

## Army War College farewells senior leader, NLC advisor Command Sgt. Major Alan Hummel

By Elena Patton, Public Affairs Office 04 July 2020



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*USAWC Command Sgt. Major Alan Hummel retires from the Army after 34 years. His last posting, at the Army War College, gave opportunity to influence readiness of the most senior Army NCOs for executive positions.*

Command Sergeant Major Alan Hummel is leaving the Army after 32 years

of service. During his last assignment with the U.S. Army War College at Carlisle Barracks, Hummel applied his big-picture philosophy to the USAWC executive education program for senior sergeants major.

In April 2018, he was assigned to Carlisle Barracks and faced with the unique challenge to advance the Nominative Leaders Course—a program designated to prepare sergeants major for their initial nominative-level assignments serving in a one- or two-star command team.

“My learning point was that I just fell back on my experiences. A lot of the things that they're getting ready to get into, I had already been there,” said Hummel, who had completed the NLC pilot in preparation to serve as part of the one-star command group at the Armor School in Fort Benning Georgia. He incorporated his practical knowledge into the NLC curriculum to create an experiential learning curriculum.

The newest addition to the curriculum is a program of instruction on how to operationalize a commander's vision, developed with NLC Director Erik ‘Sparky’ Anderson. “... NCOs come from their units [to NLC] prepared with the commander’s vision. In the course, they break it down: what does that mean to you as a sergeant major, and what are you going to do to effect that and support that?”

These senior leaders face a constantly changing and evolving environment, he said. He expected that the NCOs would have questions and need someone to act as a sounding board as they worked through their projects and ideas. Hummel gladly filled that role.

NLC includes a Gettysburg Battlefield Staff Ride during which the Army War College faculty facilitator acknowledges the vital tactical contributions of NCOs in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and the major changes in responsibilities since that time. The nominative sergeants major will be command partners at the strategic level.

The NLC was established in 2015 by Sergeant Major of the Army Dan Dailey. It continually evolves to help prepare and guide those senior NCOs for movement from tactical operations to strategic level positions. The course was developed at the Army War College because of its focus on strategic level skills and knowledge. However, Dailey, his team, and instructors tailored the material to make it NCO- specific.

The course addresses various topics and issues these leaders will encounter, e.g., national security, Army policy, economics, defense budget, and Congressional interactions. The students engage senior leaders in the

Pentagon and meet with members of Congress and their staff.

“This adaptability is a highlight of the course,” said Hummel. “I think it's fantastic that they're able to adjust and revise that course as much or as little as they need to.”

Adaptability describes Hummel's Army career since 1987 when he enlisted in the Army, after starting a degree in computer science from Point Park University, completed in Liberal Arts at Excelsior University. Through decades of working directly with Soldiers, and through deployments to combat duty in the Gulf War, Bosnia IFOR/SFOR service, the Iraq years and to Afghanistan, he developed an appreciation for the “purpose, direction, discipline, and motivation” the Army offered his life and work, he said. As a result of those personal and professional benefits, training Soldiers and collaborating with military leaders became his life's work.

Hummel said he was continually amazed by what Soldiers are willing to do when they are led well.

“Be genuine, be honest, be yourself, and you let the people, Soldiers and officers see who you are as a true genuine person,” he said. “Then, I found, people are willing to do anything to accomplish the mission because they believe and trust in you.” He spent the remainder of his career emulating those characteristics in his leadership roles, he said.

At Carlisle Barracks, primarily an officers' post, he determined to be the same, genuine person he'd always been, this time interacting and engaging with colonels and lieutenant colonels in the class on a daily basis. As Maj. Gen. Kem's eyes and ears, he extended the commandant's interest in students. “They felt comfortable talking with me, I could always just act ... on the commandant's behalf and try to go intervene and fix things.”

As Hummel looks toward a new civilian career, he recalled the defining aspects of his career in the Army.

“There are core lessons and values which transfer across military and corporate America,” said Hummel. “You could bring Army values by demonstrating them in your daily life and work. In turn, the company may want to adopt similar values for their workers.”

Hummel's life work in the Army impacted his fellow Soldiers and his family. Through it all, his family completely supported his career choice, explaining why Hummel identified his family's constant support as the best aspect of

his military career.

Each demonstrate in their own way, the ability to see and think beyond themselves, adapt to and thrive in different situations, no matter the circumstances, he said.

“This holistic, big picture thinking is the key element NLC wants to bring to the table for it is the most useful tool for navigating difficult situations, said Hummel. “Even ones as dire as the COVID-19 pandemic.”

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