

The Naval Postgraduate School's Supply Chain Management Program

Logistics officers should consider completing the Naval Postgraduate School's supply chain management master's degree program as a career broadening opportunity.

■ By Capt. Michael McCrory

The Army must identify and reward its very best performers in order to retain top talent. Being among the very best performers requires an officer to be well-rounded and have a broad education. One way to accomplish this is by taking advantage of the Advanced Civil Schooling program.

Advanced Civil Schooling gives Army officers a chance to pursue advanced degrees in acquisition or business-related disciplines at civilian universities. One such degree is the master's degree in supply chain management (SCM) from the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS).

This course of study broadens a student's horizons in critical thinking and can enhance an officer's career. Anyone with a strong background in mathematics will find the 18-month SCM program enlightening and thought-provoking.

The majority of coursework required for the degree focuses on statistical simulation modeling. Students learn the basic equations behind the policies and procedures that drive the Department of Defense as well as the logistics operations of civilian corporations. These basic equations are then combined with different supply chain management theories, leading to further study of distribution and the costs associated with the risks of the outcomes.

If prospective students feel the SCM program might be too challenging mathematically, there are a few electives they can take to prepare. Students should not be discouraged

because the business department strongly encourages students to take a few courses outside of the prearranged curriculum.

For instance, NPS offers a negotiation tactics course that examines real-world case studies that students role-play. Role-playing gives the students the opportunity to experience negotiation challenges firsthand.

The Defense Transportation System Course is also worthwhile. It reveals how little most students know about the U.S. transportation system and the resources that the government has at its disposal in times of crisis. The course is neither mathematically challenging nor does it require a great deal of reading. It is designed to be a thought-provoking, exploratory, self-learning study of transportation modes.

NPS focuses on the philosophical underpinnings of leadership and service. Its programs describe how to find and preserve equanimity in the midst of conflict.

The SCM program requires attendees to take one Joint Professional Military Education (JPME) class, which addresses problems that are of special interest to the government. During this class, some of the top experts in their fields assist students with their respective problems. In addition to taking one JPME class, most students (promotable captains and above) elect to take the remaining three courses to complete JPME I.

NPS is one of the top research schools for the Department of Defense. Unlike most business schools'

MBA programs, NPS requires students to complete a thesis or project for publication. The students are required to develop a research topic that a professor or sponsor is interested in. The project can take anywhere from a few months to a year to complete.

There are a few downsides for the students who have families staying with them in Monterey, California, during their time at NPS. The cost of living in Monterey is high, and a cost-of-living allowance is not available for the area. Even when receiving an estimated \$3,000 a month for housing, service members usually choose to live on post. The average rent for a four-bedroom house in a nice area of Monterey can run well over \$4,000 a month.

The SCM program requires a considerable amount of studying and a focus on growing one's intellectual capacity to deal with new challenges in imaginative and thoughtful ways.

The NPS instructors ensure each attendee leaves the program well-equipped with the skills to solve the complex problems that face the Department of Defense. High-quality officers looking for a challenge will find themselves pushed to their intellectual limit, which is the mark of any program worthy of an officer's time.

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