

Finally Optimized

CCLD restructures to better focus on critical mission



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While many extraordinary men and women have served in senior posts at the U.S. Air Force Academy, delivering significant contributions guided by their unique perspectives and experiences, all have recognized the critical mission of the Academy to develop “leaders of character.”

In July 2018, the Center for Character and Leadership Development (CCLD) was restructured and reinvigorated to ensure this mission is accomplished as USAFA develops the officers who will lead our Air Force and nation in the 21st century.

There have been many previous iterations of CCLD, each staffed with outstand-

ing individuals and effective in its time. However, despite its members devotion to purpose and their passion, CCLD was always limited in its effectiveness by an organizational structure that prevented it from enabling excellence across the Academy.

That changed in July 2018, and CCLD is now executing at a level and scope of which alums, donors and partners can all be proud. We are in the midst of achieving the vision that so many always shared for the CCLD — a national Center of Excellence generating positive effects for the Academy and beyond.

Once Superintendent Lt. Gen. Jay Silveria '85 announced our establishment as a college-level center and laid out his expectations, we started to aggressively evaluate how we would meet his intent.

We realized right away that we had to stop trying to be everything to everyone and had to focus on where we could deliver excellence. I pledged to everyone in CCLD, and everyone at USAFA, that we would only take on tasks and missions that we could deliver at a high level. We've held fast to that pledge, are proud of where we are, and are excited for where we are headed.

Of course, evolving CCLD to a world-class center is made easier by the iconic structure in which CCLD is housed. We are fortunate to live and work here in Polaris Hall, a building made possible by the generosity of donors and the tremendous efforts from many.

We view Polaris Hall as an extraordinary gift to USAFA and its cadets, faculty and

staff. We even incorporate the building's symbolism into our course content. What it symbolizes and the perfection of its physical qualities is truly extraordinary and is the envy of every similar institution in the world.

As an example, the building's 39-degree slope that leads to the navigation star Polaris symbolizes how you can look to us when you lose your moral compass. Plus, it is all glass because we want our programs to be transparent. The building isn't just iconic, it's perfect, and we have made every effort to ensure our programs match.

To achieve the excellence USAFA deserves, CCLD ceased almost all course delivery in 2018 and recreated itself from scratch. The result is a new “menu of services,” which CCLD calls “Developmental Opportunities,” or “DOs.” The offerings are designed for faculty, staff, coaches and permanent party, all of whom are exceptional, and all of whom deserve world-class developmental opportunities.

CCLD took the entire 2018-19 academic year to gather feedback from USAFA on what it wanted from the center, evaluated best practices from around the world, and built a new delivery platform. This new content is adaptable, customizable and in direct response to what the USAFA community said they want from us. It is also fully voluntary. We are confident that, as we deliver the new courses, faculty and staff will want more from us because we're delivering something of value and fostering an environment of partnership and collaboration.

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The new courses are so far being received very favorably. We have enabled CCLD instructors to become masters of their areas of expertise and to develop their delivery methods. Our team members are truly exceptional, and I couldn't be more proud of how well the CCLD team is delivering our new courses. We feel we're having a positive impact on all of USAFA. It's also worth mentioning that we are advising the Cadet Wing in developing honor lessons and character seminars, many of the latter now taught by Air Officers Commanding (AOCs).

One course that stands out from the rest is the Leader of Character Workshop, our foundational offering, which explains the framework behind what it means to be a leader of character. Before I arrived at USAFA, some truly exceptional men and women developed the leader of character framework, and I cannot overstate how extraordinary it is. Much like the Air Force Core Values, the framework is elegant, refined and highly effective. We deliver it all over the world to multiple industries and sectors, and it resonates with everyone.

We want to ensure “leader of character” is not just a bumper-sticker phrase, but is instead understood to mean we are developing leaders who exemplify the core components of living honorably, lifting others and elevating performance. Once everyone understands the depth and quality of the model, we can move forward together to achieve our noble purpose.

While much of CCLD's attention has been dedicated to building the new Devel-

opmental Opportunities, several additional efforts have been moving in parallel with similarly high levels of effort. Among these programs is the National Character and Leadership Symposium, or NCLS.

NCLS has been extraordinary for many years, but we've been challenging ourselves to steadily improve. I'm not sure when we will plateau, but CCLD's

Capstone Experience Branch, led by Ms. Danielle Brines, has been doing some truly extraordinary things.

