Transitioning Incoming Professionals into Effective Instructors: The Processes for New Instructor Programs (NIP)

Benjamin Blane
William Rothrock
Don Sedivy
Josh Silver

This paper was completed and submitted in partial fulfillment of the Master Teacher Program, a 2-year faculty professional development program conducted by the Center for Faculty Excellence, United States Military Academy, West Point, NY, 2016.

Abstract: This paper presents analysis on the processes by which the United States Military Academy (USMA) transitions professionals (Army officers, non-commissioned officers, and civilian professors) into effective instructors that work across its four developmental domains (academic, military, physical, and character). These processes across fifteen departments amount to over thirty New Instructor Programs (NIP), which have varying degrees of efficacy. Although the information collected for this paper reveals best practices amongst numerous entities and identifies institutional deficiencies, there is no effort to highlight specific organizations for praise or criticism. Rather this study seeks to emphasize best practices in order to better facilitate departments achieving four essential outcomes needed to produce effective instructors. Important recommendations include the implementation of a codified validation process. This interpretive analysis stems from independent research and is supported by the findings of previous research on faculty development and pedagogy. Utilization of this information provides insight on what an optimal transitional program would entail and how to best facilitate professionals into effective instructors.

Executive Summary

The purpose of this paper is to assess the common components of USMA’s New Instructor Programs (NIPs), which are often referred to as either a Faculty Development Workshop (FDW) or New Instructor Training (NIT), and identify the best practices across the Academy so as to better inform future NIPs. In other words, this paper attempts to identify those components of a NIP that are germane to all departments and disciplines. Because the faculty at West Point is predominantly military, the study asks the question, “How do we effectively transition professional ‘doers’ into professional instructors?” This study identifies these components and answers that question through surveys and participant studies incorporating all those who have run these NIPs. The expansive data compiled for this study on NIPs is organized under the following six subheadings: 1) Goals and Outcomes; 2) Time and Resources; 3) Leadership 4) Methods of Instruction; 5) Validation and Retraining; and 6) Best Practices. This study also includes data from the Army Basic Instructor Course (ABIC) to serve as a baseline.

This study revealed that USMA’s departmental NIPs share the same general goals but each have their own specialized secondary goals. All USMA NIPs focus on some type of reception to West Point that supplements the garrison program. Other pervasive goals are conducting an orientation to the specific department and how to teach with respect to a specific discipline or domain.

Similar to the Army and West Point’s strategy on developing leaders, this study organizes these findings in the form of “outcomes” along with recommendations on how to properly evaluate and assess these outcomes. This study recommends four outcomes that will provide focus for future NIPs and guide faculty through the developmental process while providing the flexibility to achieve these outcomes using a variety of methods. Concisely speaking, the four
desired outcomes for a NIP should be that a NI will: 1) Possess the specialized knowledge required in subject matter discipline; 2) Facilitate effective training and education in a diverse learning environment; 3) Integrate all available resources necessary to enhance the learning process; 4) Demonstrate commitment to the role of a team member within the organizational culture.

This study reveals significant variance regarding the time and resources that programs commit to their NIP and who facilitates the program for NIs. The duration of these programs range from two days up to six weeks and have diverse topical focuses. Some NIPs entail a department-wide effort to develop NIs whereas others task an individual to provide a bare-bones orientation course.

The decision for who runs a NIP and the degree to which senior leadership is involved in NIP are telling factors about their efficacy. Although it is usually a field-grade officer, there is an importance distinction between whether it is a junior rotator or a senior faculty member that serves as the NIP facilitator. Also a greater degree of senior leadership involvement tended to instill a greater degree of formalization that often equated to a stronger validation process.

Although methods of instruction varied due to differing departmental focuses, there was a ubiquitous consistency in the use of practice teaches to foster faculty development. Repeated practice afforded NIs the opportunity to familiarize themselves with effective ways to teach for their respective department. Practice teaches along with a few other methods tailored to specific disciplines provided a viable means for transitioning inexperienced professionals into effective instructors.

Most departments had formal or informal means of validation for NIs and a process to retrain those whose performance proved lacking. Although the exact ways of validating NI, and retraining them if necessary, were not necessarily important to the efficacy of a NIP, the great degree of emphasis placed on the validation/retraining processes equated to a higher pedigree of NI. Indeed an emphasis on such processes is one of the best practices that this paper presents in order to highlight ways to improve future NIPs.

This study provides a compellation of best practices observed across fifteen USMA institutions and ABIC. Examples of best practices include having a fixed schedule that affords predictability and conducting a major off-site team-building exercise like a Gettysburg Staff Ride. A third best practice is the use of grading seminars by which NI practice honing their ability to grade both fairly and with precision. These three aforementioned examples are joined by many additional best practices discussed later. To better inform this study, this paper also discusses best practices from military courses outside of USMA and civilian institutions that have programs similar to USMA’s NIPs.

Although it is likely that all NIPs will seek to accomplish all the recommended outcomes, this study has no intention of producing an authoritative list of outcomes that must be achieved. Instead this study advocates the four central outcomes that will enable a NI to succeed in their new role.

The most fundamental points that this study finds and are reiterated in our conclusion are:

Each department has individual and independent goals but should nevertheless strive to achieve the four broad outcomes that pertain to all developmental organizations at USMA. An effective way to accomplish these four outcomes is to conduct the best practices in a manner which also achieves organizational goals. For this to occur in an optimal fashion, sufficient time (4-6 weeks) must be allocated. A reinforcing mechanism to
facilitate efficacious NIPs is to increase or, in the case of already involved departments, maintain the degree of departmental senior leadership involvement. Although most departments conduct informal and incremental validation processes that include at least three evaluated teaching sessions, this study recommends an Academy-wide effort to implement processes in better keeping with the ABIC model.

Introduction

West Point’s faculty plays an instrumental role in fulfilling USMA’s mission to develop its cadets into future Army leaders. USMA selects its instructors, who serve as trainers and/or educators, from across the Army and other academic institutions based upon multiple factors. While a principal consideration for selecting instructors is their professional contributions to their particular field, another critical factor is their demonstrated potential to facilitate the learning and developmental experiences that contribute to achieving the Academy’s mission. Unfortunately, there is not necessarily a correlation between an individual possessing professional experience and the ability to foster effective cadet learning. Therefore it is essential that USMA develops its incoming faculty in a manner that ensures they become effective instructors – both in general and for the specific field for which they will instruct cadets.

