

AIR WAR COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

3,700 USAF JUNIOR ACQUISITION OFFICERS!
REBALANCE USAF MANNING PRIORITIES NOW



by

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Biography

Colonel Kevin Sellers is assigned to the Air War College, Air University, Maxwell AFB, AL. Colonel Sellers entered the Air Force in 1995 as a graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy. His acquisition program manager assignments include the Air Force SEEK EAGLE Office, the Space Based Infrared Systems Ground Systems, the B-52 System Program Office, and the Program Element Monitor for the Engine Component Improvement Program, the Alternative Fuels Program, and the B-2 Spirit Bomber and Long Range Strike Bomber Programs in the Global Strike Division, Directorate of Global Power Programs, Assistant Secretary of the Air Force (Acquisition). Colonel Sellers also served as the Squadron Section Commander for the 552d Aircraft Generation Squadron. From July through December 2003, he deployed to Karshi-Khanabad Airfield, Uzbekistan, as Group Resource Advisor and Squadron Executive Officer, in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. Colonel Sellers' most recent assignments include the Commander, Aircraft Propulsion Operations, General Electric Engines, Defense Contract Management Agency, as the Deputy Commander of the Defense Contract Management Agency Iraq from March 2011 through February 2012 in support of Operation NEW DAWN, and as the Materiel Leader and Branch Chief for the Three-Dimensional Expeditionary Long-Range Radar Program.

Abstract

The United States Air Force (USAF) currently has a manning crisis in the pilot, maintenance, and intelligence officer career fields, among several other career fields in the USAF operations and operations support career fields. The USAF leadership has clearly identified these career fields as the priority for accessing and retaining officers. Yet, the USAF officer career fields have a manning priority imbalance between the USAF mission operations and operations support positions, and the acquisition career fields. The overall intent of this paper is to expose the number of Active Duty (AD) Line of The Air Force (LAF) junior officer positions in the acquisition career fields and to propose an innovative method of educating future USAF acquisition officers. This paper uses a quantitative and qualitative approach to argue that the benefits of the AD LAF acquisition officer direct accessions is not worth the initial resource costs and return on investment relative to higher priority USAF AD LAF manning needs at the junior officer, or Company Grade Officer (CGO), level. This paper then recommends an innovative mid-career USAF acquisition officer cross-flow program to educate new acquisition officers as they embark on a career path towards becoming a USAF senior acquisition leader. The paper provides three recommendations related to building the future USAF AD LAF acquisition career fields. This first recommendation proposes to immediately cease direct officer accessions into the acquisition career fields. The second recommendation involves cross-flowing AD LAF officers in their mid-career timeframe into acquisition. The third recommendation argues for using a combination of the Education with Industry (EWI) program and the Defense Innovation Unit Experimental (DIUx) initiative assignments to enhance newly-accessed USAF acquisition officers' education and training prior to their full integration into the USAF acquisition career field.

Introduction

The United States Air Force (USAF) finds itself in an operations and operations support manning crisis. Recent budget cuts forced difficult manpower reductions decisions that now have proven costly to the Active Duty (AD) Line of the Air Force (LAF) manpower profile, especially to the pilot career fields. The most urgent personnel needs include pilots, maintenance, intelligence and cyber forces.¹ In fact, the USAF faces a 700-person fighter pilot shortage.² The USAF also faces a current shortfall of 350 mobility pilots.³ The USAF leadership states that approximately 1,600 mobility pilots become eligible to separate in the next four years.⁴ The issue has become so perverse that the USAF leadership has called this shortage a national strategic crisis.⁵ This crisis did not occur overnight. And the crisis won't be solved in the immediate one or two years. However, the service can make strategic career fields decisions now to begin to alleviate the manning pressures faced by the USAF's operations and operations support career fields. For the purposes of this paper, the operations career fields include the Air Force Specialty Code's (AFSCs) of Pilot (11X), Combat Systems Officer (12X), Air Battle Manager (13B), Special Tactics Officer (13C), Combat Rescue Officer (13D), Air Liaison Officer (13L), Airfield Operations (13M), Nuclear and Missile Operations (13N), Space Operations (13S), Information Operations (14F), Intelligence (14N), Weather (15W), and Cyberspace Operations (17D).⁶ The operations support career fields include the AFSCs of Aircraft Maintenance (21A), Munitions and Missile Maintenance (21M), and Logistics Readiness (21R).⁷ The acquisition career fields include the AFSCs of Scientist (Operations Research Analyst-61A; Chemist/Biologist-61C; and Physicist/Nuclear Engineer-61D), Developmental Engineer (62E), and Acquisition Manager (63A).⁸

