

MANDATORY ACCREDITATION AND THE US ARMY COMMAND AND GENERAL STAFF COLLEGE

Bernard F. Harris
US Army Command & General Staff School
Bernard.Harris@us.army.mil

ABSTRACT

The US Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC) is an accredited institution that serves the educational needs of mid career US Army and selected officers from around the world. The college recognizes the importance of accreditation, despite its non-voluntary accreditation status, and uses it to maintain trust between its students and the American public. CGSC's experiential learning environment is accredited by three different accrediting agencies each with their own criteria and standards. This paper will discuss the literature available that outlines each accrediting agencies standards, review and compare the standards, discuss the work that CGSC is currently performing to meet two upcoming accreditation visits, and finally highlight a few self study lessons learned in preparation for the visits.

INTRODUCTION

The English word “accreditation” comes from the latin word *credito*, which means “trust” (Alstete, 2007). It is important for US Army officers and select joint service and international officers to trust military institutions of higher education. Institutions that maintain this trust will help these officers to develop into lifelong learners and more importantly, into leaders who will play an important role in future world affairs. Therefore, trust is paramount to the continuing mission of CGSC to educate and to develop young military leaders. CGSC has found the best way to assist in building this trust is with an experiential learning environment (CAC, 2013). CGSC’s accrediting agencies examine this experiential environment to ensure the college meets its current and future pedagogical objectives.

The accreditation of higher learning institutions is almost as old as CGSC. The college began educating officers in 1881 and some scholars state the accreditation process in America began in approximately 1901, after a realization that university curriculums were becoming too diverse (Alstete, 2007). These diversifications lead to the creation of regional accrediting agencies. These agencies saw accreditation as a way to ascertain if a college or university, no matter the diversity of the curriculum, could meet specific quality standards and minimal criteria (Alstete, 2007). Fortunately for CGSC one of its accrediting agencies The North Central Association

became one of the early civilian education leaders in this new American accreditation process in 1905 (Alstete, 2007).

Some scholars define accreditation as a status given to an institution that has been found to meet or exceed educational quality criteria (Bogue, 1992). However, accreditation is not a single event; it is a means to encourage institutions to ensure trust through improvements over time (Alstete, 2007). It is also important to mention that accreditation in American civilian education, is a voluntary process for most institutions (Alstete, 2007). Institutions can choose not to submit to the accreditation process; however, the ramifications of being a non-accredited college or university are the possible loss of federal and state funding and a generally low perception of the quality of education and trust in the institution (Alstete, 2007). Fortunately, most institutions view the benefits of accreditation as being worth the effort. They understand that it provides a venue for practitioners in a specific profession to set the requirements for entering this profession and increase unity among practitioners of the profession through collaborative activities (Bogue, 1992). CGSC is different from other American civilian institutions, because its accreditation is mandatory. This forces CGSC to strive for the trust of its student officers by strictly adhering to accreditation guidelines. However, maintaining this trust is a challenge, because CGSC has three primary accrediting agency guidelines to follow:

1. The Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) accreditation for Professional Military Education (PME).
2. The Chairman of the Joints Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) process for accrediting joint education (PAJE), which accredits Joint Professional Military Education (JPME).
3. North Central Associations Higher Learning Commission (HLC), which accredits the Masters in Military Studies (MMAS) degree program.

