

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON MILITARY AFFAIRS

Special Committee on Military Affairs

March 3, 2016

5. MARSOC Masters Degree Program RFI.....Karrie Dixon and Courtney Thornton

Situation: UNC institutions are considering their interest in responding to a “Request For Information (RFI)” shared by UNC GA on behalf of Marine Corps Special Operations Command (MARSOC). The UNC-GA Academic Affairs Division, Federal Relations/Military Affairs Division and MARSOC Training and Education Command will review institutional responses. Responses will be reviewed for alignment with MARSOC needs and recommendations as outlined in the Scope section of the RFI and for feasibility of the institution/program to deliver the proposed track.

Background: In 2013, U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM) issued a directive applicable to all branches of Special Operations. That directive tied promotion through the ranks to civilian higher education. To achieve the rank of E9 (Sergeant Major), a service member (operator) in any branch of Special Operations must have completed a Bachelor’s degree. To achieve the rank of O5 (Lieutenant Colonel), a service member (operator) in any branch of Special Operations must have completed a Master’s degree.

With the exception of the Marine Corps Special Operations Command (MARSOC), all branches of the military have established or are in the process of establishing partnerships with civilian higher education institutions to ensure their members have the opportunity to meet the directive established by SOCOM. To that end, MARSOC Training and Education Command approached UNC General Administration (UNC-GA), Federal Relations and Military Affairs Division, to explore a partnership with one or more UNC constituent institutions. The objective of this Request For Information (RFI) is to identify one or more UNC institutions with the interest and capabilities to develop tracks specifically for MARSOC operators in existing Master’s degree programs.

Assessment: This opportunity to offer access to UNC system graduate programs of interest to MARSOC is consistent with the goals and objectives identified in the UNC-MARSOC partnership agreement.

Action: This item is for discussion only.



Quick Update

RFI for Marine Corps Special Operations Command (MARSOC)

At your earliest convenience, please distribute the attached Request for Information (RFI) as appropriate.

The objective of the RFI is to identify one or more UNC institutions with the interest and capabilities to develop tracks specifically for MARSOC operators in existing Master's degree programs. Areas of particular interest include international studies, security studies, and conflict studies.

Submission Instructions

Each institution must submit response(s) through the Chief Academic Officer (CAO) to Courtney Thornton, Associate Vice President for Academic Programs, cthornton@northcarolina.edu and Ann Marie Beall, Director of Military Education, ambeall@northcarolina.edu. Submissions that do not follow this requirement will not be reviewed.

Timeline

1. CAOs at UNC institutions submit responses via email **by 5 p.m. on March 31, 2016.**
2. UNC-GA Academic Affairs and Federal Relations/Military Affairs Divisions review responses from April 4-8, 2016.
3. UNC-GA identify up to five (5) programs to forward to MARSOC for review on April 8, 2016.
4. MARSOC reviews recommended programs from April 11-15, 2016.
5. Per MARSOC's request, program directors meet with MARSOC Training and Education Command on (April/May 2016).
6. MARSOC selects program(s) on or before May 16, 2016.
7. Selected program(s) notified by May 23, 2016.

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Master's Degree Program Track for Marine Corps Special Operations Command (MARSOC)

Introduction and RFI Purpose

In 2013, U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM) issued a directive applicable to all branches of Special Operations. That directive tied promotion through the ranks to civilian higher education. To achieve the rank of E9 (Sergeant Major), a service member (operator) in any branch of Special Operations must have completed a Bachelor's degree. To achieve the rank of O5 (Lieutenant Colonel), a service member (operator) in any branch of Special Operations must have completed a Master's degree.

With the exception of the Marine Corps Special Operations Command (MARSOC), all branches of the military have established or are in the process of establishing partnerships with civilian higher education institutions to ensure their members have the opportunity to meet the directive established by SOCOM. To that end, MARSOC Training and Education Command approached UNC General Administration (UNC-GA), Federal Relations and Military Affairs Division, to explore a partnership with one or more UNC constituent institutions. The objective of this RFI is to identify one or more UNC institutions with the interest and capabilities to develop tracks specifically for MARSOC operators in existing Master's degree programs.

