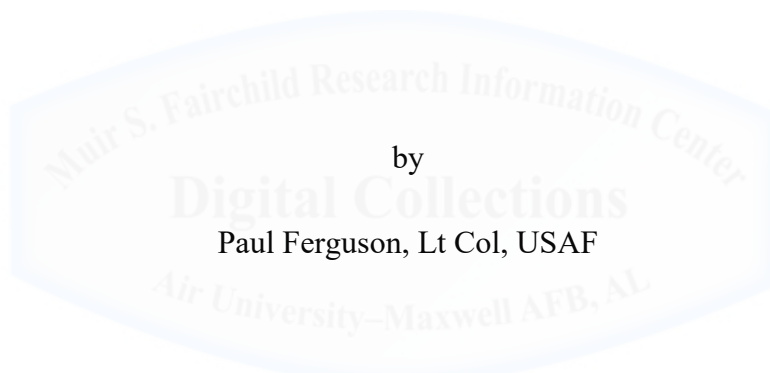


AIR WAR COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

TRUE GRIT: GETTING AFTER RESILIENCE THROUGH OFFICER
PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION



A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty

In Partial Fulfillment of the Graduation Requirements

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Biography

Lieutenant Colonel Paul Ferguson is a Senior Developmental Education Student at Air War College, Air University, Maxwell Air Force Base (AFB), Alabama. After graduating from the United States Air Force Academy, Ferguson gained operational experience as an aircraft maintenance officer with Air Mobility Command. He gained a user's perspective while retiring the C-141B Starlifter and transitioning operations to the C-17A Globemaster III at McChord AFB, Washington. After that foundational experience, the colonel transitioned into acquisition management when he managed supply chains with Air Force Materiel Command at Ogden Air Logistics Center, Hill AFB, Utah. He then took his uniformed perspective to industry during an assignment with the Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA) at Boeing Seattle, Washington. While with DCMA in Seattle, Ferguson served as a Program Integrator and deployed to multiple locations in support of contingency operations across Asia. After this exposure to contract administration and combat operations, he broadened into force development with assignments at the Air Force Personnel Center and with the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition. Prior to his current position, Ferguson served two tours in consecutive board-screened squadron level leadership positions; first, as Commander, DCMA United Kingdom, Royal Air Force Wyton, England; second, as Materiel Leader, Range Systems Branch, Hill AFB, Utah.

Abstract

Life is tough. Everyone experiences some degree of hardship, failure, or catastrophe. Those things do not define us as human beings; they certainly do not define commissioned officers in the United States Air Force (USAF). How we respond to hardship, failure, or catastrophe does.

Resiliency theory describes the promotive and protective factors people can use to succeed despite setbacks, learn from failures, and bounce back from adversity that might otherwise break us down. The Center for Leadership and Character Development at the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) requested a deep analysis of the unique experience at the USAFA and how that experience influences the development of grit. In July 2019, a doctoral dissertation from the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs answered that call and confirmed the statistically and practically significant associations between resilience and performance. This paper considers that analysis and those conclusions as they apply more broadly across the entirety of the USAF's continuum of officer developmental experiences at Air University (AU), Maxwell AFB, Alabama.

Introduction

Everyone experiences adversity, trying or unfortunate circumstances. Nobody escapes life without experiencing some form of adversity along the way. Adversity can come in the form of a low-grade fever, it can come in the form of a serious trauma, or it can come as something in between. Adversity can be self-imposed, imposed by others, or simply an unfortunate act of God. The one thing I can say about adversity with absolute certainty is: it is coming.

Some of the most trying adversities come when people wage war. Though one could make a credible argument that the USAF has been on a wartime footing since the early 1990s, it is fair to say American Airmen have been at war since 0846 Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) on Tuesday, September 11, 2001. At that moment, the world stopped turning when American Airlines Flight 11 slammed into the north side of the World Trade Center's (WTC's) North Tower. A short 17 minutes later, United Airlines Flight 175 slammed into the south side of the WTC's South Tower. With the nation reeling, at 0937 EDT, American Airlines Flight 77 crashed into the Pentagon and, at 1003 EDT, United Airlines Flight 93 crashed into a field outside Shanksville, Pennsylvania. In those 77 minutes and in the hours that followed, thousands of Americans perished, and all Americans experienced adversity as few could recall. Without a doubt, American Airmen have been facing adversity in war ever since.

