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Developing Flag Officers of 2025 And Beyond

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**NAVAL
POSTGRADUATE
SCHOOL**

NAVAL RESEARCH PROGRAM

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

DEVELOPING FLAG OFFICERS OF 2025 AND BEYOND

by

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Prepared for: Naval Leadership and Ethics Center

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Our Naval education systems, designed in the machine age, do not adequately prepare our military for the emerging new world. Our adversaries, who are not subject to our institutional constraints, are moving into the new age faster than we are. It is time for a new conversation about the design of military education.

Project Summary

We considered the question: Is military education keeping pace with the task of preparing military people for effective leadership in the emerging highly networked, highly unpredictable world? We examined the nature of the changing environment for military operations. We speculated about leadership identity needed in this environment, possible ways to cultivate the required sensibilities, and the possible role of technology in achieving it. We call for a conversation about how military leadership education might be redesigned and how we might get a new design in place.

Our project met its final deliverable with a book chapter, *Being in Uncertainty: Cultivating a New Sensibility in Military Education* in “*Innovative Learning: A Key to National Security*” (General editors: Ralph Doughty, Linton Wells II, & Theodore Hailes, Army Press, Dec 2015.) <http://armypress.dodlive.mil/?p=1659>

We participated in a commercial training course in which we read select books and articles, met online for bi-weekly conversations and attended a 2-day, face-to-face workshop. We explored skills for innovation and coping with change, pragmatics of communication and commitment, skills for orchestrating moods, and skills for cultivation of community and networks. Our classmates were a diverse group of fifty international business leaders, educators and military leaders.

Findings and Conclusions

We describe the skills of leaders needed to move effectively in an emerging, shifting, unpredictable world. The skills encompass new ways of thinking and interpreting. They embody new sensibilities about people’s moods and possibilities in fast-changing networks. They cultivate moods that facilitate actions. They define a new way of being in and navigating an uncertain and unpredictable world. The new way is not obvious from the machine age in which we grew up and designed our education systems.

We outline five essential aspects of a leadership identity we think are needed in the new world: leader as innovator, navigator, historical agent, opener of possibilities, and appropriator. We refine these distinctions through ongoing conversations with an international group through which we extracted the ideas that are most relevant for our situation in military education. The need for these skills stems from a change in human dynamics as our world transforms with the help of dramatic advances in digital technology.

Contrasts between Machine Age and Network Age Perspectives

1	INNOVATION AS IDEA CREATION	INNOVATION AS EMERGENCE
2	KNOWING MORE	EXPONENTIAL UNCERTAINTY
3	DIFFUSION	MOBILIZATION
4	DETERMINISTIC	UNPREDICTABLE
5	NO INTELLIGENCE	INTELLIGENCE
6	EFFICIENCY	EFFECTIVENESS
7	MANAGING TOWARD GOALS	NAVIGATING
8	RULE SETS AND END---STATES	COMMITMENTS, MOODS, POWER
9	SUSTAINING INNOVATION, BRANDS	SHIFTING IDENTITIES, DISRUPTION, AVALANCHES

Recommendations for Further Research

1. The Navy should engage in future experimental courses and modules designed to teach network age skills. We speculate that by adding a few well-designed modules to existing Navy curricula, we could take significant steps toward the desired transformative effect.
2. We propose starting new conversations to cultivate network age leaders by designing workshops and symposia. This should begin with a broad conversation about the breakdowns currently experienced by military leaders, the nature of the world in which they will be leading future military operations, and the aspects of a leader's identity that our education programs should cultivate.
3. The Navy should explore a redesign of the Naval Academy engineering and leadership curricula and follow-on leadership schools to ensure network age skills are cultivated.