In recognition of the important link between faculty development and cadet development, USMA leaders have designed and implemented programs for incoming faculty in all developmental programs (academic, military, physical, and character). In general, the most formalized of these programs occur in USMA’s thirteen academic departments. Nevertheless, as this study reveals, additional departments under the United States Corps of Cadets (USCC) have similar programs that satisfy instructor development for new arrivals that will conduct cadet development in military, physical, and character domains. The study also revealed the ways in which prerequisites and program requirements, as well as special relationships with functional areas, are determinative of how a NIP is structured. Typically, there was a correlation between more rigorous or academically demanding departmental prerequisites and the degree to which a NIP was structured. Functional area relationships were more influential among STEM departments, although it was unclear how these pervasive relationships impacted NIPs overall.

While faculty development is an ongoing process that continues throughout an instructor’s time at USMA, the initial socialization process each faculty member undergoes before they begin to train or teach cadets is of utmost importance. Soon after arriving to their USMA assignments, provided that they arrive during the early to mid-summer, new faculty members or New Instructor (NI) enter into their department’s New Instructor Program (NIP). These NIPs, whether referred to as NIT or FDW facilitate the initial transition from “professional doers” into “effective instructors” and create the foundation that undergirds the entire developmental process. Each of the thirteen academic departments as well as all of the USCC programs run NIPs within their department and have as many as five subsidiary NIP programs. Analysis of those NIPs revealed the ways in which prerequisites and program requirements, as well as special relationships with functional areas, are determinative of how a NIP is structured. Typically, there was a correlation between more rigorous or academically demanding departmental prerequisites and the degree to which a NIP was structured. Functional area relationships were more influential among STEM departments, although it was unclear how these pervasive relationships impacted NIPs overall. Despite the variety of course material in
each NIP, several common themes emerge from each of these programs. As a helpful baseline, this study also includes data from the Army Basic Instructor Course (ABIC).

In order to best explore these themes, this paper is organized into the following six subheadings: 1) Goals and Outcomes; 2) Time and Resources; 3) Leadership 4) Methods of Instruction; 5) Validation and Retraining; and 6) Best Practices. In analyzing NIPs and organizing the information accumulated into these headings, it becomes easy to identify the critical trends throughout the NIPs at USMA. As emphasized in the executive summary, the concluding two categories (Best Practices and Conclusion) provide the critical takeaways that will best inform institutional policy for enacting a most efficacious process for transitioning professional doers into professional instructors. The four desired outcomes for a NIP should be that a NI: 1) Possess the specialized knowledge required in subject matter discipline; 2) Facilitate effective training and education in a diverse learning environment; 3) Integrate all available resources necessary to enhance the learning process; 4) Demonstrate commitment to the role of a team member within the organizational culture.

**Goals and Outcomes**

Although not every program studied had explicit goals, each department had a clear vision of the desired outcomes for each NI at the completion of the NIP. Whether departments refer to these programs as New Instructor Training (NIT), Faculty Development Workshops (FDW), Instructor Summer Workshops (ISW), etc., all programs combined both training and education as part of the curriculum. Each department also took an outcomes-based approach in preparing instructors. This approach is in line with the Army Leader Development Strategy as well as the West Point Leader Development System, the latter of which is the system USMA uses to accomplish its mission (WPLDS, 2015).

When interviewing the NIP directors for each department, several commonalities emerged. NIP outcomes varied across the fifteen departments based on the specific needs of the department, but we were able to identify themes that were generalizable to every department. After gathering data from all departments, we found that each department goal could be categorized under four distinct outcomes. Before discussing these outcomes, it is necessary to further elaborate on the concept of outcomes-based training and education.

Focusing each NIP on specific outcomes rather than training objectives provides three clear benefits for these programs. First, an outcomes-based approach in NIPs provides the broader purpose to training and education in each program. This better aligns NIP outcomes with WPLDS outcomes across all departments. Similar to WPLDS, this allows these programs to remain developmental in focus rather than establishing a minimum standard of performance required for each NI. Ultimately, aligning the way we develop instructors with the way we develop cadets improves the overall learning and development experience of the cadets. Second, it provides maximum flexibility to each department in achieving these outcomes in a manner that best suits their departmental needs for NIs. The outcomes-based approach focuses more on the totality of individual performance where the accomplishment of the overall mission is more important than the procedures (Asymmetric Warfare Group, n.d.). Shared, superordinate outcomes encourage collaborative efforts amongst all departments rather than potentially malicious competitive efforts. Thus, it will in turn create more flexible and adaptable instructors that are more willing to take risk, share ideas, adjust to student needs, and adapt to changes in a complex and ambiguous environment. This also allows departments to communicate standards of excellence in teaching that have a shared meaning across the Academy. Third, it provides
continuous focus on the overall outcome rather than the limitations of completing an exhaustive list of performance objectives. Each NIP may still maintain their own departmental outcomes based on the unique needs of the department. Departments are then able to determine the indicators that demonstrate success across the three learning domains. The true measure of effectiveness cannot be determined until the NI begins actual in-class instruction with cadets. However, indicators can be used toward the development of self-efficacy. This self-efficacy serves as the foundation for effective instructor performance which is further manifested through cadet learning. For these reasons, we have developed four specific outcomes that our generalizable to all departments across West Point. These outcomes specify what each NI should be and should be able to do.

Upon completion of a NIP, NIs will:

- **Possess the specialized knowledge required in subject matter discipline.**
- **Facilitate effective training and education in a diverse learning environment.**
- **Integrate all available resources necessary to enhance the learning process.**
- **Demonstrate commitment to the role of a team member within the organizational culture.**

In order to assist departments in developing their own indicators towards each outcome, further elaboration is needed. In order to clarify these outcomes, we provide definitions of each outcome and describe the methodology used to develop each of these outcomes below.

1. **Possess the specialized knowledge required in subject matter discipline.**

   Being able to instruct others in any subject requires possession of some advanced-level knowledge of the subject (Fink, 2008). This serves as one of the most essential “inputs” for the entire education system. Consistent with the USMA mission, this knowledge serves as the foundation to develop instructors capable of educating, training, and inspiring cadets.

   USMA does a great deal to ensure its instructors are capable of effective classroom facilitation prior to their arrival at the Academy. Every department requires incoming instructors to possess an advanced degree (usually related to the courses taught in the department) and/or professional experience related to the subject they will instruct. Only one department requires NIs to demonstrate a minimum level of proficiency in their future course before beginning their NIP. Incoming military faculty are expected to have successfully completed their key development assignment(s) before beginning their NIP. Through practice teach sessions, NIs have the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to relate these prior experiences to classroom instruction. However, in some departments, these experiences are insufficient and more specialized training and education is required.

   In subjects where an NI’s advanced degree and professional experience do not relate directly to the material of the course they will teach, the NIP incorporates additional training and education towards the outcomes of the course. This is much more common in STEM courses. Whereas most courses focus model/practice teach sessions on a few select lessons, at least five of the courses will take NIs through the entire 40-lesson course, to include the administration of all tests/quizzes. Completion of an entire course during NIP often requires a great deal more lesson preparation outside of class than found in other NIPs. Across the fifteen NIPs, the efforts placed in pursuit of this outcome varies greatly. However, expert knowledge in a particular discipline
does not equate to understanding of one’s own teaching ability or effectiveness in facilitating the learning process.