In October 2001, the battlefield shifted from New York, Washington D.C., and Pennsylvania to austere foreign fields in places like Afghanistan and Iraq. Those warfighting environments are difficult and dangerous. In those environments, even the best-trained, most well-equipped, and most battle-hardened professionals are subject to adversity. Things seldom go according to plan. Mental fatigue and failure are real. Especially when faced with this type of adversity in these types of environments, resilience is critical.

Being resilient “is distinct from mere survival, and more than mere endurance. Resilience is often endurance with direction.”¹ It is an important characteristic. It is no wonder that Officer Professional Military Education Policy (OPMEP) directs that Joint Professional Military Education (JPME) institutions, “produce resilient and adaptive national security practitioners.”² Just as the USAF has an obligation to organize, train, and equip Airmen to succeed when conducting the Nation’s business, it has an obligation to train and educate Airmen about what it takes to be resilient. As every USAF officer will undergo at least one developmental experience at Air University (AU) in the course of their career, leaders at AU should develop and utilize resilience-building activities throughout the continuum of officer development.



Thesis

When considering the contribution of resilience and passion to the overall concept of leadership development, research shows resilience has a more significant relationship with leadership than does passion. This suggests, instead of developing policies and programs to chase resilience *and* passion, the USAF should focus on developing resilience in its officers. As every USAF officer will undergo at least one developmental experience at AU in the course of their career, leaders at AU should develop and utilize resilience-building activities throughout the continuum of officer development.



Background on Resilience

In his work, *Understanding Resilience – The Relationship Between USAFA Cadet Grit-S Scores and Cadet Development*, Justin Stoddard speculated, while it may be “difficult to imagine the challenges and adversities faced by military service members without actually walking in their boots, it is not difficult to understand the need to support, train and prepare service members to effectively confront adversity before they head into harm’s way.”³ This is where the USAFA and Air Education and Training Command (AETC) come in. USAFA prepares cadets and, through AU, AETC prepares officers to be the resilient leaders the USAF needs.⁴

The Center for Character and Leadership Development at USAFA recognized the importance of resilience in today’s fight. Leaders there requested a study of the unique experience at the USAFA and how that experience influences the development of grit. In July 2019, Stoddard answered that call. In his dissertation, Stoddard used the Grit-S survey (which consists of a passion subscore and a resilience subscore) to analyze data provided by over 5,400 USAFA cadets over more than nine years. Stoddard’s quantitative analysis of the associations between Grit-S score, passion subscore, resilience subscore, and over 30 different cadet variables identified trends. Through that work, Stoddard confirmed the significant associations between grit variables and performance. Stoddard’s work suggests resilience is more important than passion and, to develop resilience, suggested there is “considerable value” in classroom work.

These associations and suggestions apply directly throughout the continuum of officer professional development. They apply at the USAFA, just as they do at AU. In the following pages, I will explore how leaders at AU might utilize Stoddard’s work to better equip Airmen to be resilient in the face of adversity.

Opportunities to Enhance Resilience Education at Air University

Air University (AU) resides on Maxwell AFB, Alabama. As the sign on the gate to Maxwell AFB says, AU is the intellectual and leadership-development center of the Air Force. The majority of Air Force officers begin their careers at Maxwell, either by earning their commissions at Officer Training School (OTS) or by undergoing Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps (AFROTC) Field Training. Air Force officers who commission at the USAFA are the exception, but, as Squadron Officer School (SOS) is a *de facto* requirement for promotion to the rank of major, AU touches every Air Force officer who serves a career beyond the rank of captain. As either or both Air Command and Staff College (ACSC) and Air War College (AWC) are the most likely options for in-residence developmental education for Air Force majors and lieutenant colonels (respectively), AU blood runs through every Air Force field grade officer's veins. All Air Force officers can benefit from enhanced resilience education, and that education should be happening through AU, an institution that can take advantage of Stoddard's research in unique ways. There are three discrete officer professional military education programs at AU – SOS, ACSC, and AWC. All three could be strengthened and enhanced by weaving resilience throughout and between programs.

