Naval Academy

The United States Naval Academy has a deep and abiding commitment to the moral development of its midshipmen and to instilling the naval service's core values. The Naval Academy's mission is supported by the three pillars of moral, mental, and physical development. Unlike civilian institutions, we hire all of our graduates, and within months of commissioning, the new Navy Ensigns and Marine Corps 2nd Lieutenants will find themselves in leadership positions that can challenge their values and test their character in today's highly complex and dangerous battle space. As an institution, we strive to reinforce midshipmen's ability to discern between right and wrong and to reason through right versus right decisions, while stressing the obligations they have as leaders to develop the moral courage to do what is right even at great personal risk. These

goals are embedded in the commissioned officer's role as a Leader of Character, trained and educated to serve as Warrior, Servant of the Nation, and a Standard Bearer of the Naval Profession. The goal of the Leadership Education and Development Division is to integrate the moral, ethical, and character development of midshipmen across every aspect of the Naval Academy experience. The integrated officer development program is the single most important feature that distinguishes the Naval Academy from other civilian educational institutions and naval officer commissioning sources.

The Naval Academy's character program is fairly new in the grand scheme, getting its start in the fall of 2005. Since then, the character staff has been developing its doctrine so that it can be most effective for the Brigade of Midshipmen. Its

**Captain Mark Adamshick, USN, Ph.D.** is the Director, Division of Leadership Education and Development and senior military professor of leadership and ethics at the United States Naval Academy and 1981 USNA graduate. Captain Adamshick is a naval flight officer and test pilot school graduate and has accumulated over 3000 flight hours in over 25 different aircraft. He has served in a variety of high level staff positions including the deputy flag officer assignment officer to the Chief of Naval Personnel and the head aviation warfare policy officer to the Chief of Naval Operations in the Pentagon. Captain Adamshick has a Masters degree in public administration from Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government and earned his Ph.D. in policy studies, specializing in management, finance and leadership, from the University of Maryland, School of Public Policy.



purpose is to promote training and development of combat leaders of character. The Character Program has three sub-programs, Alcohol and Drug Education (ADEO), Command Managed Equal Opportunity (CMEO) and Sexual Assault Victim Intervention (SAVI). Each of these programs has its own separate impact on the Brigade, its own training, and its own personnel, yet all fall under the Brigade Character Advisor who oversees the programs and keeps the Brigade Commander and Commandant on board with the character program's activities.

Because having a strong foundation of honor and character is of utmost importance for becoming an exceptional leader, the character program strives to educate and motivate the members of the Brigade into taking a serious step down the path of developing their own character in preparation for their fleet service. All midshipmen are encouraged to talk about the importance of character and events and occurrences where one's character can be tested. An important part of the character development program is the First Class (1/C) Capstone Seminar.

This seminar program was introduced for the Class of 2002. The goal is to support the mission of the Naval Academy by providing the 1/C midshipmen the opportunity to discuss issues of leadership, character, and ethics in a focused day-long setting. These discussions are one of the final opportunities available to them in their preparation for assuming the mantle of leadership as commissioned officers. The seminar represents a continuing effort to underscore the core values of honor, courage, and commitment and the application of these values as commissioned officers in the profession of arms. Each 1/C midshipman attends this day-long seminar at some point during the First Class year.

A Midshipman can select any one of 32 dates that best fits his or her schedule. Each seminar is limited to 36 Midshipmen to maintain the effectiveness of small-group discussions. Midshipmen attend the seminar in business attire for two reasons. The first is to underscore the importance of appropriate attire for meetings and other functions when a uniform is not required. The second is to remove any semblance of rank hierarchy, so that the value of a person's comment is based on its worth and not the person's position or rank. The small-table composition is great for discussions and allows everyone to really get involved.

