

Dear Classmates,

West Point and the SCPME hosted the Spring 2016 NCEA this past week, and we want to provide you with an update on this year's conference and a status report on the future of NCEA.

You may recall that the Superintendent decided to have two ethics conferences this academic year: a fall conference focusing on ethical issues facing the Corps of Cadets and spring conference with an external focus. The theme of the spring conference was The Ethics of Public Discourse, a topic of significant relevance on college campuses and in society at large.

Nine classmates represented the Class of 1970 as observers: Don Blakeslee, Dave Brown, Bill Cater, Barney Forsythe, Gil Harper, Rich Measner, Terry Young, Bill Wattendorf, and Toby Quirk.

Forty West Point cadets and one hundred and twenty students from forty-one civilian institutions participated in the conference. Students were organized into twenty table groups, with the West Point cadets (one firstie and one cow per table) acting as facilitators. External participants included cadets from the other service academies as well as ROTC cadets and civilian students from colleges and universities around the country.

The guest speakers inspired the participants with personal life stories about important ethical issues they faced in life.

Scotty Smiley. West Point Class of 2003. Left permanently blind by a suicide bomber in Iraq, Scotty went on to command West Point's Warrior Transition Unit, earn a graduate degree from Duke University, and teach leadership at the Military Academy. Although sightless, Scotty has surfed in Hawaii, climbed Mount Rainier, and completed a triathlon. He was named *The Army Times* 2007 Soldier of the Year, and he won an ESPY as the world's Best Outdoor Athlete in 2008. He is also a recipient of the prestigious MacArthur Leadership Award.

Jim Farrell. Vice President for Logistics, Distribution, and Transportation for PepsiCo. Jim brought the skills he learned as an Army logistics officer to his executive position in PepsiCo, an international company that prides itself in being a values based business. He talked about the importance of establishing trust as the key to effective teamwork and organizational performance.

Sage Steele. ESPN and ABC sports journalist, she is the host of *NBA Countdown*, a contributor to *Sports Center*, and co-host of *ESPN's New Year's Rockin' Eve*. She is a daughter of the Class of 1970, and her proud parents, Gary and Mona, were on hand to listen to her talk. Sage's inspirational message focused on overcoming the barriers to civil discourse that spring from bias and prejudice. She stressed the importance of personal accountability for our words and actions.

Jenna Wolfe. Certified personal trainer, health and wellness expert, and former correspondent for NBC's *Today* show. Jenna challenged the students to stretch themselves and take advantage of the opportunities to grow in life. Drawing upon her own stories with success and failure, she stressed the importance of perseverance and grit when facing difficult challenges.

Between presentations, the students worked at their table groups to address significant issues related to ethics in public discourse and to identify ways they could enhance conversations on their campuses. At the end of the conference, each table group had five minutes to report on the most significant take-ways from their deliberations. It was clear from their summaries that the students "got it." Their ideas were substantive and relevant to their specific situations.

Throughout the conference, the observers had the opportunity to interact with the participants, and it was clear they were motivated to attend the NCEA and grateful for the chance to reflect on important topics related to ethics in society. As your representatives, we came away from the conference feeling like the Class of 1970's gift had made an impact on these young people.

During the conference, we took the opportunity to speak with the Superintendent, the Commandant, and COL Halstead about the future of the NCEA and the Class of 1970's role going forward. Their responses were encouraging. We learned that:

1. The Superintendent wants the NCEA to be on the level with SCUSA and the McDonald Leadership Conference. The Commandant is new and is still learning the ropes, but she also expressed support for the NCEA.
2. With the newly implemented character development program in place, West Point is addressing many of the issues that led the Superintendent to change the NCEA model, so that he now intends to return to one NCEA a year, most likely with both cadets and students from civilian institutions. The next NCEA is tentatively scheduled for the third week in January 2017.
3. With recent changes to the West Point curriculum, it appears that the SCPME will get additional officer slots to run its programs. When this occurs, the SCPME will have greater capacity to host NCEA on the level of SCUSA.
4. In discussing the Class of 1970's support role, COL Halstead requested help in two areas. Once he identifies a theme for each year's conference, he needs our help (a) opening doors for inviting guest speakers and (b) establishing contacts with civilian colleges and universities for inviting student participants.

We came away the feeling that West Point sincerely values our gift of the NCEA. West Point representatives, cadets, and civilian students consistently expressed appreciation to the Class of 1970 for our generous gift and for our presence at the conference. We believe that the NCEA has weathered the storms of the past three years and is now in a better position.

In the next few months, the Class NCEA committee will develop procedures for supporting subsequent NCEAs. The goal is to standardize and institutionalize the NCEA while the Superintendent and COL Halstead are still at West Point.

Again, profound thanks to the members of the Class of 1970 for your generous gift of the NCEA. You continue to make a difference.

Serve with Integrity,

Barney Forsythe and the NCEA Team