Define Terms, Constraints, Assumptions

A simple Google search indicates there are about 197 million definitions of resilience. While the majority of those definitions share similarities, there tend to be subtle and/or meaningful differences. Inevitably, those differences reflect the perspectives and biases of the source. Since I will consider resiliency in the context of USAF force development, similar to Stoddard's study, it is appropriate that I consider the USAF's definition of resilience. The USAF adopted the definition of resilience put forth by the Defense Centers of Excellence of

Psychological and Traumatic Brain Injury. According to that definition, resilience is, “The ability to withstand, recover and/or grow in the face of stressors and changing demands.”⁵

This definition incorporates the verbs, “withstand, recover, and grow.” Those words connote a dynamic ability that can (and perhaps should) change over time. These abilities link to mental health, an individual concept for which there is no “one size fits all” solution. When thinking about individual concepts for which there is no “one size fits all” solution in a USAF context, it is important to recognize existing programs. Programs exist for good reason. Consider Green Dot, the USAF’s annual bystander intervention program aimed at reducing sexual harassment and sexual assault incidents, for example. Green Dot exists for a noble purpose, but its usefulness is a function of execution at the point of impact. Some Green Dot exercises hit the mark; some do not. Like other existing programs, Green Dot is positive, but it is not enough.

Clearly, there is room for improvement. Accordingly, I will consider individual experiences at each AU school in aggregate, consider experiences at other joint and sister service schools, and seek to make “one size fits most” recommendations.

Squadron Officer School

The SOS in-residence program at Maxwell AFB is currently a 6.5-week educational experience for USAF captains. The purpose of SOS is “to help develop solution-minded, bold and courageous Airmen ready to overcome today’s and tomorrow’s challenges.”⁶ USAF policy is that 100% of captains attend SOS in-residence.⁷ To give the nearly 21,000 active duty USAF captains an opportunity to experience SOS, the school graduates nearly 4,700 USAF total force officers, international officers, and civilians annually.⁸ Since SOS is a requirement for USAF officers to be promoted to the rank of major, the nearly 27,000 active duty USAF Field Grade and General Officers are SOS graduates.⁹ These are staggering numbers. Weaving resiliency

theory into the SOS curriculum represent an opportunity to grow resilience across the entire USAF officer corps.

Existing and Developing Programs

In late 2019, SOS initiated an elective program dubbed “Task Force Hope” (TFH). TFH is designed to bring young officers together to consider the causes of moral injury, brainstorm possible changes to address those causes, flush-out possible organizational changes or improvements to address those causes, and propose actionable options to leadership. TFH briefs its best actionable options to the SOS Commandant, the SOS Vice Commandant, SOS Squadron Commanders, the SOS Dean, and others. SOS leadership considers TFH proposals and takes appropriate action. For example, if TFH suggests changes to the SOS curriculum, leadership can implement changes immediately. If TFH suggests something broader, leadership can connect TFH to external stakeholders as necessary. At the time of this writing, only two SOS classes had participated in TFH. The first out-briefed the SOS Commandant with suggestions for how the USAF could destigmatize mental health screening enterprise-wide. While some of the suggestions were not directly actionable by AU leadership, other suggestions were.¹⁰ Most recently, the second SOS class that participated in TFH out-briefed the AU Commander. The final outcome of that brief is still pending, but the idea that TFH put captains in front of a lieutenant general to discuss grassroots thoughts on resilience is a step in the right direction. That idea indicates young Air Force captains are eager to solve problems, looking to find and address causes of moral injury, and taking action to curb suicide in our Air Force.

Air Command and Staff College

ACSC is a “rigorous 10-month graduate-level program taught through intensive small group seminars and engaging lectures.”¹¹ The 499 students who graduated from ACSC in 2019

included 307 active duty USAF majors, 72 majors and lieutenant commanders from sister services, 78 international officers, 19 majors from the Air Force Reserve Component, and 23 civilians.¹² Students who complete all of the ACSC resident program's curriculum and criteria requirements are awarded Intermediate Developmental Education (IDE) credit, JPME phase 1 credit, and the Master of Military Operational Art and Science (MMOAS) degree.¹³ While the IDE, JPME, and MMOAS degree requirements constrain ACSC's core curriculum, ACSC students "have the opportunity to conduct research and participate in elective courses that explore topics of varying interests."¹⁴ Research and elective opportunities offer potential avenues to explore resiliency theory and address moral injury.

