

I was asked to “shadow” representatives of the 50 year affiliate classes for USMA 2017 (USMA 1967), USMA 2018 (USMA 1968), and USMA 2019 (USMA 1969) for a “Leader Challenge” at West Point held on 14 November 2016. Volunteers from the 50 Year Affiliate Classes are needed for all Leader Challenges and USMA 1970’s first commitment will be in November, 2017.

The Leader Challenge (LC) component of the Cadet Character Development Program was developed at West Point by the Center for the Advancement of Leader Development and Organizational Learning (CALDOL), a.k.a. Center for Company-Level Leaders). Please read the attached document CC\_ARMY\_(Jun2013)\_Leader\_Challenge\_Approach.pdf for an overview of how LCs are conducted at USMA.

LCs are a method for developing leaders and they are part of a profession-wide effort to improve learning and leader development— to make them more context-based, collaborative, and problem-centered. Each Leader Challenge session engages the upper-class cadets in all 144 USCC platoons (4 platoons x 9 Companies x 4 Regiments = 144 Platoons) in a difficult leadership decision as described by the junior officer or cadet who actually experienced it (usually a recorded video).

In the LC sessions, Army professionals with varying levels of experience (cadets, staff/faculty volunteers, TACs, **50-Year Grads**) engage with each other in small-group conversations about the situation to enhance their understanding of ethical leadership. Participants in Leader Challenge sessions learn not only from the true scenario and their conversations about it, but also from the LC process itself, which highlights the learning value of engaging in meaningful conversations about real problems with our fellow professionals. Cadets are the facilitators with staff/faculty volunteers, TACs, and 50-Year Grads helping with the small group conversations during the LC.

There are 2 LCs per semester, and since they are only conducted for the upper three classes, there will be a total of 12 total LCs for the Class of 2020 (and consequently 6 opportunities for USMA 1970 to participate in said LCs with our 50 Year Affiliate Class, since the 50 year Affiliates are only invited to 2 LCs per year). The LCs are usually one day exercises in November and March of each calendar year conducted in the West Point Club and Academic Area at USMA.

In the session I “shadowed”, there were about 100 **50-Year Grads** in attendance (so about 30 per year for the classes of 1967, 1968, and 1969). All 50-Year Grads were volunteers who paid their own way (note that some of them got a statement from West Point that they were on “permissive TDY” that allowed waiver of the Hotel Tax at Army Lodging and the Hotel Thayer). Except for the “locals”, most arrived the night before since the session began early the next morning.

From what I observed, LCs have 4 components –

1. True Story Only – no actors, scenario with no clear outcome
2. Small Group Conversations About the True Story
3. Process – strict time constraints for each part of the LC
4. Mindset is “Learner” versus “Judger”

There are two types of LCs each year that 50 Year Affiliates are invited to participate in – a “garrison” themed and a “combat” themed scenario.

“Starburst” methodology is employed during the LC sessions, with multiple groups facilitated by

the same cadet facilitator, and all small group members rotating to other (and different) groups to maximize diversity of perspectives.

Attached are two documents that give you the flavor of a LC – the Combat Integrity LC Schedule (attached) that was conducted on 14 November 2016, and the previously mentioned CC\_ARMY\_(Jun2013)\_Leader\_Challenge\_Approach.pdf for an overview of how LCs are actually conducted.

Note that USMA 1970 needs to recruit volunteers for this program (about 30 per LC x 6 LCs); volunteers do not need to be the same for each iteration. There should be a single POC with CALDOL to facilitate coordination.

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