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COMPETENCY-BASED ASSIGNMENT & PROMOTION TO MEET AIR FORCE SENIOR LEADER REQUIREMENTS

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Abstract

The Air Force Doctrine Document on Leadership and Force Development (AFDD 1-1) states leadership contains three main components: core values, competencies, and actions. All three of these components are important to the development of senior leaders. Of the three, core values are learned early in an individual's life, and actions are the result of learned values and experiential development. The third component, competencies, are occupational skill sets and enduring leadership competencies Air Force leaders develop as they progress along the tactical, operational and strategic levels of increased responsibility. Competencies are clearly the one leadership component the Air Force can purposefully develop and nurture in our officers. Because of the potential influence the Air Force has over competency development it may eventually become a key factor in senior officer assignment and promotion.

This research paper, sponsored by the Headquarters Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel and Manpower (AF/A1), will address the question: should the AF adopt a competency-based system for assignment and promotion for senior officers?

AF/A1 is aggressively exploring a competency-based promotion and assignment system. This is a natural progression for the former Secretary and Chief of Staff of the Air Force's Force Development Initiative. This research addresses the historical background of the Air Force's current force development and promotion systems, as well comparative industry efforts in competency-based personnel management and sister service promotion schema, and makes recommendations for the Air Force to modify Force Development to better meet senior leadership competency requirements.

Chapter 1

Executive Summary

The purpose of this research is to determine if the Air Force should adopt a competency-based system for assignments and promotions of senior officers. The research is sponsored by the Headquarters Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel and Manpower (AF/A1).

Our research initially examined five related areas: the Defense Officer Professional Management Act to identify any legal roadblocks to the Air Force's current approach, and our proposed recommendations to modify that approach to developing senior officers; the existing Air Force officer and enlisted promotion systems to understand the origin, history, current objectives, and current promotion statistics for "career families" (e.g. Acquisition and Intelligence); recent senior leader job analysis and modeling efforts of RAND and AF/A1 to address perceived insufficient selectivity of qualified candidates for senior Air Force, joint, and Office of the Secretary of Defense senior officer positions; other promotion and assignment systems to include sister services, the Royal Air Force competency-based system, the Internal Revenue Service, and the new National Security Personnel System; and recent work by the Wexford Group, Development Dimensions International (DDI), and RAND to explore a competency-based system of promotion and assignments of officers throughout a career.

Our research led us to four representative definitions of "competency," based on the work of Wexford Group, DDI, Schoonover, and RAND. However, for the purposes of our research and

recommendation, we used the definition found in AFDD 1-1—a concept of occupational skill sets and enduring leadership competencies which Air Force leaders develop as they progress through tactical, operational and strategic levels of responsibility. Currently, the Air Force uses its Force Development construct to leverage education, training, and assignments to produce these occupational and enduring leadership capabilities.

Finally, we researched governmental and civilian approaches to competency-based personnel management. The evidence indicates the overriding goals of competency-based systems are to: determine the needed skills for each job, and then to recruit and develop personnel to fill these job skill requirements; identify the superior/high-potential performers, and then to further focus their leadership development; and to ensure personnel are placed in the best-matched assignments based upon previously attained competencies and future leadership requirements.

Our research led us to three potential courses of action: 1) change now to a “Wexford-type” competency-based promotion and assignment system for active duty officers, 2) stay with the current Air Force Force Development system to deliberately develop officers to meet senior officer primary/secondary occupational skill requirements, or 3) modify the current Force Development system. We break this last course of action into three possible tracks: 3A) make minor modifications to increase oversight and standardization between Development Teams, 3B) make major modifications to the Air Force promotion system to promote officers to the senior ranks based upon Air Force senior officer occupational/skill competency requirements, or 3C) slightly modify the Air Force promotion system to add one or two additional competitive categories to ensure adequate numbers of technically proficient officers will be promoted to the senior ranks. Based on the analysis of each COA presented, the research group recommends the

Air Force implement COA 3A, “Minor Modifications to the Present Force Development System.” The group believes this COA represents the best avenue to meet Air Force senior officer occupational competency requirements within current Air Force institutional culture.

The team members would like to thank General (USAF Retired) John A. Shaud, the Air University Hap Arnold Research Chair, for his sage guidance. We also wish to thank our faculty advisors, Colonel Wade Johnson and Colonel Steve Visco for providing the necessary guidance and vectors to keep us on task. Thank you all for your assistance!

Chapter 2

Surveying the Competency Environment: Industry Efforts in Competency and Current AF Force Development Efforts

Competency and Competency Management in Theory

To define the competency environment, it must begin with a review of competency systems advocated by The Wexford Group International, Development Dimensions International, Schoonover, and RAND Project Air Force. This review is important when looking for relevance to promotion and assignment management systems, and it starts with the development of a common definition, including defining the environment in which the system operates.

The search for a useable, clearly defined definition is a common problem when researching the different competency-based systems. The best example of that difficulty is presented by Developmental Dimensions International (DDI), which provides a very telling definition concerning competencies when discussing one of their key corporate competencies.

One of the key competencies of Development Dimensions International is the development of competencies relative to competencies important to jobs.¹

That definition by DDI is accurate, and it highlights the issues confronting the development of competency systems. This specific definition will be revisited later during the in-depth look at DDI.

When defining the environment, one must determine the starting point from which the Air Force began its search into competencies. The answer is contained in a RAND report from 2004, which had its genesis with General Michael D. Ryan, former Chief of Staff of the Air Force. Competencies were portrayed as a way for the Air Force to “develop senior personnel with operational knowledge and technical skills needed to lead the future Air Force.”² Competency systems have the ability to develop methodologies ensuring the availability of personnel with the competencies needed to lead diverse “operational, technical, and business-oriented activities.”³

The Wexford Group International

The Wexford Group International (WGI) is a management and technical consulting firm. It was tasked by United States Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff/Personnel (HAF/A1) to develop “a plan for strategic management of human capital.”⁴ Their research states that competencies are “a way to make the link more visible between strategy, mission, and the work being done.”⁵ Also, competencies aid in “establishing a common language” and it produces “a way to encourage flexibility of jobs and mobility across organizational boundaries.”⁶ Not only does WGI develop a clear definition for a competency but also a definition for a competency management system.

Definition of Competency: A measurable or otherwise assessable collection of skills, knowledge, abilities, and qualities, along with behaviors required to perform job functions successfully.⁷

Definition of an Air Force Competency Based Management System: A system of competencies that enables tracking performance in all human resource life cycle applications and supports all six strategic personnel goals. The system integrates personnel strategies and synchronizes human resources management systems for the Total Force; links to the Air Force’s mission, vision, core values, core competencies, and distinctive capabilities; and provides for cross-position comparison that enhances the AF’s flexibility in allocating human capital.⁸

With clearly defined definitions for what a competency is, the next area to review is a defined structure for the competency system to operate. WGI fully develops a construct to define, and implement a competency-based management system. It suggests that competencies describe capabilities at a process level and provide “generalized information that allows cross-job comparison.”⁹ WGI’s competency definition requires behaviors to be demonstrable and thus they can be assessed when linked to job performance.¹⁰

The Air Force currently uses job title and knowledge, skills, abilities, and other qualities (KSAO’s) to define career field skill sets. As WGI points out, it is important to understand where competencies fit into the current structure. Competencies fit in-between the job descriptor and KSAO’s. Figure 2.1 is the WGI example of this relationship. As WGI points out the addition of competencies are additive to the entire personnel process, “it enhances” and does not replace the current system.¹¹

Descriptor s	How Defined
Job	Electrical Engineer
Competency	Design electrical instruments, equipment, facilities, components, products, and systems
KSAO	Knowledge of circuit boards, processors, chips, electronic equipment, and computer hardware and software, including applications and programming