I wasn't sure how we could top last year's lineup that included former Defense Secretary Leon Panetta and Dr. Brené Brown, but the team is building an incredible lineup for NCLS 2020, scheduled for Feb. 19-21. And when I say incredible, I'm not



being hyperbolic. Just for starters we will be featuring former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and U.S. Army Gen. (Ret.) Stanley McChrystal. We have to wait a bit longer to announce the final lineup, but suffice it to say it will be our best ever.

In addition, CCLD has re-branded and re-launched the Journal for Character and Leadership Development (JCLD). The journal's editorial board is a "who's who" of government leaders, athletics executives, private sector leaders and academics versed in the fields of character, leadership, moral decision-making and related fields. Like NCLS, every edition of the JCLD is an improvement on the last.

We are also proud of the fact CCLD efforts have been noticed and celebrated by other service academies, centers for character and leadership at civilian universities, military centers for leadership development and foreign entities. The list of partner nations currently using USAFA CCLD products is expanding every year and currently includes Australia, Germany, Great Britain, Colombia, Argentina and Mexico.

We are proud of the exportation of CCLD's curriculum and approaches to character and leadership development, and view outside adoption as the ultimate compliment. An organization visits, spends a day or two with us, and leaves asking for our products. Interestingly, they always seem surprised when we show our willingness to share everything we have and offer to come to them to help them establish programs. The more we share what we're doing, the better place we think the world will be. That may sound corny, but we are building strong partnerships and collaborating to build a better world; what could be better than that?

CCLD's new structure and approach to character and leadership development have been noticed by the Military Academy at West Point's Simon Center and the Naval Academy's Stockdale Center. Along with CCLD, the three centers with similar missions have discussed opportunities to partner and met at a neutral site in November 2019.

We are now establishing a formal consortium to share best practices, solve common challenges and identify areas for increased collaboration. My counterparts from the other two academies and I are very excited



about this initiative, which will allow us to share our achievements and improve together across all academies. Since our graduates will be solving our nation's problems together, our thought is that the more common their experience at the undergraduate level, the better able they will be to partner as junior officers in the field.

Our plan is to establish the consortium with USAFA-USMA-USNA in 2019, expand membership to the Coast Guard and Merchant Marine Academies once the relationships can be formalized, and eventually invite the six senior military colleges to join.

Partnerships also are flourishing at the Air Force level, with formal relationships being built between CCLD and Air University's leadership development programs, and with AFROTC and OTS. To facilitate these relationships, we have built an entire division dedicated to integration.

In 2018, we focused early and hard on internal integration, leveraging new positions and very talented new hires to assist with the AOC development program, the Academy Military Trainer (AMT) program, and a partnership with the commandant and faculty on integrated officership courses for cadets.

Based on these successes, we are now moving aggressively to external integration efforts. External partners include those agencies listed above, but we are now working with partners we never expected to consider "customers." Throughout 2019, CCLD dedicated efforts to improving the culture of several United States Olympic teams, making them more effective in their sports, and multiple federal agencies. These partnerships are improving relations and expanding opportunities for all members of USAFA.


If that wasn't enough, CCLD also is partnering with the commandant's staff to build on last year's integration of the

ropes course, adventure race and experiential learning programs into formal summer training; conducting original research into whether technology can be leveraged to more effectively teach moral decision making; and evaluating curriculum around the world for possible adoption at USAFA through our new Prototyping Branch.

Yes, we've achieved success in many areas, but we will not rest on our laurels.

USAFA's faculty, coaches, trainers and staff have been doing extraordinary things for a long time. To enable improvements, CCLD is devoting attention on helping deliver content more collaboratively and efficiently. Aligning the efforts of our amazing faculty, the commandant's gifted professionals and trainers, athletics coaches and staff, airfield personnel, our Prep School, and the unique talents that reside in the 10th Air Base Wing gets us to a truly remarkable place as an institution. That's the vision.

CCLD has finally hit its stride as envisioned for so long by so many. We have the best job in the world — helping improve our Academy, Air Force, nation and the world. Sometimes we are silent partners, but we're executing at a very high level. The goal is not and cannot be credit for our efforts; we simply desire now to live out our new alignments of ENABLE, INTEGRATE and COLLABORATE.

We owe our effort to the people who always believed we could get to this point. I am eternally grateful to USAFA, the Endowment, the Association of Graduates, every single donor and everyone at USAFA for their support and faith. I can promise that we will continue to improve from here. 

To learn more about the Academy's Center for Character and Leadership Development, visit <https://www.usafa.edu/character/>.