



Base Realignment and Closure

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Transforming enlisted medical education and training for the 21st Century

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On schedule to begin classes in June, the Medical Education and Training Campus at Fort Sam Houston will be the largest consolidation of service training in Department of Defense history, said Navy Rear Adm. William R. Kiser during an April 16 tour of the facility during San Antonio Navy Week.

Currently, the commander of the Naval Medicine Center, Portsmouth Va., Kiser will be the inaugural commanding officer for METC.

Training commences with the consolidated Radiography Specialist course and more than 30 academic programs available for the Navy, Army and Air Force enlisted medical personnel, with more planned for the future.

“At the end of the day, every course that the military has with a medical education component will be offered through the METC program,” Kiser said. “That number is in the hundreds.”

The 7.9 million square-foot campus will be the world’s principal military medical education and training institution when fully operational in 2011, according to Col. Larry Hanson, the first dean of METC.

The active daily student load will be about 7,800 and we’ll have about 24,500 people graduating from courses annually,” Hanson said. “We’ll have staff and faculty of close to 1,400 people.”

Students will begin with joint service consolidated courses, and then break out into service specific courses.

“An Army guy doesn’t need to know how to fight a fire on a ship,” Hanson said. “The Navy and Air Force folks don’t need to know how to pitch that [General Purpose] Medium [tent].”

“Will we make generic corpsman? No,” Kiser said.

“We’re not building avatars for all of the services, we’re building joint operability,” said Air Force Command Chief Master Sgt. Kevin Lambing, METC senior enlisted advisor and aerospace medical technician.

The benefits of consolidated training enhance tri-service interoperability and joint deployment opportunities, while cutting redundant curricula, streamlining system capacity and reducing infrastructure, as mandated by the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Act, Kiser explained.

Once on campus, students, faculty, staff will have access to a state-of-the-art “Cybrary” or online library on the METC Intranet. The Cybrary offers self-paced online courses, ebooks, research material, podcasts, recorded video lectures, discussion boards and a search capability.

The facility is outfitted with computer rooms specifically for homework, research and Cybrary use. Students will also have access to furnished day rooms with flat-screen televisions for lounging.

Living areas in the facility were built using a modular design. Units were manufactured in Belton, shipped to Fort Sam Houston, staged at the site, and then lifted into place by crane.

Each module consists of two sets of living quarters for two students, which includes living areas, walk-in closets and bathrooms, said Randy Holman, program manager for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and spokesman for the Joint Program Management Office, which is in charge of the project.

The JPMO is a joint military service entity representing a partnership between the Corps, the Air Force Center for Engineering and the Environment and the Naval Facilities Engineering Command and is supported by private sector contractors.

“The modular aspect saves a lot of time,” said Navy Capt. Lori Frank, action officer for METC.

In the case of the dormitories and the barracks, each module’s “footprint” is replicated throughout the building, explained Holman.

“With a common foot print or style to the building and a common floor plan, we have the ability to modularize each of the components, which dramatically accelerates construction,” Holman said. “Ninety-five percent of our program is design build.”

Is the modular design as good as a traditional brick-and-mortar build? Frank said yes, citing a hotel in downtown San Antonio built in the 1960s that is still functional and easily maintained.

Edward Martinez, lead construction representative for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, said even the furniture was wear tested with rowdy 18 year olds in mind, immersing bed frames, tables and chairs into vats of water for weeks.

“What’s neat is about these is how soundproofed they are,” Frank said. “I used to come into these [rooms] a lot when they were building them and you could see the construction outside, but you couldn’t hear it at all.”

Fitting a Navy presence into a traditionally Army and Air Force town will come with some rough spots.

Kiser related a humorous incident where he and Navy Command Master Chief Carl Morgan, command master chief for Naval Medical Center Portsmouth and Navy Medicine East, were walking near Brooke Army Medical Center.

An Army Sgt. 1st Class was walking toward the admiral and command master chief, but did not recognize their uniforms.

“She said ‘I don’t know what to do – what are you?’” Kiser related laughing. “The master chief took her aside and gently explained, ‘See the star? He’s an admiral and you’re supposed to salute and stuff.’”

“As we have more of a Navy presence here, I expect that will occur less often,” Kiser said.

The cultural aspects in a tri-service environment are also taken under consideration at METC. Just as the Air Force calls their living quarters “flights,” the Navy plans to call theirs “ships,” Frank said.

“We’re committed to making sure, when our folks leave [METC] – far away from the ocean – that they will not have lost the sense of what it is to be a Sailor,” Kiser said. “Sailors will know how to navigate around a ship and interact with the Fleet Marine Force. They will keep doing those things that corpsman are doing.”

For information about METC go to <http://www.metc.mil> and for more information about San Antonio Navy Week, log onto <http://www.navyweek.org>. For more news from the Navy Office of Community Outreach, visit <http://www.navy.mil/local/navco>.