Figure 2.1. Illustration of the KSAO-Competency-Job Hierarchy¹²

In development of competencies, WGI shows three types of competencies. The first is enduring leadership competencies taken from AFDD 1-1. The second is functional competencies describing “the substantive content” of actual jobs, and the last area encompasses

institutional or wellness competencies.¹³ WGI develops the first two competencies. Figure 2.2. shows an example of a single competency developed by WGI as an illustration. As one examines the example it must be pointed out WGI bounds competencies with a limit to the number of competencies for each position, 15-20 enduring leadership and functional competencies each.¹⁴

Elements of Competency Model	Example Elements
Competency Title & Definition - Standard across functional groups	Competency Title: Decision Making Definition: Analyzing information and evaluating results to choose the best solution for problem solving.
Performance Requirements Description of performance at different levels - Each competency has associated performance requirements at different levels (e.g. entry-, mid-, & high-levels) - Standard within functional groups, to the extent possible - Performance Requirements for Enduring Leadership Competencies may be the same across functional groups	Function: Acquisition Occupation: 61SX: Scientific Research & Development (61S3D: Physicist) Performance Requirement Entry Level – Analyzes data from research conducted to detect and measure physical phenomena. Describes and expresses observations and conclusions in mathematical terms. Performs complex calculations as part of the analysis and evaluation data. Mid Level – Collaborates with other scientists in the design, development, and testing of experimental, industrial, or medical equipment, instrumentation, and procedures. Conducts experiments, evaluates application, and analyses results in order to determine commercial, industrial, scientific, medical, military, or other uses for physical devices. Designs computer simulations to model physical data. High Level – Develops theories and laws on the basis of observation and experiments, and applies these theories and laws to physical problems in areas such as solid state physics, electronics, optics, lasers, and related fields of engineering.
Performance Standards Performance ratings for each Performance Requirement level - Each performance requirement has associated performance standards (e.g. average, above average, superior)	Performance Standard for Entry Level Requirement (see above): Average – Needs minimal assistance using traditional data analysis procedures. Uses standard mathematical terms correctly. Familiar with fundamental laws of nature, mathematical methods, and data analysis. Above Average – Uses traditional data analysis procedures without assistance. Understands and uses both standard and new mathematical methods correctly. Superior – Develops new and innovative data analysis techniques.

Figure 2.2. Example of an Air Force Competency Model¹⁵

WGI develops a detailed structure to implement a competency-based management system within the Air Force, entailing 19-steps. The steps recommended for implementation are listed in figure 2.3. Of the 19-steps, two directly relate to the research question and require a closer look, they are “Placements and Assignments,”¹⁶ and “Promotions.”¹⁷

1. Why Benchmark AFSLMO’s Competency-based Senior Leader Management initiative?
2. Identification of Competencies
3. Classification Part A: Classification System Structure
4. Classification Part B: Determine Competencies Needed for each Position
5. Future Requirements Analysis – Capabilities
6. Inventory Population’s Competencies
7. Workforce and Strategic Planning
8. Force Planning
9. Performance Evaluation of Competencies
10. Retention and Separations
11. Training and Education
12. Career Planning and Development
13. Placements and Assignments
14. Recruiting
15. Accessions
16. Promotions
17. Recognition
18. Compensation
19. Institutionalize AF Competency-based Management System

Figure 2.3. WGI 19-Steps for Competency Implementation¹⁸

The assignment system changes offered by WGI directly relate to the competencies developed for each job/position. Since competencies would be assessed and documented, then the system would provide the ability to match Airmen’s developed competencies with assignment requirements. This would result in a system to “incorporate minimum and maximum time-in-job requirements, standardized job advertisements, and encourage members to identify

and apply for jobs.”¹⁹ The assignment system would become a centralized selection system to match an individual’s competency to fill positions based on needed competency matches and developmental needs.

The promotion system would project “requirements and provide promotion opportunities to individuals with the highest performance potential based on” demonstrated competency.²⁰ The applicability of competency to promotions is best described by the WGI report:

Promotion selection criteria will continue to employ the fully qualified or best-qualified concept that values competency-based job performance results and potential based on that performance and also meets organizational goals and requirements for a limited number of individuals at higher grades.²¹

WGI provides a very complete competency-based management system and implementation plan for the Air Force. While the WGI report is very detailed, other consulting organizations also provide important insight into competency systems.

Development Dimensions International

Development Dimensions International (DDI) is a consulting firm specializing in executive leadership development. They advertise systems to enable “power selection success, develop extraordinary leaders, and unleash executive talent.”²² As mentioned in the introduction a clearly defined common definition is difficult to find. DDI presented a telling definition concerning competencies when compared to one of their key corporate competencies.

One of the key competencies of Development Dimensions International is the development of competencies relative to competencies important to jobs.²³

This confusing definition highlights the complexity confronting competency systems development. To address this problem, DDI breaks down competencies into three different

levels. Those renamed levels of competencies are: organizational, job/role, and personal. Below is the original definition restated using the different DDI terms for each level of a competency.

One of the key organizational strengths of Development Dimensions International is to develop personal competencies relative to dimensions important to jobs.²⁴

DDI put the focus on the job/role competencies since they indicate job-related targets, and personal competencies measure the personal achievement level for the functional need.²⁵

DDI provides a very broad definition of dimensions/competencies, using a behavioral approach. The DDI dimension/competency definition is:

Descriptions of clusters or groupings of behaviors, motivations, and knowledge related to job success or failure under which data on motivation, knowledge, or behavior can be reliably classified.²⁶

This type of system is supported by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and courts due to its basis on observable tasks.²⁷ Figure 2.4 contains the action parts of the DDI definition: behaviors, motivations, and knowledge are defined for further clarity.

Terms Defined
Behavioral Dimension/Competency
What a person says or does that results in good or poor performance.
Knowledge/Skill Dimension/Competency
What a person knows regarding facts, technologies, a profession, procedures, a job, an organization, etc. Diplomas, licenses, certificates, and similar recognition systems often are used as a sign of such knowledge.
Motivational Dimension/Competency
How a person feels about a job, organization, or geographic locations.

Figure 2.4. DDI Competency Definition Terms Defined²⁸

DDI describes a methodology to develop, implement, and sustain a competency-based management system which breaks down competencies into three levels: organizational, job/role, and personal. The focus of competency development by DDI is on the job/role competency level. The definition of the job/role competency is:

These competencies, in the most general terms, are “things” that an individual must demonstrate to be effective in a job, role, function, task, or duty. They are identified through the study of jobs and roles. Performance can be measured against job/role competencies. These measurements then are used to make hiring, promotion, and succession decisions and to guide training and development efforts. The use of job/role competencies has been the key to success for many organizations undergoing rapid and dramatic changes.²⁹

The development of a competency-based system is not a simple process but entails a constant development and reassessment of the system to ensure acceptance and sustainability. DDI has an implementation process covering four steps. The first is to prioritize the needs the system will address. The second step is to identify and develop the competencies. Third, to design the human resource part of the management system, this is the most critical. Finally, determine how to measure and refine a competency-based management system. While this may appear simple, DDI says the subparts of each of the steps are complex and require constant reevaluation to refine the system throughout development and implementation.³⁰

As a system is developed, it does have the flexibility to fit with an assignment selection system. DDI provides a four-step process for career succession and placement planning.³¹ This simple process is described in figure 2.5. The developed assignment system would become a centralized objective tool that would enhance personal development and have a direct link to a competency based promotion system.

The applicability of competency in promotions has two sides best described by DDI. If the system is built on specific competencies related to a single job or several closely related jobs, the

promotion system can be labor intensive. A job analysis must be conducted for each, a unique selection system is required, and managers must be trained on each system.³²

1. Identify dimensions/competencies and experiences required for success in key positions or roles.
2. Define level of competence required for jobs/roles using standard organizational wide scales.
3. Assess individuals on key dimensions/competencies and identify the degree of match between the individual and jobs/roles.

Ready now, place individual in new job/role.

Ready for job/role with development, go to step 4 then reassess step 3.

