

Developing Future Supply Chain Professionals

■ By George A. Zsidisin, Elliott "Chip" Minor, Billy Davis, and Jana McQuaid

For both the military and civilian sectors to create efficient and effective supply chains, they must develop leaders who possess and apply well-honed conceptual and analytical skills to address current and future supply chain management challenges.

That is why the Army Logistics University (ALU) and the Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) School of Business have partnered to offer a cooperative master of supply chain management (MSCM) degree beginning in August 2014. The integrated curriculum is oriented toward developing innovative operational-level logistics planners and supply chain management leaders.

ALU's contribution to this effort is the Theater Logistics Planners Program (TLog), an intensive 19-week course in operational-level logistics planning and execution. Although TLog focuses on theater logistics support, students also must learn about the connections to unified action partners, such as the Defense Logistics Agency and the U.S. Transportation Command.

To meet the changing needs of defense logistics, TLog will transition in the fall of 2016 to the Strategic Enterprise Logistics Course (SELC). SELC will develop "strategic logisticians" who are competent in managing issues dealing with life cycle systems, the defense industrial base, and distribution and supply chain management in the strategic domain of the joint logistics enterprise.

In close collaboration with ALU, the VCU School of Business has developed a 30-credit hour MSCM program in its newly established Department of Supply Chain Manage-

ment and Analytics. VCU's portion of the program teaches both military and civilian business students to apply advanced concepts and skills to supply chain management.

The MSCM program was developed to provide a foundation of supply chain management concepts, applications, and decision-analysis tools. Foundational courses include Global Supply Chain Management, Operations Management, and two courses that set this program apart from other graduate programs: Enterprise Resource Planning in Supply Chain Management and Supply Chain Innovation.

By including a course in supply chain innovation and leveraging the knowledge and expertise from VCU's da Vinci Center for Innovation, students are taught the tools and flexible approaches to creatively solve real-world supply chain and logistics challenges.

In addition to the foundation courses, Management Science and Analytics for Organizational Decision Making courses provide students with analytical tools for solving complex supply chain and logistics problems.

The MSCM coursework is complemented and grounded by students actively developing and working on an applied research project throughout their curriculum. This project analyzes a supply chain problem or opportunity. The goal of the project is for students to apply their newly found knowledge in supply chain management concepts and analytical tools in a real-world setting while providing a positive return on investment for the military and commercial organizations participating.

TLog students attending VCU's MSCM program will receive nine credit hours toward their degree requirements when they graduate from the TLog course. They will complete their remaining 21 graduate credit hours at VCU. While the Army is working to make this a fully-funded program in fiscal year 2016, in the interim, attendees will fund their own way using the Post-9/11 GI Bill or tuition assistance benefits.

Information on applying to ALU's TLog program is available at http://www.alu.army.mil/ALU_COURSES/ALUCOURSES.htm. For more information on the MSCM program, go to https://crm.orionondemand.com/crm/sites/Virginia_Commonwealth_University,_School_of_Business/gsibmasterofsupply-chainmanagement.

Dr. George A. Zsidisin is a professor of supply chain management in the Department of Supply Chain Management and Analytics at the School of Business at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) and serves as the co-editor of the *Journal of Purchasing & Supply Management*.

Dr. Elliott "Chip" Minor is chairman of the Department of Supply Chain Management and Analytics in the School of Business at VCU.

Dr. Billy J. Davis is the chairman of the Joint Operations Logistics Committee in the Army Logistics University's College of Professional and Continuing Education.

Jana McQuaid is the associate dean for masters and executive programs in the School of Business at VCU.