Thesis

This research paper argues that the USAF should stop accessing junior officers directly into the acquisition career fields and should delay entry until the mid-career timeframe to cross-flow officers into the USAF acquisition career fields.

Rationale for Not Directly Accessing Acquisition Officers

The Unequal Costs to the USAF AD LAF and the Benefits to the USAF Acquisition

Enterprise Don't Add Up

The amount of USAF junior-level acquisition career field positions is disproportionately large in comparison to the total USAF AD LAF total numbers and adversely impacts the USAF's ability to fill positions in the operations and operations support career fields. The USAF has 6,409 personnel in acquisition officer positions across the Scientist, Developmental Engineer, and Acquisition Manager career fields.⁹ Of these personnel, approximately 3,700, or 58 percent, of those officers are Company Grade Officers (CGOs) serving at the junior ranks.¹⁰ To put this in context, the USAF has 47,185 total USAF AD LAF officers.¹¹ The USAF AD LAF acquisition officers represent over 13 percent of the entire AD LAF officer population. The CGO acquisition population represents 8 percent of the total AD LAF officer population. Due to laws that limit the total number of AD officers,¹² these acquisition officers adversely impact the USAF's flexibility and options to solve its operations manning crisis because the USAF is held to a certain top-line number of officers allowed in the AD force. However, relative to the size and scope of the DOD and USAF acquisition enterprise, these few thousand positions have lesser significance.

With 156,313¹³ personnel, the Department of Defense (DOD) acquisition enterprise is enormous. The Air Force Materiel Command (AFMC) is the primary the USAF acquisition

organization. AFMC has approximately 80,000 civilian and military personnel spread across the command's six centers.¹⁴ These large numbers reduce the approximately 3,700 junior acquisition officers to a relatively small amount of the overall DoD and USAF acquisition enterprise total. But USAF acquisition leadership remains loathe to giving up these positions to higher priority USAF AD LAF needs. Acquisition leadership opposes releasing these officers for other duties because they represent basically "no-cost" manpower to the headquarters and base-level leaders. The USAF pays for their military salary and other benefits at the service level. But the commands and base-level leadership must budget for similar non-military acquisition personnel such as government civilians and contractors using their own baseline funding.¹⁵ While the USAF AD LAF officer corps struggles with manning issues among operations and operations support career fields, the USAF acquisition enterprise marches on using "no-cost" labor at the expense of the legally-capped AD LAF officer corps. Even with the relatively free labor, research does not suggest that these junior officers make a significant difference in the overall performance of the acquisition enterprise at the USAF or DOD levels.

A review the most recent *Performance of the Defense Acquisition System* document shows some promising results for the overall acquisition enterprise. "This report demonstrates that the DoD is making continuing progress in improving acquisition. The overall series presents strong evidence that the DoD has moved—and is moving—in the right direction with regard to the cost, schedule, and quality of the products we deliver. There is, of course, much more that can be done to improve defense acquisition, but with the 5-year moving average of cost growth on our largest and highest-risk programs at a 30-year low, it is hard to argue that we are not moving in the right direction."¹⁶ The review doesn't provide any insight that any of the individual military services have better outcomes based on manning. The report focuses on cost

