

**DUTIES OF A MASTER'S DEAN
FOR
COLLEGE OF COMMISSIONER
SCIENCE**

**DOCTORAL THESIS
BY
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What procedures are needed to perform correctly and interestingly, the duties of the Dean of the Master's section of the Commissioner College?

Upon the acceptance of the position of becoming the Dean of the Master's program at the regularly scheduled College of Commissioner Science, there is a transition period that immediately begins to occur. My first thought was in the area of euphoria for to be chosen to lead such a program is a great honor. This feeling began to quickly be dispelled and brought me back to earth in order to begin a process of selection of course materials and quality instructors to hopefully make it a success.

In order to insure the latest information in to be presented, the director of the course should begin by accessing the web. By going to www.scouting.org/scoutsourc/Commissioners/training/Masters will provide this information. Currently there are a total of twenty-one different Master's Courses found in the Commissioner Training Manual.

MCS-301 – No Lapse – No Drop Commitment

MCS-302 – Unit and Council Finance

MCS-303 – Commissioner Lifesaving I

MCS-304 – Commissioner Lifesaving II

MCS-306 – Counseling Skills

MCS-308 – Venturing and the Commissioner

MCS-309 – Good Commissioners Need Both Head and Heart

MCS-311 – All About Assistant District Commissioners

- MCS-313 – Orienting and Training Commissioners
- MCS-314 – Administration of Roundtable Staff
- MCS-315 – Effective Unit Service in Urban Communities
- MCS-316 – Effective Unit Service in Rural Areas
- MCS-317 – How to Remove a Volunteer
- MCS-318 – Top 10 Ways to ensure Good Commissioner Service
- MCS-319 – District Commissioner Basics
- MCS-321 – New Unit Service
- MCS-322 – Advanced Special Needs Scouting
- MCS-323 – Mining UVTS for Gold
- MCS-324 – Preventing Commissioner Burnout
- MCS-325 – Consider Your Spouse and Family

The choices for course selection and having to limit them to six classes of forty-five minutes each can be intimidating at first. The first step is to become thoroughly acquainted with the different courses and the benefits that each may have for the commissioners attending a master's level course. The next decision is which six of these would be the most beneficial to a Unit Commissioner and his/her units.

Initially there are some very easily eliminated course selections which do not pertain to the audience we are focusing upon - - namely the District Commissioners, Assistant District Commissioners and Unit Commissioners of Boy Scout Troops and Cub Scout Packs. Now that the focus group has been identified, we can begin the process for course decisions. Having been a Unit Commissioner in the Cornhusker Council for six years and

now a District Commissioner for six years, I began to concentrate on areas where I found the greatest assistance to be of service for the units to which I had been assigned or district I am in charge of at this time. What problems have I encountered, what will be of most value in the future careers of the District and Unit Commissioners taking these courses? This is a daunting task, especially when I recognized that nearly each of these students will likely never return to take additional classes, at least in a setting such as our College of Commissioner Science. Many of the courses to select from are of great value to all but we have only time for six courses. Some of the courses are best suited for larger groups which can be broken into small discussion groups but, unfortunately, the numbers of participants has been much less than eight people for the last several sessions. I felt that some of the classes are almost a rehash of the Bachelor level courses so they were not entered as a possible selection. (As an aside, perhaps we should be teaching some of these courses not covered during the College of Commissioner Science during our monthly training time with our Unit Commissioners).

Realizing that some commissioners may only assigned to Cub Scout or just to Boy Scout units makes the task of course selection more interesting. Since I am unsure how commissioners are appointed in other Councils, it becomes a matter of choosing classes that pertain to both Boy Scout and Cub Scout units. The whole process of being a commissioner involves service to adults with the benefits to their Scout units and this fact does not vary between Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts.

Currently the focus of commissioner service at Philmont is New Unit Service and having recently heard from a representative of the National Office about New Unit Service, this was an easy choice.

None of District Executives or the leadership above them ever wants to lose a unit so the commissioners must all be familiar with the No Lapse – No Drop Commitment (especially around recharter time frames). Without units, the youth will not be able to have the Scouting experience.