4. Target dimensions/competency gaps for development.

Figure 2.5. The Basic Steps Involved in Career, Succession, and Placement Planning³³

On the other hand, if the system is based on core competencies, the focus is on a broad collection of roles. It provides “the advantage of simplicity; only one assessment system is required for large groups of positions.”³⁴ Evaluations are against the criteria for a large number of roles and it provides the additional flexibility in placing individuals into specific roles. A core competency-based system is less specific due to the promotion process only assessing “those competencies that are important to all jobs covered by the core model.”³⁵

The system may be constructed to allow for a “two-part process: a core assessment followed by a more specific process that evaluates the competencies required for a specific job.”³⁶ This “ensures all incumbents are competent” in core “as well as those required for a specific position.”³⁷ “Simulations and tests” can be “used to evaluate” the core competencies “while targeted behavioral interviews are used to evaluate the specific” competencies.³⁸

The promotion selection system has the ability to be flexible based on the type of competencies selected for evaluation. Different competencies are measured using different tools, the more complex the system, the more diverse the selection tools. The tools that could be possibly used are included in figure 2.6.

1. Targeted Behavioral Interview
2. Evaluation of Past Job Performance
3. Behavioral Simulations
4. Paper and Pencil Tests and Inventories (Cognitive ability tests, Knowledge tests, Personality tests, Behavioral knowledge tests, Motivation assessment tests, Motivation assessment inventories)
5. Multiperspective (360-Degree) Assessment

Figure 2.6. Assessment Tools for a Promotion System³⁹

DDI lays out a complete, yet complex, competency-based management system, encompassing competency development, assignment, and promotion. Their competency system concepts are much more detailed than the simple consolidation of applicable issues pertaining to the group's research question described in this section.

Schoonover Associates

Schoonover Associates is a management consulting firm specializing in “leadership and executive development, organizational effectiveness, change initiatives, and the design and implementation of competency-based human resources systems.”⁴⁰ The data available openly from Schoonover is not on scale with the information available and reviewed by WGI or DDI, but this limitation does not diminish the applicability of Schoonover's thoughts on competencies.

The review of literature starts with examination of the clear definition of a competency as defined by Schoonover.

Competencies are a set of context-specific behaviors that define what success looks like in action in a particular setting.⁴¹

Since competencies are context bound, they are linked to specific goals. Competencies then can be developed within the following areas: the total organization, entire function, career level or band, specific role, or specific job.⁴² The most interesting part of competencies, as defined by Schoonover, is the ability to scale them in complexity and detail.⁴³ The example of how Schoonover develops competencies is shown in a human resource competency framework. This framework presents four-building blocks, aligning with areas described earlier: personal attributes, leadership and management competencies, HR core competencies, and role specific competencies.⁴⁴

To demonstrate the applicability of the Schoonover competency model the focus will be on only one of their building blocks, the leadership and management competencies. The example below shows associated definitions in a human resources context.

Visioning and Alignment: Creates and communicates a vision of the organization that inspires and aligns the workforce.
Strategic Thinking: Actively pursues strategies and high potential opportunities for the benefit of the organization.
Networking: Creates and leverages a diverse range of key relationships to improve access to resources and expertise.
Resource Management: Identifies, mobilizes, and tracks resources to fulfill key objectives and plans.
Teamwork: Develops collaborative work groups that maintain focus on a common purpose and leverage the unique talents of its members.
Process Excellence: Continuously improves processes and work products.
Performance Development: Consistently coaches and develops team members by articulating key expectations, identifying strengths and development needs and providing ongoing support to maximize performance.
Goal Setting: Develops and tracks challenging goals aligned with organization strategies.

Figure 2.7. Schoonover Leadership and Management Competencies⁴⁵

Schoonover provides an example of succession planning directly relating to the focused question of this research. This is something different from the earlier systems reviewed. Schoonover presents a systematic method, which directly relates to the development and promotions of officers at the senior leader level. The purpose of planning is listed in figure 2.8.

Succession Planning Purposes
- Development and replacement of key leaders - Clarification of key positions and the criteria required to fulfill them - Generation of a talent pipeline to fill key positions - Specification of leaders' strengths and experiences to accelerate leadership growth of individuals and a total talent pool - Provision of learning and development experiences to accelerate leadership growth of individuals and a total talent pool - Provision of a value proposition to motivate and retain key talent - Development of the leadership success criteria and practices to generate the talent required to meet business strategies - Generation of a program to manage the leadership talent pool most efficiently (including who to retain; who to release; how to streamline structures and processes, etc.)

Figure 2.8. Schoonover Succession Planning Purposes⁴⁶

Schoonover contends the system should be a “multi-dimensional, simple to assess, and linked to “future success.”⁴⁷ This system produces a balanced approach and normally utilizes the factors in figure 2.9 to develop an assessment system which determines developmental gaps. The development and selection of senior officers requires a system using clear principles, applies specific criteria, and implements a structured, sustained process.⁴⁸

- Critical Competencies: Behavioral criteria linked to successful performance of a key role. - Key Experiences: Specific work settings assignments or accomplishments required for growth and credibility of leaders across the career span. - Results: Objective outcomes of negotiated goals and/or specific contributions to the team or organization
--

Figure 2.9. Assessment Components⁴⁹

RAND

The last competency system framework to examine is by the RAND Corporation. RAND's research of competency-based systems started from work chartered in 1998.⁵⁰ RAND's approach is different from the others systems examined in this paper. RAND developed a method to describe Air Force senior officer competency requirements. From this research RAND has developed the following definition of a competency:

A knowledge, skill, ability, other personal characteristics, or a focused set of these that is useful in a job or to the mission/purpose of an organization.⁵¹

RAND's research showed that most senior positions require "not general, nonspecific backgrounds but, rather multiple specific operational or functional competencies."⁵²

RAND's research identified the need for, and the development of primary and secondary occupational competencies to meet the future demands of senior leaders in the Air Force.⁵³ The primary occupational competency is "considered the most critical" for job success, and the secondary occupational competency is of less importance but still requires "an occupational or service provider level" of expertise gained through direct experience.⁵⁴ The key issue is the identification of the critical competency requirement pairs, then tracing them and deliberately developing them.⁵⁵

RAND does not lay out a clear competency-based assignment and promotion system for comparison against the other models examined. They do provide a tool to measure and compare current competency inventories and provides a path for deliberate development to meet future competency needs. By identifying current system constraints, RAND provides a development path for future competency needs which provides an avenue to pursue earlier development intervention.

Competency Implementation Issues

To make the review of a competency-based systems complete, it is important to look at implementation issues. Competency systems have made many promises, and part of their appeal is listed below in figure 2.10.

- | |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Common language for describing work requirements2. A framework for integrating personnel systems3. A guide for development or performance improvement4. A strategic linkage to business strategies |
|--|

Figure 2.10. Competency-Based System Four Main Benefits⁵⁶

Each of the above benefits has issues that must be overcome. A common language is appealing to the organization, but the language used to describe competencies is not common or natural to employees or supervisors employing the competency-based system. A continual training process must be in place to ensure leaders and managers understand the competency framework and apply them uniformly.⁵⁷ To gain institutional, cultural buy-in, a standardized process is required across the entire organization.

The next issue is the appeal of an integrated framework for the personnel management system. This has great appeal in theory but unifying the diverse systems and changing the sub-cultures of individual commands and career fields is a challenge.⁵⁸ The Air Force alone has 126 different systems supporting the personnel management effort.⁵⁹ This is in addition to all the special interests spread throughout the Air Force within commands and career field.