and schedule growth issues. “There was no net overrun for any of the military departments in either year and therefore no military department incurred penalties. Thus, all three military departments showed net improvements across their portfolios of programs with original baselines since 2009. This result aligns with our other analysis, indicating that cost growth has improved recently, and it is the programs that started before 2009 that have higher cost growth.”¹⁷ The review clearly points to improvements based on leadership and management focus areas. The report’s first “Principle for Improving Defense Acquisition” states that “People matter most.”¹⁸ The report touts DoD acquisition for improving its mid-career staffing.¹⁹ But further research could not find any quantitative and qualitative data that discusses the impacts of specific sub-sections of acquisition enterprise manning, such as USAF junior officer manpower, that is making a significant difference in the overall DoD or USAF acquisition performance.

The USAF acquisition career fields remain critical to the mission of delivering high-quality, on-time goods and services. But these CGO-level jobs constitute junior-level business and technical management positions that can be accomplished by government civilians and contractors. These positions would be more efficiently and effectively utilized by the USAF AD LAF officer corps in the operations and operations support career fields. Obviously, the USAF can’t immediately transition all these officers or positions to the pilot, maintenance, intelligence or cyber career fields. This isn’t a straight line, one for one comparison either in manpower or budget. It’s about re-defining USAF AD LAF officer position prioritization of limited resources for inherently military positions and war fighting capabilities.

Eliminating junior-level acquisition officer accessions also removes the need for several specific force development cross-flow programs. The Special Experience Exchange Duty programs allow acquisition, logistics and intelligence officers to serve a tour in one of the other

career fields. This tour includes re-directing acquisition personnel to intelligence or logistics career fields for a three or four year tour.²⁰ These programs also have inherent overhead costs of the exchange career field training and education pipelines, as well as headquarters staff time usage at all levels to conduct boards, announce results, and plan personnel moves.

The 3,700 junior-level acquisition officer positions represent USAF organize, train, and equip resources that could be adjusted to higher manpower priorities within the AD LAF, as recently declared by USAF senior leaders. This immediate reallocation of positions would take time to accomplish in the near future. For the long-term, the USAF AD LAF should use these positions in the operations and operations support career fields to meet the challenges as envisioned in the Air Force Future Operating Concept (AFFOC) 2035.

The Air Force Future Operating Concept 2035 Envisions “Operationally Agile” Forces

The AFFOC 2035 is current USAF strategic guidance that states the services need to create “operationally agile” forces.²¹ This guidance includes creating “(a) balanced pool of Airmen...supported by a greater and purposeful differentiation of selection, development, and placement to improve proficiency in multi-domain approaches, mission-critical areas, operational design, full-spectrum operations, and cutting-edge technologies.”²² The AFFOC envisions “(a)irmen who are ready and responsive, and demonstrate general qualities such as critical thinking, adaptive behaviors, innovation, creativity, collaboration, social networking skills, emotional and cognitive intelligence, initiative, and resilience.”²³ The AFFOC further wants to “(e)nsure institutional processes and culture value individual initiative, support productive failure in pursuit of innovation, provide latitude to experiment, and instill a cost-conscious mindset in all Airmen.”²⁴ The AFFOC also desires to “(i)mprove acquisition tradecraft and business acumen by actively managing people with the appropriate education,

