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Recommended Citation

Costanza, William. "Building an Intelligence Education Program at Marymount University Course-by-Course." *Journal of Strategic Security* 6, no. 3 Suppl. (2013): 72-79.

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Building an Intelligence Education Program at Marymount University Course-by-Course

Dr. William Costanza

Introduction

What began as an initiative to introduce one or two intelligence-related courses into the forensic psychology curriculum at Marymount University is now evolving into a process to create a series of skills-based intelligence courses geared to meet the analytic needs of the U.S. Intelligence Community (IC). The process of building the program is centered on the stated goal of building analytic skills to enhance the employability of students for jobs in the IC upon graduation. This approach relies on a combination of skills-based coursework and IC internships developed through input and feedback from IC managers. Continuing efforts to establish the program is based on a strategy of “in-reach” aimed at gaining support and resources from university administration officials and selected academic departments, and “outreach” aimed at gaining direct input from IC managers and relevant private sector partners to assist in course design and development. The long-term goal is to establish a Center for Intelligence Education at Marymount to serve as the focal point for the proposed intelligence education program.

Background

Marymount is a small, independent, coeducational, Catholic liberal arts university that was founded in 1950 by the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary (RSHM). The University is located in northern Virginia about six miles outside of Washington, D.C. It has three campus locations. The main campus is located in Arlington, Virginia. Also located in Arlington is the Ballston Center building, located several miles away from the main campus. A third campus site is located in nearby Reston, Virginia. Marymount currently offers Bachelor’s, Master’s and Doctoral degree programs granted through the Schools of Arts and Sciences, Business Administration, Education and Human Services and the Malek School of Health Professions.

The Fall 2012 enrollment at the university totaled about 3700 students - 2500 undergraduates and 1200 graduate students. Although not a large enrollment, the 2012 student population was diverse and represented forty-one states and sixty-seven countries. In 2012 there were 157 full-time Faculty at Marymount. Ninety percent of the full-time faculty held the highest degree in their field. All undergraduates are required to take a specific number of credits in the Liberal Arts Core - social and natural sciences, humanities, philosophy, writing and theology/religious studies. The university actively incorporates internships and experiential learning opportunities into its academic programs. Through its Center for Global Education, Marymount also offers opportunities for students to serve internships abroad.

Marymount’s location places it in close proximity to working professionals in the IC. Located within a ten mile radius of the university is the Central Intelligence Agency, Defense Intelligence Agency, Department of Homeland Security, the FBI and the Pentagon. It is also in close

proximity to hundreds of defense contractors large and small that provide support to various clients within the U.S. intelligence community.

Genesis Of The Graduate Level Intelligence Education Initiative

Responding to student interest within the Department of Forensic Psychology for specific coursework on intelligence and counterterrorism, the department chairperson received authorization to hire a new full-time faculty member with the requisite experience and academic credentials to create and teach a survey course on intelligence and another on counterterrorism. The author was interviewed by university officials in the Spring 2012, was offered employment and began teaching in Fall 2012.

Forensic Psychology is the discipline that applies psychological knowledge to the juvenile, civil, and criminal justices systems to address issues ranging from fairness and justice within the American adversarial legal system to treatment of offenders and victims. At Marymount, the Department of Forensic Psychology, situated within the School of Education and Human Services (SEHS), offers students a Master of Arts degree that prepares them for jobs in law enforcement, the legal system, government and private agencies. Some students obtain a Masters degree and continue on to doctoral programs in clinical psychology, criminology and law. Among the broad range of issues of interest to forensic psychology is the origin and nature of terrorism, generally understood within the context of homeland security and domestic terrorism. In the past, terrorism and counterterrorism issues were integrated across several forensic psychology courses.

The idea of intelligence and counterterrorism in the minds of most students that come into the forensic psychology program at Marymount is generally narrowly focused around the notions of domestic terrorism, criminal prosecution, and intelligence analysis mostly in the form of operational target analysis. Discussions with the chairperson of the department led to an agreement to broaden the scope of instruction on intelligence and terrorism that go beyond the confines of a law enforcement perspective. The author proposed developing a survey course on intelligence that reflected a global perspective on intelligence that also incorporated a domestic intelligence module that addressed homeland security issues. The proposal was accepted at the departmental level and formally approved by the SEHS in Fall 2012 for introduction during the Spring 2013 semester.

The First Course

The design of the introductory survey course was based on the several key principles in line with the overall objective in enhancing a student's employability upon graduation. First, the course would need to provide students with a comprehensive and practical overview of the intelligence community and how it does its work. Second, the students would be exposed to academic perspectives on the intelligence community while also obtaining "ground truth" based on how the intelligence community actually functions on a day-to-day basis. Third, the course would include interactive elements so students would get an opportunity to not only how learn about intelligence, but also to get a chance to experience what it *feels* like to be an operations officer and an intelligence analyst. Fourth, the course syllabus would be reviewed by current and former IC officials to insure that the course design tracked with current needs of IC managers. Fifth, the

course would serve as a core course to additional intelligence-related coursework that would be subsequently approved and phased in over time.