Student Audience

Marine Corps Special Operations Forces (MARSOF) consists of specially screened, assessed, selected, and trained Marines and Sailors serving as MARSOF Multidimensional Operators (MDO). The MDO is a mentally agile member of an adaptable team capable of operating from the tactical to strategic levels simultaneously, holistically evaluating problems and challenges, comprehending the situation, and making critical decisions in a timely and effective manner. MDOs execute missions in largely unstructured and ambiguous environments, often including rapid and diverse changes in terrain, enemy, and climate. They are trained to understand the impact of their actions, their non-actions, the environments they operate in, and how to achieve desired effects ranging from tactical to strategic. They comprehend the nature of complex issues, and have the ability to understand, decide, and act within multiple nested levels of intent. MDOs possess an attitude of "Spiritus Invictus" that enables them to achieve success whatever the challenge, based upon this mindset of unconquerable spirit.

Scope of Interest

According to a recent MARSOC Training and Education Command survey, approximately 150 operators at MARSOC headquarters in Stone Bay, NC have completed a bachelor's degree, are interested in completing a master's degree, and would need a master's degree for promotion.

The Marine Corps will only cover the cost of a degree for the service member (operator) if the degree is applicable to his work and to the mission of Special Operations. The academic areas MARSOC has designated as most applicable are international studies, security studies, and

conflict studies, with each program including the option to pursue an international regional emphasis. UNC-GA and MARSOC will consider related graduate degree programs outside of these academic areas if they are applicable to the work and mission of Special Operations.

Due to the operation tempo of this group and their availability in terms of training and deployment, MARSOC has specific requests with regard to when, where, and how courses are offered:

- Hybrid format with courses offered online and in person at MARSOC Headquarters in Stone Bay, NC (via Video Teleconference or by a professor coming to MARSOC Headquarters)
- In-person courses offered evenings or weekends (for example, 2-3 nights per week for the entire term or intensive week long or weekend long format with the remainder of the course completed online)
- Start times outside the regular academic calendar to coincide with operator availability
- Shorter terms (for example, 8 weeks versus 16 weeks)
- Flexibility if student (operator) is suddenly unavailable to continue/complete a course due to military obligations (training or deployment)
- No foreign language requirement (preferred) or waiver of foreign language requirement
- Waiver of degree requirements for work experience, internships, or international study based on Special Operations experience.
- Ability to accept applications by Fall 2016 and enroll students as soon as possible thereafter.

Given MARSOC's special requests and desired implementation timeline, UNC institution(s) are encouraged to consider development of a track specifically for this population in an existing degree program.

Guidelines for Response Submission

Submissions should be no more than 10 pages in length and should include:

- Cover page
 - Degree program title, degree awarded (M.S., M.A., etc.) and 6-digit CIP code.
 - Institution name, submitting unit, and collaborating campus (if applicable).
 - 250-word or less description of the degree program, including student learning objectives, current target audience, delivery method, hours required, program core and concentrations (if applicable), post-graduate outcomes for which graduates are prepared, and other special features.
 - Name, title, and contact information for primary program contact.
- Narrative Section
 - Detailed description of potential track, including how the institution/program will meet the requests of MARSOC as listed on p. 2 of the RFI. For programs

- with an online component, describe whether the delivery is synchronous with an on-campus course, partially synchronous, asynchronous, or other.
- Summary of credentials of faculty who will develop and deliver the track, including relevant courses taught, experience working with military student populations, and experience with online or off-site program delivery.
 - Budget narrative estimating incremental personnel and project costs to develop and deliver the track and source(s) of funds needed.
 - Describe how student learning objectives and efficacy of the program track will be evaluated in Year 1 and ongoing.
 - Project timeline including anticipated implementation date

The narrative section of the response should also include information on the institution's experience working with the military as well as examples of established military related programs, partnerships, services, or resources.

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RFI Review and Evaluation

Responses will be reviewed by UNC-GA Academic Affairs Division and Federal Relations/Military Affairs Division and MARSOC Training and Education Command for alignment with MARSOC needs and recommendations as outlined in the Scope section of the RFP and for feasibility of the institution/program to deliver the proposed track.

Submission Instructions

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