Since IDE is a requirement for promotion to the rank of lieutenant colonel and most of the USAF's nearly 9,800 active duty lieutenant colonels receive IDE credit via ACSC, the research and elective opportunities at ACSC represent a way to deepen understanding of resilience theory and moral injury for a significant number (if not the majority) of USAF leaders.¹⁵

Existing and Emerging Programs

Several existing courses in the ACSC resident program touch on topics related to resiliency. For example, ACSC's core *Leadership Development* course has an entire phase devoted to the ethical foundations of military leadership. During that phase, *Leadership Development* students explore the purpose of leadership, wisdom and justice, courage and temperance – all topics related to resilience. The ACSC Commandant Lecture Series presentations may also touch on topics related to resiliency. Likewise, ACSC's elective courses that touch on topics related to resilience include, but are not limited to:

Transforming Toxic Leadership
The Psychology of Leadership

Leadership: An Evidence Based Approach
Leaders by Design: Becoming a Leader Worth Following
Leading Change and Transformation
Foundations of Leadership Coaching

Each of those courses addresses topics related to resilience, but does not directly address how the USAF might grow resilience. That is not to say any of these courses are deficient, but rather highlights an opportunity to build off these ideas and modify course content or add a course about how the USAF might grow resilience.

Students in the ACSC and AWC resident program can also opt to participate in the Surgeon General Research Task Force. A single line of effort (LOE) for the Surgeon General Research Task Force in 2020 is to explore Senior Leader Resiliency (SLR). The SLR LOE is framing the challenge of why Senior Airmen (defined as “Commanders, Chiefs, Flag Officers, and other Senior Officers”) “crash and burn because they did something stupid.” The SLR LOE hopes to frame the problem and move this important research forward in Spring 2020.

An issue for the existing and emerging ACSC programs discussed above is that they are not required for all ACSC students. They are optional research tracks and elective courses. The majority of ACSC students will not learn of the work accomplished by students in those research tracks or electives because there is currently no requirement to present results to the entire student population. Additionally, the existing and emerging programs discussed above are limited to the ACSC resident program. While the ACSC resident program shapes hundreds of USAF majors annually, the ACSC non-resident, or distance learning (DL), program shapes thousands. This suggests that ACSC initiatives to promote resilience will have a higher return on investment if they consider and apply to the ACSC-DL program in addition to the ACSC resident program.

Air War College

AWC is a 10-month graduate-level program taught through a mix of small group seminars and large group lectures. The 240 students who began the program in 2019 included 105 active duty USAF colonels and lieutenant colonels; 48 colonels, captains, lieutenant colonels, and commanders from sister services; 44 international officers; 17 colonels and lieutenant colonels from the Air Force Reserve Component; and 23 civilians.¹⁶ Like ACSC, the AWC resident curriculum consists of core and elective courses. Officers who complete all of the ACSC resident program's curriculum and criteria requirements are awarded Senior Developmental Education (SDE) credit, JPME phase 2 credit, and the Master of Strategic Studies (MSS) degree. Again like ACSC, the SDE, JPME, and MSS degree requirements constrain AWC's core curriculum, but the research and elective opportunities at AWC offer potential avenues to explore resiliency theory.

Existing and Emerging Programs

Like ACSC, several existing courses in the AWC resident program touch on topics related to resiliency. Those courses include *Strategic Leadership and the Profession of Arms*, *Grand Strategy Strategic Leadership and the Profession of Arms*, *Grand Strategy Field Studies*, and *Joint Warfighting Warfare*. Additionally, again like ACSC, AWC's Commandant Lecture Series presentations may touch on topics related to resiliency. AWC's elective courses that may touch on topics related to resilience include, but are not limited to:

Creative Thinking

Right, Wrong, and In-Between: Philosophy and Ethics for Senior Leaders

Expeditionary Leadership in World War II

Adaptive Conflict Management

Overcoming the Fog of Culture: Tools for the Senior Warfighter

Great Captains: Timeless Leadership Lessons from Military Commanders

Leaders by Design

North Star Leadership

Each of those courses address topics related to resilience, but do not directly address how the USAF might foster resilience. That is not to say any of these courses are deficient, but, as with ACSC, highlights an opportunity to build off these ideas, modify curricula, and/or add a course about how the USAF might grow resilience.

Like their peers in ACSC's resident program, students in the AWC resident program who participate in the Surgeon General's Research Task Force might focus their studies on the SLR LOE. Otherwise, if an AWC student wants to study matters directly related to resilience, he or she would have to find a professor to sponsor individual research. That stifles all but the most focused interest. Pragmatically, AWC's current curriculum for the resident program does not offer any specific options that focus explicitly on resilience. Again, that is not to say the current AWC resident program is deficient, but rather highlights an opportunity to build off these ideas and modify curricula or add a course about how the USAF might grow resilience.