The introductory intelligence course that was developed in Fall 2012 and introduced in Spring 2013 semester is entitled *The Intelligence Community: Theory, Process and Challenges*. The survey course is essentially presented as the world as seen through the eyes of the U.S. intelligence community. The range of topics included - the collection process, intelligence products, human intelligence (HUMINT), clandestine collection, domestic intelligence, military intelligence, CI, the IC response to terrorism, covert action, IC issues and challenges, IC reform and ethics. The aim is to maintain a comprehensive but practical focus that looks at the nature of intelligence and how various types of intelligence organizations go about their business. In this way students become exposed to the various cultures within the intelligence community which will hopefully help guide those students interested in intelligence careers in making occupational choices that match their skills and interests.

Establishing “ground truth” in the course was accomplished by taking advantage of Marymount’s Washington, D.C. area location to host a series of current and former high level IC officials and seasoned practitioners to address students on their areas of specialization. The session on the collection process featured a presentation by IAFIE Executive Director Mark Lowenthal, who is also President and CEO of the Intelligence and Security Academy, which allowed students an “insiders” view on how the intelligence collection process works as compared to how it is supposed to work. Senior Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Analyst Doug Humphries, the current CIA Representative to the National Defense University, provided students with a general overview of some intelligence products and the analytic elements and writing style used in contemporary intelligence estimates. In addition, he provided feedback on intelligence topics that were to be used in an analytic intelligence product the students were assigned to create. The domestic intelligence module featured a presentation by Madeleine Gruen, a former New York Police Department (NYPD) counterterrorism analyst, who provided a law enforcement perspective on analytic target analysis in support of criminal investigations. Retired Special Forces Colonel David Maxwell, currently the Associate director of the Security Studies Program at Georgetown University, provided students insight into the process of military intelligence within the context of his role as former senior counterinsurgency (COIN) strategist for the U.S. Army in the Philippines. The course also hosted Neal Duckworth, Senior CI officer currently serving in the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), who made a presentation on counterintelligence. A special presentation was made by Joe Augustyn, the former Deputy Associate Director of Central Intelligence for Homeland Security, who spoke about his experiences in working with current CIA Director John Brennan to create the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC). In sum, students were able to acquire a more realistic understanding of how the intelligence community functions and the challenges it faces.

An important feature in the course design was interactive elements that allowed students to get a chance to *feel* what it’s like to be an intelligence officer. There were two interactive elements. The first element was the “Embassy Reception” exercise that gave students the opportunity to go undercover at a “notional embassy reception” to target foreign nationals (twelve role players) who were believed to have access to intelligence of interest to the U.S. government. There were two sessions devoted to HUMINT. The first session, which took place in the classroom,

reviewed the principles of HUMINT and cover. At the end of the class, students were provided with their targeting assignments. There were twenty-four students in the class. Students were given no names, only the potential intelligence access of individuals who may be attending the embassy reception. The second HUMINT session took place at the Main House on the Marymount main campus, which houses the Office of the President and essentially replicates the ambience of an embassy setting. The students' tasks were to socially network until they found their target, establish rapport, validate the target's access to intelligence and try to arrange a follow-up meeting. The role players were given brief bios to help establish the character that they would use to interact with the students. One of the role players that agreed to participate was the President of Marymount University, Dr. Matthew Shank. His participation as a role player in the exercise provided him a first-hand view of the new course as well as an investment in its success. Also serving as a role player was the Deputy Administrator of the Transportation Safety Administration (TSA), John Halinski, a former military intelligence officer who is very supportive of the Marymount intelligence program initiative. In addition, three former CIA case officers, former colleagues of the author, served as role players and provided feedback during the post-reception debriefing of students. The remainder of the role players were drawn from the Department of Forensic Psychology. Two of the role players were assigned CI roles so students would understand that they were being targeted as well.

A second interactive element of the course was the requirement to create a "mini national intelligence estimate (NIE)" product. This element was composed of three parts. The first part required each student to write a short analytic piece on a selected topic listing key judgments, the issue's relevance to U.S. policy and evidence to support their judgments. Students signed up for one of five topics. There was a maximum of five students per topic. In a class of twenty-four students this meant that one topic would have only four students. The students turned in their individual assessments that were graded and returned. The next step required the five students who wrote on the same topic to meet together to consolidate their research and come up with a joint estimate that represented the best group assessment, i.e. they have to internally reach an agreement through the process of defending their critical analyses within a group context to experience the collaborative efforts that go into creating the best assessment based on available intelligence. The final element required the students to make a fifteen-minute presentation to a panel of three "notional national security council (NSC) staffers" who were allotted ten minutes to question the presenters. The students experienced what it felt like to verbally defend their critical thinking in front of "high level NSC committee." The roles of the NSC staffers were played by three former intelligence officers who were previously known to the students through their participation in the embassy reception exercise. Consequently, the students experienced what type of questions policymakers may have if they had to defend their estimates in front of the NSC.