The third benefit is the ability of a competency-based system to provide a guide for personnel development. Most organizations have adopted some type of 360-degree assessment to measure competencies. These assessment tools provide a means to determine an individual's

strengths and weakness within the current employment environment. Using multiple raters to assess can be a powerful tool, but there is difficulty translating into developing competencies.⁶⁰

Assessment tools are not perfect, “all have methodological and analytical limitations.”⁶¹ When using 360 systems, the system relies on the raters understanding and perception of other humans. Human judgment is used to develop, assess, apply, and evaluate competencies. This construct does not produce a pure system without influence and fault.⁶² Since humans are fallible, several issues come into play like stereotyping, attribution, and group biases.⁶³

The final benefit to examine is the strategic link. How are competencies evaluated and linked to results within business strategies? When competencies are developed they are normally constructed based on the demands of the job, from the bottom up. The need exists for the development of competencies from the top down, driven by the desired results for the enterprise.⁶⁴ Why is this important? It may be easy to identify the competence required for the job, but does leadership have the capability, the competence at a level required.⁶⁵

Another area to examine is the issue of fairness in the perception and implementation of a competency-based system. DDI states, “Although simple in concept, implementation of such a system throughout an organization is extremely complex.”⁶⁶ DDI describes the following issues when using competencies in pay systems, but they are applicable throughout an organization.

1. Managers’ ability to accurately evaluate dimensions/competency achievement and to defend that evaluation to an individual.
2. The organization’s ability to develop sufficient reliability of judgment among managers to have a fair system throughout the organization. (Ensuring accurate and reliable ratings of interpersonal, decision-making, leadership and management dimensions across an entire organization can be very difficult.)

Figure 2.11. DDI Competency Evaluation Issues ⁶⁷

To capitalize on the benefits and confront the issues of developing a competency-based management system, Schoonover provides a list of issues to clarify in relationship to succession planning. Succession planning relates directly to the developmental assignment selection and promotion. The list in figure 2.12 provides very good questions to ask as development process progresses.

Key Issues to Clarify
- How far down in the organization will succession planning reach? - Is succession planning primarily position-based (i.e., focused on specific roles/jobs) or person-based (i.e., focused on a general pool of talented leaders)? - To what degree is succession planning selection-oriented vs. development-oriented? - How will development plans be planned and tracked? - How much is the program focused on “inside” vs. “outside” talent? - How is succession planning related to or integrated with other HR processes (e.g., assessment, career planning, performance management etc.)? - Is succession planning a periodical event and/or a continuous process? - What criteria will be used for identifying and selecting leadership talent (e.g., competencies (current vs. future), key experiences, results, etc.)? - What data will be used in the process to evaluate candidates (e.g., manager only, 360 degree input committee, assessment interviews, narrative data vs. numerical ratings)? - What data review will and decision-making process will be applied? - How will the program be communicated and to whom? - How will the program’s effectiveness be measured and what methods will be applied to update, refine, and sustain the process over time?

Figure 2.12. Schoonover Competency Issues to Clarify⁶⁸

While there are many issues with implementing a competency-based system, the key is to develop a system that fits within the institutional culture, addresses a problem, and reaches the appropriate level to be effective.

Competency-Based Systems in Application

The next logical step is the evaluation of current competency-based systems designed for use in specific environments. While Chapter 2 covers the systems from the theory of consulting firms and design, this chapter will specifically look at the issues surrounding their actual use. Systems to be examined are the National Security Personnel System, and the Internal Revenue Service.

National Security Personnel System

The National Security Personnel System (NSPS) was authorized by the National Defense Authorization Act in 2003, to enable the Department of Defense to provide personnel to meet the critical national security mission. It allows the personnel system to modernize and allow the system to hire quickly, pay competitive salaries, and reward personnel based on performance and contribution.⁶⁹

The key component of the NSPS is performance management. The objective is to enable employees to know what is expected of them and how performance is recognized and distinguished.⁷⁰ The NSPS uses a new performance management system, which values performance, contributions, and excellence.⁷¹ How does the NSPS define the environment that competencies operate? *The Federal Register* states it as:

Implementing a new competency-based performance management system that is intended to create a clear linkage between employee performance and the Department's strategic plan and core values.⁷²

With the desire to establish a clear linkage between performance and the strategic plan and core values, the logical next step would be a clear process to define a competency. Again, *The Federal Register* provides the definition.

Competencies: means the measurable or observable knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors, and other characteristics that an individual needs to perform a particular job or job function successfully.⁷³

With that, a clear path should exist to define and evaluate performance and plan future assignments and promotions. But, the NSPS includes several methods to define performance, it is not solely a competency-based system. Performance expectations can be derived from three areas. (Figure 2.13.)

Performance expectations may include:
(1) Goals or objectives that set general or specific performance targets at the individual, team, and/or organizational level; (2) Organizational, occupational, or other work requirements, such as standard operating procedures, operating instructions, manuals, internal rules and directives, and/or other instructions that are generally applicable and available to the employee; and (3) Competencies an employee is expected to demonstrate on the job, and/or the contributions an employee is expected to make.

Figure 2.13. NSPS Possible Performance Expectations⁷⁴

With this flexibility, organizations are able to produce their own methodology within the guidance provided by the NSPS. At this time, the NSPS is under numerous legal challenges and opposition from Unions. Also, additional information will be published shortly covering classification and performance management.⁷⁵ The performance management system does provide an avenue for the development of competencies such as the system the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has employed.

Internal Revenue Service

The IRS developed a system using competencies based on the exemptions given it under the IRS Restructuring and Reform Act of 1998.⁷⁶ Prior to the changes, they utilized the traditional way to describe human resource management, by describing jobs set by knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs). With the implementation of the new system, the IRS developed competencies, which are demonstrated, versus the old KSAs based on “knowledge of something but not requiring demonstrated competency.”⁷⁷ Using this system the IRS identified core competencies for its 12 occupational families. These competencies are normally broken into two areas, general which includes leadership/managerial and technical competencies.⁷⁸

The general and technical competencies can be used as the basis for job descriptions training, hiring, and performance assessment. Figure 2.14. contains a list of the IRS Leadership Competency Model very similar to the Air Force enduring leadership competencies. With the development of IRS competencies, the model identifies courses and training for employees to gain or strengthen their competencies. The key part of the IRS system is the ability to relate competencies to performance appraisals and pay under the performance management system, a system similar to the NSPS.⁷⁹

The IRS system is confusing to the workforce. Some of the competencies are hard to understand and the large number makes it difficult to determine what is required to post for a new job. Also, the competencies are so broad, they can be difficult for use in evaluations. Due to these issues, the IRS uses the competency system for selection and evaluation purposes for managerial personnel only. Notably, the National Treasury Employees Union has not agreed on their use.⁸⁰