training, and skills; and increasing efficiency and effectiveness in acquisition tools and techniques (including disciplines like systems engineering and digital thread tools).”²⁵ The AFFOC defines Performance Optimized Teams by an “(e)volution in the way the service achieves readiness and required performance levels (that) will change the organization, training and equipping of Airmen. As a result of the Air Force’s prioritized focus on critical thinking, adaptive behavior, innovation, and collaboration skills, Airmen will be more agile and effective in the battlespace. Agile Airmen with critical thinking, adaptive behavior, innovation, and collaboration skills team with advanced technology, including Human-System Integration (HSI). Proper HSI empowers humans to excel in tasks that they can do better than machines, while automated systems accomplish the tasks that they can do better than humans.”²⁶ The AFFOC has an aggressive vision for the USAF’s personnel and organization in the year 2035. But based on personal observations of serving with many other acquisition officers who lack an USAF airpower-focused operational mindset, the USAF will not achieve these goals and visions using the current stove-piped and non-operations or operations support USAF acquisition personnel career field development system. The USAF acquisition enterprise will need to modify its organize, train, equip, and employ model to meet these conceptual demands forecasted for 20 years from now. It takes 15 to 20 years to develop and promote USAF officers to the Lieutenant Colonel and Colonel levels. The time is now to completely revise the acquisition personnel cross-flow, education, training, and development system to meet these demands in several decades. The US Army acquisition cross-flow and development model provides the baseline for the USAF to follow in adjusting its current acquisition organize, train, equip, and employ model.

The US Army Acquisition Career Field Cross-Flow Development Model

The US Army model currently cross-flows officers into the acquisition career fields at approximately the seven year career timeframe. This model allows the Army to best develop and utilize junior officers in the traditional US Army combat arms branches. Junior officers gain experience in their operational basic branch and functional areas that “build leadership and competencies for decision-making and managing personnel, equipment and funding resources.”²⁷ According to a senior US Army acquisition officer, the US Army also values the company command experiences in the combat arms branches that further enhance the officer’s ability to “communicate intent, desired end-state, concept of operation, and understanding of the situation so subordinates can take initiative consistent with the mission.”²⁸ The mid-level and senior-level officers are expected to be “agile, innovative, and adaptive leaders within increasingly complex and uncertain environments.”²⁹ The US Army senior acquisition officer further stated that the most effective “mid- and senior-level acquisition officers are those who communicate effectively, think critically, and are able to build and lead organizations under mission command in support of the warfighting force.”³⁰ This US Army acquisition professional believes the current US Army acquisition cross-flow model facilitates officer development to serve “in the operating and generating force, while also providing a more capable US Army acquisition officer that is able to adapt and perform in the world of cost, schedule, and performance.”³¹ Just as the US Army delays officer entry into the acquisition career fields, the USAF also uses Test Pilot School (TPS) as a model for delayed entry into the acquisition career field as well.

Proposed Model for USAF Mid-Career Officer Cross-Flow into the Acquisition Career Fields

Leverage the Proven Test Pilot School Model

A “delayed-entry into acquisition” career path worked for several current and previous USAF senior acquisition leaders. Several recent officers that served, or are currently serving, in the permanent position of the Military Deputy, Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition (the SAF/AQ MilDep) each began their careers as USAF operational pilots. From their aviation tours at the junior level, they progressed into TPS and then to several test pilot positions prior to their cross-flow into the acquisition career field. Lieutenant General (Lt Gen) Mark Shackelford served as the SAF/AQ MilDep from October 2008 to November 2011. He served as a pilot for the first nine years of his USAF career prior to entering the year-long TPS. Lt Gen Shackelford then served as an experimental test pilot for another three and one-half years before making the formal transition into acquisition.³² Similarly, Lt Gen Charles Davis served as the SAF/AQ MilDep from May 2012 to September 2014. He also began as a student pilot, T-38 instructor pilot, and F-15 operational pilot for the initial eight years of his career prior to TPS. He then served as an experimental test pilot for four years. This follow-on tours included two years with USAF Test and Evaluation Directorate at the Pentagon and another two years as a Flight Test Squadron Commander.³³ The current SAF/AQ MilDep, Lt Gen Arnold Bunch, started his career as a B-52 pilot for the first six years of his career. He then spent the next five years going through TPS and as a test pilot, along with a two year tour as a Flight Test Squadron Commander a few years later.³⁴ Of note, Lt Gen’s Shackelford and Davis did not attend Intermediate Developmental Education (IDE) In-residence.^{35,36} This is an important data