In order to be effective with our adult Scouting leaders, we must have the basics of Counseling Skills. This course is applicable to all commissioners whether talking to unit leadership, chartered organizations and even our own offspring. To be able to communicate the importance of issues within the Scouting program whether it is verbally or non-verbal, is the foundation of our existence as commissioners.

We all recognize that Commissioners need both Head and Heart in order to effectively interact with their unit's leadership. Although I understand the need to communicate this to the Commissioners, is it worthy to spend 45 minutes going over a subject that can be covered at a monthly commissioner's training session? I believed it can best be presented at that time as it may be a great short training session.

Recruiting New Commissioners is a subject that all District Commissioners and Assistant District Commissioners should take when accepting these titles. It is not a subject that

Unit Commissioners should have at the top of their listing of priorities. New commissioners are always a need and that statement may be enough if frequently presented to the commissioning staff.

Administration of Roundtable Staff is the responsibility of the District Commissioner or in their absence, the Assistant District Commissioner. It is for the District Commissioner to recruit a Roundtable staff or perform this responsibility themselves. Not a course intended for Unit Commissioners.

Having presented the course entitled 'Effective Unit Service in Urban Communities', I found little relevance to the type of units we serve in the Midwest. Too much emphasis was placed on serving the low-income, blighted areas such as in a metropolitan city. Certainly we have rural units which are few and far between but this was not the focus of the guide accompanying this course. We put together our own course to concentrate this class on our rural communities but the attendance was lower than we expected due to few students coming to the college from far away from the council hubs. For this reason, I tossed the Effective Unit Service in Rural Communities to the side. Again, this may be the course to be conducted by the District Commissioner during their monthly commissioner training/meeting sessions.

Sooner or later personality issues present themselves within a unit and the phone rings at the Unit Commissioner's residence. The call goes something like 'how do I get rid of our Cubmaster'? This subject is going to occur in all commissioners' tenure if assigned to

units for any amount of time. How to go about the removal of a volunteer and not burn too many bridges along the way requires knowledge and understanding of the system and the individuals involved.

As commissioners, we all should be striving to be providing the best service possible to enhance the quality of the programs that are being presented to the Scouts and their leadership. By explaining 10 ways to perform this duty properly, we are able to review for experienced commissioners their priorities and get back to the basics. Key points are discussed in detail in other courses.

District Commissioner basics is too focused on only them to be of general interest to the typical Unit Commissioner who is attending the Master's level courses at our College of Commissioner Science so it has to be left out of the curriculum that was chosen.

A new and currently being emphasized subject is 'New Unit Service'. National is focusing on this subject at the Philmont Training Center this year. Fortunately, I have an instructor for this course who has just returned from this training session to present it. All of the Cornhusker District Commissioners were presented a 'new' guideline a little more than a year ago by a representative of National who informed us how they now want to work with these new units - - assigning a Unit Commissioner to them who has no other units, has accepted this unit for a two year period and is knowledgeable of the Scouting programs.

The course entitled 'Advanced Special Needs Scouting' is one that District Commissioners, Assistant District Commissioners and Unit Commissioners must become familiar with to provide the knowledge needed to share with unit leadership so these leaders can present a program which provides these youth with the Scouting opportunities. The course allows all to become familiar with the factors that will help them respond to the needs of these special youth.

Although the course entitled 'Mining UVTS for Gold' is 'in theory' a good benefit for District Commissioners and Assistant District Commissioners, it has little relevance if unit visits are not provided by the Unit Commissioners. Again, 'in theory', the information that a Unit Visit Report provides can steer the District and Assistant District Commissioners towards the need for directed assistance for a troubled unit but the reports have to be entered by the Unit Commissioners. Unfortunately history in most districts throughout the country shows little acceptance on entering these Unit Visit Reports. Without these reports, this class is meaningless. (Perhaps a better course would be 'How to Motivate Unit Commissioners to Enter UVTS Reports. Districts are graded on the number of reports for our Journey to Excellence which signifies the importance of them being entered by the Unit Commissioners).

Since we only commit to the joke of 'one hour a week', there should never be a problem with 'Unit Commissioner Burnout' nor the need for the related class. If the truth be known, many times a commissioner may just feel that he is tired and cannot do this job anymore. The class describes how we can help overcome burnout situations and motivate

ourselves and others for improved tenure in the Boy Scouts of America. This course can be a good motivational experience for the District and Assistant District Commissioners as they are the primary individuals tasked with retention of the Unit Commissioners.

