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SWOS Brings New Engineering Course to Life

NEWPORT, R.I. – The first class from the Surface Warfare Officers School's (SWOS) new Auxiliaries Officer (AUXO) and Electrical Officer (ELECTRO) course graduated Oct. 10 in Newport, R.I.

According to Lt. Cmdr. Mike Johnson, lead instructor for the course, the four-week program is designed to prepare prospective AUXOs and ELECTROs for their first tour.

"The AUXO ELECTRO course is rigorous and the pace is intense," he said.

"We focus our training on the applicable references and technical documentation while using our highly-qualified instructors to provide personal experiences and practical applications of the material being taught. It's a tough course; no doubt about it. Our goal is to provide a solid foundation from which the new AUXOs and ELECTROs can build a successful tour and career."

Several of the students were eager to provide their thoughts on the inaugural course. Ensign Thomas Casamassa, a former 1st Class Petty Officer and prospective AUXO in LCS Crew 102, acknowledges the course as being extremely advantageous.

"Based on how I see the LCS crew model, there is a need to remove the traditional learning curve upon arrival," Casamassa explained. "This course

helps alleviate the burden of standard on-the-job-training. For someone like me with no engineering background, the first week of this course, which is all theory, really set the foundation for when we later began to learn the functional operation of the electrical plant itself. It all comes full circle within this course.”

Ensign Zach Bessette will report to USS Shoup (DDG 86) as ELECTRO upon completion of the course.

“I was on the ship for three months before coming to SWOS,” Bessette said. “This course gives you a good base for when you return, I think. It is a lot of information, but the work is manageable.”

ENS Michael Pizzari is heading to USS Gravelly (DDG 107) where he will assume the role of AUXO.

“I was onboard for 80 days before coming here, and I haven’t been to the Basic Division Officer Course yet,” he said. “The AUXO ELECTRO course contains a lot of information, although I tend to be better at hands-on learning. When I was on my ship before, I didn’t know what questions to ask, but this course gives you lots of things to take with you. I’ll definitely know what to ask in the future.”

Capt. Dave Welch, SWOS commanding officer, believes the introduction of courses like AUXO and ELECTRO demonstrate the surface Navy’s commitment to professional education across an officer’s career progression.

“In addition to the Basic and Advanced Division Officer Courses, the SWO community is investing in new and expanded Billet Specialty Training (BST) for division officers and department heads,” Welch said. “We believe in training for our vocation. The AUXO ELECTRO course is crucial to ensuring our engineering division officers have the tools necessary to lead their divisions and to make a significant contribution to their ships.”

SWOS is headquartered in Newport, R.I. and oversees nine learning sites, which provide more than 1,000 courses a year to more than 67,000 Sailors.

SWOS uses a mix of blended-learning techniques comprised of instructor-led classes, hands-on labs, high-fidelity, physics-based simulation and computer-based training. Courses include specialized training supporting all enlisted engineering ratings, and surface warfare officers at every level. Building maritime partnerships, the command also provides training to international students.

For more information about Surface Warfare Officers School, visit <https://www.netc.navy.mil/centers/swos/>.

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