2. **Facilitate effective training and education in a diverse learning environment.**

   A few departments refer to this second outcome as being “prepared to teach” or the ability to “achieve teaching excellence”. This outcome extends far beyond these concepts as it is the primary outcome of the entire teaching process. The departments in this study each recognize that the process of learning in the classroom is not simply a “transmission of knowledge” from one individual to others. Accordingly, all fifteen departments spend a great deal of time on pedagogical instruction during their NIP. The majority of NIPs begin with a three- to ten-day period dedicated to pedagogical instruction while a select few incorporate pedagogy throughout the duration of the entire course. To better understand the focus in this pedagogical instruction, we further define this outcome as consisting of four components: Creation of a Positive Learning Environment; Lesson Design and Preparation; Generating Feedback; Evaluating and Assessing Understanding.

- **Creation of a positive learning environment.**

   The learning environment is more than just a physical location. It describes the entire context in which students learn and often extends beyond the classroom. Students within a learning environment share a common purpose that provides direction and motivation for the students’ learning and development. In their work towards common goals, students benefit more from efforts that are collaborative rather than competitive (Chickering, 1991). This type of environment is necessary to inspire students to perform at their highest potential towards achievement of individual, group, and institutional goals. As such, it is essential that instructors understand their unique roles in fostering this environment.

   Institutions provide this context through the creation of individual, group, and institutional goals along with policies that support these goals. USMA accomplishes this through the West Point Development System (WPLDS). Under WPLDS, the term “leader development environment” is synonymous with the concept of the learning environment. The WPLDS Handbook states that all staff and faculty “have a role in fostering a positive developmental environment and maintaining developmental experiences that contribute to achieving [West Point’s] mission” (WPLDS, 2015). Appropriately, every reviewed program in our study placed emphasis on the instructor’s role in supporting this aspect of WPLDS. This is accomplished through a constant focus on the WPLDS outcomes, consistent embodiment and enforcement of Academy standards by staff and faculty, and by viewing every interaction with cadets as a learning/developmental opportunity. Upon completion of each NIP, instructors are able to effectively foster this learning environment which “inspires all to perform to their highest potential” (WPLDS, 2015).
Lesson Design and Lesson Preparation.

While every interaction with students is a potential learning opportunity, instructors must place special attention on planned interactions. This is especially true for the learning experience that occurs within the physical and time boundaries of the classroom. Instructors must be purposeful in the design of each lesson to ensure that these learning experiences are properly focused towards the achievement of lesson goals/objectives. Because the most effective instruction is student-focused, instructors must have a general understanding of the various learning styles they may encounter and, furthermore, possess the pedagogical techniques necessary to adapt to multiple learning styles. Accommodation of diverse learning styles in one’s lesson design may also incorporate out-of-class preparation activities (reading, lectures, lab exercises, etc.) that contribute to each student’s understanding of the course material. Proper assessment of students’ preferred learning styles incorporated with an understanding of the three learning domains (Bloom et al, 1956) enables instructors to design learning activities which optimize student potential in achieving lesson goals and objectives.

Proper preparation for each class is the link between effective lesson design and the effective execution of the learning experience. In the student-oriented classroom, well-prepared instructors are better able to assess and react to the needs of the student. Effective instructors place a great deal of consideration of preparation of the classroom, which serves as the physical vessel for the learning experience. These instructors must also consider time management for planned interactions with students while maintaining flexibility in their allocation of time on task. The emphasis on time on task for instructors and students alike is a critical factor to facilitate the learning process, both in and out of the classroom. Thorough preparation on lesson material also provides the instructor broader understanding of the material. As a result, instructors are better prepared to answer questions, facilitate classroom discussion, and encourage active student participation in the learning process.

All departments surveyed in this study provided NIs pedagogical instruction on lesson design as well as the opportunity to design and prepare their own lesson. In most cases, lesson design and preparation was an individual endeavor. However, at least one department implemented a mentorship approach to the process. In pedagogical instruction, all but two of the departments incorporated lessons on accommodating learning styles and Bloom’s taxonomy on learning domains. Each NIP also dedicated time to the preparation of the physical classroom space. Every department also stated that effective time management was an outcome of their NIP. Additionally, to better familiarize NIs with these boundaries, all departments gave NIs at least one opportunity to design a lesson and facilitate the entire 55-minute classroom experience.

Common to all NIPs is a form of department-specific standardization in lesson design. The majority of departments encouraged an outcomes-based approach. In addition to lesson
outcomes, some departments even gave instructors responsibility for specific departmental or student-oriented goals for consideration in their lesson design. This approach to lesson design allows instructors maximum flexibility in the pedagogical methods they incorporate in learning activities to reach lesson goals/outcomes. Similar to WPLDS, both instructors and students are held accountable for success in each outcome. The two exceptions to the use of this approach were departments which generally focus on training particular skills and in subjects in which a “best practice” approach has been identified. Rather than standardizing lesson design based on outcomes, this approach standardizes based on the process. Using this approach, NIPs tended to value consistency over flexibility throughout the learning process.

- Generating Feedback.

Classroom feedback from students provides useful insights on students’ learning as well as the effectiveness of the instructor’s approach (Angelo, 1993). Feedback in this setting occurs continuously and in multiple forms. If properly monitored, instructors can use this feedback to adjust their approach in the learning process and ultimately to better serve the needs of the students. For these reasons, it is imperative that instructors are not just passive recipients of feedback but that they are actively generating feedback based on lesson outcomes and objectives.

The first major form of feedback in the classroom comes from classroom dialogue. The ability to generate successful classroom dialogue largely relies on the success of the two previously discussed components of the superordinate outcome. Naturally, if students are more engaged with the course material, they will be more active in the learning process. However, instructors must be prepared to elicit student participation by encouraging open dialogue and through the implementation of effective questioning techniques. Questioning should be used to reengage student interest, to review previously covered topics, and to provide the opportunity for student to express opinions or attitudes in relation to the lesson material (Cotton, 1988).

Instructor feedback to the student can promote further dialogue from the students in a continuous “feedback look” (Angelo, 1993). This includes instructor feedback delivered through nonverbal communication as well.

The second major type of feedback comes from a variety of Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs). Instructors may design activities in the classroom to provide short-term feedback on the learning process. These can be simple activities such as asking students to submit anonymous written feedback on a particular lesson. Classroom tests, including quizzes and Written Partial Reviews (WPRs), are a more formalized version of collecting this feedback. When designing and implementing tests, these tests should be valid (measures what syllabus says it measures), reliable (accurate and consistent), and objective (free from instructor opinion or bias). In cases where there is a need to accurately assess individual achievement and separate the top performers from the bottom, tests should also be discriminatory.