- Leadership - Adaptability - Demonstrates adaptability - Modifies behavior in reaction to new situations - Adapts approach to achieving goals - Adapts overall strategy - Communication - Fosters open and honest communication - Clarifies or emphasizes the message - Addresses the needs, interests, and style of the audience - Uses communication in a strategic manner - Decisiveness - Acts responsively and makes timely decisions - Acts without complete information - Makes decisions in challenging business environments - Persists and holds firm on tough decisions - Integrity/Honesty - Is candid and honest about work situations - Acts consistently with the organization's guiding principles - Acts with integrity, even when it is not easy to do so - Fosters integrity and high ethical standards in others - Service Motivation - Makes a personal commitment to public service - Acts to support the organization's mission and goals - Encourages others to commit to the organization - Promotes a positive image of the organization - Strategic Thinking - Understands the organization's strategic goals - Links daily tasks to strategies, or long-term perspectives - Develops work plans based on strategic priorities - Develops strategies in support of the mission	- Customer Satisfaction - Customer Focus - Solicits and understands internal/external customer needs - Responds to internal/external customer needs - Takes action for the internal/external customer - Uses a long-term perspective - Entrepreneurship - Develops solutions to meet needs/opportunities - Encourages risk taking in others - Experiments with solutions - Takes calculated entrepreneurial risks - External Awareness - Identifies trends in external environment - Acts on current trends in the external environment - Understands future developments in the external environment - Uses knowledge of the external environment to improve the organization's position - Influencing/Negotiating - Persuades based on facts and reason - Adapts style and approach - Influences through others - Uses complex influence strategies - Partnering - Makes informal contacts and builds rapport - Develops networks and builds alliances - Uses networks to strengthen internal and external organization support - Enables the use of cross-functional activities and collaboration
- Employee Satisfaction - Continual Learning - Is aware of own strengths and limits - Keeps current in own field of expertise - Makes long-term self-development plans - Keeps current with business changes - Developing Others - Gives how-to directions - Informally and formally develops others - Provides feedback to encourage development - Does long-term coaching or training to create leaders - Group Leadership - Informs and involves people - Supports and empowers group members - Promotes group and cross-functional effectiveness - Communicates a compelling vision - Teamwork - Cooperates - Keeps team members informed - Expresses positive expectations of the team - Builds teams - Diversity Awareness - Is willing to learn from others - Is open to diversity - Values diverse perspectives - Fosters diversity	- Business Results - Achievement Orientation - Focuses on doing well - Sets and meets goals - Improves performance - Accepts challenges, persists, and makes large-scale performance improvements - Business Acumen - Understands core management areas - Uses knowledge of core management areas to increase workplace effectiveness - Understands and addresses the most current thinking and practices in core management areas - Anticipates future trends and appropriate applications of core management areas - Political Savvy - Understands formal structure - Understands informal structure - Leverages underlying organizational environment - Leverages organizational politics - Problem Solving - Breaks down problems, issues or challenges into parts - Solves routine problems - Analyzes complex problems and proposes solutions - Anticipates and prevents problems - Technical Credibility - Utilizes knowledge in own areas - Demonstrates deep understanding of expertise area - Actively contributes to enhancing level of expertise within the organization - Recognized as an expert in the field

Figure 2.14. IRS Leadership Competency Model⁸¹

USAF Competency Management – Force Development: Shortcomings of Legacy Assignment & Development Systems

Before looking at the USAF's Force Development (FD) program initiatives implemented over the last three years, it is instructive to look at the pre-FD Officer Assignment System (OAS) and Officer Professional Development (OPD) concepts which prevailed the majority of the last two decades. The legacy OAS for grades O-1 through O-5 focused on filling *vacancies*—valid Air Force positions—with qualified officers. In the course of filling vacancies, assignment teams at the Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC) also managed, to a degree, an officer's professional development. AFPC assignment officers used individual member desires, squadron commander inputs, career field-specific formal/informal certification levels, member experience, aviator gate months, short tour requirements, professional military education (PME) selection/outplacement, senior officer by name requests, and other factors to place qualified officers in vacant positions while managing and attempting to balance world-wide career field manning shortages and surpluses. “Must movers,” completing overseas long/short tours, in residence PME, etc., drove vacancies. Average tour lengths ranged from 2½ - 4 years depending on career field. Career fields with more short tour requirements had shorter average tour lengths.

OPD generally occurred as a byproduct of assignments, as officers were flowed through jobs of increasing responsibility pictorially represented in career path pyramids from second lieutenant to colonel. Development took place largely within traditional career field stovepipes, focusing on technical depth/expertise in the member's specialty as well as the generalist leadership and management knowledge, skills, and abilities we now refer to as enduring leadership competencies. OAS valued breadth of experience for field grade officers, though normally limited to vacant positions managed within an assignment team's career field portfolio

(example: fighter pilot positions residing in headquarters' staff acquisition directorates).

The most notable development deficiency with the legacy OAS was a lack of awareness and basic knowledge of the wider Air Force—its components, missions, joint roles, organization and employment at the operational level of war—outside a member's primary career field. This deficiency was addressed during the 1990s, not through assignment system changes, but rather through education and training initiatives. Air Education and Training Command revised curricula at Squadron Officer School (SOS) and Air Command and Staff College (ACSC) to incorporate air campaign planning and joint warfighting blocks for all students, regardless of career field, and the Air Force started a new "Air Force 101" foundations school for all newly commissioned lieutenants called the Air and Space Basic Course (ASBC).

Job Analysis to Derive Competency Requirements

The legacy assignment and development systems described above produced over time an additional deficiency identified by Air Force Chief of Staff General Michael Ryan in 1998. Ryan noted mismatches between the qualification requirements of Air Force and joint general officer (GO) positions he needed to fill or nominate for and the experience/occupational competencies of the candidates he had to choose from.⁸² As Ryan and his staff examined the issue, he observed many of his current inventory of approximately 255 GOs had backgrounds which were too specialized, limiting their utility at higher grades.⁸³ Ryan enlisted RAND's Project Air Force to analyze the knowledge, skills, and experiences required for each Air Force GO position. RAND, working with a new, General Ryan-chartered Air Staff office called Developing Aerospace Leaders (DAL), conducted a series of GO job analyses employing incumbent and former incumbent surveys to develop a database of competency requirements for

each GO position. RAND's job analysis findings were validated with the General Officer Matters Office (GOMO) and the DAL office (both GOMO and DAL came under the umbrella of the new Air Force Senior Leader Management Office (AFSLMO) in 2002). The product of the job analysis was primary and secondary occupational skill requirements for each GO position which:

demand an operational or functional background at the depth that can be gained only through direct, occupational experience within the operational or functional area, as a *provider* of the product or service of the function. The *primary* occupational competency is the one considered the most critical to success in the job; the *secondary* occupational competency, if specified, is less critical.⁸⁴

RAND found that nearly all GO positions require a secondary competency. While RAND and DAL's work initially focused on GO job requirements, AFSLMO expanded its efforts in 2002 to include a similar, end-to-end job competency requirement analysis of approximately 2,800 colonel (O-6) positions.

RAND used the results of their job analyses to develop **flow models** for entering GO and O-6 cohorts describing Air Force senior leader occupational competency requirements, by position, in terms of primary and secondary skill pairings. The flow models identify the best mix of incoming O-6s/O-7s to meet Air Force and joint job requirements using multiple, weighted input parameters including: primary and secondary (paired) occupation requirements; experience tiers (1st job, 2nd job, 3rd job); preparatory roles for GO candidacy ("fast" track); minimum inflow targets for O-7 (all with paired occupations); selectivity (desired number of qualified candidates per position); flexibility in occupational mixes and pairings; and consistency with past mixes. Each of these management parameters can be adjusted for sensitivity and relative importance based on Air Force 4-star leadership priorities, promotion policy and officer management goals. According to RAND and HAF/A1 action officers, it is the Air Force policy

to only use the flow models *after* a promotion board to assess how well the results meet senior leader occupational skill pair requirements.⁸⁵ The Air Force goal is to develop a distribution of competency pairs in each year group that mirrors the distribution of skill pair requirements informed by the flow models. Air Force personnel specialists use the flow models, in conjunction with other Air Force modeling (attrition and promotion percentages, etc.), to work backwards to derive the number of O-4s and O-5s needed to meet entering O-6 cohort skill pair requirements with the desired selectivity.

Deliberate Force Development to Requirements

In November 2002, General Ryan’s successor, General John Jumper, significantly expanded AFSLMO’s DAL work from its narrow focus on defining officer broadening paths to meet senior leader occupational skill requirements. The new FD program encompasses total force, accession-to-retirement development, sustainment and renewal. FD is “a series of experiences and challenges, combined with education and training opportunities that are directed at producing Airmen who possess the requisite skills, knowledge, experience, and motivation to lead and execute the full spectrum of Air Force missions.”⁸⁶ FD aims to deliberately develop Air Force Airmen—officer, enlisted, civilian, Active, Guard, and Reserve—to produce members with the right capabilities to meet the service’s operational needs within the constraints of a closed-loop, “grow what you need” personnel system. Developing senior officers with the primary and secondary occupational skill pairs required by Air Force/joint senior leader positions (using RAND definitions and flow models) is one of the primary focus areas of the FD program.

