

CCE Interns Experience More Variety and Greater Challenges

LTC Jonathan D. Long

I*ntern*—the word is easy to recognize and understand. According to the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, an intern is “a student or a recent graduate undergoing supervised practical training.” However, for interns assigned to the U.S. Army Contracting Command (ACC) Contracting Center of Excellence (CCE) through the Army Civilian Training, Education, and Development System (ACTEDS) and local intern programs, the life of an intern is much more.

Undra Robinson, CCE Director of Contracting (DOC), explains that the intern program “is the key mechanism for replenishing our workforce as contracting professionals move within the National Capital Region [NCR] or choose to retire.” CCE Deputy DOC Jackie Woodson adds that, “the Army intern program in contracting is the first step to growing future leaders. The complexity of the requirements and volume of what we do here at CCE provides our interns more variety and greater challenges.”

Unique Assignments

While the intern program follows a traditional model combining standardized Defense Acquisition University (DAU) education and on-the-job training found at most acquisition centers, it's the specific nature of the skill-broadening assignments that make the CCE intern program a unique experience. Interns start with the educational aspects of the program providing the foundation for contracting during the first year of the 2-year program. All interns in

the contracting program will normally complete DAU courses, including:

- CON 110 Mission Support Planning.
- CON 111 Mission Strategy Execution.
- CON 112 Mission Performance Objective.
- CON 120 Mission Focused Contracting.
- CON 202 Intermediate Contracting.
- CON 204 Intermediate Contract Pricing.



Derwin Rush, CCE KO, provides mentorship to Na Lin, a first-year CCE ACTEDS intern, as they discuss how to determine best value. (U.S. Army photo by LTC Jonathan D. Long.)

- CON 210 Government Contract Law.
- CON 353 Advanced Business Solutions for Mission Support.

These courses offer contracting fundamentals and how to interpret and apply the *Federal Acquisition Regulation* when developing acquisition strategies. Aspiring contract specialist interns arrive at CCE ready to learn the fundamentals and excel in completing the program.

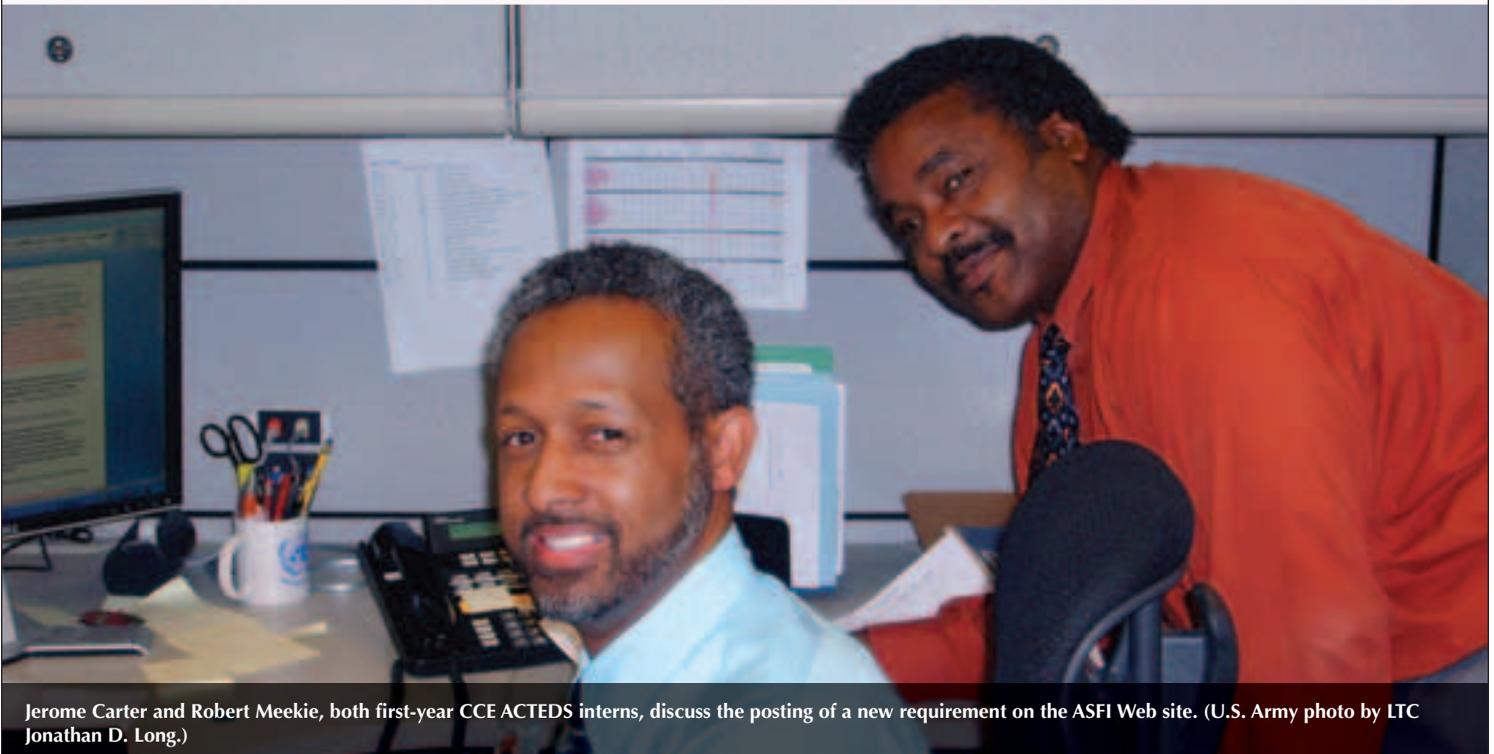
Once assigned to CCE, interns work in one of two contracting divisions. Here, they serve as contract specialists within a contracting branch and begin to learn and use the Procurement Desktop Defense (PD2), the contract writing system. PD2 is the automated tool used to compete contracts through the Army Single Face to Industry (ASFI) for award. Interns initially focus on post-award work where they interact with customers, review contract folders, prepare modifications, and exercise options.