Every one of the fifteen NIPs surveyed in this study introduced NIs to various techniques for generating student feedback and rejected the concept of the purely lecture based classroom. This was apparent in comments from course directors that NIs should be able to “increase student engagement with the course material” or to enable students to “find their inspirational voice” in the classroom. While some departments focused their pedagogical courses on effective questioning and the introduction of CATs, most departments incorporated discussion of these topics into the model and practice teaching sessions. In at least two departments, NIs were required to take all quizzes and WPRs from the previous semester with group discussion around effective test questions. In each department, discussions on the generated feedback eventually
leads to the next component of this outcome.

- **Evaluating and Assessing Understanding.**
  
  More important than the collection of generated feedback is the ability to capitalize on this feedback. This requires the proper interpretation of this feedback. In other words, instructors must be able to use feedback as an indicator of how well students are learning and developing relative to desired outcomes. Effective observation of classroom dialogue along with the implementation of questioning, CATs, and tests can assist instructors in better assessing learning styles and gaps in understanding of lesson objectives across the three domains. Tests that are comprehensive in nature allow instructors to identify particular areas that may require revisiting. Assessment on this feedback should drive the instructor’s approach in meeting both lesson and course objectives. It also gives instructors the ability to “close the feedback loop” by communicating to students the necessary direction following the assessment process (Angelo, 1993).

  All of the 15 NIPs that incorporated discussions on generating feedback also included discussion on evaluating and assessing the students’ understanding using this feedback. Generally, these components were both addressed in the same discussion. In roughly a third of the programs, senior faculty served as members of a “mock classroom” to assess instructors’ ability to react to common student questions and “adjust their lesson on the fly” according to their assessment. No less than five NIPs included more formalized methods of evaluating and assessing understanding through grading exercises. These grading exercises also enabled NIs to reflect on how to properly discriminate the high performers from those in need of more intervention in the learning process. Together, these discussions and grading exercises elucidate the significant impact these evaluations and assessments potentially have on an instructor’s approach in the learning process.

3. **Integrate all available resources necessary to enhance the learning process.**

  While some may view incorporating resources into classroom instruction as a necessary component of pedagogical instruction, the distinction between this outcome and the previous is significant. Training aids and technology are meant to enhance or transform, not supplant, existing pedagogical methods. It is common for instructors (especially inexperienced ones) to initially respond to advances in pedagogical resources with hesitance towards the time commitment, distrust in the reliance of new technology, and fear of appearing incompetent (Rutherford, 2002, p. 133). Keeping these common responses in mind, resources should be introduced in a gradual manner when instructors already have gained some basic level of comfort with pedagogical fundamentals. Additionally, it is important to keep in mind that the resources introduced into a lesson should only be added...
with respect to student learning styles or when the identified best way to present a class is through the use of a particular training aid/technology.

All of the departments provide at least a single lesson on the training aids common to each classroom. This includes the setup of the computer/projector, use of online tools such as Blackboard and the Academy Management System (AMS), and use of the blackboard/whiteboard (some departments even provide specific instruction on the use of colored chalk and “board design”). Other common tools introduced in multiple NIPs include iPads/iBooks, Apple TV, and the Share Drive.

Recognizing that technology is multifaceted, all NIPs dedicate some time toward introducing NIs to the department facilities and resources (labs, libraries, research centers, simulation centers, video equipment, etc.). For courses that utilize special technology in laboratory exercises, most of the departments chose to introduce this technology outside of the NIP closer in time to the actual execution of the laboratory exercise. This allows them to dedicate more time to focus on training on these resources without taking away from much needed practice time for NIs. Because the introduction of new technology often involves an emotional response, it is essential to ease instructors into the use of these resources. Ultimately, this will encourage instructors to take more risks to facilitate the learning process rather than resisting any change efforts.

Although each department clearly valued the potential impact of training aids and technology on the learning process, each NIP director discussed hazards in the overreliance on these resources. For example, some NIP directors discussed problems with designing lessons around new technology while NIs were still getting comfortable with new material. Others talked about placing value on the ability to instruct in any setting or the ability to carry on a lesson when technology fails. In each case, the introduction of these resources was secondary to sound pedagogical skills and abilities. All NIP directors understood that the addition of more resources does not always equate to better learning, further justifying why we chose to make this a separate outcome.

4. Demonstrate commitment to the role of a team member within the organizational culture.

Incoming faculty members, not just at West Point but at all institutes of higher education become members of that organization’s culture. Edgar Schein (a preeminent scholar in the study of organizational culture) explains in his definition of culture that the shared basic assumptions that exist within a group are “taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” (Schein, 2004, p. 17). Viewing oneself as a member of a team helps NIs acknowledge that they are not merely a casual bystander and observer of that culture. Rather, they are active members who share in the culture with other members of the team and pass the important aspects of culture on to future members.

The speed and effectiveness of this process of transition determines employee loyalty, commitment to the mission, productivity, cooperation, and level of comfort (Fink, 1992). These aspects all contribute to an instructors’ perceived level of academic freedom which impacts instructors’ willingness to take risks and to try various instruction techniques. With this in mind, examination of an organization through a cultural viewpoint proves an effective method to analyze those elements of NIPs that ultimately affect student learning. For these reasons, departments must carefully consider how each component of their NIPs contribute to this outcome.
While it seems that this transition of NIs into a new culture is best described as a socialization process, our choice of words for this outcome is deliberate. Although the transition process of new faculty to West Point includes all of the defining characteristics of a socialization process, we avoided using the term “socialization” in our outcome. This is because the NIP directors largely avoided using this term to describe their own programs. In fact, only one department described their NIP as a “deliberate socialization process” incorporating NIs, current faculty, and their families. (Also important to note is that less than half of the departments incorporate families into this socialization process). However, every department incorporated “team building” as either an explicit or implicit component of their NIP. NIP directors described the instructors in their department as a “team” with NIs as new members, stressed the importance of commitment to this team and its goals, and/or deliberately incorporated team-building events into their NIP. The concept of socialization provides an apt description of the transition process for NIs at West Point, however, the concept of being a member of a team carried more meaning with all those interviewed.

All departments recognize the unique aspects of West Point culture (or “quirks” as one department described them) and the importance of introducing NIs to this culture through NIPs. Additionally, departments recognize that this process must be tailored towards the needs of the NI population. For incoming military faculty, it is likely that they have never worked in an academic environment before. Likewise, it is likely that civilian faculty have never worked in a military environment before. It is important that these experiences are designed to accommodate the diverse backgrounds of the incoming faculty.

