

Creating Conversations

JCLD Links Leadership and Character in the Military and Beyond

By Louisa Baker

Today, the terms character and leadership are frequently linked, but this hasn't always been the case.

A decade ago, two professors in the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership at the United States Air Force Academy observed that although there existed abundant scholarship on the topic of leadership and emerging scholarship on character, there was little available on the interaction between the two.

"People knew that character and leadership were related, but, as with many academic endeavors, they were generally being studied in isolation," said Dr. Douglas Lindsay '92, cofounder and editor in chief of the Journal of Character and Leadership Development (JCLD).

Lindsay and his colleague Col. Joseph Sanders established the journal in 2009 — then called the Journal of Character and Leadership Scholarship — with the dual purpose of disseminating the high-quality scholarship produced at the Academy and establishing a new space to explore the critical intersection of character and leadership.

"Leaders don't typically fail because they're not competent at their tasks — they fail in areas of discretion," Lindsay said. "If we look at leadership as a manifestation of who the individual is, we see that it's not just about what a leader does — their actions — but about how they treat others around them and what kinds of values and virtues they align themselves with."

Broadening Reach

Over the past 10 years, the journal has evolved through several iterations, most recently re-

launching in June 2018 through continued support from Max James '64 and funding from other USAFA Endowment initiatives — and with a new title.

"In the past, the journal focused more internally, but now we've opened the aperture," Lindsay said. "While we want to serve the Air Force Academy and its cadets, staff and faculty, we also want to export the information to others who are also interested in the domains of character and leadership. Character and leadership are not military-centric ideas."

The journal's unique interdisciplinary approach and its focus on application sets it apart from other peer-reviewed, evidence-based publications. In fact, the JCLD serves as a primary strategic publication for the Academy. Operated at a high level of excellence, it increases recognition of the scholarship produced at the institution, thereby furthering the presence and message of the Academy.

"Across academic publications, there's really nothing like it," said Col. Mark Anarumo, permanent professor and director of the Center for Character and Leadership Development, which houses the triannual publication. "We integrate all the different disciplines surrounding the topic of leadership and elevate the conversation."

Another distinguishing element of the JCLD is the fact that each issue converges on a single theme, thus concentrating thought power on a specific question or concept. The February issue, for example, always aligns with the Academy's National Character and Leadership Symposium, serving as a read-ahead on conference topics, while themes for the summer and fall issues are selected based on current topics of interest in the leadership community.

The fall 2019 publication centered on the power of conversations. Through a series of organic, unscripted interviews with leaders in the military, academia, and industries ranging from sports to nonprofits, this issue gave readers a glimpse into the inner workings of leaders in a wide array of contexts.

"We wanted to make explicit that no matter what domain you're in, leadership matters," said Lindsay. "While we know that the context in which leadership is enacted is absolutely important, we also know that there are similarities across domains — how you prepare yourself for your position, how you take care of your people, how you serve others. Whether you're leading in an academic community or a military environment, or you're a professional athlete, you still have issues of leadership that start with who you are as a person."

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— Dr. Douglas Lindsay



LEFT: Dr. Douglas Lindsay '92 pictured outside the Center for Character and Leadership Development. (Photo by Ryan Hall)

The summer 2019 issue, the journal's largest and most academically rigorous to date, explored leadership and character assessment. The JCLD's approach to this controversial subject demonstrated its commitment to excellent and relevant scholarship.

'Cracking the Code'

As the JCLD's only staff member, Lindsay collaborates with the CCLD to publish three issues a year in addition to an occasional paper series. An editorial board comprising nearly two dozen preeminent scholars and practitioners advises him.

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"The biggest takeaway I had from my Academy experience was to strive for excellence by being a person of character and integrity, first and foremost," said editorial board member Chad Hennings '88, president of Hennings Management Corporation and three-time Super Bowl champion with the Dallas Cowboys. "Serving on the board offers me the opportunity to help others realize that truth in life."

Although its current iteration is only a year and a half old, JCLD is quickly establishing it-

self as a vital, authoritative source on the integration of character and leadership, benefiting burgeoning leaders at the Academy and beyond.

"The Air Force recognizes that leaders can't be manufactured," said Arthur Schwartz, JCLD editorial board member, former senior scholar at the CCLD and professor of leadership studies at Widener University. "The journal is crucial because it offers a platform for military and nonmilitary personnel to suggest theories and research to help the Academy 'crack the code' on how to inspire and challenge each cadet to take ownership of his or her own leadership and character journey."

"Leadership doesn't always imply character," echoed Marvin Berkowitz, editorial board member, co-director of the Center for Character and Citizenship at the University of Missouri-St. Louis and USAFA's inaugural Ambassador Holland H. Coors Professor of Character Development. "JCLD is the only journal to focus on the interface of character and leadership. While it skews to military leadership, it is much broader than that. It serves to provide a venue for exploring ethical leadership and shines a light on its importance as a scholarly endeavor."

As a USAFA Endowment-funded and government-supported publication, the JCLD does not generate revenue through subscription sales as do traditional academic journals.

Presently, it is available primarily online (jcli.scholasticahq.com and usafa.edu/jcld), where readers can access and subscribe for free. Some issues are printed in small quantities for distribution to key leaders, visitors and special events.

"It is a worthwhile endeavor to distribute more tactile copies," Anarumo said. "Having the JCLD on the desk of the Secretary of the Air Force next to Joint Force Quarterly and Air and Space Power Journal and other like publications further elevates the status of JCLD and of the institution."

Another new undertaking would be a fourth, special issue every year that features papers authored by cadets and midshipmen from USAFA, the U.S. Naval Academy and the U.S. Military Academy. The CCLD recently formed a consortium with these two service academies and hopes to one day expand its partnership to include the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, Coast Guard Academy and the six senior military colleges.

"With over 2,000 programs and counting, leadership is the fastest growing academic discipline in the country," Anarumo said. "It would be remarkable for JCLD to be a cornerstone academic journal for this discipline. This publication is something that all members of the USAFA community can be very proud of."

Lindsay added: "The mission of the Academy is to educate, train and inspire men and women to become leaders of character, motivated to lead the United States Air Force in service to our nation. As we help approximately 1,200 new cadets with diverse backgrounds align with the Academy's core values every year, we can apply what we learn to leaders around the world. We don't want to just create knowledge for knowledge's sake. We want to create a conversation space that wouldn't have happened otherwise." 

Donor Support

The USAFA Endowment's fundraising efforts will help ensure the JCLD continues publishing in perpetuity. Contributions made in support of the JCLD will offset the cost for increased print distribution, especially for libraries, as well as other expenses related to the research and production of the journal.