Prior to launching the course it was important to get feedback on the proposed course content from current and former intelligence professionals to assess the relevance and quality of the course of instructional design in line with IC interests. In addition to forwarding the proposed syllabus to potential guest speakers for comments, the author also received feedback back from former senior CIA official Bob Wallace, from Robert DeGross, currently Director of Community Training at the Sherman Kent School and from several former case officers employed in the private sector involved in training programs for customers in the IC. The syllabus was sent to

each requesting feedback on potential course content with the guidance that the syllabus was aimed at students who had little or no background in the field of intelligence. Their feedback was used to fine-tune and shift emphasis on several of the course topics.

In proposing the initial intelligence course at the departmental level at the university, the author presented it as a “core course” in a potentially broader program that would encompass multiple intelligence-related courses geared towards enhancing a student’s employability in the IC. The basic philosophy of the approach was to create a pool of entry-level candidates with the requisite analytic skill-sets to seamlessly transition into analyst jobs in the IC with clearances already in hand. The author proposed a series of courses coupled with internships that would permit students to obtain the necessary clearances and background that would allow them to add value early on in the workplace and productively participate in additional in-house training programs of their IC employer. The notion of going beyond the offering of one or two intelligence course to conceptualizing intelligence education at Marymount in a more comprehensive manner was envisioned at the departmental level in Fall 2012, concurrent with the proposed development of the introductory “core course” on intelligence.

Building An “Intelligence Education” Program

In keeping with the stated goal of establishing a practical skills-based program to enhance student employability in the IC upon graduation, the author opted to propose the development of an intelligence curriculum focused on “intelligence education” as its primary orientation rather than on “intelligence studies”. In presenting the proposal at the departmental level, intelligence education was defined as coursework and internships aimed at providing students with the necessary background and skill sets that would be of immediate interest to potential employers in the IC. A focus on intelligence education would encompass a combination of core foundational courses and skills-based analytic courses. Coursework would be supplemented with internship opportunities allowing students to showcase their skills while sponsoring agencies obtained their clearances.

Phasing In The Program

The intelligence education program began with the introduction in Spring 2013 semester of the “core” course *The Intelligence Community: Theory, Process and Challenges*. The class was fully subscribed by the end of the first day of registration indicating a clear market demand for intelligence education among students at the university. The author also served as a reviewer of graduate applicants for the Forensic Psychology Program for Fall 2013 semester and noted that, despite limited exposure of the Marymount initiative in intelligence education, a number of students noted their desire to specifically pursue intelligence courses at Marymount to prepare for careers in the IC.

During the Spring 2013 semester, the author designed a course on terrorism entitled *Contemporary Terrorism and the U.S. Response*. The basic objective of the course is to introduce students to various types of terrorism and terrorist organizations, the radicalization and recruitment processes that sustain these organizations and the U.S. response to the terrorist threat. The course was reviewed and approved by the SESH for introduction during the Fall 2013 semester. The choice of introducing a course on terrorism as a second course offering was

consistent with desire on the part of the Forensic Psychology Department to consolidate instruction on terrorism into one course. Within the context of a broader program in intelligence education at Marymount, the terrorism course will most likely be offered as a selected topic rather than as a core course.

Following a philosophy of emphasizing intelligence education, the author is in the process of gathering resources and input from analysts and IC managers to design two courses that would serve as the “analytic core courses” of the program. The courses would be aimed at building basic skill sets of interest to the IC. The first course would provide students with instruction in critical thinking skills and the fundamentals of analysis. The course will be designed to offer students a sampling of structured approaches and techniques used in the IC to address diverse intelligence issues. The major objective of the course would be to provide students with a framework to develop strategies to overcome perceptual and cognitive biases by providing a sound basis to conduct critical analysis used in the production of finished intelligence to support policymakers. This course would seek departmental and SEHS approval during Fall 2013 semester for introduction in Spring 2014.

The companion follow-on course tentatively entitled *Intelligence and the Policy Process* would introduce students to the production of intelligence as a product in its various forms and the process by which it is disseminated within the IC, among Executive Branch policymakers and the Congress. An important element of the course will be instruction that helps students understand how intelligence wends its way through the bureaucracy, its potential impact and the various obstacles that may diminish the impact of various intelligence products. This course would be designed ideally during the Fall 2013 semester with introduction in Fall 2014 as the sequential follow-on course to the first course in critical thinking and analysis fundamentals.