point in USAF officer force development. IDE In-residence attendance is an indicator of future promotion to senior leadership. Lt Gen's Shackelford and Davis overcame this missing biographical ingredient due to their overall superior performance and their cross-flow in TPS and follow-on test pilot assignments that precluded IDE In-residence attendance. Lt Gen Bunch, having entered TPS at the six year point of his career, still managed to attend IDE In-residence based on his career path timing.³⁷ All three of these Lt Gen's still attended Senior Developmental Education (SDE) In-residence after their test pilot transition^{38,39,40} to facilitate their senior officer-level ascent into the general officer ranks. The operational pilot to test pilot to acquisition officer and senior leader has proven to develop a robust, well-rounded USAF officer ready to lead in the joint force arena and at the highest levels of the USAF acquisition system. The USAF should follow this proven career field track to embrace and execute a similar operations or operations support career path to acquisition for non-rated officers. These recent, clear examples should provide reassurance to USAF senior leaders that a 'delayed-entry into acquisition' model can and does work. An Education with Industry (EWI) program assignment should acts as an alternative to TPS for mid-career USAF acquisition officer accessions. The Defense Innovation Unit Experimental (DIUx) should then follow EWI and act as the alternative to the post-TPS operational assignment.

The Education with Industry Program

The USAF EWI program attracts and selects highly qualified officers to serve a 10-month assignment with defense industry corporate partners and non-defense industry leaders.⁴¹ "The USAF derives benefit from first-person insight into the philosophy, procedures and practices of industry. The students fully examine industry polices and processes, as well as how industry addresses issues. In doing so, students acquire the ability to interpret the needs of the

USAF in industry terms. By studying best practices of industry, students are able to bring new knowledge, understanding, and empathy back into the USAF to improve its processes. This direct insight and experience are unavailable elsewhere in the USAF.”⁴² The USAF has identified and promoted EWI as its only training program to understand industry.⁴³ The USAF acquisition enterprise deals directly with industry on delivering world-class capabilities. The EWI program would provide an accelerated for-profit, business-focused education and training for those selected for the mid-career acquisition career field cross-flow. Upon completion of the 10-month EWI program, the new acquisition officer should then proceed to a DIUx office for a master’s-level education and training experience that teaches personnel how to ‘fail fast’ to more rapidly improve the process to succeed in delivering the system or service more quickly.

The Defense Innovation Unit Experimental Initiative

Former Secretary of Defense Ash Carter established the DIUx in 2015 to “accelerate innovations to the warfighter.”⁴⁴ “In the past, government funding spurred significant technology development; today, that trend has shifted: commercial investment now propels the preponderance of ground-breaking technology development. Much of this technology is of significant interest to the DoD (e.g. virtual reality, autonomy, cyber defense, etc.), but, the high barriers to entry, including the long timelines inherent to the federal acquisition system, make the DoD an unattractive customer for many companies on selling to the commercial market.”⁴⁵ DoD Directive (DoDD) 5105.85, signed by former Secretary of Defense Ash Carter on 5 July 2016, ‘re-booted’ the previously established DIUx from 2015. DIUx currently has a presence in the Silicon Valley, California area, in the Boston, Massachusetts area, and in the Austin, Texas, area. This directive “(e)stablishes the mission, organization and management, responsibilities and functions, relationships, authorities, and administration of DIUx” and “(e)stablishes an internal

governance council, the DIUx Technology Review Group, to oversee the activities of DIUx.”⁴⁶ Per the DoDD, DIUx’s mission is to “(f)unction as an interface node between the DoD, entrepreneurs, start-up firms and commercial technology companies to increase DoD access to leading edge commercial technologies and technical talent.”⁴⁷