Air Force Doctrine Document 1-1

The Air Force outlined its new competency development and management approach in Air Force Doctrine Document 1-1 (AFDD 1-1), *Leadership and Force Development*, released in February 2004. AFDD 1-1 describes the relationship of competencies to leaders and leadership at all levels. As leaders advance they “serve in complex and interdependent organizations,” and require “different occupational and enduring leadership competencies.”⁸⁷ Unlike the Wexford, DDI, Schoonover, and RAND competency efforts, AFDD 1-1 contains no clear definition of what a competency is, or how to measure it, and to what level a competency is achieved. The AFDD 1-1 document describes a interlaced puzzle of different competency areas (occupational competencies, occupational skill sets, enduring leadership competencies). AFDD 1-1 states occupational skills derive from enduring leadership competencies when combined with the activities and experiences of Airmen.⁸⁸ The Air Force approach is further phased across tactical, operational, and strategic organizational levels as a framework to deliberately development relevant enduring leadership competencies and occupational skill sets.⁸⁹ The sixteen enduring leadership competencies are shown in figure 2.15.

“Force development defines the occupational skill combinations and facilitates the education, training, and assignment process to produce” the capability within Airmen.⁹⁰ The development of occupational skills is “executed through policies, force management strategies, and prioritization of resources.”⁹¹ The end goal “is to prepare Airmen to successfully lead and act in the midst of rapidly evolving environments.”⁹² However, AFDD 1-1 lacks clarity to enable Airmen to determine developmental paths and applicability to their, and the Air Force’s, future needs. The combination of these development efforts with the occupational skill pair

requirements, as determined by the RAND and AFSLMO study, form the foundation of the USAF's competency development and management system.

PERSONAL LEADERSHIP - Exercise Sound Judgment - Adapt and Perform Under Pressure - Inspire Trust - Lead Courageously - Assess Self - Foster Effective Communications LEADING PEOPLE/TEAMS - Drive Performance through Shared Vision, Values and Accountability - Influence through Win-Win Solutions - Mentor and Coach for Growth and Success - Promote Collaboration and Teamwork - Partner to Maximize Results LEADING THE INSTITUTION - Shape Air Force Strategy and Direction - Command Organizational and Mission Success through Enterprise Integration and Resource Stewardship - Embrace Change and Transformation - Drive Execution - Attract, Retain and Develop Talent
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Figure 2.15. Enduring Leadership Competencies⁹³

Development Teams

The primary active duty officer FD execution arm for deliberately developing a qualified pool of senior officer candidates with requisite primary and secondary occupational competencies is the Development Team (DT). There are currently 28 DTs organized by functional areas (examples: Civil Engineering, Communications and Information) and logically related operational groupings (examples: Combat Air Force rated officers, Mobility Air Force rated officers). Each officer DT is chaired by a designated GO functional manager and includes career field managers, experienced functional senior leaders from multiple Major Commands

(MAJCOMs), AFPC FD and assignment experts, as well as Joint, Air Force Reserve, and Air National Guard representatives when appropriate. DTs are charged with “oversight of personnel development to meet both functional family and Air Force corporate leadership requirements.”⁹⁴ DTs use three primary means for development: experience through assignments, education, and training.

To accomplish these responsibilities, DTs direct long term institutional, career field, and officer development by: (1) assigning development vectors (desired experience) for new O-4 and O-5 selects, (2) prioritizing and vectoring officers for Intermediate and Senior Developmental Education (IDE/SDE) opportunities, (3) selecting squadron command candidates (non-rated DTs), and (4) awarding officer Developmental Identifiers (DIDs), explained in a subsequent section. Each DT typically meets three times per year to vector field grade officers by year group who have reached predetermined “trigger points”: promotion to O-4 or O-5, nomination for IDE/SDE, consideration for squadron command, or commander (O-6 level) initiated review. When assigning developmental vectors, DTs consider Air Force requirements, commander recommendations, and individual officer desires, previous job experience, education, etc. DTs can also access officer performance records if desired.

DTs evaluate each officer, “compared to their peers and determine the best course of action [vector] for the next 2-3 assignments, what IDE/SDE program is appropriate, and if command is a future recommendation, etc. This intentional development sets a path for [each] officer [while meeting] the requirements of the career field and long range institutional needs for senior leaders.”⁹⁵ DTs engage in strategic career planning from both the institutional and individual perspectives through the developmental vectors they give each officer, shaping career fields and year groups to meet Air Force needs.

Occupational Skill Pairing Targets

DT processes are still maturing. During their first 5-6 meetings, most DTs used member experience and established career field demographics and development paths to vector officers to jobs and/or responsibility levels within the DT's traditional assignment portfolio. For Fall 2005 DT assignment vectoring, AFSLMO provided AFPC with development skill pairing target ranges, by year group, to meet GO/O-6 inflow requirements based on upper and lower selectivity runs of the RAND flow models incorporating Air Force corporate leadership management priorities. For each DT overseeing a primary career field, the AFPC Force Management and Analysis Division translated the AFSLMO development targets into its "valued" secondary skills and desired skill pairing target percentage ranges by year group (Figure 2.16.).

Allocating development "bogies" to each DT is a significant milestone in the transition to a steady state officer FD battle rhythm. DTs will now give long range institutional development vectors to a year group according to the AFSLMO flow model-derived skill pairing percentage target ranges at the O-4 select trigger point. The DT then relooks officers at the IDE nomination, squadron command nomination, and O-5 select trigger points to determine whether a year group is "shaped" with secondary competencies in line with the AFSLMO skill pair requirements reflected in the initial O-4 vectors. If needed, DTs can adjust development vectors at any trigger point to gain better pool alignment with senior officer requirements.⁹⁶ A long term view with regular opportunities to adjust is critical to the steady state FD process because development vectors may not be fulfilled in an officer's next assignment depending on job position availability and individual timing. By way of an analogy, it is useful to picture the DT as an investor placing an investment order (development vector) with a brokerage firm who is the AFPC assignment team (AT). Like a broker, the assignment officer determines best time to

“buy” (put an officer on assignment) to get best return—desired skill experience, development—on the assignment investment.⁹⁷ The overarching goal for both DTs and ATs is to develop a pool of senior officers, over time, with skill sets that meet the Air Force institutional requirement

Development Team “X” SKILL PAIRING TARGETS

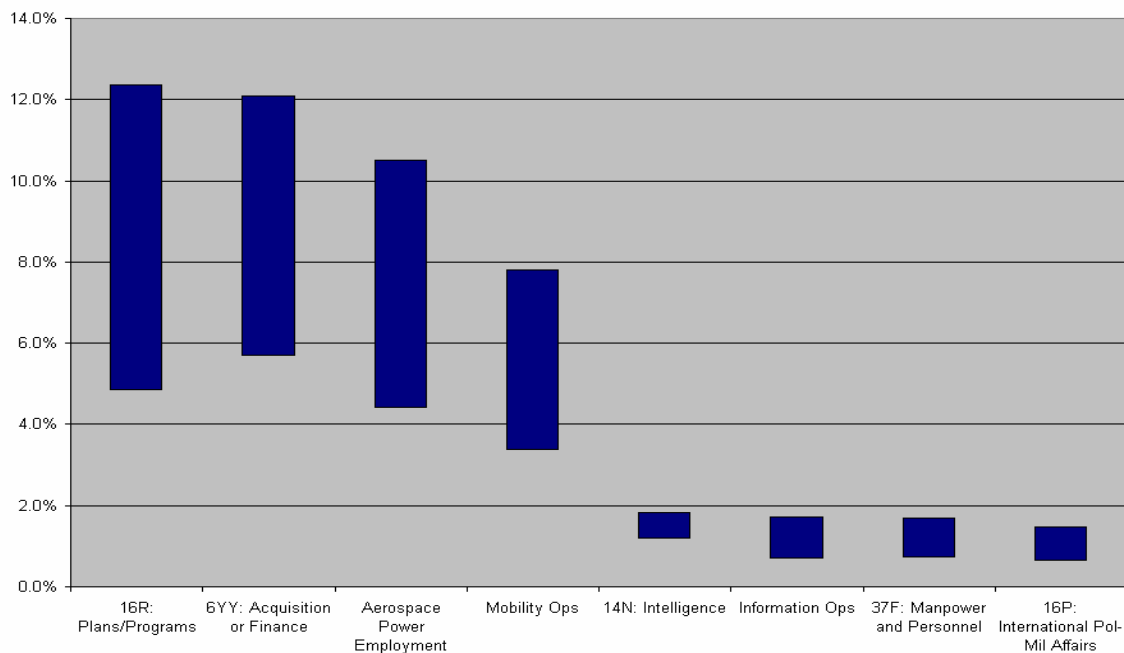


Figure 2.16. Example of Skill Pairing Targets Given to DTs

Developmental Assignments & Developmental Identifiers

AFI 36-2640 Volume 1, *Total Force Development (Active Duty Officer)*, defines a developmental assignment (DA) as one “inside or outside of an individual’s core identifier or

