

Warrior Logistics Scholars Seminar: The Ultimate Leadership Course for Field-Grade Logisticians

BY MAJOR TRAVIS J. JAMES

The Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC) Warrior Logistics Scholars Seminar is a graduate-level program designed to expose select field-grade officers to the best practices in military and corporate supply chain management and logistics. The 10-month program combines the Fort Leavenworth, Kansas-based Intermediate Level Education (ILE) common core and sustainment-focused electives period with the fully funded, National Logistics Curriculum (NLC)-endorsed University of Kansas (KU) master of science degree in business.

The KU master's program features a concentration in supply chain management and logistics, while the ILE electives period provides opportunities for education with industry (EWI) and sustainment field studies at strategic-level Department of Defense (DOD) organizations.

I was honored to be among the 16 officers to participate in the inaugural Warrior Logistics Scholars Seminar. The exposure I gained from participating in this intellectually demanding program had a positive effect on my professional development, increasing my analytical skills and my supply chain management and logistics knowledge. This article serves as my after-action review of the program and recommends changes for the way ahead.

Selection Process

To be considered for 1 of the 16 seminar seats in the 2010–2011 ILE year, each applicant was required to submit a written essay, a memorandum requesting participation, his last 3 officer evaluation reports, and his officer records brief. Incoming ILE students applied for the program while in-processing at CGSC and were notified of their selection a few days before the official start of the course. This selection process yielded a very diverse group, including 11 Army Logistics Corps officers, 1 Armor officer, 1 Chemical officer, 1 Aviation officer, 1 Navy engineer, and 1 Air Force C–5 Galaxy pilot.

The CGSC core curriculum consisted of instruction in leadership, military history, force management, and joint, interagency, and multinational operations. The various departments within CGSC emphasized staff functions at the operational level in environments across the full spectrum of conflict. In addition to this instruction were numerous graded assessments of the writing and critical thinking skills of each warrior logistics scholar. Seminar students participated in the same common core curricu-

lum as other students in ILE Class 11–01, including guest speaker engagements, strategic communication requirements, and additional duties.

KU Course of Study

The Warrior Logistics Scholars Seminar students also attended class 2 to 3 nights a week as they worked toward completing the KU master of science in business in supply chain management degree program. Although all of the KU courses were presented at Fort Leavenworth, they were taught by KU professors.

The first phase of the KU program was focused on core business functions with courses in accounting, economics, statistics, finance, project management, and an introduction to supply chain management. Each course held eight classes that met in the evenings for approximately 3½ hours. Requirements for each subject consisted of homework assignments that averaged 3 hours of study time per class meeting, Blackboard discussions, and midterm and final exams.

Education With Industry

Once the seminar students completed the CGSC common core blocks of instruction, their schedules were altered from that of a traditional ILE student to support the EWI phase and CGSC courses L200, Leadership, and H200, Military Innovation in the Interwar Period. On Mondays and Fridays, scholars participated in the leadership and history courses; the remaining 3 days were dedicated to EWI.

The overall objectives of this portion of the program were to provide exposure to the corporate environment, witness best industry practices, and apply lessons learned from the KU coursework to assigned corporate projects. Based on individual interests, experience, and previous education, officers were paired with participating firms to work on supply chain management or logistics-related projects. Firms such as Hallmark, Harley-Davidson, and Frito-Lay were provided with two to three officers who worked from 0900 to 1500 on each Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

In my corporate assignment, I worked on a reverse logistics project at the Hallmark corporate headquarters in Kansas City, Missouri. My specific project-related tasks at Hallmark were to—

□ Research industry best practices in reverse logistics

using external sources.

- Document and validate current Hallmark reverse logistics procedures and workflows (physical and information) and quantify current costs and resource requirements.
- Identify improvement opportunities in Hallmark's current reverse logistics/returns process based on findings from best-practice research and develop recommendations to enable supply chain and business staff reviews to improve the firm's current reverse logistics operations.

From January to May, EWI continued with required KU coursework, sustainment field studies, and CGSC electives. The KU courses were focused on core supply chain management issues, including change management, transportation and logistics systems, information systems, procurer and supplier management, and a final capstone project. The students were challenged to solve a real-world supply chain management issue for a major distribution firm under the guidance of the company's president.

CGSC Spring Electives

The second phase of the KU courses continued on Friday evenings and on Saturdays from 0830 to 1600 in support of the CGSC Spring Electives Term I travel requirements.

In the sustainment field studies period, which was substituted for the spring electives, we visited the TACOM Life Cycle Management Command headquarters, Navy Supply Command headquarters, and Defense Logistics Agency New Cumberland, Pennsylvania. We received overview briefs, tours, and demonstrations of each organization's current operations, supply chain issues, and future role in the military's strategic supply chain. Following each visit, an officer provided the visited organization with a case study on the issues presented and recommended solutions.

After completing the travel period, CGSC Spring Electives Term II electives became the main effort of the program. The electives were sustainment-focused to further broaden each officer's knowledge and provide preparation for post-ILE assignments. For example, I elected to take the Sustainment Brigade Operations Course, Support Operations Course, and Battle Command Sustainment Support System Course.

In the closing weeks of the program, we participated in a local Council of Supply Chain Management roundtable, a KU graduation social, a KU hooding ceremony, and finally the KU graduation ceremony in Lawrence, Kansas.

Recommended Program Improvements

The leaders within CGSC's Department of Logistics and Resource Operations (DLRO) have developed a cutting-edge program in the Warrior Logistics Scholars Seminar. It is one of the few, if not the only, programs that specifically target the professional development of

field-grade Logistics Corps officers. However, a few adjustments can be made to improve the program.

As the program gains popularity, the demand to participate will greatly exceed available seats for the seminar. To ensure that the selection process yields the best qualified officers to participate in the program, I recommend that CGSC add the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) or Graduate Record Examination (GRE) to the application process. With this additional requirement, the application process deadline should be at least 30 days before the ILE start date in order to provide administrators with adequate time to select the best qualified officers for the program.

To ensure that officers are correctly assigned after completing the Warrior Logistics Scholars Seminar, a special skill identifier similar to the identifier given to graduates of the Theater Logistics Planners (TLOG) program should be awarded to the officers who complete the seminar. My recommendation is that graduates of the program receive follow-on assignments within sustainment brigade headquarters, corps- and division-level G-4 staffs, the Defense Logistics Agency, the Army Materiel Command, the Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command, the Army Logistics University, and the Army and Air Force Exchange Service. This will ensure that the Army can take full advantage of the skills gained by graduates of the seminar.

The Warrior Logistics Scholars Seminar demonstrates CGSC's tremendous flexibility and creativity. DLRO's development of this specialized program enhances the military's ability to meet the current needs of the changing sustainment environment. As factors such as globalization, technological advances, joint and interagency Government interoperability, and dependence on the military industrial complex continue to affect Army sustainment operations, officers with the diverse skill set acquired in the Warrior Logistics Scholars Seminar will greatly benefit the Army.

By making minor adjustments to the application process and tracking the officers who complete the program, the sustainment community will produce a stellar program that develops field-grade officers with the knowledge needed to combine the best practices of civilian supply chain management with current military sustainment operations at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels.

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