An issue for the existing and emerging AWC programs discussed above is that they are not required for all AWC students. They are optional research tracks and elective courses. The majority of AWC students will not learn of the work accomplished by students in those research tracks or electives because there is currently no requirement to present results to the entire student population. Additionally, the existing and emerging programs discussed above are limited to the AWC resident program. While the AWC resident program shapes hundreds of USAF colonels and lieutenant colonels annually, the AWC non-resident, or DL, program shapes thousands. This suggests that AWC initiatives to promote resilience will have a higher return on investment if they consider and apply to the AWC-DL program in addition to the AWC resident program.

A Look at Our Past

Longtime faculty at AWC remember a lesson or two in the core curriculum (specifically in the *Strategic Leadership and the Profession of Arms* course), in which all AWC students were exposed to resilience as a concept and an emerging theory. Unfortunately, the faculty who recall teaching lessons on resiliency were not able to provide historical course or program documentation to substantiate those memories. Consequently, I was not able to review documentation to determine how feasible it would be to simply “blow the dust off” those plans and integrate them into the contemporary academic program. Regardless, the idea that AWC and ACSC could integrate a cursory exposure to resilience theory has merit. Given that OPMEP directs JPME institutions to “produce resilient and adaptive national security practitioners,” it stands to reason that graduates of JPME institutions would have some knowledge of what it means to be resilient and how one might foster resiliency.

In years past, ACSC and AWC fostered connections between officers through intramural athletic competitions. Today, AWC alone does that – through Jim Thorpe Sports Day Competitions (“Jim Thorpe” for short). Jim Thorpe is a competition amongst War Colleges that occurs late in the academic year. Jim Thorpe teams train throughout the year and, in so doing, forge interpersonal bonds that promote resilience. Jim Thorpe is positive, but there are some gaps. Not all AWC students participate in Jim Thorpe and Jim Thorpe does not include Command and Staff Colleges.

Returning to the original consideration: in years past, ACSC and AWC participated in an intramural sports program. Teams from both colleges trained as AWC’s Jim Thorpe teams train today. They forged interpersonal bonds, promoting resilience, as they prepared to represent their school in competition against their local counterparts. In 2012, for example, I participated in

intramurals as a member of the ACSC shotgun team. As a member of that team, I trained with my ACSC peers and my AWC superiors and I represented ACSC when I shot in competition against AWC. My classmates did the same as they trained to represent ACSC in softball, soccer, cross-country, etc. That intramural program does not exist today, but it easily could. If the goal is to build resilience within officers, between officers, and across AU programs, reinitiating the ACSC-AWC intramural sports program would be a step in the right direction.

A Look at Other JPME Institutions

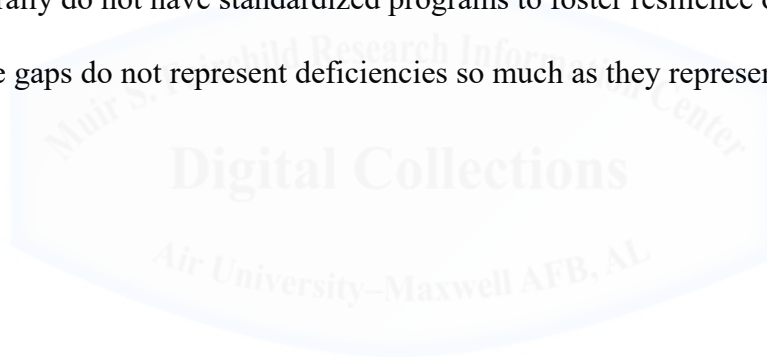
A catalog review and selected syllabi review of other JPME institutions – the National War College,¹⁷ Army War College,¹⁸ Army Command and General Staff College,¹⁹ Naval War College,²⁰ Marine Corps University,²¹ National Intelligence University²² – indicates programs at joint and sister service school look much like they do at AU. Those programs expose officers to topics related to resilience, but do not appear focused on developing resiliency. This is surprising considering that all JPME institutions aim to produce resilient graduates and OPMEP directs that JPME institutions, “produce resilient and adaptive national security practitioners.”²³

Moving beyond academic programs, JPME institutions can foster resilience in other ways. For example, the Army Clinic that supports the Army War College at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania takes a deliberate, patient-centered approach to providing for the wellness of Army War College students. As part of their inprocessing at Carlisle, Army War College students are afforded time to undergo holistic fitness assessments and develop individual wellness plans. Students use those assessments and plans to “make healthy lifestyle decisions,” decisions the Army War College supports throughout the academic year by providing resources such as “state-of-the-art fitness testing, healthy nutrition advice, stress reduction using biofeedback, fitness programs, and health education.”²⁴ I do not know if other joint and sister service JPME

institutions have similar programs, but ACSC and AWC do not. There are no wellness checks upon arrival to either ACSC or AWC. The only institutional programs the Air Force has to assess wellness are Periodic Health Assessments (PHAs) and Fitness Assessments (FAs). Neither PHAs nor FAs are comparable to or as effective as the Army War College's focus on comprehensive wellness.²⁵