Unlike civilian universities, the Naval Academy hires all of its graduates, and within months of commissioning, the new ensigns and 2nd lieutenants will find themselves in leadership positions that can challenge their values and test their character daily. The seminar discussions are designed to stimulate thought about important and relevant issues to be faced in the not-too-distant future. The seminar is integrated with the academic courses in leadership and moral reasoning taught during the four years at the Academy, providing 1/C midshipmen a valuable opportunity to test their knowledge and skill and challenge that of their peers. This experience is enhanced by input from experienced facilitators at each table. These men and women are drawn from the staff and faculty of the Naval Academy and supporting organizations, including retired commissioned officers. All provide valuable input and perspective to assist in the decision-making process. The seminar is a learning experience for all who participate.

The Leadership, Ethics and Law Department (LEL) in the Division of Leadership Education and Development of the U.S. Naval Academy



provides midshipmen with education and training in core courses in leadership, ethics, character, and law, and the opportunity to study specialized electives in philosophy, behavioral science, leadership, and law. While the course of study is intentionally broad, it enhances the effectiveness and credibility of midshipmen while they are members of the Brigade, and later when they enter the fleet as junior officer leaders. Through an intensive four-year process, students acquire a solid foundation in the dynamic science and art of leadership, preparing them for a lifetime of leadership development and service to their country.

The approach to studying leadership at USNA is based upon an experiential learning model comprised of conceptualization, experimentation, reinforcement, and reflection over a period of four years in residence at USNA. Through a process of personal learning, classroom instruction, and interaction, complemented by the unique professional experiences and opportunities for reflection during the academic year and through summer training, midshipmen will understand leadership and what it means to be a Leader of Character. The leadership education program consists of formal instruction by military and civilian professionals in leadership, philosophy and ethics, human behavior, and law; complimented by the practical knowledge and real-time fleet experiences of Navy and Marine Corps commissioned officers. This relevant and effective combination of academic and professional expertise profoundly enhances the learning environment. The “deckplate” experiences of the instructors transforms the learning environment from an abstract study into a more pertinent and timely application of knowledge. The primary outcome

of the leadership learning model is the Officer/ Graduate “Leader of Character.” This outcome is continually improved through a departmental focus on and assessment of individual educational and officer outcomes, student learning objectives, and general program effectiveness.

During the four-year program, midshipmen study leadership, human behavior, ethics, law, and character, as well as individual, group, and organizational behavior. They will gain an understanding and appreciation of the values, culture, identity, and specialized knowledge encompassed by the naval profession. This is achieved in the context of the following student learning goals and objectives for core academic and training courses:

### **Freshman (Fourth Class) Year – NL110 (Preparing to Lead: Principles of Self- Leadership and Organizational Dynamics)**

Midshipmen begin the complex study of leadership in the context of theories and principles of individual and group behavior. This course emphasizes the development and understanding of personal strengths, values, and opportunities for growth. Topics include temperament theory, values, time management, reflection, self-presentation and the self-concept, social influences, trust, perception, communication, conflict management and an introduction to team and group behavior. At the conclusion of NL110, midshipmen will:

- Have knowledge of the basic processes of self-leadership, interpersonal interaction, and group dynamics and demonstrate the ability to apply this knowledge to leadership tasks and challenges at USNA.



- Have deeper understanding of their personal strengths, values, and opportunities for growth.
- Have the foundation to assist them in their performance as active, thoughtful, effective followers, and self-leaders, and demonstrate the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors consistent with thoughtful and effective followership.
- Have a broad understanding of the complexities of leadership and demonstrate introductory leadership skills during in-class exercises and within Bancroft Hall.
- Have a vision for continued leadership development in preparation for Fleet leadership.
- Be prepared for a military career by experiencing a range of contemporary moral dilemmas in the military context.
- Employ the moral reasoning tools in responding to professional moral and ethical dilemmas.
- Have an increased capacity for critical thinking as it applies to moral reasoning, to include the examination of their personal ideas and beliefs.
- Enhance their level of moral reasoning.

