NAVAL AIR SYSTEMS COMMAND WASHINGTON LIASION OFFICE, ARLINGTON, VA. — Increasing speed to the fleet is more important now than ever in a time of great global competition, NAVAIR Commander Vice Adm. Paul Grosklags told participants of a leadership development class here May 1.

“We have been underestimating China’s ability to quickly bring capabilities to their Navy,” Grosklags explained. “On the other hand, we overestimate our own ability to deliver on-time capabilities to the fleet. To be ready for the challenge, we need fundamental changes that focus on speed, quickly delivering integrated, ready-to-train capabilities to our sailors. Don’t wait on others to make the changes; be the change agent.”

Grosklags spoke as part of the Washington arena seminar, the second in a series of five classes NAVAIR Leadership Development Program (NLDP) participants take over a period of three to five years.

The seminar provides a practical introduction to the interaction and communication
between NAVAIR, the Department of the Navy and the Department of Defense (DoD). Senior leaders from NAVAIR and outside the command briefed participants on the various workings of the DoD.

“We need to be asking ourselves, ‘Why aren't we moving faster?’” Grosklags advised. “For your NLDI [job] rotations, you should be looking for rotational opportunities that expand your bandwidth and allow you to learn a new area. Encourage those around you to focus on new ways to make big shifts to increase speed to the fleet.”

Participants said part of the challenge in moving faster is a risk-averse work culture and stringent policies.

“We become prisoners to policy,” explained Tarhesha Ellis of Patuxent River, Maryland. “Changes may be necessary, and it's up to our leadership to empower the workforce and assist with removing barriers that impede our success.”

To increase speed to the fleet, Ellis suggested applying critical thinking and innovation – “This improves efficiency, productivity and drives competition” – she explained, and promoting diversity.

“Diversity introduces many perspectives, which is key to overall effective decision-making,” she said.

Jared Fife of Point Mugu, California, suggested employees will move faster if they find the right motivation.

“Most people really want to support the warfighter, but I think they often don't understand how their efforts connect to and benefit the warfighter,” he said. “I believe this desire to support the warfighter is our best motivating factor.”

The fleet, and its challenges, are the main motivator for Jordan Schmalz of Patuxent River.

“The threat is real. Our adversaries are moving at a much faster pace than ever before,” Schmalz said. “We have to do things differently than ‘business as usual’ to offset the threat. That means taking calculated risks and identifying any barriers to success of the mission to have weapon systems ready and sustainable.”

During the seminar, participants also learned about Emergenetics (a tool used to analyze individual thinking attributes), met with Dr. Steven Billet of George Washington University to discuss “An Introduction to the U.S. Congress,” took a guided tour of the Pentagon, and participated in wellness activities to learn how to create healthy habits as leaders.

In addition to taking leadership training classes such as this one and partaking in job rotations, the 202 civilian and military NAVAIR participants must create individual development plans, shadow senior leaders, attend leadership and diversity events, and
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build a professional network.

Find more information on NAVAIR’s career development programs.

Alana Nunez-Bennett, center, holds a discussion as part of the Washington arena seminar April 30 to May 4, the second in a series of five classes for NAVAIR Leadership Development Program participants. (U.S. Navy photo)

Todd Balazs, NAVAIR’s digital integration officer, briefs participants of the Washington area seminar May 1. The class is part of NAVAIR’s Leadership Development Program and is intended to broaden their understanding of NAVAIR’s place in the Department of Defense. (U.S. Navy photo)
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From left: Tracey Pintell-Quade, Lee Burton, Lt. Cmdr. Jason Brotherton and Ann Dickens present a class project at the Washington arena seminar, part of the NAVAIR Leadership Development Program. (U.S. Navy photo)

From left: Tony Miguelez, Candy Chesser and Garry Newton speak as part of a NAVAIR senior leadership panel May 4 at a Washington area seminar class for NAVAIR Leadership Development Program participants. (U.S. Navy photo)