Putting it All Together

A detailed review of curricula at AU and cursory reviews of curricula at other JMPE institutions identified possible gaps. It appears there is a lack of institutionalized education to address resilience at the nation's JPME institutions. Moreover, it appears the nation's JPME institutions generally do not have standardized programs to foster resilience outside the classroom. These gaps do not represent deficiencies so much as they represent opportunities.



Recommendations

To fill those gaps and take advantage of those opportunities, I recommend three things. AU should: 1) deliver programs in addition to education aimed at facilitating resilience across the larger force, 2) make changes to curricula to specifically address resilience theory and deliver resilience education, and 3) make programs available outside the classroom to grow resilience in JPME students and their families.

1) Deliver Programs in Addition to Education

Codify, Continue Task Force Hope

SOS should continue TFH. TFH is in its infancy, but it holds promise. SOS should codify TFH by drafting and publishing a syllabus to institutionalize TFH, thereby making it an enduring part of the SOS curriculum. After publishing a syllabus and instructional purpose, SOS should iterate and improve TFH based upon feedback from participants and consider the degrees to which TFH outputs have positive impact across the USAF. To do that, SOS should survey graduates annually to determine if those officers see value in TFH when they return to the operational USAF. Impacts will likely be difficult to quantify at first, but should become easier to compile over time. As TFH continues and TFH participants circulate through their USAF careers as Company Grade and Field Grade Officers, the value of and necessary changes to TFH should become clear.

Bring Back ACSC-AWC Intramural Program

ACSC and AWC should reinvigorate the competitive spirit of their students and bring back the ACSC-AWC Intramural Program. That simple change would cost little, since students would prepare on their own time, they would participate on their own time, and (presumably) the

program does not need to be designed from scratch. Bringing back that intramurals would do something to emphasize connectedness amongst classmates and between schools.

2) Make Changes to Existing Curricula to Specifically Address Resilience

Modify Core Curriculum

As OPMEP directs JPME institutions to “produce resilient and adaptive national security practitioners,” it seems logical that core curricula at JMPE institutions would address resilience directly.²⁶ For the most part, they do not. After extensive review of AU curricula, TFH at SOS and the Surgeon General’s Task Force SLR LOE at AWC and ACSC seem to be the only curricula that specifically address resilience. It is important to note each of these programs are voluntary electives rather than compulsory parts of any school’s core curriculum. That means those programs that specifically address resilience do not get delivered to all of the students at any school. Instead, only a small minority of students in each program are exposed to resilience programs at AU. Since all JPME schools are charged with producing resilient national security practitioners, it seems all AU schools should include resiliency as part of their core curricula. AWC, ACSC, and SOS should infuse resilience directly into the core curriculum. They could do this with minimal investment or perturbation simply by modifying core leadership courses that already touch on subjects related to resilience to be more direct in their approach.

Task Force Hope Partnerships

ACSC and AWC should partner to support SOS in offering and improving TFH. This partnership could take the form of a joint elective, one in which ACSC and AWC students would study resilience theory, coordinate with SOS/TFH, improve the actionable recommendations TFH provides to leadership, and develop strategies they could take with them to staff and command assignments at the squadron and group levels.

Institute a “Blue Horizons-like” Program

ACSC and AWC partnership could take the shape of a “Blue Horizons-like” program to focus on resilience under sponsorship from the Chief of Staff of the Air Force or the Surgeon General of the Air Force. If ACSC and AWC moved forward using that type of model, fellows would study resilience theory, complete JPME requirements, and focus the bulk of their energies on addressing an emergent challenge facing their sponsor.

Maintain Surgeon General Task Force’s Senior Leader Resiliency Line of Effort

ACSC and AWC should continue the momentum built by the 2019-2020 Surgeon General Research Task Force’s SLR LOE. As this goes to print, the results of the SLR LOE are unknown. That is to say the momentum that needs maintenance is unknown, but the LOE itself holds promise and is worthy of continuation in the future.