The following literature review will discuss each of the accrediting agency’s documents that outline their respective standards and criteria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Each of CGSC's accrediting agencies has its own literary documentation or regulations that outline standards and criteria to evaluate CGSC. The first is the CJCS regulation called "CJCS Instruction (CJCSI)", or the PAJE, which controls the JPME standards. The PAJE outlines the CJCS vision of developing the foundations of the joint learning continuum to ensure that the US military is, intrinsically, a learning organization that cares about the content of training, education, experience, and self-development opportunities (CJCSI, 2009). Second is the TRADOC Army Enterprise Accreditation Standards, which is located in TRADOC Pam 350-70. TRADOC utilizes the family of 350-70 regulations to examine professional military education across all TRADOC schools and centers. TRADOC Pam 350-70 contains the 28 distinctive standards for CGSC to adhere to and to maintain. The third piece of literature is the material developed by the North Central Association's Higher Learning Commission (HLC), which publishes its own standards of quality criteria. Even though HLC is the only civilian organization that accredits CGSC, its standards are surprisingly close to the military's standards in examining the CGSC mission, ethical conduct and institutional effectiveness. CGSC utilizes all of the above literature to prepare to meet the challenge of multiple accreditation visits. The following discussion will delve more into the details of each of the three CGSC accreditor's standards and criteria.

ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

The following details the frequency of each accrediting agency's visit and a discussion of their respective standards and criteria. The discussion will conclude with a short analysis of the similarities and differences between agencies standards and their criteria:

1. Every three years, a TRADOC accreditation team, consisting of military and civilian educators, visits CGSC to accredit all of the schools under CGSC's oversight:
 - a. The Command and General Staff School (CGSS)
 - b. The School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS)
 - c. The School of Advanced Leadership and Tactics (SALT)
 - d. The School of Command Preparation (SCP)

For the purpose of this paper, we will focus on the 350-70 family of regulations that outlines the accreditation standards for CGSC. TRADOC considers the purpose of accreditation to be the TRADOC commander's formal recognition of an institutions authority, to conduct education and training (TRADOC, 2004). The 28 Army

Enterprise Accreditation Standards (AEAS) inside TRADOC Pam 350-70, specifically describes the programs CGSC is responsible to maintain (TRADOC Pam, 2013):

AEAS 1 - Quality Assurance – Institution has an effective quality assurance program.

AEAS 2 - Mission and Functions – Institution empowers subordinate organizations to be effective through publishing policy and guidance to highlight the mission, functions and programs.

AEAS 3 - Military Personnel – Institution properly utilizes its military personnel.

AEAS 4 - Instructional Equipment – Institution ensures all equipment for safe realistic training are available.

AEAS 5 - Civilian Personnel – Institution acquires, sustains, develops and compensates an effective civilian workforce.

AEAS 6 - Facilities and Environment – Facilities and environment are conducive to learning.

AEAS 7 - Operational Environment – Training and education are performed under appropriate operational environment conditions

AEAS 8 - Operational Environment – Institution integrates operational environment complexities into concepts, capabilities and requirements.

AEAS 9 – Library – Institution maintains a resourced library to meet the needs of students, staff and faculty.

AEAS 10 - Army Learning Model Management – Institution manages implementation of Army learning (institution learning analysis, design, development, implementation and evaluation) based on the Army learning model, senior leader guidance and priorities, policies and resources.

AEAS 11 - Training Resource Management – Institution has an effective system to manage resources for education and training development.

AEAS 12 - Test Control – Institution administers controls and investigates compromise of test and test material.

AEAS 13 – Safety – Institution implements risk management and TRADOC safety and occupational health programs.

AEAS 14 - Knowledge Management (KM) – Implementation of KM processes and procedures.

AEAS 15 - Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) Education – Managed to ensure a positive NCO learning environment.

AEAS 16 - Doctrine – Institution manages and develops Army doctrine.

AEAS 17 - Staff and Faculty – The institution has the personnel needed for effective, high quality programs.

AEAS 18 - Educational Programs – The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs and learning environments and evaluates their effectiveness to promote continuous improvement.

AEAS 19 - Active Component and Reserve Component Equivalency – Institution develops and distributes

individual education and training to both active Army and Reserve component Soldiers.

AEAS 20 - Leader Development – Institution’s climate, culture and curriculum foster the development of leaders of character and presence with intellect who lead, develop and achieve.

AEAS 21 - Lessons Learned – Institution understands and trains lessons learned concepts and integrate into education and training.