NIPs most commonly introduced NIs to the unique aspects of West Point’s culture through classroom instruction and West Point tours. The aspects of West Point’s culture most commonly covered in classroom instruction included the mission/strategic plan of USMA, WPLDS, the Cadet Honor Code, United States Corps of Cadets (USCC) policies, and the Cadet Schedule (commonly referred to as “Buff” cards). Some NIPs effectively incorporated more interdisciplinary approaches to these lessons by enlisting “guest speakers” from other departments such as Center for Faculty Excellence (CFE), Center for Enhanced Performance (CEP), Simon Center for Professional Military Ethic (SCPME), and/or Tactical Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers from the Brigade Tactical Department (BTD). Tours of West Point in NIPs most commonly visited the library and Arvin Gym, sometime led from someone outside the department as well. Other departments take advantage of West Point’s resource to facilitate team-building events. This includes attendance at a sporting event, urban land navigation courses, completion of the Leader Reaction Course (LRC), or a game at the local bowling alley. When designed to foster commitment in this team and executed properly, NIP directors commented on the positive influence these experiences had on their department’s performance and the experience of the cadets.

In a 2012 study on NIPs at West Point, Dr. (Colonel) Holly West collected data on the socialization processes that occurred at the academy- and departmental-level programs. In her study, completed in partial fulfillment of a PhD, she emphasizes the demonstrated need for a
deliberate socialization process at West Point as the Academy receives approximately 150 new faculty members each year (p. 75). She concludes with her assessment that the socialization practices in West Point NIPs are effective in promoting “commitment to the mission and passion for teaching” which promotes the fostering of a “continuous learning environment” (p. 177). Within the three departments that she observed, she noted highly collaborative efforts and the formation of learning communities (p. 178). However, she also noted apparent boundaries that were created through the socialization process that occurred during NIP. Within departments, there was little interaction or collaboration across divisions let alone across departmental boundaries (p. 184). She noted elements of each department that contributed to this lack of collaboration such as a “culture of elitism” (p. 110) or a narrow definition of the concept of a “team” (p. 103). She contributed these factors largely to a lack of Academy-wide synchronization and consistency in messages (p. 174) that permeate all levels of the socialization process. A deliberate and consistent socialization process incorporating all levels of the institute is key in producing a learning community amongst the staff and faculty and, subsequently, developing a learning organization and learning environment. This further justifies the implementation of a superordinate outcome which requires cooperation from all departments and NIPs. At West Point, when discussing NIs’ role as a member of the team, this team cannot be limited to their “circle of friends” or the other members of their department. In support of West Point’s mission, each instructor plays a key role in the “developing leaders of character for a lifetime of service to the Army and the Nation” (WPLDS, 2015). In order to develop these essential learning environments, NIs must understand their role in the higher level systems of West Point as well as the Army as they are members of this larger team as well. This superordinate outcome provides the broader purpose to assist each department’s NIP foster NI commitment towards all of these teams.

Time and Resources

Providing new teachers, instructors and coaches with the resources necessary to accomplish their assigned tasks is essential to their development as educators. In resourcing a NIP, a department provides its NIP leaders with the requisite time, personnel, physical space and materials to facilitate an effective program that yields confident, skilled instructors capable meeting the department’s mission.

Time is one of the most valuable resources at any institution but especially at USMA. Above all other resources, time has been identified as the most difficult to produce and least flexible when considered at all echelons of a department’s or institution’s hierarchy. Based on Manning cycles associated with departing faculty and the academic calendar, NIs primarily arrive at the beginning of the summer approximately eight to ten weeks prior to the first day of fall semester classes. Within this time constraint, departments elect to reserve anywhere from four to six weeks for their NIP. Of the departments surveyed, the average program was 5 weeks in duration while five departments conducted six-week NIPs and three departments conducted four-week NIPs. These weeks entailed approximately 30- to 40-hour of programmed time per week. For the remaining time during the summer, most departments allow their NIs to complete their move to the area, settle their families, participate in cadet summer training (CST), and optionally take a small amount of leave before they begin teaching in the fall semester if their schedule allows. Departments make a deliberate effort in making their NIP time scheduling...
flexible enough to allow for the completion of competing institutional tasks and requirements to maximize the efficient use of time. The best programs ensure that schedules are coordinated so that the mandatory briefs and CST events fall into appropriate blocks of instruction and transitions are transparent to those in the program. Only a few departments have ill-defined schedules that are characterized by ad-hoc planning due to the operational tempo imposed on them during the summer months. To compensate, they execute decentralized NIP programs with a limited number of personnel and do the best they can with their NIs, the majority of whom are also consumed with summer details. Additionally, the few newcomers who arrive off-cycle between the fall and spring semesters are normally put through an abbreviated NIP, if any formal instruction due to the short, two-week gap between semesters.

Human resources is another key aspect of any NIP. Leadership dedicated to a department’s NIP gives some insight into how much value that department invests in the program. Most NIPs are run by a senior faculty member who is an academy professor or has substantial longevity within the department. This leader is augmented by one to two additional NIP mentors who generally have a key stake in the course or courses that the NIs will be teaching in their first semester. A model that some departments use it to have one NIP mentor who is entering their third year of teaching and another NIP mentor who is entering their second year of teaching and will assist with NIP the following year. This allows for consistent quality with a deliberate turnover to enable a high-quality program that is not stagnant in its approach. Beyond dedicated personnel for the entirety of NIP, many programs will have current faculty members come to the NIP for a day or two to give an example teaching sessions, offer insight into how the department functions as well as gradually introduced the NIs to other members of the department’s faculty. Some of the better resourced NIPs have as many as fifteen instructors that interact with their NIs during various points of the program. Additionally, many departments coordinate with external centers and agencies for briefs that introduce their NIs to academy-wide resources that are available to them. These briefs normally involve one to two members from within the department (Library, CEP, CFE) that perform a 30-minute to one hour brief regarding the resources that they can provide for all instructors.

Lastly, physical space and teaching materials organized by each department directly affects the quality of the NIP they execute. Fortunately at USMA, most summer semester activity is relegated to a small portion of the student body allowing for the vast majority of classrooms to be available for NIPs. This allows the NIP to be conducted in an environment that will closely match what the NIs will encounter upon commencement of their first semester of teaching. While less critical for humanities disciplines whose classes can be performed at a variety of venues without a change in class format, most STEM disciplines ensure that their laboratory spaces are available for use during NIP. This allows NIs to get hands on with the exact exercises they will perform during the academic year so that they will be able to execute their classes with a confident level of proficiency. In conjunction with the reservation of physical space, classroom, and instruction materials are another non-trivial resource that needs to be deliberately coordinated. While less stringent for those disciplines that only require blackboard or whiteboard space, those disciplines that required laboratory exercises will order the appropriate equipment and materials months in advance of their NIP to ensure that their training can be executed to standard in the tight time frame stipulated for their NIP. Other materials that require deliberate prior coordination are course and pedagogical textbooks as well as welcome packets that cover some of the more esoteric institutional requirements. As an
additional resource, some departments coordinate social off-site events that are generally funded within department or personal budgets.

