



Back to School: Higher-Education Opportunities for CBRN Officers

By Lieutenant Colonel Peter C. Zappola and Captain Chester T. Garner

During the career timeline of a U.S. Army officer, there are a few windows of opportunity to gain broadening experience in unique training and schooling environments. One of those opportunities is higher education through the Army's Advanced Civil Schooling (ACS) program, offered by the Advanced Education Programs Branch.¹ ACS is a fully funded program that allows officers at various levels to obtain an advanced degree at a top-tier institution. While in this program, CBRN officers are full-time students with the sole duty of completing a degree within a specified timeframe. After graduation, officers complete a utilization tour in a critical position that supports future Chemical Corps initiatives.² This article highlights two of the marquee degrees available to chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) officers through the ACS program—the master of business administration degree from Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, and the master of arts degree in international affairs from The Fletcher School, Tufts University, Medford, Massachusetts.

Master of Business Administration From Emory University

The Goizueta Business School (GBS) at Emory University is one of the premier business programs in the Nation, and it serves as a great community for Regular Army Soldiers and veteran students. In recent years, there have been a handful of Regular Army Soldiers in each graduating class. Maneuver Support Center of Excellence and Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, Commander Major General James E. Bonner was one of the first to recognize the value that a master of business administration degree could bring to the Chemical Corps. The Corps began sending officers to complete GBS master of business administration programs in 2017. Through the efforts of Lieutenant General P. K. "Ken" Keen (Retired), senior lecturer in organization and management associate dean for leadership at GBS, Emory, has worked to reserve one seat per schoolyear for CBRN officers. As with other ACS programs, prospective students take the Graduate Record Examination and, as a formality, interview with the school. The intent of offering this degree program to CBRN officers is to provide them with an academically rigorous background in preparation for filling organizational-level positions (such as positions with a

U.S. Army finance office, or the Personnel Development Office at the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence) where their analytical, critical thinking, and managerial skills will have the greatest impact. A quick look at the leader development strategy that is part of the GBS curriculum demonstrates how the program goes far beyond spreadsheets and speaking skills in preparing young officers to step into key roles throughout their Army and civilian careers.

In addition to the learning of various business disciplines that comes with a master of business administration degree, GBS has built leadership development into the core requirements for all of its students. From the very outset of the program, students begin a healthy examination of the dynamics of leading and working within teams; discussing and understanding diversity of thought, experience, heritage, and culture; employing personal assessment tools like the Birkman Method; and developing a growth strategy to becoming a successful and effective leader, follower, and team player.³ Some leadership courses are framed by adopting the perspective of the general manager in making decisions; setting direction, vision, and priorities; coordinating efforts; negotiating; and establishing culture and behavior.⁴ Other courses "center on building self-awareness and developing skills in empathy, influence and communication."⁵ The intentional end state of this focused leadership diet is articulated in one course description:

"... to help . . . contribute to and build work environments and cultures that are 'brain friendly,' i.e., ones that bring out the very best in people. We would characterize these environments as being inspiring (with positive stress) places where people create, innovate, cooperate, imagine, produce, and conduct themselves with moral maturity."⁶

GBS does more than preach the antithesis of toxic leadership. It enables students to discover their own ideal brand of leadership by inviting them to explore fundamental principles and philosophies through hands-on experience, research-backed frameworks, and contemporary and historical examples. This in-depth examination, delivered in concentrated doses over the course of several semesters, understandably shapes how officers understand and plot their personal growth and impact within an organization—something that cannot be fully captured here. However, it should

be clear that there is a great deal of overlap between how the Army seeks to shape its future leaders and what GBS is able to provide.