AEAS 22 - Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation and Evaluation (ADDIE): Analysis – Institution conducts analysis to determine training and education requirements.

AEAS 23 - Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation and Evaluation (ADDIE): Design – Institution designs individual training and education that includes individual training strategies and design of programs, courses and products.

AEAS 24 - Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation and Evaluation (ADDIE): Development – Institution converts course design into

products and materials required to implement the course.

AEAS 25 - Unit Training Products – Proponent institution designs and develops efficient, effective and relevant products.

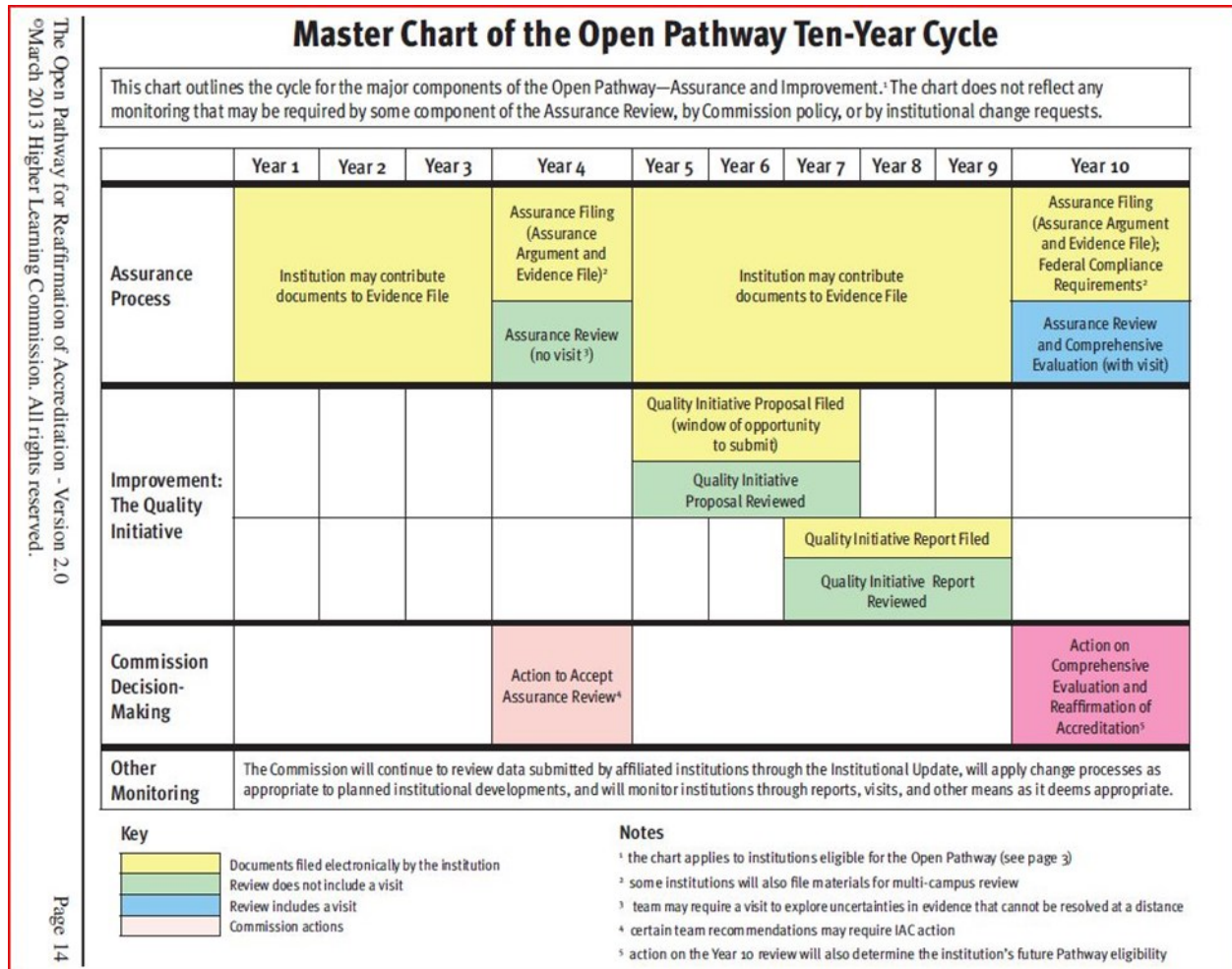
AEAS 26 - Distributed Learning (DL) Development – DL products are developed, delivered, and maintained in accordance with TRADOC and other Army polices and regulations.