In addition to maintaining the Surgeon General Task Force’s SLR LOE, ACSC and AWC should consider ways to disseminate the results of this LOE to the larger student bodies. Today, the Surgeon General Task Force invites participation from all students. In practice, few students beyond TF members participate because such sessions are optional for students not assigned to TFs.²⁷ The optional nature of TF sessions is logical because there are multiple TFs with each school, each TF is conducting important work, there are a finite number of hours in each day, and schools respect students’ time. This is as it should be. Still, if ACSC and AWC were to add one training day to the schedule, each TF could outbrief the full student body en masse. There may be other solutions. Regardless, ACSC and AWC should consider ways to disseminate information from TFs to the larger student bodies.

3) Make Programs Available Outside the Classroom

Emphasize Connectedness

Since AU schools are individual education programs, there is a focus on individual effort and individual learning. That focus is appropriate, but it can come at the cost of connectedness. Connectedness is important. AU schools focus on connectedness in a number of ways. Schools promote connections through formal and informal functions both in and out of class. All schools should continue those functions. AWC and ACSC should continue encouraging maximum participation in the “Taste of America” and International Officer culture days. All schools should continue encouraging officers seeking and offering mentoring opportunities between schools. All schools should continue allowing seminars to meet at alternate locations (including off-base and in civilian clothes) when those deviations facilitate learning objectives.

Benchmark Army War College Holistic Fitness Assessments

The USAF should benchmark the Army’s success, invest in a comprehensive wellness center at Maxwell AFB, and help members focus on improving their holistic wellness. Following the Army War College model will require adding a few days to ACSC and AWC inprocessing schedules, but, if the Air Force wants to do more than pay lip service to wellness, it will need to invest.

Conclusion

Returning to where we started: life is tough. Nobody gets through life without facing adversity in some form. That is especially true for those charged with fighting and winning wars. The hardships, failures, and catastrophes warfighters experience do not define them; how they respond to those things does.

Recent research at the USAF Academy underscored this point when it substantiated a clear and important link between resilience and leadership, suggesting military institutions should focus on developing resilience. Coincidentally, the nation's JPME institutions are charged with producing "*resilient* and adaptive national security practitioners" (emphasis added).²⁸ It naturally follows that the nation's JPME institutions should focus on developing resilience in their students. AU can do that by implementing three things: 1) programs in addition to education aimed at facilitating resilience across the larger force, 2) changes to curricula to specifically address resilience theory and deliver resilience education, and 3) programs outside the classroom to grow resilience in JPME students and their families.

These three things can be done piecemeal. All three promise to improve resiliency of the force and can be done wholesale, but change is hard and resourcing is always a constraint. Each of these three types of recommendations and their subordinate supporting details promise to improve upon the status quo and can do that with varying degrees of investment. For example, continuing and codifying TFH (the first recommendation) would require minimal resources while benchmarking the Army War College's Holistic Fitness Assessments (the last recommendation) could require significant investment. The key, then, is to take a multi-faceted approach. We should not do nothing because we cannot do everything. Rather, we should do what we can when we can.

As things are today, the nation's JPME institutions do an admirable job of preparing warfighters for the challenges they face. True as that is, there is always room for improvement. Military professionals still struggle. Officers struggle, Airmen struggle, veterans struggle. If we do nothing to change the status quo, there is no logical reason to believe those outcomes will change. If we do nothing, we have every reason to believe the struggle will continue. That is not positive. Rather than be satisfied with the status quo, we should do all we can to lessen the struggle for our military professionals.



Notes

¹ E. Greitens, E, *Resilience: Hard-won wisdom for living a better life*, (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2015), 25.

² “Officer Professional Military Education Policy (OPMEP)”, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 1800.01E, (May 29, 2015), E-F-I, accessed March 8, 2020, https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Library/Instructions/1800_01a.pdf.

³ Justin R. Stoddard, “Understanding Resiliency – The Relationship Between USAFA Cadet Grit-S Scores and Cadet Development,” (PhD Diss., University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, 2019), 1.

⁴ AETC also develops cadets through the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps (AFROTC) and officer trainees through the Officer Training School (OTS). This paper will not address AFROTC or OTS, but will focus on AETC’s JPME schools.

⁵ Sarah O. Meadows, Laura L. Miller, and Sean Robson, “Airman and Family Resilience: Lessons from the Scientific Literature,” *RAND Project AIR FORCE Series on Resilience* (2015), 10, accessed March 9, 2020,

https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR100/RR106/RAND_RR106.pdf.