Because DIUx is envisioned as a Silicon Valley-type business ‘start-up,’ it directly supports the Secretary of Defense outside of the DoD or military service acquisition enterprise chain of command. The Managing Partner reports to the Secretary of Defense’s designee.⁴⁸ Thus, Secretary Carter wanted this organization to remain outside the traditional bureaucratic, unimaginative traditional defense acquisition system. Along with the Managing Partner, DIUx has several other partners who support the Managing Partner as the overall leadership team. The DIUx Technology Review Group oversees projects and tracks progress of those projects to the DIUx partners.⁴⁹ Among the many partners’ functions, these leaders “(i)nform the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC) of any DIUx activities that should be coordinated with the Military Service rapid acquisition cells, and briefs DIUx activities to these bodies at appropriate intervals.”⁵⁰ While independent from the services, DIUx still retains the responsibility to coordinate activities with the DoD’s JROC on potential programs of interest to military services that might be useful in on-going programs. DIUx retains broad discretion to execute its mission. DIUx has ‘fast-track’ authority to “(r)equest waivers to selected requirements of DoD regulations, directives, instructions, or other policy related to the responsibilities and functions assigned in this issuance.”⁵¹ Most of the DIUx personnel include operations and operations support officers who are experts in their career fields at the junior officer level. A few of the more senior personnel include traditional acquisition officers.⁵² But the flat organizational construct has the operational and operational support tactical and technical

experts leading the various projects at the lowest level based on an agile technology business start-up construct that is pervasive throughout Silicon Valley and other technology hubs.

DIUx uses a rapid contracting tool called the Commercial Solutions Opening (CSO) ‘to move at the speed of business’ based on an existing concept from Other Transaction Authorities. “In order to access cutting-edge technology from companies focused on selling to the commercial market, DoD must change the way it does business and adapt to commercial best practices. To this end, DIUx initiated a first-of-its-kind contracting mechanism called the...CSO. The CSO is the mechanism by which DIUx solicits solutions to problems that our warfighters are facing.”⁵³ As an initial metric of success, DIUx awarded 12 agreements for 36 million dollars, in the first quarter of the CSO launch, with an average of 59 days from when a company first submits a solution.⁵⁴ Because of its usefulness, DIUx published the CSO Guide for potential implementation across the DoD defense enterprise.

Of the 36 million dollars contracted for in Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 after re-launch, DIUx funded 8.3 million dollars of that total as a government independent research and development innovation-type money. Various DoD customers provided the remaining cost-sharing amount.⁵⁵ This arrangement incentivizes DIUx to properly scope out the initial effort and get the project kick-started while the requirement owner can provide more funding beyond the original scope of technology effort if it proves some merit for continuation. The FY16 projects include working with a company called Tanium in California which will “provide cyber defense operators the ability to react more quickly to threats as they pop up..(by having) near real-time visibility and control of network endpoints.”⁵⁶ The DoD is also funding an effort with Saildrone in California to investigate “wind-powered autonomous sailing platforms that can operate on the surface of the water to provide persistent maritime surveillance and reconnaissance...with the need for manned

crews and human pilots.”⁵⁷ The Air National Guard is working on a wireless, hands-free, ears-free, communicator from the Sonitus company. This would “adapt commercially available hands-free, ears-free, two-way removable communications devices...that are placed in the mouth and integrate wirelessly to radios and offer clear communications in high noise environments.”⁵⁸ With DoD leadership excited about the results, DIUx has identified an additional 65 million dollars worth of anticipated projects for FY17.⁵⁹

The *2017 Defense Posture Statement* says “this era of technological competition is uniquely characterized by an additional variable of speed, such that leading the race now depends on who can out-innovate faster than everyone else. It’s no longer just a matter of what we buy; what also matters is how we buy things, how quickly we buy them, whom we buy them from, and how quickly and creatively we’re able to upgrade them and repurpose them to be used in different and innovative ways to stay ahead of future threats.”⁶⁰ The DIUx initiative is exactly the type of innovation-minded transition assignment, in conjunction with EWI, to leverage mid-career officer cross-flows from operations and operations support career fields to the acquisition career fields to help mitigate the current manning shortfalls and prepare officers to meet the challenges as described in AFFOC 2035.