The course entitled 'Consider Your Spouse and Family' is intended to assist commissioners in ways to understand and strengthen their marriage and/or family relationships so Scouting augments rather than detracts from the family and increases their personal happiness and tenure as a commissioner. Certainly a must for all of us is to have knowledge on this subject for we need to have the support of our spouse and family in order to continue our efforts as commissioners. By allowing them to see and hear of the benefits we are providing to the Scouting program (and ourselves), they will understand and encourage us in our volunteering efforts.

Having dissected the Masters Courses, it is now time to find instructors who are able and willing to invest the time and efforts necessary to present the chosen courses. As in past years, the Cornhusker Council and the Overland Trails Council have cooperated in the presentation of these classes. We have a very good working relationship on the selection of instructors due to prior experiences with each other and look forward to again seeing these individuals (and comparing notes) which only occurs during the College of Commissioner Science once a year.

Approximately two years ago, it was mentioned that we always use the same instructors and it is time for the next generation to be worked into the system. This has resulted in

many new faces that have been slowly worked into the role of being an instructor. By using a 'tag-team' approach, none of these new instructors has to feel totally responsible for the entire forty-five minutes of instruction. This has provided a comfort level to most of the new instructors as nearly all are back this year for another session or two of teachings. We must remember that the number one fear of Americans is speaking in front of an audience but if this responsibility is spread between two individuals, the comfort level has been greatly increased.

After the listing of instructors has been formed, the perspective individuals are contacted by email first by sending a listing of the courses to be taught. At that time, all who wish to participate are asked to reply to the email. As one would expect, the response is poor. Only those who have a conflict will reply. Now it is time to pick up the phone and go one on one in contacting the prospects and get the commitment to be an instructor. Most of the list is very willing to provide of their time and talents to furthering this beneficial training to others and advancing the knowledge of the commissioner corps. It becomes obvious in talking with the perspective instructor list that all believe in the Scouting movement and the benefits of having a trained commissioner staff.

Having a commitment from the instructors, it is then time to ask if they have a preference from the courses that will be taught for their class. Approximately 50% will have a favorite they would prefer to teach so they are assigned this course. Some have worked with other instructors and wish to be teamed up with the same individuals. I have always tried to accommodate these wishes, as well. Then it becomes only a matter of

determining who and where to place in the remaining subjects for instruction. I have only had one instructor not want a course they had been assigned so this was never a large issue to deal with during this phase of the course.

Approximately 4 weeks before the course commences, all instructors should be contacted to check what materials they need to conduct their course. Two weeks before the course is to be presented, all instructors should again be contacted and insure all are going to be able to put on a good series of classes. Insure that all of the instructors have your email and telephone numbers as any number of problems can arise to prevent them from attending the program (this is where the two deep instructor plan can certainly prevent the dean from having a nervous breakdown and last minute scrambling to present the announced course). This certainly follows the 'Be Prepared' motto of the BSA.

Locating all of the class instructors prior to the opening ceremonies allows the dean to insure that all know where the courses will be held, lunch times and their course presentation schedules. It also allows the dean to express his/her appreciation on their attendance at the college.

In order to insure the smooth flow of the instructors and take care of their own personal goals and commitments, I recommend checking the instructors personal schedule on the day of the class - - do they have to return home by a certain time, do they want to go shopping in the city, etc.

After the sessions have been completed (or before the instructors leave), have a brief meeting with the instructors to improve the next college classes. Some call it a 'thorns and roses' but it is a debriefing while everything is still very fresh in everyone's minds.

Within a couple days, thank all the instructors individually/personally for their participation and thank them again for their commitment to making our commissioner programs stronger and of more importance to our Scouting units.

It is really a great experience to see other Scouters with the same commitments as our group if only during the College of Commissioner Science. In the end, enjoy the experience and look forward to the fun you will have next time.

References:

1. Commissioner's Fieldbook for Unit Service, Number 33621, Copyright 2009, 2012 updated printing
2. Administration of Commissioner Service, Number 34501, pages 118 – 123, Copyright 2009, updated 2011.