⁶ “Welcome to Squadron Officer School,” (October 21, 2019), accessed December 5, 2019, <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/SOS/>.

⁷ In reality, operational considerations can preclude active duty USAF officers from attending SOS in-residence. After nearly 25 years in uniform, I do not know of any... but there is probably someone out there. Regardless, the vast majority of active duty USAF officers (a number approaching 100%) attend SOS in-residence. Natasha Stannard, “SOS reduces course length, increases classes in FY15,” (42nd Air Base Wing Public Affairs, February 10, 2014), accessed March 9, 2020,

<https://www.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/497084/sos-reduces-course-length-increases-classes-in-fy-15/>.

⁸ “USAF Almanac, 2019,” *Air Force Magazine*, (June 2019), 42, accessed March 9, 2020, https://www.airforcemag.com/app/uploads/2019/06/AFM_June2019-Full-Issue.pdf. Stannard, “SOS reduces course length, increases classes in FY15.”

⁹ “USAF Almanac, 2019,” 42.

¹⁰ TFH suggested some things that would require elevation to the Air Force Surgeon General and other things that would only require action from Squadron Commanders. The SOS Commandant forwarded TFH’s suggestions to AU’s Leadership Development Course (LDC) for consideration as the LDC builds curriculum for Squadron Commanders.

¹¹ USAF ACSC, “Academics,” (not dated), accessed March 9, 2020, <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/ACSC/Academics/>.

¹² USAF ACSC, “Student Demographics,” (Academic Year 2019), accessed March 9, 2020, <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/ACSC/Student-Life/Student-Makeup/>.

¹³ USAF ACSC, “Academics,” (not dated).

¹⁴ USAF ACSC, “Academics,” (not dated).

¹⁵ “USAF Almanac, 2019,” 42.

¹⁶ AWC Dean of Students, Presentation to AWC AY20 First 30, “Resident Students AY 20,” July 15, 2019.

¹⁷ “National War College Student Catalog,” National Defense University, (Academic Year 2017/2018), accessed March 9, 2020, <https://nwc.ndu.edu/Portals/71/Documents/NWC%20Student%20Catalog-AY18.pdf?ver=2017-12-18-104627-443>.

¹⁸ “US Army War College Academic Program Guide,” Army War College, (Academic Year 2020), accessed December 5, 2019, <https://www.armywarcollege.edu/documents/Academic%20Program%20Guide.pdf>.

¹⁹ “US Army Command and General Staff College Catalog,” US Army Command and General Staff College, (Academic Year 2016), accessed March 8, 2020, https://usacac.army.mil/sites/default/files/documents/cace/350-1_CGSCCatalog.pdf.

²⁰ “Academic Catalog, US Naval War College,” US Naval War College, (2019-2020), accessed March 8, 2020, https://dnnlgwick.blob.core.windows.net/portals/0/AcademicCatalog/catalog2019_2020%20062819c.pdf?sr=b&si=DNNFileManagerPolicy&sig=hzymLV%2BN1UnBwyPW3y8TWrZnt6pyTbpoBISia4V%2Fkbbk%3D.

²¹ “Marine Corps War College Curriculum,” US Marine Corps War College, (not dated), accessed March 8, 2020, <https://www.usmcu.edu/Colleges-and-Schools/Marine-Corps-War-College/MCWAR-Curriculum/>.

²² “National Intelligence University Academic Catalog,” National Intelligence University, (2019), accessed March 8, 2020, <https://ni-u.edu/wp/niu-academic-catalog/>.

²³ OPMEP, CJCSI 1800.01E, E-F-I.

²⁴ Mark McCann, “Carlisle Barracks Army Wellness Center set to open in July,” (June 26, 2012), accessed March 8, 2020, https://www.army.mil/article/82514/carlisle_barracks_army_wellness_center_set_to_open_in_july.

²⁵ PHAs are web-based, ask questions about an Airman’s overall health, and rely upon Airmen to answer those questions honestly before initiating targeted consultation. PHAs are not targeted mental health assessments... but, even if they were, Airmen do not answer PHA questions honestly. FAs only assess physical health, and the degree to which they do that effectively is questionable.

²⁶ OPMEP, CJCSI 1800.01E, E-F-I.

²⁷ I participated in one such open session with the Surgeon General Task Force SLR LOE. That session was at the end of the duty day, multiple hours after the day’s last scheduled mandatory event. I was the only student not affiliated with the TF to participate.

²⁸ OPMEP, CJCSI 1800.01E, E-F-I.