While somewhat simple and mundane, properly resourcing a NIP with the appropriate allocation of time, personnel, physical space, and materials is a non-trivial event that requires significant prior coordination. The amount of resources directly speaks to the priority that a department places on the quality of NI development.

Leadership

Despite the apparent need for NIPs, these programs are absent from many of the nation’s top colleges and universities. Although some of these institutes have made significant efforts in the past to correct the institutional imbalance between research and teaching (Rimer, 2007), these initiatives have yet to lead to the implementation of these much needed programs. This shortcoming can be contributed to several factors. At top universities, instructors are often hired based on research and publication (and, thus, ability to bring in money to the institute) and not on their ability to teach. This is best reflected in the list of schools that identify themselves as “research institutes” rather than “teaching institutes” (Carnegie Classifications of Institutes of Higher Learning, 2016). Many are often hesitant to question the teaching practices of these individuals based on the concept of academic freedom and because these professionals are expected to be “authorities of their discipline” (Cross, 1987). Additionally, the most recent data on university employment released in 2014 indicates that more than three-quarters of all university faculty are part-time, adjunct professors (Curtis, 2011). As part-time employees, colleges and universities have little incentive to invest time and resources into their pedagogical development.

At the beginning of our research into these programs, we began asking the question as to why these schools, despite acknowledging the value of pedagogical instruction, have failed to implement these programs. According to one professor of adult learning and leadership at a top Ivy League institution, the absence of these programs at top institutions of higher education stems from one major shortcoming: Leadership.

This shortcoming in many institutes helps to explain why West Point, an institute that places high value on leadership, has experienced such success in its pedagogical efforts and student-oriented focus. The Princeton Review has consistently placed West Point at the top of its list for “Most Accessible Professors” for the past few years (Princeton Review, 2015). Currently at West Point, each of the 13 Academic Departments; Department of Military Instruction; and Department of Physical Education have implemented their own customized NIP. Common to each program was the focus of training and education of NIs prior to their first class of instructing cadets. As we progressed in our research, it became clear that leadership was also the decisive factor in the most successful NIPs.

Throughout our review of NIPs at West Point, we identified the influence of senior department leadership at every level. Goals/outcomes for each NIP were, at a minimum, reviewed by department directors before the commencement of each NIP. Academy Professors ran nine of the fifteen NIPs while three NIPs involved some level of oversight by a program
director or Academy Professor. In the remaining three NIPs, the NIP director was either appointed by a program director or reported directly to the program director/department director on the readiness level of the NIs upon completion. Although the NIP director/facilitator is usually a field-grade officer, an important distinction is whether it is a junior rotator or a senior faculty member that serves as the NIP facilitator. One of the most influential factors for the NIP leadership selection was the specific requirements of that department. In NIPs with junior-level directors, there were often comments surrounding the issue of “responsibility without authority,” especially in relationship to senior or civilian NIs. In these cases, senior-level involvement was necessary to resolve the issues. Although we will discuss some of the potential pitfalls related to the lack of leader involvement in NIPs, leader involvement in every NIP was one of the most telling indicators of the program’s eventual success.

**Methods of Instruction**

All but one of the departments surveyed performed methods of instruction in a similar manner and covered the following topics in varying proportions: pedagogical instruction; course-specific material instruction through practice teaching; and institutional administrative processes and socialization. The remaining department utilizes an apprenticeship model for their NIs based on the unique mission of their department that still addresses these core topics.

Pedagogy involves a systematic attempt to describe a series of effective teaching practices and the theory behind why they work. Eight departments explicitly devote an average of three days of lecture and study to this subject separate from the study of their specific discipline; some departments devote as few as one day while one department devotes a full five days to this topic. One department mixes the discussion of pedagogical concepts within the course-specific material instruction and practice teaching sessions as precursors to the material of the day. Those departments that elect to devote a specific block to pedagogy normally perform it at the very beginning of their NIP as a precursor to their discipline-specific material. The remaining five departments that fall into this categorization do not formally introduce or discuss the discipline of pedagogy; however, they will informally address its core concepts by exposing their NIs to various teaching styles from both experienced and new instructors and encourage NIs to pick a style with which they will be effective.

The bulk of most departments’ NIPs are spent on course-specific material instruction whose centerpiece was practice teaching sessions. After spending anywhere from a week or two on various introductory and administrative sessions, all departments eventually will break their NIs into groups based on what course they will be teaching their first semester and proceed to progress through some portion of that course’s material. This training model is possible because the vast majority of NIs will teach “core courses,” which have large enrollments that require a correspondingly large number of instructors teaching the same material. A common practice
across departments is for the instructor leading the NIP or another experienced faculty member presenting to teach a full class session to provide an example demonstration of an effective and polished teaching style. One department explicitly has their Department Head teach the first example lesson to emphasize the importance of teaching to their NIs while other departments have anywhere from three to four example teaches from experienced instructors spaced throughout their NIP to expose their NIs to a wide variety of teaching styles. While techniques vary, most departments will start from the beginning of their respective courses and progress sequentially through the material expecting NIs to study the topics the night before class in a manner similar to their future students before either giving a practice teaching session or observing one as a mock student and providing feedback. This model allows for NIs to attain a high working proficiency with the material as well as empathize with the cadets who will similarly be learning the material for the first time and help identify where they may struggle as they learn the material.

The number of practice teaches required by department averages around four for STEM departments and three for non-STEM departments; one department required six practice teaches while another department only required two 25-minute practice teaches (a standard class is 55 minutes). Key to each of these sessions was that all NIs along with supporting faculty would sit-in on each session to act as mock students that posed questions and then provided an after-action review (AAR) for the NI to ascertain the sustains and improves in their teaching style. This allows for each NI to not only improve their expertise and confidence in teaching but also provides them with the opportunity to think critically about the teaching style of others in a constructive manner. In addition to progressing through course material through practice teaching sessions, the majority of STEM departments have laboratory sessions associated with many of their classes and will devote significant portion of their NIP, sometimes up to an entire week, to go through their course’s laboratory exercises to ensure their NIs are able to perform them at an acceptable level of proficiency. Depending on the time allocated for their NIP and number of NIs to train, departments will cover anywhere from 25% to 100% of the course material during their program. In general, STEM departments are more likely to progress step-by-step through the entirety of their courses while humanities-based departments are more likely to only cover critical points in the course and allow their NIs to fill in the remainder of preparation on their own time.