Master of Arts in International Affairs From The Fletcher School, Tufts University

The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, was founded in 1933 as the first graduate-only school of international affairs in the United States. An average of 550 students from the United States and more than 40 countries around the world enroll in The Fletcher School each year. Fletcher alumni live and work in more than 130 countries and are engaged in careers within national governments, international organizations, businesses, banking, journalism, education, international research, and countless other private and public pursuits.⁷

The Fletcher School master of arts degree in international affairs is a 1-year program for mid-career professionals on sabbatical or leave of absence from government ministries, international organizations, and other institutions.⁸ Students, who must have at least 8 years of professional experience, are typically between the ages of 32 and 39 years old. About half of the students are from outside of the United States, meaning that classmates have diverse real-world knowledge and opinions from which to base their perspectives in the classroom. For example, Lieutenant Colonel Peter C. Zappola (one of the authors) took a course on weapons of mass destruction, taught by a Western European professor, with students from the United States, China, Eastern Europe, India, and Japan; the conversations that they had regarding nuclear deterrence and policy were unlike anything else he had experienced.

The flexibility of The Fletcher School master of arts program allows students to select courses that match specific functional and/or regional interests, which means that Service members can tailor the program to their specific goals. Lieutenant Colonel Zappola focused on national security policy and decision making. Fletcher students can also cross-register for courses at Tufts University and at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, providing increased opportunity to further customize the educational experience.

Fletcher has a rich history of excellence in international security and support to the military. U.S. Navy Admiral James G. Stavridis (Retired), former Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, and himself a Fletcher graduate, was the dean in 2017. He held monthly breakfasts with Soldiers and used the opportunity to share his many experiences. At the same time, there were five national security fellows from the various senior Service colleges who were attending Fletcher in lieu of a war college and who served as mentors to the junior officers. The class was also fortunate to have General Joseph F. Dunford, a Fletcher master of arts program alumnus and then chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, visit and speak about national military strategy. He has maintained regular contact with the school since he graduated as a major. A professor whose father was an Army special operations officer arranged to have General Raymond A. “Tony”

Thomas, then commander of the U.S. Special Operations Command, speak to Lieutenant Colonel Zappola’s class as well. The faculty of the International Security Department is internationally renowned, which affords military professionals a level of opportunity that is unmatched in most graduate programs.

Conclusion

Following the successful completion of key major and captain developmental positions, completing an advanced degree through programs such as those at Emory and Tufts can be a tremendous boost to the knowledge that officers already bring to the organizations in which they serve. Officers interested in participating in ACS should inform their U.S. Army Human Resources Command career manager at least 15 months before the start date of the desired program. For more information, explore the Advanced Education Programs Branch website at <<https://www.hrc.army.mil/Officer/Officer%20Advanced%20Education%20Programs>>.

Endnotes:

¹“Advanced Education Programs Branch,” U.S. Army Human Resources Command, <<https://www.hrc.army.mil/Officer/Officer%20Advanced%20Education%20Programs>>, accessed on 10 February 2021.

²“Advanced Civilian Schooling,” *My Army Benefits*, <[https://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil/Benefit-Library/Federal-Benefits/Advanced-Civil-Schooling-\(ACS\)?serv=122](https://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil/Benefit-Library/Federal-Benefits/Advanced-Civil-Schooling-(ACS)?serv=122)>, accessed on 10 February 2021.

³“The Birkman Method,” Birkman International, <<https://birkman.com/the-birkman-method/>>, accessed on 10 February 2021.

⁴Renée Dye, “Syllabus for Leading Organizations and Strategy,” GBS, Emory University, Spring 2019.

⁵Karl Kuhnert and Rick Gilkey, “Syllabus for Leading with Emotional Intelligence,” GBS, Emory University, Spring 2019.

⁶Ibid.

⁷“A History of Excellence,” *The Fletcher School*, <<https://fletcher.tufts.edu/about/history-excellence>>, accessed on 10 February 2021.

⁸“Master of Arts, Mid-career Program,” *The Fletcher School*, <<https://fletcher.tufts.edu/academics/masters-programs-residential/MA>>, accessed on 10 February 2021.

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