### **Junior (Second Class) Year – NL310 (Becoming a Leader: Theory and Applications of Leadership)**

Third year students build on the concepts introduced in the first year by examining the theory and research of the contingent and dynamic process of leadership. Students refine and further develop their understanding of personal strengths, values, and growth opportunities in the context of team, group, and organizational leadership, as well as through the creation of a leadership vision and professional development plan. The course combines literature from the fields of social psychology, organizational behavior, and group dynamics to help students understand the factors that influence leadership in a military context. The extensive application base and case-study driven approach to the process of leadership introduces students to the immediate roles they face as leaders in the Brigade of Midshipmen and as first tour junior officers. At the conclusion of NL310, midshipmen will:

### **Sophomore (Third Class) Year – NE203 (Ethics and Moral Reasoning for the Military Leaders)**

This course is structured around classical and contemporary writings in moral philosophy. Current military and historical case studies are used to demonstrate how the fundamental ideas of moral philosophy can be applied to the service of the professional military Leader of Character. This course teaches classic and contemporary moral theory, and applies this to resolve ethical situations midshipmen and officers may face in the military. The course is team taught with a professional philosopher (PhD) providing the moral theory and senior officers providing the military application. At the conclusion of NE203, midshipmen will:

- Understand the moral obligations and responsibilities of military Officership.



- Have an understanding of how their personal strengths, values, and opportunities for growth impact their leadership style.
- Have an in-depth knowledge of the most recognized and accepted theories of leadership and group and interpersonal dynamics.
- Have the foundational tools associated with communication, decision making, team building and motivation, conflict management, and vision development to assume responsibilities within the Brigade and as a junior officer in the Fleet.
- Have an understanding of the unique combat factors that influence the leadership process in the military.
- Have a plan for continued leadership development in preparation for Fleet leadership.

### **Senior (First Class) Year – NL400 (Law for the Junior Officer)**

This course provides a survey of relevant legal topics applicable to the role of the future junior officer as a leader, manager, and decision-maker. Students examine operational law concepts, including the Law of Armed Conflict, Rules of Engagement, and the Law of the Sea. They also study the various types of military investigations, as well as the different types of disciplinary venues, such as Nonjudicial Punishment and Courts-Martial. Students are provided with an exposure to the various crimes enumerated in the Uniform Code of Military Justice and the administrative discharge process. They also study Constitutional criminal procedure vis-à-vis self-incrimination, search and

seizure, and evidentiary matters. Students are also exposed to newly emerging areas of personnel law, to include new developments in Equal Opportunity law, the Joint Ethics Regulations, and government information practices. This course equips junior officers entering the Fleet with the knowledge and tools they will need to recognize sensitive legal issues. The broad legal exposure the course provides to midshipmen will improve their effectiveness as officers and leaders by enhancing their ability to safeguard the good order, discipline, and morale of their units. At the conclusion of NL400, midshipmen will:

- Gain familiarity with operational law concepts and theories governing the profession of arms.
- Gain knowledge that will enable them to run a fair, impartial, and effective disciplinary program in their future Fleet assignments.
- Gain the ability to identify legal issues and the appropriate avenues for their resolution.

In 2007, the LEL Department began to integrate multi-method evaluation and assessment across the education program. The department continues to test and apply new and different approaches to understand the effectiveness of departmental efforts and student outcomes. This multi-method approach evaluates student experiences in LEL core courses, acquisition of core course knowledge, and assessment of specific course-relevant skills and attitudes. The following assessment-related projects and plans were deployed during the 2008-2009 academic year.

a. Common Core Course Evaluation. Course evaluations for each of the four core courses within LEL contain a common section that utilizes three core assessment questions. This tie-in to key LEL



objectives provides a helpful baseline for future assessment of student perceptions of the linkage between LEL core courses and leader development. In the spring semester of 2008, three common assessment questions were included for NL110 and NL203. These questions assessed how clearly midshipmen perceived a link between courses and three leadership education learning outcomes. The common core question base was expanded and integrated across all four core courses during 2008-2009.