Recommendations

The USAF has an opportunity based on the current manning crisis to re-imagine the timing and method of the USAF acquisition career field education and development system. First, immediately re-direct all acquisition career field officer accessions to USAF higher priority operations and operations support career fields. The USAF should stop accessing the roughly 400-500 officers per year into the acquisition enterprise.⁶¹ Some will object to this because this is not how the system worked for them and they were successful. Still others will object because

of the “no-cost” support the junior acquisition officers provide for the specific acquisition mission at their particular system program management office. The USAF and DoD acquisition will not crumble with the absence of USAF acquisition junior officers. The USAF acquisition enterprise contains approximately 80,000 civilian and military personnel. The approximately 3,700 USAF junior acquisition officers represent a small portion of the DoD and USAF acquisition workforce. However, these 3,700 officers represent a much larger proportion of the legally-capped USAF AD LAF officer corps. This personnel re-direct action will create minor, but certainly acceptable risk within the USAF acquisition enterprise. In the near-term, this action begins to alleviate the manning requirements demand and reduce risk within those more important airpower-related operations and operations support career fields. The USAF personnel system is focused on making the pilot, maintenance, intelligence and cyber career fields more healthy. In the long-term, this delayed cross-flow action will allow a total re-imaging of the acquisition officer career field development without the pressures of managing continued accessions. This action supports the process to adapt the USAF to meet the challenges proscribed in AFFOC 2035 including the pursuit of “operationally agile” forces.

Second, re-imagine the acquisition officer career field development with the cross-flow of approximately 200 officers, or about half the current direct accession amount of over 400, into the several acquisition career fields at the seven to nine year career point. This action would follow the current US Army acquisition career field cross-flow and development model. Waiting until after several operational or operational support assignments allows the officers to continue to develop and demonstrate leadership skills at the tactical level in more airpower-focused career fields. These officers would then bring their operational or operational support expertise into the acquisition enterprise. This influx of talent and experience would provide the program offices

with an infusion of technical skills and mission credibility that would enhance the program's ability to understand the performance requirements and give more meaning and sense of urgency to delivering the desired system on-time and within budget. To raise the profile of potential acquisition career field applicants, consider including a bonus structure into this competitive selection cross-flow program or allowing current bonus recipients to keep earning their contracted bonus amounts.

Third, educate and train the new acquisition officers using a deliberately structured 10-month EWI assignment based on the current EWI program. Then follow the EWI assignment with a two year DIUx assignment prior to full integration into the formal acquisition career fields. This model would follow the operational pilot to test pilot to acquisition career field followed by several recent senior leaders. The USAF would still need to integrate the traditional Defense Acquisition University courses into each officer's training plan to meet DoD policies for appropriate Acquisition Professional Development Program specialty certification requirements. Further, the USAF should investigate incorporating a business master's degree requirement embedded with the EWI and DIUx assignments focused on innovative business practices. The USAF should also consider granting IDE In-residence credit for those completing the EWI and DIUx program if the overall program contains both a master's degree and an Air Command and Staff College Non-resident completion requirements.

The DIUx concept and current organizational and operational environments provides the USAF a unique opportunity to re-imagine its initial acquisition career field education and training system by having its acquisition officer first experience a for-profit, technology-era organization. By delaying acquisition officer accession until the seven to nine year officer career timeframe, the USAF can reduce risk in near-term by supporting current manning shortfalls in

operational and mission support higher priority career fields such as pilots, maintenance and cyber forces. Besides supporting the current and anticipated near-term institutional manning pressures and requirements, this acquisition officer accession delay actually enhances these officers' USAF career by developing an operationally-agile officer that brings robust tactical expertise from an actual USAF operations or operations support career field to the acquisition enterprise as envisioned by AFFOC 2035. Not only would these officers have a greater sense of the war fighter focus, these officers would also first experience for-profit business on-the-job training and experience via EWI, along with a business innovation education prior to experiencing the more traditional acquisition career field. This creates a balanced acquisition professional with a broad leadership background and a unique educational foundation. Additionally, this acquisition accession delay actually inoculates the officer from experiencing the bureaucratic, not-for-profit mindset that entraps the defense acquisition enterprise system. The EWI to DIUx progression, with an innovative business master's degree requirement, will prepare the prospective acquisition officer with a for-profit business mindset with a foundation of principled risk-taking. The acquisition officer will then have a better foundation, based on industry best practices, of how to get the most out of the personnel and funding resources provided to them.