There are also plans to design a counterintelligence (CI) course that will provide students a clear understanding of CI principles and the CI threat to operations and analysis. The CI course would be conceived as a core course given its critical importance in the intelligence collection process. An ideal timetable for the introduction of this course would be Spring 2014 assuming that resources and approvals to expand the intelligence education program at Marymount are in place. The CI course would include interactive elements to provide students with what it *feels* like to be engaged against targets that pose a CI threat.

Implementing A Broader Program

Although still in the formative stages, as currently conceived the intelligence education program will be centered around four core course offerings - *The Intelligence Community: Theory, Process and Challenges*, the critical thinking/fundamentals of analysis course, the intelligence products and dissemination course, and a CI course. A student would choose one special topics course. Currently the only special topics course available is *Contemporary Terrorism and the U.S. Response*. Courses on other topics such as chemical and biological warfare, cyberwarfare and regional studies may be offered to fulfill the special topics requirement. Students would also be required to complete an internship in the IC or in a private sector company that supports the IC.

The current discussion at the departmental level tends to favor seeking approval from SEHS to offer a “concentration” in intelligence within the Department of Forensic Psychology rather than formally propose establishing an intelligence curriculum as a major or minor within in SEHS. The current status of the program is that there are two approved course offerings - the Introductory course and the terrorism course with plans to seek approval for a phase-in of the two core analytic course by Fall 2014. Meanwhile efforts are underway to identify and enter into internship relationships with analytic units in the IC and private sector.

The strategy to move forward to establish a program beyond the current two course offerings is predicated on two principles. First, an “in-reach” strategy to expose the proposed program in a measured way to university administrators through their engagement in program course interactive elements. In order to obtain high-level visibility of the program the author approached the President of Marymount, Matthew Shank, to enlist his participation in the Embassy Reception exercise. This provided him an opportunity to see first hand through direct engagement how the course furthered the learning goals and objectives of the course as well as highlighting the market demand for the fully subscribed course. He is currently supportive of the intelligence education initiative and has even suggested collaborating on developing a course in conjunction with the recently funded Marymount University cyber-security program. The “in-reach” strategy has also included involving faculty in other departments to participate in course activities to increase program exposure.

Second, an “outreach” strategy was used to both identify high quality expertise to provide “ground truth” to the course curriculum through participation of guest speakers and to expose the intelligence education initiative to former and current members of the IC who were offered a role in helping design and shape an intelligence education program. The program is currently expanding contacts Transportation and Safety Administration (TSA) to establish internship opportunities within their analytical unit as well as analytical units within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Efforts are currently underway to obtain analytic input from IC managers and trainers to assist in developing analytic courses that will provide IC managers with a pool of potential entry-level candidates to seamlessly transition into an IC work environment with clearances in hand.

The Marymount Center For Intelligence Education

Assuming that the program will evolve as proposed, the author has also proposed that a firmly established intelligence education core course curriculum, most probably designed as a concentration within the Forensic Psychology Department, be placed under the aegis of a newly created Center for Intelligence Education. Although still in the formative stages and open to discussion, the primary objectives of the Center would serve to ensure quality control of intelligence education program, manage the growth and expansion of the program and serve as an academic and administrative focal point for all activities related to intelligence education at Marymount.

The Center would also serve as the focal point and sponsor to host academic conferences as well as professional development and networking conferences to bring students together with potential employers. The Center would also serve as the focal point to manage the internship

program in intelligence education that would also seek to establish internships at the international level.

The Center would be headed by a Director and would employ faculty composed of scholar/practitioners. The Center would potentially offer scholar-in-residence opportunities as well as seek to establish institutional relationships with training and analytic elements within the IC and the private sector.

The Center would also seek to build relationships within the private sector with companies that provide expertise to the IC based on mutual interest in developing an employable analytic cadre that could add value to their ongoing operations. To assist in maintaining program quality and effective outreach to the IC and potential private sector partners, the Center proposal includes establishing an outside Advisory Board composed of members representing the IC, the private sector and the university to oversee and provide guidance on the Centers activities and growth. The Advisory Board would formalize their recommendations in the form of a yearly report.

The Center would require an administrative component to manage the flow of administrative tasks generated by the program. Included within this unit would be resources to support social media communication - website, blogs, newsletter, Twitter, Facebook - to expand the Center's connectivity to people and institutions in support of its mission.

The Center would also plan to be an institutional supporter of the International Association For Intelligence Education (IAFIE) to draw on the organization's vast reservoir of expertise to provide the "ground truth" and guidance necessary in building a high quality intelligence education program that meet the needs of the IC and the country.