Rated Distribution and Training Management [code] designed to develop breadth once depth of experience has been achieved.”⁹⁸ DTs award officers who complete a developmental assignment a developmental identifier (DID). DIDs are three-digit alpha numeric codes which serve as a mechanism for tracking officers’ experience outside their primary career fields. The complete list of DIDs (Figure 2.17.), approved by the Air Force’s corporate FD oversight board, align with secondary occupational skill requirements as defined by RAND’s senior leader skill pair flow models. It is important to note not all DIDs are “valued”—are validated senior leader secondary skill requirements—by every primary career field. DIDs are currently awarded by the officer’s operational/functional community DT, not the DT of the secondary occupation/function.

There are four significant issues with DAs and DIDs currently in debate as FD matures into a steady state. First, while most DIDs can be gained within a primary career field’s existing assignment portfolio—i.e. previous example of fighter pilot positions residing in headquarters staff acquisition directorates—some may require brokering between different DTs and ATs. AFPC facilitates this brokering if a primary functional area cannot gain a required secondary skill/occupational experience from its “normal” assignment positions. AFPC’s Force Management and Analysis Division is currently analyzing these brokering requirements to determine their scope. Presently, AFPC only classifies an assignment as a DA when such cross portfolio brokering is required although the AFI 36-2640V1 definition is much broader.

DID	Secondary Occupation / Paired Skill
10E	AIR & SPACE POWER EMPLOYMENT
10M	MOBILITY OPS
10U	INFORMATION OPERATIONS
10W	ELECTRONIC WARFARE
13B	AIR BATTLE MANAGEMENT
13M	AIRFIELD OPERATIONS

13D	COMBAT CONTROL
13S	SPACE
14N	INTEL
15W	WEATHER
16F	POL/MIL FOREIGN AREA OFCR
16P	POLITICAL/MILITARY AFFAIRS
16R	PLANS/PROGRAMS
21A	LOGISTICS/MAINTENANCE
31P	SECURITY FORCES
32E	CIVIL ENGINEERING
33S	COMMUNICATIONS & INFORMATION
34M	SERVICES
35P	PUBLIC AFFAIRS
37F	MANPOWER & PERSONNEL
61S	SCIENTIST
62E	DEVELOPMENTAL ENGINEERING
63A	ACQUISITION
64P	CONTRACTING
65X	FINANCE
71S	OFFICE OF SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS
81T	AF LEVEL INSTRUCTOR
87G	INSPECTOR GENERAL

Figure 2.17. Developmental Identifiers (DIDs)

The second issue concerning DAs and DIDs logically follows: what qualifies as a developmental assignment? As of Fall 2005, there is no detailed guidance on what skills the Air Force requires an officer to gain in a secondary occupation to earn its associated DID, and therefore no criteria for designating jobs as DA qualifying positions as prescribed in AFI 36-2640 Volume 1.⁹⁹ AFSLMO attempted to address this issue in 2003-04 by identifying 320 two-year set aside “connector assignments” for deliberate development of new IDE graduates outside their core career field.¹⁰⁰ According to sources in AFSLMO, AFPC and various MAJCOMs, these DAs were contentious as they were based solely on GO secondary skill pair requirements and heavily focused on rated officers. Of the 320 connectors, approximately 130 were slated for fighter pilots and weapon systems operators, 60 for bomber pilots and navigators, 20 for special

operations pilots and navigators, and 18 for mobility pilots and navigators.¹⁰¹ Since other operational and functional DTs had so few numbers in this initial definition of DAs, there was little buy-in and these narrowly defined connector assignments were shelved by Air Force four-star officers in 2004. The DA concept has since generalized to include all senior officer (entering O-6 and O-7) skill pair requirements and career fields. Still, beyond RAND's view that occupational competencies are gained through "direct, occupational experience within the operational or functional area, as a *provider* of the product or service of the function,"¹⁰² there remains no analytically-based definition of the occupational skill(s) sought in a DA or which positions qualify as such.

A related issue concerns who awards a DID. Several functional communities, such as acquisition and space, have well-defined certifications or sub-functional qualification areas and believe the DID owning community should determine whether an officer's experience and performance in a DA earns/qualifies him or her for the community's DID.¹⁰³ However, when developing an officer with a senior leader-required secondary occupational skill, the Air Force is not normally trying to train a fully qualified, tactical officer in that second skill—i.e. make a fighter pilot into a Level 3 certified acquisition officer. This level of expertise, and the investment it would take to gain it, is not generally needed to gain the types of experience called for in RAND's senior leader job analyses. Based on this premise, AFPC's current policy is the owning officer's functional community (DT) awards a secondary skill DID for an officer performing duties outside his or her primary career field above the wing level (Air Staff, MAJCOM, Numbered Air Force, Joint, Combatant Command) for at least 12 months, though 24 months is desired.¹⁰⁴

The final issue related to DAs and DID concerns capturing and documenting officers'

DID-qualifying experience in previous assignments and/or jobs outside their primary career field. The numbers involved in retroactively awarding DIDs are huge. The mobility rated DT alone manages over 3,000 officers. To aid with this challenge, AFPC developed a software program to capture “low hanging fruit” through searches of the military personnel database records for duty Air Force Specialty Codes (AFSC) and organizational codes, associated with each Air Force manning position, which would indicate an officer held a position outside his or her core specialty. The software program “suggests” possible DIDs an individual officer may have earned. It is up to the DT to examine the officer’s duty history and determine whether to award the software-recommended DID, or any other DIDs the record merits, to the officer based on his or her past experience. DT members must rely on their collective experience and judgment due to the absence of specified approving criteria for award of a DID as discussed above. This retroactive DID review is time intensive but necessary, in conjunction with assigning development vectors, prioritizing and vectoring officers for IDE/SDE opportunities, and selecting squadron commander candidates, for DTs to deliberately develop pools of senior officer candidates with the required distribution of occupational skill pairs.

Education & Training Initiatives

Expanded Intermediate Developmental Education

Officer FD also leverages several education and training initiatives to deliberately develop officers to meet flow model senior leader requirements. The most important has been the expansion of IDE venues and opportunities to attend. In residence IDE historically has been and remains a significant quality cut for officers. Prior to FD, only the top 20-25 percent of a year group attended IDE (then Intermediate Service School or ISS) in residence. As part of the

FD initiative, the Air Force expanded the definition of IDE to include selected Air Force Institute of Technology and civilian advanced academic degree programs, the Naval Post Graduate School, the Joint Military Intelligence College, and Air Officer Commanding positions at the Air Force Academy. This increased the number of in residence officer “seats” 50 percent from approximately 480 to 750,¹⁰⁵ so that approximately 35 percent of a year group now attends IDE in residence. These changes also enabled the Air Force to vector officers to developmental education programs *tailored* to their career fields and institutional senior leader requirements, a significant enhancement to deliberate development. General Jumper described this new mindset best in his November 2002 *Chief’s Sight Picture* launching FD:

We plan to add a dimension to your educational experience that has not been fully exploited in our current PME and advanced education structure...by emphasizing our common Airman culture while offering a variety of choices that respects the distinctive elements of your career field....No longer will the doctor, scientist, engineer, and operator be expected to pursue the same line of advanced degree and PME in order to be promoted...your ISS PME experience will be matched to your professional needs, making you more competent within your career field and better prepared if you are assigned outside your career field....Any resident program should make you highly competitive to command at the squadron level and be significant for command opportunities above the squadron level.¹⁰⁶

The sum total of these changes are IDE programs designed to capitalize on officers’ depth of experience, maximize officers’ breadth of exposure, and increase officers’ capability and potential to serve as Air Force senior leaders.

