

Dept. of Military Affairs: Wisconsin Air Guard enlisted development program achieves milestone

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Enlisted Airmen assigned to Wisconsin Air National Guard units across the state gathered at Volk Field Jan. 9-13 for the State Enlisted Development Program (SEDP).

The January course marked the 10th year in which the program has contributed to the personal and professional development of Airmen and noncommissioned officers statewide.

Senior Master Sgt. Linda Koenen, the human resource advisor for the Wisconsin Air National Guard's 115th Fighter Wing, has helped facilitate the SEDP since 2015, and currently serves as the primary program administrator.

"When I first began, the SEDP consisted of one or two classes per month offered only on drill weekends," Koenen said. "In addition to completing the required classes, students were responsible for executing a volunteer activity, and completing a capstone project before attending a three-day in-residence program."

Due to low course completion rates among Airmen in highly demanding career fields, the decision was made to pivot away from drill weekends. With the support of Wisconsin National Guard leadership, the SEDP transitioned to a comprehensive, weeklong in-residence course in 2021.

Following its restructuring, the program was expanded to include career development opportunities for senior non-commissioned officers and first sergeants, and is hosted at Volk Field twice each year.

The Wisconsin Air National Guard's Command Chief Master Sergeant Meredith Conn

is ultimately responsible for the professional development of the enlisted force in the state. She became the SEDP program manager in 2016, and works closely with Koenen to facilitate the course.

“Our number one resource will always be our people,” Conn said. “So improving their tactical skills such as written and verbal communication while inspiring them to develop as leaders is essential.”

The combination of classes and opportunities Airmen experience during the SEDP are intended to do just that. Students are introduced to the concepts of continuous process improvement, foundational competencies and emotional intelligence. They learn to write military awards, biographies and memos, and are put to the test in mock promotion boards or job interviews. The course also includes opportunities for mentoring, and open dialog with senior Wisconsin Air National Guard leadership.

Staff Sgt. William Gault, aircraft armament systems specialist for the 115th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, attended the January SEDP for the first time.

“All of the classes have all been extremely useful,” Gault said. “But the most valuable part of the course to me has been the ability to sit down and speak directly with our leadership. Getting that experience was a very memorable moment for me.”

Brig. Gen. David May, Wisconsin’s deputy adjutant general for Air, engaged with SEDP students in two separate sessions throughout the week. In addition to briefing attendees on the National Defense Strategy and how it impacts the future of the Wisconsin Air National Guard, he took the opportunity to address numerous student questions.

Before departing Volk Field on the final day of the course, he expressed his appreciation to the Airmen for their dedication and initiative.

“I want you to know how amazing all of you are,” May said. “The questions that you prepared showed me that you’re engaged and intelligent. You’re just what we were hoping for which is awesome. I’m so proud of that and it fills me with confidence for the future.”