

**PUTTING ON A  
VIRTUAL COLLEGE OF COMMISSIONER SCIENCE  
(Doctoral Project)**

By  
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## **Background**

As the COVID-19 pandemic forced Americans and people across the globe to retreat to their homes and as public-health and government leaders called for all non-essential workers to stay in their homes as much as possible, Scouting activities came to a screeching, though temporary, halt. Shortly after the beginning of these stay-at-home orders, Scouters began to create new avenues for Scouting to continue. Initially, Scouting happened mostly online. In-person colleges of commissioner science (CCS), like other trainings, were postponed or cancelled. We had to adapt and change the way we conducted Scouting trainings in 2020 and 2021. At the suggestion of an assistant district commissioner, the Longhorn Council led the way for councils across the Boy Scouts of America to conduct virtual CCSs.

Throughout the month of May 2020,<sup>1</sup> the Longhorn Council held a virtual, bachelors-level CCS two nights per week (Wednesdays and Saturdays). Registration for each class exceeded 100 people. Commissioners from the Longhorn Council were joined by commissioners from 62 councils from across the country and world, including the Far East and Transatlantic Councils. The Longhorn Council repeated its excellent performance by holding its regularly scheduled CCS on August 29, 2020, virtually. About 100 commissioners from approximately 55 other councils, again including both the Far East and Transatlantic Councils, joined Longhorn Council commissioners at this CCS.

Once word began to spread across the BSA of Longhorn Council's May 2020 mini-CCS,<sup>2</sup> chancellors and deans of CCSs in other councils began to contact us for information and insight into how to organize, plan, develop, and host a virtual CCS. Assistant Council Commissioner Bill Jesse, who was also the Longhorn Council Chancellor for the August 2020 CCS, and I held meetings with leaders from 15 - 20 councils via Zoom during the summer and fall of 2020 to share our knowledge and experience.

Recognizing both a demand and a need, I contacted the Chair of the National Commissioner Service Team, Larry Chase. Larry conferred with the National Commissioner Service Team member responsible for Commissioner Development, John Cherry. The result was they asked

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<sup>1</sup> To my knowledge, having asked national and regional commissioner leaders, the Longhorn Council delivered the first virtual college of commissioner science in the BSA in May 2020. I have not been able to confirm whether the Transatlantic Council has previously conducted virtual colleges, given its reach across Europe, the Middle East, and north Africa. Surprisingly, the Far East Council, which spans 26 nations in Asia and the south Pacific, does not appear to have conducted a virtual college of commissioner science prior to that date.

<sup>2</sup> As Council Commissioner, I dubbed this CCS "May-mester."

me to select and lead a team to brainstorm ideas about how to educate leaders of CCSs and then another team to implement some of those ideas, once approved.

### **The Projects**

Ultimately, multiple projects arose, including these two, which constitute my doctoral project:

- Leading the effort to update the resource materials on the National Commissioner web page ([Commissioners | Boy Scouts of America \(scouting.org\)](https://www.scouting.org/commissioners/)) on how to put on a virtual college of commissioner science.
- Leading the effort to develop one or more Virtual Impact Session(s) to teach council commissioners and other leaders of colleges of commissioner science how to put on a virtual CCS.

To accomplish these projects, I formed a team of people, who were approved by John Cherry and the National Commissioner Service Team. The team members were:

Karen Bengtson, Middle Tennessee Council  
Carl Drew, Baltimore Area Council  
Bill Jesse, Longhorn Council  
Bill Lewis, Longhorn Council  
Gray Strickland, Longhorn Council

While task forces like this one usually engage people from a wider variety of councils, John approved this team because of the leadership of the Longhorn Council and the limited number of commissioners and councils with experience when the team was formed. The team met on a roughly bi-weekly basis via Zoom, and at Gray's suggestion, we used the Basecamp project management web tool to manage the work.

### **Virtual Impact Sessions**

Because of the complexity of the issues, two Virtual Impact Sessions were scheduled:

- One covering functional issues was scheduled for January 23, 2021; and
- One on the technical (or technological) issues was scheduled for February 20, 2021.

Karen Bengtson and I prepared the PowerPoint slide deck and presentation for the functional session, entitled "Delivering a Virtual College of Commissioner Science: Practical Considerations." Due to unforeseen circumstances, Karen was unable to join me in conducting the Virtual Impact Session. I presented the two-hour session alone and received favorable feedback on the surveys. Carl Drew and Gray Strickland conducted the second Virtual Impact Session, which was named, "Delivering a Virtual College of Commissioner Science: Technical Considerations." I provided oversight on the content, which they quite ably developed. They also received positive feedback from the surveys.

## Resource Materials

I also led the development of a number of resources on how to put on a virtual CCS that are now available on the Commissioner web page at [College of Commissioner Science Administrative Resources | Boy Scouts of America \(scouting.org\)](#). I served as lead author on some of the material, and reviewed and edited other documents. The resources, which have been posted and are available to all council commissioners, CCS chancellors, CCS deans, and others, are the following:

- Planning a Virtual College of Commissioner Science
- Sample Schedules for Virtual Colleges of Commissioner Science
- Technical Aspects of Hosting a Virtual College of Commissioner Science
- Tips for Instructors
- Tips for Facilitators
- Tips for Participants

After approximately nine months of work, both projects have been successfully completed.