AEAS 27 - Staff Development – Institution has a program and a process in place to develop its assigned personnel.

AEAS 28 - Training Support – Institution forecasts, requests, provides, uses, and manages resources to support effective and efficient training and education.

TRADOC Pam 350-70, accreditation standards 1, 10, 17, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24, 26 and 27 all address experiential learning through the Army Learning Concept (ALC) 2015. The ALC 2015 seeks to improve learning by leveraging technology, in order to provide credible, rigorous, and

Figure 1
(HLC, HLC Pathways 2013)



relevant training and education for the US Army. The ALC 2015 does not focus on any particular technology, but rather focuses on the opportunities presented by dynamic virtual environments, on-line gaming, and mobile learning platforms (TRADOC Pam 2011).

2. Every six years, a PAJE accreditation team, consisting of military and civilian educators, visit the college to accredit JPME. They specifically follow JPME Phase 1 learning areas to determine whether CGSC has met the requirements for accreditation. The objective of JPME 1 is to prepare future leaders for high-level policy and command and staff responsibilities by educating them in the diplomatic, informational, military, and economic dimensions of the strategic security environment and the effect of those dimensions on strategy formulation, implementation, and campaigning (CJCSI, 2009).

The JPME 1 Learning Areas are (CJCSI, 2009):

- Learning Area 1 – National Military Capabilities, Command Structure, and Strategic Guidance.
- Learning Area 2 – Joint Doctrine and Concepts.
- Learning Area 3 – Joint and Multinational Forces at the Operational Level of War.
- Learning Area 4 – Joint Planning and Execution Processes.
- Learning Area 5 – Joint Command and Control.
- Learning Area 6 – Joint Operational Leadership.

The PAJE does not directly address experiential learning; however, the team does evaluate assessments that encompass experiential learning. Acceptable assessments that are used as evidence for meeting the standards are simulations and practical exercises, which will be discussed later in this paper. CGSC endeavors to meet the JPME 1 Learning Area standards through its Command and General Staff Officers Course (CGSOC) Common Core lessons to ensure that each student officer receives and masters the required joint educational knowledge.

3. The North Central Association Higher Learning Commission (HLC) is a regional accrediting agency under the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and is recognized by the US Department of Education (USDE) (Alstete, 2007). The HLC conducts its accreditation visit every ten years with a team of civilian educators. The HLC specifically accredits CGSC for the MMAS degree in which students from CGSC and SAMS are eligible to participate. To conduct its accreditation visits, HLC utilizes the Open Pathway accreditation process, which among other things, reduces the reporting burden by utilizing as much existing data from other institutional processes as possible. HLC also ensures academic rigor by conducting assurance reviews twice in a ten year cycle (HLC, The Open Pathway, 2013); **see figure 1** (HLC, HLC Pathways 2013). The specific HLC's criteria for accreditation are (HLC, The Open Pathway, 2013):

Figure 2
(CGSOC Example Lesson Plan Practical Exercise Instructor Guidance)

Instructors have several key roles in assisting officers in making the Practical Exercise (PE) a success:

1. Facilitate the officers in getting started. The key to this is ensuring the officers understand their organization, the functional cell's location in the classroom, and what their requirements and end state are for the lesson.
2. Over-watch each cell and its activities during the PE. Instructors should ensure that officers keep on track, and act as their higher headquarters for Requests for Information or guidance.
3. Ensure that officers are continually striving to provide **analysis versus information**. The standard is to provide the commander with field grade analysis and NOT a regurgitation of the higher operations order.
4. Facilitate officers creating products that assist the commander in his visualization. The goal should not be to produce a myriad of power point slides that do not assist the commander in his visualization process.
5. Role-play the Division Commander during the different briefings and decisions. Conversely, the instructor could have an outside person role-play the Division Commander. If an outside guest receives a briefing, the instructor should ensure that the guest is totally familiar with the scenario and orders. (This will make the guest's comments much more beneficial to the officers. Additionally, the guest must be consistent throughout the exercise.)

Assessment Plan: Students must demonstrate clear understanding of the following concepts:

- Mission Command concepts include the Art of Command and the Science of Control
- Integration of Joint Interagency Intergovernmental and Multinational enablers into tactical Decisive Action
- The Operations Process, and how it relates to Military Decision Making Process and Operational Design

Criterion One, Mission - Is the institutions mission clear and articulated publicly and does it guide the institutions operation.

Criterion Two, Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct – The institution acts with integrity: its conduct is ethical and responsible.

Criterion Three, Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support – The institution provides high quality education, whenever and however its offerings are delivered.

Criterion Four, Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement – The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

Criterion Five, Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness – The institutions resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

CGSC utilizes HLC criterion 3-5 to address its experiential learning mission. Similar to PAJE, CGSC conducts simulations and practical exercises to meet HLC standards and to analyze its quality of experiential education and ways to improve for the future.

In preparation to meet all of the above standards and criteria the CGSC staff lead by the Dean of Academics (DOA) routinely conduct an analysis of all of the above standards to find similarities and differences between the agencies. This analysis helps focus the efforts of all CGSC subordinate organizations. The following is an outline of some of this analysis:

Similarities between the standards: (The following areas are evaluated by all or at least two agencies)

1. Mission – TRADOC (AEAS 2); NCA (Criterion 1); All PAJE Learning Areas
2. Operational Environment – TRADOC (AEAS 7, 8); NCA (Criterion 4, 5); All PAJE Learning Areas
3. Educational Programs – TRADOC (AEAS 18), NCA (Criterion 3-5); All PAJE Learning Areas
4. Active and Reserve Component Equivalency – TRADOC (AEAS 19), All PAJE Learning Areas
5. Staff Development – TRADOC (AEAS 27), All PAJE Learning Areas

Differences between the standards: (TRADOC is the only agency that evaluates the following areas)

1. Safety – TRADOC (AEAS 13)
2. Knowledge Management – TRADOC (AEAS 14)
3. Noncommissioned Officer Education – TRADOC (AEAS 15)
4. Leader Development – TRADOC (AEAS 20)
5. Unit Training Products – TRADOC (AEAS 25)

The above analysis along with other analytical products are critically important, because CGSC will submit to two nearly simultaneous accreditation visits from PAJE and TRADOC in the winter of 2014. In order to meet this upcoming challenge, the following illustrates CGSC preparation for these visits.

PREPARATION

DOA is the lead proponent for the development and implementation of the CGSC plan to accommodate the

**Figure 3
(CGSS Sample Course Map)**

COMMON CORE 11-01				Learning Level	SYNTHESIS			ANALYSIS		SYNTHESIS	
				TLOs and ELOS	16. Explain the importance of modern media and telecommunications on military operations.	16.1. Develop a plan for and executing a live media interview;	16.2. Display openness to varying media opinions and agencies; and,	16.3. Discuss the impact of modern media and telecommunications on military operations.	17. Examine the role of the Professional Military Officer in society.	17.1. The theoretical basis of the American civil-military relationship; and	17.2. The recent American civil-military relationship experience.
Lesson Title	Hours	Week	Assessment								
C111 - The Operational Environment	2		C100 Stagesetter Theorist Group Briefing								X
C131 - Leader Development	2		C100 Develop an Individual Development Plan (IDP)								X
C141 - Introduction to Media	2		C100 Develop a media plan (Individual)	X	X	X	X				X
C142 - Media Practicum	2		C100 Conduct Media Interview (Individual)							X	X

