



TRADOC Gets Help from Acquisition to Install Distance Learning

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FORT MONROE, Va. (Army News Service, Dec. 8, 1998) – Training and Doctrine Command is getting valuable help in making sure that the Total Army Distance Learning Program is fully operational by 2010.

The Army's smallest Acquisition Category I team is overseeing contracting for the construction and purchase of facilities and equipment for 745 distance learning classrooms around the world.

"Altogether we have about 27 people," said Gary Winkler, TADLP program manager. "For a program this size – a billion to \$2 billion – there's normally an organization of 70 to 200 people executing the program."

The program manager is also the first one ever assigned to TRADOC by the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Research, Development and Acquisition.

Another thing unique about the TADLP PM is its location.

"It's very unusual that a PM's office is in the same building or on the same installation or in the same state as their functional proponent," Winkler said. "Right now, I'm across the hall from Col. [Christopher] Olson [TRADOC TADLP chief]."

"It works out really well because all the while we're acquiring the system, we need TRADOC

to tell us what their requirements are at a detail level.

"The customer – TRADOC in this case – always sets the functional requirements, and then the PM executes those functional requirements. We determine the technical requirements and actually acquire the system, provide for the life cycle funding, and field the system."

For the next 12 years, Winkler's team will manage the building of the worldwide distance learning system. The project is divided into two phases. Phase One includes fiscal years 1998-99.

By the end of FY 99, Winkler thinks 150-200 fully equipped distance learning classrooms will be completed in the United States for the active Army, U.S. Army Reserve, and National Guard. Work will have begun on sites in Europe and Korea, too.

The first classrooms will be able to originate as well as receive training. But only three prototypes will have local area networks. LANs give the sites access to the Internet so web-based and interactive CD-ROM training will be available to students.

In Phase Two, the rest of the classrooms will be built, LANs will be operational, and several deployable distance learning packages will be created.

Phase Two also includes giving the classrooms the capability to run simulations.

“We’re doing the best we can to keep costs down and standardize our equipment,” Winkler said. “We get economies of scale in purchasing computers, really good computers, for \$1,400 apiece. Everything we’re putting in the distance learning facilities has warranties.”

A typical distance learning classroom has 16 computers. Each computer has a six-year warranty with on-site parts and labor included. If, during the warranty period, the computers become outdated or replacement parts are no longer available, the supplier will install a new computer with the same capabilities.

Actually building the system will cost less than to maintain it. Most of the distance learning system bill will be for operations and sustainment, according to Winkler.

“O&S means providing funding for classroom managers – somebody on site to help students,” he said. “It provides funding for system administrators and network administrators to keep the networks up and running, to do account

movements, and control student and user accounts and passwords.

“O&S includes maintenance, utility bills, VTT (video teletraining) usage, and paying for replacing computers every six years.”

New technology developed before 2010 will not make the distance learning system obsolete, because of the warranties and O&S money, Winkler said.

“TRADOC is developing distance learning courseware for the lowest common denominator machines, so there shouldn’t be a problem running courseware designed for lower-capacity machines,” he said. “Some courseware may need to be reconfigured, but that’s a small task compared to recreating the contents of a course.”

Editor’s Note: Caldwell is a writer with Training and Doctrine Command’s Public Affairs Office at Fort Monroe, Va. This information is in the public domain at <http://www.dtic.mil/armylink/news/> on the Internet.