Beyond pedagogy, course-specific material, and practice teaching, departments will round out their NIP with sessions on the institutional administrative processes inherit to USMA. Furthermore departments will conduct extensive socialization within their department. Instruction on administrative processes occurs either in either a large, all-inclusive session at the beginning of a NIP or, more commonly, in smaller, topic-based sessions interwoven with the large blocks on course-material and practice teaching. Topics in these sessions generally include a broad introduction to USMA’s mission and intent as an institution, how the department fits within that larger mission, how to navigate the Academy Management System (AMS), USMA’s IT system for managing all course and administrative information, how to function as a Department Academic Counselor (DAC), Officer Representative (OR) or Officer-in-Charge (OIC) for a NCAA or club activity, and additional military duty requirements. For socialization, most departments will hold social events the beginning, end, and sometimes in the middle of their NIP. Some departments conduct physical training-related activities throughout their NIP to build familiarity amongst their NIs as well as ensure the maintenance of Army standards. Some even conduct race-like scavenger hunts that focus on team-building in a friendly competitive
environment. Additionally, one department holds a “career day” where NIs meet with experienced members of the department discuss what research opportunities and career paths they can pursue while teaching at USMA.

The one outlier in this NIP model opts to use an apprenticeship model with their NIs given the unique mission of their department. This department is changed with a curriculum that involves evaluating specific tasks perform by cadets and thus requires a degree of subjective expertise to be effective. Because the expertise required cannot be achieved in a five- to six-week period while being simultaneously being tasked to facilitate a significant portion of Cadet Summer Training, this department keeps their NIs centralized for their first summer while having them observe department operations to allow them to accumulate institutional knowledge and become socialized within the department. Towards the end of the summer training period as most other departments NIPs are concluding, this department’s NIs are sent to their specific course committees to begin an apprenticeship on how to teach their course. Once assigned to their course, the NIs will begin an apprenticeship under a more experienced faculty member to assist then and learn how they teach their course. This apprenticeship period also includes instructional blocks on pedagogy and allows the NI to observe a large number of instructors other than their primary mentor. Over time, the NI will be evaluated and ultimately able to teach this class independently after having been certified as proficient by the department. While drastically different in execution than the other 14 departments studied, this department’s method of instruction aligns still covers the core topics of pedagogy, course-specific material instruction through practice teaching, and socialization covered by other departments.

Considering the methods of instruction described, several trends emerge. Firstly, pedagogical instruction serves to set the tone for most NIPs and triggers the NI to focus on broader concepts before attending to the specific details of their course. While three days seemed to be a consistent mark, the introduction of concepts and directing NIs to the appropriate references and resources seems to be the key step as most instructors have reached a point in their careers where they can effectively self-educate. Secondly, each department makes a deliberate effort to ensure that their NIs understand the environment which they are operating in and appreciate the larger mission of the institution. Because most NIs are only present for tours of two or three year, USMA does not have the luxury of allowing NIs to slowly figure how they fit into the larger picture. NIs are explicitly walked through what the department and academy expects of them as well as how to navigate through present bureaucracy so they can immediately become an effective member of the team. Lastly, practicing teaching is the cornerstone of all NIPs. As teaching has a large artistic component that is not readily quantified, practicing that art is the only reliable way to measure that performance and ensure that it meets the standards of the institution.

Validation and Retraining

All but one of departments surveyed lacked a formal or codified practice for validating or retraining their NIs during programs; however, several informal methods exist and generally occur during practice teaching sessions. The one department that did have a formal validation and retraining program made use of Army Basic Instructor Course (ABIC) certified instructors who evaluated select NIs through full practice lessons with mock student questions. Those departments with informal programs expected that the senior faculty member who supported their NI (or that person’s designated representative) would evaluate NIs during their practice teaches and provide additional coaching and instruction if the techniques of that NI were particularly lacking. In many departments, this validating person would be a program director.
with significant teaching experience; however, in six departments, the Department Head or Deputy Head would explicitly sit in one of each NIs practice teaches (generally the last one) to certify that the NI was prepared to teach in their department. Only one department indicated any record of having a NI fail this Department Head validation; other departments indicated that early intervention and coaching was their key to ensuring that their NIs were able to meet their department’s teaching standard at the end of their NIP. In the case of the one department that actually had a record of a NI not meeting the Department Head’s standard, the individual in questions was given remedial guidance in what the department expected of their teaching style and generally had numerous senior faculty members sit in on that NI’s class for the first few lessons to ensure the remediation had the desired effect.

The model of validation and informal training across the departments surveyed places a premium on experienced instructors intuition and a qualitative evaluation of performance. Overall, the model of evaluating NIs through three practice teaches, which is used in ABIC, is already modelled in the majority of NIPs. This would require very little change by the departments to model the ABIC standard of instructor validation. If a more formal model with specific evaluation criteria were used to measure and validate NI performance, it is likely that those measurements could help focus NIs on specific areas to improve as well as compare NI performance from year-to-year to see if there are any consistent trends within each department.

### Best Practices

This study provides a compellation of best practices observed across fifteen USMA departments and ABIC. In the process of compiling the survey data, the aforementioned departments highlighted what they thought were their best practices from their NIP. In addition to the self-identified best practices, this study’s authors applied their judgement to discern which practices had the most utility. As a result of the numerous differences that exist between each department, even among those with disciplinary similarity, certain pre-requisites, program requirements, and even special relationships with functional areas define the characteristics of a NIP. As a result, some best practices were specialized and had little application beyond the department that uses this technique. Nevertheless, they are identified as best practices because of the usefulness that this best practice has for a particular NIP. It is the best of the best practices that are discussed in the subsequent paragraphs. Pitfalls that NIPs should avoid are discussed in the concluding paragraph of this section.

Categorically speaking, the most important best practices are those that pertain to the structures and mechanisms that define a NIP. The biggest similarities between the seemingly most effective NIPs was that they had the greatest degree of formalized organization. Although far more rigorous in terms of subject matter and intellectual difficulty, these marquis NIPs mirrored the ABIC course in having schedules, content matter, goals, and end states that were not only well defined but published. Although all NIPs have the aforementioned components, it was the greater degree of products that helped the more codified NIPs build the requisite framework for a productive program.
This best manifestation of these products was a formalized reception binder that was not only comprehensive in nature but was also distributed to every NI. This codified packet (see Reception Binder Table of Contents - Right) not only helps with welcoming the NI but provides them easy access to much of the information needed for them to succeed as a first-year instructor in that department. While every department provides necessary information to their NIs, there were multiple departments that employed this best practice with a comprehensive reception binder. Like having a reception binder, a methodical and scrutinized schedule also provides significant benefit to NIs.