current round of accreditation visits in 2014. DOA utilizes the expertise of the subordinate Leader Development and Education (LD&E) department to orchestrate the accreditation efforts of the college. LD&E specifically handles the PAJE JPME and TRADOC PME requirements through the Accreditation Coordination Division (ACD). ACD coordinates closely with each accrediting agency and CGSC department to ensure that all aspects of the visits are properly coordinated. The accreditation process that ACD follows is very similar to what is found in Jeff Alstete's book, "*College Accreditation: Managing Internal Revitalization and Public Respect*".

1. Standards – The accrediting agency, in collaboration with educational institutions, establishes published standards as discussed previously.
2. Self Study – The institution or program seeking accreditation prepares an in-depth self-evaluation study that measures its performance against the standards of the accrediting agency. This is the most important step for any college and the current emphasis of the CGSC accreditation process.
3. On-Site evaluation – An accrediting agency team visits the institution to determine first hand whether the applicant meets the established standard. For CGSC, this will occur in the early winter of 2014 for CGSC.
4. Publication – Upon satisfying the accrediting agency's standards; the agency grants accreditation and lists the institution in an official publication with other similarly accredited institutions or programs.
5. Monitoring – The accrediting agency monitors each institution throughout the period of accreditation to verify that it continues to meet the agency's standards. For example, HLC conducts assurance reviews twice in the ten year cycle and TRADOC also conducts periodic reviews.
6. Reevaluation – The accrediting agency periodically reevaluates each institution that is listed to ascertain whether continuing of its accreditation status is still valid.

The college is currently in the Self Study step of the accreditation process for both the PAJE and TRADOC visits. The Self Study assessment helps the college to determine if the accrediting agencies standards are met. It provides an opportunity to assess the situation and correct deficiencies prior to official accreditation visits (TRADOC, 2004). The study also creates the impetus for strategic change and establishes a foundation on which to build a set of common goals and purposes (Ratcliff, 2001). To ensure that the current Self Study proceeds without incident LD&E took steps years ago to prepare the college. LD&E, through ACD, strove to have departments push for more than minimal compliance with agency standards; plan beyond the process by exploring and including best practices; and keep the continuous improvement outlook in the forefront of all the stakeholders (Alstete, 2007). ACD,

for example, continuously reviews the lessons learned from the last PAJE Self Studies to assist departments in correcting discrepancies.

To ensure better collaboration between the departments, during the self study ACD published a consolidated PAJE and TRADOC accreditation timeline. The timeline began with a two month internal self assessment by the faculty and senior leadership of all accreditation standards and criteria. Today, the timeline highlights the efforts that ACD is taking with departments to form committees; review committee feedback and begin to actually update the accreditation packets for the respective visits. CGSC, as a whole, is particularly looking into improving any deficiencies in the college's Experiential Learning Model, which is based on David Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle of Concrete Experience, Publish and Process, Generalize New Information, Develop, and Apply. To prove that any and all deficiencies are being mitigated, CGSC departments are gathering primary, secondary and tertiary evidence to support their migration efforts (Driscoll, 2006). Some of the evidence being gathered is:

1. Curriculum assessments – Papers and tests.
2. Lesson plans – With practical exercises and simulations that apply knowledge learned in the classroom, see **figure 2** (CGSOC).
3. Survey Results - For both students and faculty.
4. Grading Rubrics – Used by both students and faculty.
5. Policies – Such as bulletins that which explain grading requirements.
6. Course maps – That illustrate how lesson assessments are reflective of learning objectives, see **figure 3** (CGSS).
7. Products associated with the CGSC Accountable Instructional System (AIS) - The AIS process accumulates much of the above evidence through two important meetings: The Post Instructional Conference (PIC), which reviews previously taught curriculum, and the Course Design Review (CDR), which exams how the future curriculum will be taught.