Conclusion

The USAF AD LAF faces a manpower shortage in many operations and operations support career fields. The USAF AD LAF has a manning cap that keeps the officer corps limited to how many officers can serve at various grades. The USAF AD LAF acquisition corps currently holds over 6,400 of these positions. Several thousand of these positions at the more senior level are justified and needed to lead and manage high-visibility, critical scientific,

engineering and acquisition programs. However, 3,700 of these total USAF AD authorized officer positions are consumed by direct accession, junior-level officers serving in business office and technical jobs that can be just as effectively and efficiently accomplished by government civilians or contractor personnel. The USAF should accept mission risk in the acquisition enterprise and immediately cease all direct accessions into the acquisition career fields. Future junior officers should be placed into operations or operations support positions, in lieu of acquisition positions, that have a greater impact on day-to-day USAF operations and operations support missions around the world.

The USAF should delay officer entry into the acquisition career field until the seven to nine year career timeframe. This will allow for officers to gain tactical-level leadership skills and a better grasp of airpower's capabilities and limits. The USAF should develop and implement an innovative cross-flow training structure modeled by the operations to test pilot to acquisition career path. The EWI program and DIUx initiative provide new acquisition cross-flow officers a for-profit business perspective in focusing on delivering on-time, within-budget systems that meet customer performance expectations based on current 'speed of business and technology' industry standards.

The results of the delayed acquisition entry, and the EWI and DIUx cross-flow education system, would produce an acquisition officer that can more easily translate warfighter requirements and perspectives into their leadership roles as officers and acquisition professionals. This career field development model, based on the current US Army acquisition officer development system, supports the vision of the AFFOC 2035 "operationally agile" force. This model also alleviates the manning pressures on the USAF in critical operations or operations support career fields at the junior officer level. Creating the innovative EWI and

DIUx education and training pipeline would help inoculate the acquisition officers from acculturating into the acquisition system where failures become a routine, accepted practice with cost overruns, schedule delays, and/or low or degraded performance in the delivered system. Also, these future acquisition officers would be better prepared and possess more credibility to lead and manage in an USAF business-type office environment. These officers would have sharpened their tactical skills and leadership abilities in a decidedly more direct airpower-focused environment in the USAF's operations or operations support career fields. These competitively-selected officers would be presented to the USAF acquisition career field at the right time in their ascent to the senior-level ranks ready to lead people and manage programs more effectively and efficiently in the 21st century.



Notes

¹ Stephen Losey, "Officer Who Played Key Role in Personnel Policy Picked to Lead the Air Force Personnel Center," *Air Force Times*, 4 April 2017, <https://www.airforcetimes.com/articles/brig-gen-kelly-to-be-next-head-of-afpc>.

² Deborah Lee James and General David Goldfein, "The US Air Force Is Short 700 Fighter Pilots. Here's Our Plan to Fix That," *Defense One*, 14 July 2016, <http://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2016/07/us-air-force-short-700-fighter-pilots-our-plan/129907>.

³ General Carlton D. Everhart II, Commander, Air Mobility Command. (Lecture, Air War College, Maxwell AFB, AL, 9 February 2017).

⁴ General Everhart, (Lecture, 9 February 2017).

⁵ General Everhart, (Lecture, 9 February 2017).

⁶ Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel and Services (AF/A1), "Career Field Health Charts" (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters U.S. Air Force, 31 January 2017), 5-17.

⁷ AF/A1, "Career Field Health Charts," 18-20.

⁸ AF/A1, "Career Field Health Charts," 27-30.

⁹ AF/A1, "Career Field Health Charts," 30.

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