

The Leadership Summit



Bold and Enlightened Naval Leaders at Every Level *Forging an Empowered Culture of Excellence*

First-ever Leadership Summit demonstrates Navy's commitment to improvement

In the first of its kind in the United States Navy, 270 people, ranging in rank from Seaman to Admiral, participated in a first-ever Leadership Summit this week at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California.

Sponsored by the Chief of Naval Operations, Adm. Vern Clark, and hosted by the NPS' Center for Executive Education, "bold and enlightened leaders, at every level" was the theme pursued by active and retired military and civilian personnel representing every community, pay-grade and leadership level in the Navy.

"Commitment to our mission is necessary, but even that is not enough if we do not focus on the development of the people whom we serve," Adm. Vern Clark said as he opened the four-day Summit.

During this time, representatives from every pay grade of the Naval service spoke up and voiced their opinions on where our strengths are within the Navy in their search for innovative ways to improve the Naval Service and support the development and growth of every member of the Navy family.

Looking at organizational change via a process called Appreciative Inquiry, Flag Officers and Deck Seaman alike compared successful examples of leadership that they had seen or experienced in order to rediscover and tap into the core values and competencies of the Navy. Appreciative Inquiry is a process designed to create positive dialogue and was the pilot tool that the Navy used to improve leadership and align our individual self-talk.

The CNO emphasized that the Leadership Summit was the beginning of a long and important conversation – one that could potentially involve every Sailor in uniform. The Leadership Summit provided a venue for a process from which the CNO said he is willing to be surprised by the outcomes. In fact, participants were inspired to propose and take responsibility for a large variety of pilot projects to improve mission and people.

“I believe that this opportunity to come together and from the lowest ranks to the highest ranks and rub shoulders and share our views and opinions is a wonderful opportunity,” said ABHAN Joy Barnhart of Naval Base Coronado. “It is inspiring to be able to see and hear our leaders being passionate about topics that involve my future and happiness in the military.” In line with ADM Clark’s commitment when he took office as CNO, participants in the Leadership Summit were encouraged to “challenge all assumptions” in providing their ideas to improve the Navy and leadership in the Navy. The process reinforced his challenge to try new ideas and innovative efforts that are reflected in the participants pilot projects.

These pilot projects were brainchildren of the numerous small groups that were as inclusive as the summit itself. Summit participants then volunteered to pursue these projects in their respective commands which will ensure that the dreams of what the Navy could be will actually be pursued.

“The dreams could help the Navy fully realize the promise of covenant leadership,” said the summit coordinator, LCDR Dave Nystrom. “Participants were given the opportunity to make a difference in their Navy. This is the legacy of leadership today for the leaders of the Navy of tomorrow.”

The Summit was the extension of a short course called the “Thirty-something” group, run by the Center for Executive Education. This group composed of officers (LT and LCDR) develops ideas, possibilities and ways to improve the Navy.

“Between the CNO/Master Chief Conference in Dallas earlier this year where 750 command master chiefs met to discuss the future role of Chief Petty Officers, and this Leadership

Summit, everyone in the Navy should feel confident that their Navy is committed to the growth and development of our people," said MCPON Jim Herdt. "This is an example of walking the walk."

"I was most impressed with how junior and senior Sailors get a chance to sit and discuss thoughts and come up with great things or suggestions on how to improve the Navy," said YNSN Vershaun Harris of Naval Submarine Squadron 16.

"This week has given me some valuable tools which I know that I will employ as a leader in the Navy. My only wish is that everyone could be involved in a conference like this – the Navy would be #1 immediately," said LT Julie McCarthy of the Naval Personnel Command.

"I dream of a Navy in which all our leaders are personally committed to the success of our mission. We are called to a life of service and it is an honor to serve in this organization," Adm. Clark said. "Leaders are responsible for the growth and development of the people that are entrusted to them. This Leadership Summit was itself a pilot program and I am pleased with results we achieved. However, this is a process, not just an event. I am committed to supporting the continuation of a journey to make our Navy and everyone who is a part of it the very best. By continuing the dialogue that was started here, we can and will encourage others to be inspired and to dream."