



John Plifka (center), the director of the Training and Doctrine Command Quality Assurance Office, presents a plaque on behalf of the Council on Occupational Education to the Quartermaster School for 40 years of sustained training and educational excellence. Accepting on behalf of the school are Brig. Gen. Ronald Kirklin (left) and Command Sgt. Maj. Jimmie Sellers. (Photo by Keith Desbois)

Sustaining a Decisive Edge

Through its Leader and Workforce Development Program, the Quartermaster School has implemented several leadership development measures, including a civilian professional development strategy.

■ By Brig. Gen. Ronald Kirklin and Marshall J. Jones

In its introduction, the Army Human Dimension Strategy 2015 stresses, “In this changing world, the Army must actively seek innovative approaches to leverage its unique strength—its people. Through investment in its human capital, the Army can maintain the decisive edge in the human dimension—the cognitive, physical, and social components of the Army’s trusted professionals and teams.”

The Army Operating Concept 2025 and the Army Functional Concept for Sustainment are designed to strengthen the Army today and into the future. The Army’s Human Dimension Strategy 2015 complements both of these concepts. When viewed holistically, these documents establish the long-range vision for an affordable and sustainable premier fighting force.

Leader Development

The Quartermaster School (QMS) has implemented leader development practices through its Leader and Workforce Development Program, which promotes the growth and sustainment of its leaders and members of its composite workforce. Among these practices are a robust counseling, coaching, and mentorship program, enhanced training and educational opportunities, and a highly

effective civilian professional development (CPD) strategy, which was recognized as a best practice during a recent fiscal year 2015 Training and Doctrine Command accreditation assessment.

Effective leader-employee workforce development is a deliberate, continuous, and progressive process, solidified in Army values, that grows Soldiers and Army civilians into competent, committed professional leaders of character. The QMS Leader and Workforce Development Program is based on three key attributes: simplicity, relevance and value added, and achievability and sustainability.

Army Doctrine Publication 7-0, Training Units and Developing Leaders, adamantly conveys that “unit training and leader development are inextricably linked.” An integral part of the QMS charter is to provide basic knowledge and requisite skills to assist with the growth and development of leaders and members of the composite workforce.

While fully realizing that most leader development occurs in operational assignments and through self-development, the QMS has enhanced its Leader and Workforce Development Program through various initiatives. Effective counseling, coaching, and mentorship requires special individuals who are committed to investing in human capital.

The school’s success is attributed to a top-down and bottom-up approach. Effective leaders epitomize and continually promote the role and criticality of effective counseling, coaching, and mentorship. The school has now embedded this into its overall Ready and Resilient Campaign in an effort to better fulfill key tenets of the Army’s Leader Development Strategy 2015 and the complementary Human Dimension Strategy.

Civilian Professional Development

The key features of the QMS CPD strategy are its simplicity and achievability. The strategy promotes

a Department of the Army civilian professional career development and progression culture in QMS that ensures civilian members of the workforce are proficient in their job assignments.

This strategy contributes to overall mission effectiveness and operational readiness. Furthermore, the strategy embraces the desire to help civilians develop and sustain the requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities that can help them make use of career-enhancing job opportunities.

The QMS CPD strategy has two important parts that directly complement the Army’s Civilian Workforce Transformation program: the QMS CPD Handbook and the QMS Civilian Employee Wellness Program.

QMS CPD Handbook. The Quartermaster School’s CPD Handbook serves as the school’s primary source document to assist its civilian employees with using available opportunities. It provides clear direction on developing knowledge and skills for career development and advancement. It also serves as a guide to assist in developing the knowledge and skills required to meet performance objectives and complete organizational tasks.

QMS Civilian Employee Wellness Program. The Civilian Employee Wellness Program helps QMS employees “achieve and sustain professional and personal balance.” It leverages and incorporates key workforce professional growth and development enablers, such as effective mentorship and coaching programs, new employee acculturation and onboarding, physical fitness, and stress management programs.

QMS also conducts a Civilian New Hires Acculturation and Onboarding Program annually. Acculturation is the process through which new employees learn, adjust to, and internalize the Army culture. Onboarding is the strategic process designed to integrate and acclimate new employees into the organization and prepare them to contribute at a desired level as quickly as possible.

CPD Success

The CPD strategy is considered successful if QMS can meet two requirements. First, at least 95 percent of civilian employees must have current, approved, and viable individual development plans that are nested in the Combined Arms Support Command Action Plan and Quartermaster School Action Plan. Second, at least 33 percent of the assigned civilian workforce must conduct at least 80 hours of formal training or education annually.

QMS civilian employees who commit to embracing the QMS CPD strategy will undoubtedly achieve some success. However, that should not keep employees from actively pursuing self-development opportunities throughout their professional civilian careers.

The desired result of the strategy is for the QMS to have civilian professionals with critical thinking skills and functional competencies that enable them to make an immediate impact in support of unified land operations and our nation’s security interests.

The QMS Leader and Workforce Development Program leverages multiple efforts to assist with shaping its human dimension strategy in support of its leaders and workforce at large. Although still evolving, the program is a valuable asset for the Army’s current and future sustainers and helps to ensure that the Army sustains a decisive edge.

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