All of this evidence will be placed on Blackboard in pre-accreditation visit folders for the respective accreditation teams to review. In this way, CGSC, through ACD, is trying to take advantage of today's enhanced Blackboard technology and apply it to the accreditation process (O'Brien, 2009). As the timeline progresses, ACD will continue to coordinate all of the in process review meetings and virtual teleconferences for accreditation collaboration among participants. The following are a few of the current lessons learned from the CGSC self study, based on the above evidence:

Self Study lessons learned compiled by ACD:

1. Continue to improve how the curriculum data base is

- maintained on SharePoint by making it easier to search and to sort files.
2. Continuing to improve the technology of how our courseware fits multiple formats, such as:
 - a. Bookmarking PDF documents.
 - b. Creating downloadable file packages.
 - c. Utilizing the cloud through Blackboard.
 - d. Continually improving how courseware is displayed on desktop computers and mobile devices.
 - e. Continually optimizing courseware for quick and efficient access for distance education students.
 3. Ensuring the accreditation teams members are linked with the correct CGSC subject matter experts during the visit to ensure that team questions and concerns are accurately addressed to avoid complications at the end of the visit.
 4. Continuing to utilize SharePoint to facilitate collaboration among departments as they develop their accreditation packets.
 5. Ensuring that all student and faculty surveys are conducted in a timely manner, especially for the distance education community.
 6. Improving distance education student access to resident student learning material.
 7. Improve the use of social networking and collaborative elements of Blackboard to improve graduate reach back to refresher tools, templates and models used during CGSOC.
 8. Continue to improve capacity for designing applications, games and low overhead desktop computer-based simulations useful within the institution.
 9. Continue to train resident students and faculty using classroom-based battle command systems that can be utilized in team based courseware simulations.
 10. Continue to extensively utilize dynamic simulations to enable problem-based learning and creatively apply concepts and knowledge.
 11. Continue to utilize simulations and practical exercises to achieve learning objectives and to replicate operating environment complexities.
 12. Continue to attend conferences to stay current in experiential learning trends.
 13. Continue to video and archive guest speakers throughout the year and tie into the distance education program.
 14. Continue to share curriculum with other subordinate schools.
 15. Continue to attend joint education conferences to gather lessons learned and other changes being integrated at the joint level for inclusion in to lesson material.
 16. Continue to refine the CGSS standard operating procedures to enable further collaboration in methods

for preparing courseware.

17. Continue to video and make available faculty development sessions for later use and reference by all faculty at any time.
18. Continue to maintain equivalent courseware for all venues, such as resident and distance education to ensure close parallels between the programs.

CONCLUSION

CGSC has a unique mission to educate and develop military leaders. The college utilizes experiential learning to specifically prepare these officers to lead subordinates in military operations. Students who attend the institution must trust that the curriculum will help them become proficient in their profession. Accreditation is a way in which institutions such as CGSC can ensure that they develop and maintain the best possible curriculum. Therefore, CGSC accepts the challenge of mandatory accreditation. The college understands that satisfying the plethora of accreditation standards and criteria from its three distinct accrediting agencies will only help the college to maintain its objective of educating military leaders. To meet this challenge, CGSC continually reviews applicable literature from each accrediting agency; analyzes the standards and criteria in this literature to find similarities and difference to better focus its efforts; and uses this information to prepare for future accreditation visits. CGSC's current efforts to prepare for two almost simultaneous accreditation visits are no exception. Fortunately, CGSC is deeply engaged in a self study that is gathering evidence to support its deficiency mitigation efforts and to identify lessons learned to apply to continuing ways to improve for the future. Based on all of this information, CGSC plans to pass both accreditation visits and continue to be relevant to the United States military and the American people.

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