

Young officers arrive with on-job experience

EDITOR'S NOTE: Capt. Ronald Brinkley, Commanding Officer of the Surface Warfare Officers School Command, will be relieved in change of command ceremonies today. His comments are included in this article.

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Putting first line leaders on the front lines; that is the Surface Warfare Officer School (SWOS). Developing tomorrow's surface warriors today through blended curriculums featuring the best resources available; that is the vision of the Navy's revolution in training.

SWOS capitalized on this as it developed a streamlined curriculum that provides not only a greater amount of flexibility in individual Sailor's careers, but also provides the Navy better prepared surface warriors, faster.

Traditionally, these junior officers spent the first 27 months of their commission earning warfare qualifications. This period included a six-month stint at the school and did not fully leverage the shipboard environment into their professional development.

"Under the old program, we had to try to describe the way things worked onboard without their having any real life experience to back up our lessons," said school Commanding Officer Capt. Ron Brinkley. "Now our junior officers come to us with six months of on-the-job experience and training that directly contributes to their

development into surface warriors. Our curriculum no longer focuses on lectures, but individual experience."

Pared down from six months to an intensive three-week seminar based residency program, SWOS is now using both traditional and state-of-the-art learning resources backed up by student experience. The course is taking advantage of ship handling simulators, interactive computer based warfare operations scenarios, firefighting and flooding trainers, and facilitator led case studies.

"The new curriculum requires students to share their knowledge and experiences in a collaborative environment facilitated by our staff," said Brinkley. "Together, the wardrooms (eight to 10 students) engage in the practical application of their warfare knowledge in various problem solving scenarios as a team, as they would onboard their own commands."

Prior to arriving at SWOS, warfare candidates must complete a series of shipboard prerequisites that include becoming qualified as officer of the deck (underway), earn basic damage control and maintenance qualifications, and demonstrate divisional leadership abilities.

During this time, the warfare candidate will also engage a learning performance system comprised of interactive courseware and practical exercises linked closely to existing personnel qualification standards and their on the job training. Through this system, the Sailor learns basic theory in an independent environment prior to engaging in first hand execution.