b. Technology. The course evaluations continue to be migrated to Blackboard for all core courses. This action makes delivery and analysis more consistent and streamlined. In the past, student participation in the evaluation process varied widely across the core courses, which affects the reliability and validity of assessment data. LEL continues to develop strategies to improve response rates for course evaluations, within guidelines established by the USNA Human Research Protection Program.

c. Content Mastery. LEL uses random pre and post course content assessments to ensure students are acquiring essential content in each core course. Sample sizes and range of instructors included have been expanded and content items were updated to better reflect course learning objectives.

d. Applied Knowledge and Skills. With course evaluations and content mastery assessment established in LEL, the department has attempted to measure applied gains in the leadership education program. In 2008-2009, core course coordinators explored at least one approach to measuring acquisition of key skills and abilities. Assessment projects included critical thinking and active listening (NL110), moral judgment test performance (NE203), counseling, goal-

setting and performance evaluation (NL310), and JAGMAN investigation reporting (NL400).

e. Long-Range Planning and Assessment. LEL has established and implemented a cycle of assessment for a five-year period. This plan articulates program learning outcomes and course objectives to be assessed each Academic Year. In addition, the department has begun assessing and mapping core course learning objectives to leadership education program learning outcomes and goals, as well as to the recently approved USNA list of graduate attributes:

- Selfless leaders who value diversity and create an ethical command climate through their example of personal integrity and moral courage.
- Mentally resilient and physically fit officers, who inspire their team to accomplish the most challenging missions, including leading in combat.
- Technically and academically proficient professionals with a commitment to continual learning.
- Critical thinkers and creative decision makers with a bias for action.
- Effective communicators.
- Adaptable individuals who understand and appreciate global and cross-cultural dynamics.
- Role models dedicated to the profession of arms, the traditions and values of the Naval Service, and the Constitutional foundation of the United States.

There are primarily three interconnected uses of





the attributes of graduates: first, to communicate to our institution and others the ideals that should shape our programs over the 47 months that midshipmen spend at the Naval Academy; second, to foster programmatic alignment at the Naval Academy with the desired end states that the attributes represent; and, third, to guide strategic planning, resource allocation, institutional renewal, and institutional effectiveness assessment.

f. **Assessment Results.** The midshipmen in the NL110 pre and post content assessment, on average, achieved significant knowledge acquisition in the core introductory leadership content. Although the content assessment revealed that students are indeed learning the core material to a significant extent, the next challenge to is to help them discern a clear connection between what they are learning and their applied leadership duties in the Brigade and in the fleet. NE203 administered the Moral Judgment Test to three sections of students (n=63) the first day of class and the last week of class. 50% of the students went up in score and the difference between the two groups is significant. The average post-course test score was 16.2% higher than the average pre-course test score. An objective test of course content was delivered to a sample of midshipmen at the beginning and completion of NL310. The mean test score improved from 53% to 76% and indicates a high level of knowledge acquisition in core content. The assessment of general content acquisition in NL400 indicates significant increases in mastery of the course material across nine essential domains. These

changes are significant and underscore the breadth of material that midshipmen learn about military law and its application to their profession. The data also reflect significant improvement over the previous two academic years. Additionally, the data reflect a significant improvement over the previous academic year in how midshipmen see their critical-thinking abilities develop throughout the course.

g. **Future Plans.** Each of the core courses will continue to assess the course using student evaluations that distinguish thoughts on the course and the instructor. This has proven valuable in providing individual feedback to each instructor, while maintaining objectivity while evaluating the course. Additionally NL110, NL310, and NL400 will continue to use a Pre-Post Course Content Assessment to evaluate knowledge acquisition. The Superintendent has initiated a fleet wide survey of accession source commanders to collect data on newly commissioned officers and their performance during initial pipeline training. Specifically, this outreach effort is designed to assess if Naval Academy graduates genuinely embody the institutional attributes that remain at the core of our developmental model. This data will be used to evaluate the institutional officer development model and make continuous improvements to assure the Naval Academy is meeting its mission of graduating leaders of character.