An efficacious schedule enables NI and their NIP to maximize developmental opportunities during the available time. To afford NIs an optimized NIP experience, one department embodied this best practice by maximizing all available time by scrutinizing all external time demands and often pushed back against organizations that impinged upon NI time unnecessarily. By protecting NI time, this department sought to guarantee as much preparatory time as possible. In the same vein, a different department likened their schedule outlook to ensuring their NI got the "maximum number of reps in the gym" prior to teaching. With an intensive load of practice teaches experienced, NIs going through the efficiently scheduled NIPs received a healthy degree of developmental experience.

Two other best practices that functioned along similar lines was the maintenance of a continuity book and in-depth involvement by the senior leadership. A continuity book that is periodically updated and handed off to the instructor who will run the next year’s NIP provides a readily accessible reference to ensure the quality of the workshop is maintained year to year. Additionally, in many departments senior leadership is involved throughout the entire workshop and even took the time to teach some of the seminars. This aggregate effect of greater continuity and command influence is that it fosters a superior execution of the NIP. In addition to the higher-level emphasis just explained, the ways in which NIPs organize their development of NI is also critical.

When it comes to the model for organizing a NIP, even departments with highly successful NIPs feel frequent tension between the demands of specialization and generalization. In the case of multiple departments, the need for specialization fosters NIPs subdividing their NIs into special groups to receive particular training. Most departments emphasize dedicated preparation for the first course that NIs will teach. In the case of one department especially, an extensive division of labor is not simply a sine qua non. To best develop the NIs, the department breaks down into committees that function as long-term master instructor teams for their "apprentice" NIs. This system paradoxically entails significant individual responsibility and fosters initiative amongst the NIs, who master the techniques by actively learning from the more experienced faculty. Conversely, there is one department who focuses on a combined NI
population for the NIP in spite of the substantial diversity among the classes the NIs will teach in their first year. Overall, specialized training seems to afford the most benefit for NIs who quickly ascertain their basic requirements and increasingly focus on the more demanding challenges that face them.

Effective efforts to socialize and indoctrinate NIs are best practices that enable NIs to cope with the challenges of being inexperienced instructors. Departments that excel at socializing allocate substantial amounts of time for social events and also dedicate time for introducing NIs to the systems and processes at USMA to ensure that their new faculty is familiarized with resources on the installation. One department even goes so far as to combine their pedagogical training with the socialization efforts by bringing in experts from several departments to foster interdisciplinary cooperation. Team-building sports and challenging events like an on-post “Amazing Race” occur in numerous departments and help foster unit culture and socialization. In addition to being a useful preparatory tool for teaching, a three-day Gettysburg staff ride functions as a culminating socialization event for one department with splendid teambuilding results. Efforts to socialize NIs and their families are a best practice that provide significant and long-lasting benefits toward providing stability for a NI that fosters better performance as an instructor.

An effective way to prepare NIs for the first course that they will be teaching is to employ the best practices that provide depth for that specific course. While very time intensive, a few departments execute meticulous instructional routines that entail going through an entire semester of lessons and taking time with the technical details and language. Even if a department is unable to or undesiring of undergoing such an intense process, it is important that a NIP entail a very deliberate process of preparing their NIs to teach their first course, particularly the first ten to fifteen lessons. Every department that achieved that standard reported strong performances by their NIs.

One of the most impactful best practices that was uncommon was a formal validation process. The department that had a codified validation effort witnessed high levels of performance from their NIs, who not only achieved a high standard of teaching proficiency but also demonstrated it to their department through an official evaluative process. While the practice of evaluating the performance of NIs occurs in all departments, the pursuit of a codified validation process would only improve overall level of evaluation in departments and thereby performances within those organizations. Such a validation process also serves to facilitate more refined retraining for the few NIs found lacking in the evaluated areas of performance. In addition to validation being an ABIC-approved method, this best practice has the overwhelming support of this study as perhaps the most important best practice that future NIPs should incorporate in future iterations. Again, it should be noted that vast majority of NIPs are already observing NIs in at least three practice teach sessions. Formalizing this as the standard across all of NIPs would ensure standardization with this ABIC-approved method as well as better aligning standards of teaching excellence across the Academy.

Although the overwhelming information obtained on the practices used in NIPs was positive, there are still some practices that prove unbeneifical or demonstrated diminishing returns. The three pitfalls identified that inhibit the efficacy of a NIP pertain to teaching techniques and scheduling. In terms of the former pitfall category, it is important to strike the proper balance between providing NIs with a sufficient foundation for them to build upon and providing them with overwhelming exposure to the multitudinous ways in which they could teach. One side of the teaching spectrum was one NIP which did not have a demonstration or
example lesson that was designed to show NIs a satisfactory teach. Instead, the NIs began practice teaching without a clear understanding of how to meet their department’s expectations. This led to a lot of AAR comments and significant consternation by the instructors who had struggled without success. On the other side of the teaching spectrum is the more common presentation of too-many "ways to teach." Exposure to an excessive amount of techniques can frustrate NIs and propel them toward cynicism in which they now want to know which way of teaching is the "right" way. The final pitfall for a NIP to avoid is having a rigorous schedule that provides insufficient transition time for instructors and family. In failing to allocate enough time for NIs to settle affairs on the homefront, departments prematurely burn out their personnel and their families. The collective avoidance of these three pitfalls is a significant determinant for a NIP to achieve satisfactory outcomes.

**Conclusion**

Each department has individual and independent goals but should nevertheless strive to achieve the four broad outcomes that pertain to all developmental organizations at USMA. An effective way to accomplish these four outcomes is to conduct the best practices in a manner which also achieves organizational goals. For this to occur in an optimal fashion, sufficient time (4-6 weeks) must be allocated. A reinforcing mechanism to facilitate efficacious NIPs is to increase or, in the case of already involved departments, maintain the degree of departmental senior leadership involvement. Although most departments conduct informal and incremental validation processes that include at least three evaluated teaching sessions, this study recommends an Academy-wide effort to implement processes in better keeping with the ABIC model.

**Acknowledgements:** This work owes much to others, whom we owe a debt of gratitude. Without the information obtained through surveying NIP course directors throughout USMA, this paper would have been impossible. Furthermore, our analysis stands upon the shoulders of the scholars whose work informed this study. Thanks goes to Dr. Mark Evans and Dr. Stephen Finn, whose collective instruction and support for this project enabled its completion. We would also like to thank our students, peers, and superiors for their inspiration and support but specifically as pertains to MTP and in this project. Most importantly, we would like to thank our families who were gracious in allowing us to commit countless hours to the completion of this endeavor.
References


Chickering, Arthur and Zelda F. Gamson. Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education.