At the practical level, this means interns contact customers to better understand requirements and review

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funding documents (quantity, type, requirements, and cost estimate). With oversight and guidance from their contracting officer (KO), interns plan their work, input data into PD2, and run integrity checks to ensure the inputs synchronize with funding and other contract line item number data. They then create contract action reports that contain all the necessary data required to be entered into the Federal Procurement Data System (FPDS). This is one of the many practical training areas experienced by interns, as the FPDS data provides several reports to the federal government. One of the most important data points for CCE is measuring the extent to which small, veteran-owned, service-disabled, HUBZone, disadvantaged, and women-owned businesses receive contract awards. The experience that interns gain with FPDS prepares them for future work in the CCE.

Interns then move within CCE during the first year to work pre-award actions. The most distinguishing characteristic for the CCE intern program is the opportunity for interns to be involved in and lead multimillion-dollar source selections. The source selection objective, often viewed as a complicated process, is to select the proposal that represents the best value. CCE interns work with their KO to set up an evaluation team for their particular requirement. In this case, the intern has the unique chance to work with other more experienced contracting specialists, legal representatives, customer representatives with technical expertise, small business representatives, and other experts, such as cost and price analysts, to ensure a comprehensive evaluation of the offers. The opportunity to work source selections so early in an intern's career is a distinguishing aspect of the CCE intern program.



Jerome Carter and Robert Meekie, both first-year CCE ACTEDS interns, discuss the posting of a new requirement on the ASFI Web site. (U.S. Army photo by LTC Jonathan D. Long.)

Learning Opportunities

While interns at CCE may make some minor mistakes during their initial contract preparation and acquisition planning assignments, with the help and mentorship of more senior and experienced KOs, these mistakes are turned into learning opportunities. According to Robinson, “we talk to the interns weekly and provide guidance and feedback for a broad overview of defense contracting to include the other services.”

Contract specialist interns are constantly challenged to research answers and make recommendations on how their procurements should proceed. The result is the interns quickly begin to develop their own individual “tool box” of skills because they are greatly challenged to learn how to complete the pre-award, contract award, contract administration, and contract closeout procedures. During the second and third exposures to the procurement process, intern mistakes are minimized. According to Na Lin, a first-year CCE ACTEDS intern, “the intern program helps me to quickly develop my multitasking ability ... and continues to build on my undergraduate degree in business.”

“The goal of the intern program within CCE is to provide a breadth of training,” said Robinson. “There is the necessary *Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act* training, which works hand-in-hand with the CCE on-the-job training. Interns rotate among the various CCE divisions including Small Business, Government Purchase Card, and Contract Administration, and may be assigned other short-term assignments with the NCR Contracting Center, Principal Assistant Responsible for Contracting Office, or Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Procurement staffing actions.”

According to CCE leadership, the command’s workload serving the



First-year CCE ACTEDS intern Nashaunte Graham pauses during a Source Selection Evaluation Board to review the key evaluation factors. (U.S. Army photo by LTC Jonathan D. Long.)

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Department of the Army Staff in the Pentagon and the Joint Staff is focused heavily on services contracting with numerous source selection evaluations in progress at any one time. The opportunity to work complex and many different types of requirements allows CCE interns great opportunities in the future. The goal at the end of the program’s second year is that each intern will become Level II certified as a career field 1102 contract specialist.

CCE Commander COL James Simpson sums up the program best: “Where else can a new person to government contracting get the opportunity to be responsible for developing, evaluating, and recommending a contract award for a multimillion-dollar requirement?” The combination of DAU core training, CCE on-the-job training, and

developmental training in the specialty divisions results in well-rounded CCE contract specialists who are much more confident in their abilities.

To apply for an ACC CCE internship, visit http://www.amc.army.mil/acc/career_op.asp.

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