The Army Financial Management School at the Soldier Support Institute is teaming up with the University of South Carolina's Darla Moore School of Business to offer two new graduate courses.

Partnering to Provide Finance Leaders Essential Training

■ By Capt. Brandon S. Broadus

The University of South Carolina's Darla Moore School of Business has grown into a thriving center for academic excellence. For this reason, the Army Financial Management School (FMS) is collaborating with the business school to train financial management (FM) leaders in Systems, Applications, Products (SAP) software, business analytics, and cost management.

This partnership allows the FMS to leverage the business school's seasoned professors of accounting and enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems. These professors provide first-rate instruction in a high-demand area through two courses: the SAP Training in ERP Certification Course (SAP TERP10) and Business Analytics.

Why Now?

The Army realizes that ERP and business intelligence (BI) systems are extremely important for its daily activities. Information flow is and should be constant. But with a never-ending flow of information, Army organizations can become bogged down with data.

The SAP TERP10 and Business Analytics courses teach students how to manipulate data into meaningful information that leaders can use. BI systems enable financial

managers to represent data analysis in different formats that leaders can understand, such as graphs, charts, and grids. FM sustainers must ensure Army leaders have the most up-to-date information to make the best decisions possible.

As with any new system, it takes time for users to adapt, learn, and gain the required proficiency to ensure organizations maximize their operating potential. As the Army continues to refine its processes, FM professionals are a primary source of information for commanders. They must ensure the Army is on the cutting edge of the latest data management solutions.

SAP TERP10

The inaugural SAP TERP10 course began in June 2014. The goal of the 4-week resident graduate education course is to provide an overall understanding and a working knowledge of the function, design, control, and use of Department of Defense (DOD) ERP systems.

Since the Army uses SAP software for its ERP, the course gives students an overview of SAP systems and the framework in which they operate. The curriculum provides students with the conceptual understanding and applied skills to be able to navigate the complexities of transaction processing and data queries inherent in modern ERP systems.

SAP TERP10 consists of four graduate-level classes:

☐ Financial Accounting with a Federal Government Emphasis.
☐ Application of Advanced Databases to Accounting and Business.
☐ Accounting Information Systems from a Strategic Perspective.
☐ ERP Systems.

Students who graduate from the course bring value to their respective organizations through improved SAP software skills and advanced accounting proficiency. Graduates also receive 190 hours toward their DOD FM certifications.

Although a few may see it as an opportunity to get away from the office and receive some continuing professional education credit, SAP TERP10 is not something to take lightly. Because of the course's condensed schedule, students must complete approximately 30 hours of prep work before they arrive at the resident course. Students who are new to ERPs can expect to have more prep work than the more experienced students do.

The day-to-day course work is just as demanding. Students spend much time after class on group work, homework, and studying for quizzes and tests. Results from the SAP TERP10 pilots show that although all students passed the required courses in order to take the SAP Certification Exam, only about 80 percent passed the exam.

Business Analytics

Business Analytics is an intense one-week resident education course taught by the University of South Carolina's Executive Education Department. The course provides Army financial management professionals with an overall understanding of the capabilities and functionality of the SAP BI environment.

The following topics are covered during the course:

☐ SAP Crystal Reports.
☐ Manipulating and analyzing Microsoft Excel data.
☐ Decision modeling in Excel.
☐ SAP Business Warehouse.
☐ SAP Business Explorer.

Students completing Business Analytics will provide value to their organizations through improved BI navigation, advanced analysis, and improved reporting.

Graduates also earn 40 hours of DOD FM competencies in decision support, accounting analysis, and financial management analysis.

Working Toward FM Certification

The DOD FM Certification Program is a course-based certification program with three certification

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levels designed to support the professional development of the FM workforce and to provide a framework for a standard body of knowledge across the FM enterprise.

This standard body of knowledge comprises 23 FM competencies, 17 of which most financial managers must train on to meet the certification level assigned to their positions.

Depending on the certification level assigned to a position and the FM competencies that one has to attain to achieve the certification level, the training could be at proficiency levels (PLs) 1 through 5.

PL5 is the highest and is applied to high-level courses. Because SAP TERP10 and Business Analytics are graduate-level courses, all of the lessons associated with them warrant a PL5 ranking.

More information on both courses can be found in the Financial Management School milSuite group, https://www.milsuite.mil/book/groups/financial-management-school.

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