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## IPCOE Offers Senior IT Leaders Career-Enhancing Course

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Article By: MC2 Kellie Arakawa

May 7, 2009

The Naval Postgraduate School's Information Professional Center of Excellence (IPCOE) recently held its biannual Information Professional Senior Officer Course (IPSOC) in Monterey, Calif., to help senior military leaders explore innovative tools and practices for managing the rapidly-changing challenges in information technology (IT).



The Information Professional (IP) community is a fairly new one, established in October 2001 after naval leaders felt it was important to create an officer community that could enhance the Navy's war-fighting capabilities by evaluating and managing cutting-edge technologies, innovative ideas, and information and network systems. To support the educational and training needs of its newest community, the Navy also decided to establish a center of excellence at NPS.

Retired Cmdr. Sue Higgins, IPCOE's first director and action officer, said one of the initial focal points for the center was that its director would serve as the chief learning officer for the entire IP community and become a core member of the IP leadership team.

Today, IPCOE's main goal is to ignite a culture of innovation and learning, said Lt. Cmdr. Warren Yu, the current IPCOE director. One of the ways IPCOE accomplishes this is through its senior officer course, which was developed in 2004 to help IP officers become leaders of positive action, change and innovative processes. Due to word of mouth, this course has now expanded to include participants from other branches of the military as well as civilian Department of Defense employees. Yu said the course is career and often life-changing because it provides students a unique learning experience that engages them in a "provocative, disruptive" discussion they've probably never had before.

During the center's most recent course, a diverse group of 20 students spent two weeks immersed in topics such as higher-order thought, social networks, complex organizations and polarity management. The students also spent time touring well-known technology companies that demonstrate both traditional and flat hierarchies, and gained insight from Department of the Navy Chief Information Officer (CIO) Rob Carey, Department of Defense CIO Dave Wennergren, and other senior executives in the IP community.

They also participated in informal discussions, social gatherings and creative team-building exercises, as shown in the photo at right, and learned about junior officer perspectives from IP officers who graduated from the center's first IP Junior Officer Course (IPJOC) course in January.

IPSOC is recognized as an important program because it encourages innovative problem-solving and reinforces the skills needed to effectively manage the Navy's unique IT challenges. Yu believes these concepts are the foundation for success in a community that experiences such rapid change.

"We're all about change, and the way to keep up is to have control over innovation," he explained. "Innovation is comprised of four pieces: it is compelling, relevant, sustainable, and enables a competitive advantage ... understanding that is how we can ignite more effective change in the military."

Yu said feedback for IPSOC is overwhelmingly positive, with students often describing the course as the best training they've received in their entire naval career.

One student who graduated from the March class commented, "This was the best training course I have had the opportunity to participate in ... it was truly exceptional at every level and will benefit me personally and professionally for years to come."

Another student provided the same feedback and said, "In my 28-plus years in the Navy this is without question the best course on leadership I've attended ... this class for me, encourages you to step back and analyze and understand why, not just how we influence ourselves and others."

IPSOC has become such a crucial part of the IP community's development that all senior IP officers must complete the training in order to be considered for promotion to the admiral ranks.

Yu explained that IPCOE's location at NPS helps improve the effectiveness of its programs. "We could not have this course at another Navy installation," he asserted. "We have to be in NPS' academic and research environment because it provides us flexibility and access to invaluable resources; we are very well-supported at NPS." Yu also said being near Silicon Valley – thousands of miles away from Washington D.C. – helps students think and learn on a more creative, innovative level.

For more information about IPSOC and IPCOE, visit [www.nps.edu/academics/centers/ipcoe](http://www.nps.edu/academics/centers/ipcoe).