Air Command & Staff College Developmental Studies

In conjunction with the effort to expand IDE venues and opportunities, are initiatives to *prepare* officers for a broadening experience and/or developmental assignment. General Jumper’s direction in this area was also clear: “part of your education will include adequate

preparation for that [developmental] assignment -- gone are the days where you are thrust into a “broadening” opportunity and left to figure it out by yourself.”¹⁰⁷ A very visible example of this direction in action is the Air Command and Staff College’s (ACSC) Developmental Studies program.

ACSC modularized its traditional curriculum areas of Strategy, Airpower, Leadership, and Joint Warfighting as part of the wider IDE restructure discussed above, adding the Developmental Studies (DS) module at the end of the academic year. The eight DS courses (Figure 2.18.) match the largest concentrations of senior leader secondary occupational skill requirements and correlate to students’ DAs after school graduation. The DS courses, “educate airmen to enhance their primary occupational depth and to transition them into new skill areas as determined by their DTs.”¹⁰⁸ When a DT nominates an officer for the ACSC IDE program, they also vector him or her to one of the eight DS courses, considering the senior leader skill pair development targets for that officer’s year group. After AFPC finalizes officer outplacements, many of which are DAs, ACSC adjusts the officer course assignments if needed.¹⁰⁹ Even if an officer’s outplacement is not a DA—example, an officer goes straight to squadron command from IDE, as is the case for many support officers—the DS program still enhances individual and career field development informed by the long-term DT senior leader skill requirements vector.

ACSC Developmental Studies Courses	
1	Air & Space Power Employment
2	Acquisition
3	Agile Combat Support
4	Information Operations
5	Mobility Operations

6	Political Military Strategist
7	Plans & Programs
8	Space Operations

Figure 2.18. ACSC Developmental Studies Courses

Other Developmental Initiatives

Two other representative FD initiatives specifically designed to deliberately develop officers to meet senior leader requirements are the International Affairs Specialist (IAS) and Special Development and Mission Support programs. The new IAS program seeks to build a

cadre of International Affairs Specialists with the insight and skills to build effective relationships with global partners....Fully consistent with the Force Development construct, select officers will be designated on an IAS secondary career path at the mid-career point and receive formal training and education with appropriate follow-on assignments on one of two development paths. Some will do this as a managed career broadening opportunity to gain international political-military affairs experience - the Pol-Mil Affairs Strategist (PAS); and for others this will be a more demanding developmental opportunity with multiple IAS assignments designed to create a true regional expert with professional language skills - the Regional Affairs Strategist (RAS).¹¹⁰

The PAS program develops an officer with a political-military affairs secondary occupational skill through an IDE program with an advanced academic degree in international relations or national security studies followed by a pol-mil DA in the first or second post-IDE assignment. RAS replaces the former Foreign Area Officer program with regionally focused IDE, language training, and country immersion. According to the IAS program website, “RAS designates will serve alternating assignments between their [primary] AFSC and IAS...in a demanding dual development track.”¹¹¹ In the Fall of 2005, AFPC required operational and functional DTs to vector specific numbers of officers to the PAS and RAS programs.¹¹²

A second set of notable FD initiatives are the Special Development and Mission Support

Programs. These far reaching development and crossflow efforts include: Air Force-sponsored advanced academic degrees (AAD), the Education With Industry (EWI) program, the Space Lift Education & Crossover Program (SLECP), the Space And Missile Acquisition Exchange Program (SAEP), the Financial Management Leadership Program (FMLP), the Program for Acquisition and Contracting Experience (PACE), Acquisition and Intelligence Experience Exchange Tours (AIEET), Acquisition and Logistics Experience Exchange Tours (ALEET), Comptroller Operational Logistics Tours (COLT), and Comm-Info/Engineering Exchanges. An annual centralized DT special selection board selects officers for these FD programs. Each deliberately develops officers via education and follow-on assignments, tailored and meaningful to career field families in line with senior leader occupational skill pair requirements.

¹ Byham, Ph.D. and Moyer Ph. D., *Using Competencies to Build a Successful Organization*, 4.

² Robbert, Drezner, Boon, Hanser, Moore, Scott, and Shukiar, *Integrated Planning for the Air Force Senior Leader Workforce: Background and Methods*, iii.

³ Ibid, iii.

⁴ Report of The Wexford Group International, *Final Report on the Coordinated Air Force Competency-Based Management System (CBMS) Implementation Plan*, 1.

⁵ Ibid, 11.

⁶ Ibid, 11.

⁷ Ibid, 12.

⁸ Ibid, 12.

⁹ Ibid, 22.

¹⁰ Ibid, 21.

¹¹ Ibid, 22.

¹² Ibid, 22.

¹³ Ibid, 23.

¹⁴ Ibid, 25.

¹⁵ Ibid, 24.

¹⁶ Ibid, 30.

¹⁷ Ibid, 31.

¹⁸ Ibid, 15-17.

¹⁹ Ibid, 30.

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- ²⁰ Ibid, 31.
- ²¹ Ibid, 31.
- ²² Development Dimensions International, <http://www.ddiworld.com>, (accessed 15 November 2005).
- ²³ Byham, Ph.D. and Moyer Ph. D., *Using Competencies to Build a Successful Organization*, 4.
- ²⁴ Ibid, 7.
- ²⁵ Ibid, 7.
- ²⁶ Byham, Ph. D., *Developing Dimension-/Competency-Based Human Resource Systems*, 2.
- ²⁷ Byham, Ph.D. and Moyer Ph. D., *Using Competencies to Build a Successful Organization*, 12.
- ²⁸ Ibid, 12.
- ³⁷ Ibid, 2-4.
- ³⁰ Ibid, 69-70.
- ³¹ Ibid, 55.
- ³² Ibid, 47.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid, 56.
- ³⁴ Ibid, 47.
- ³⁵ Ibid, 47.
- ³⁶ Ibid, 47.
- ³⁷ Ibid, 47.
- ³⁸ Ibid, 48.
- ³⁹ Ibid, 40-47.
- ⁴⁰ Schoonover, Dr., *Human Resource Competencies for the New Century*, 1.
- ⁴¹ Ibid, 6.
- ⁴² Schoonover, Dr., *Implementing Competencies: A Best Practices Approach*, 1.
- ⁴³ Ibid, 2.
- ⁴⁴ Schoonover, Dr., *Human Resource Competencies for the New Century*, 7.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid, 11.
- ⁴⁶ Schoonover, *Succession Planning Best Practices*, 1.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid, 2.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid, 4.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid, 2.
- ⁵⁰ Robbert, Drezner, Boon, Hanser, Moore, Scott, and Shukiar, *Integrated Planning for the Air Force Senior Leader Workforce*, xi.
- ⁵¹ Robbert, RAND Project Air Force, Briefing, 22 September 2005.
- ⁵² Robbert, Drezner, Boon, Hanser, Moore, Scott, and Shukiar, *Integrated Planning for the Air Force Senior Leader Workforce*, 4.
- ⁶¹ Ibid, 12.
- ⁶² Ibid, 12.
- ⁶⁵ Robbert, RAND Project Air Force, Briefing, 22 September 2005.
- ⁵⁶ Hauenstein, *Work Roles as an Alternative to Competencies*, 1.
- ⁸⁸ Ibid, 2.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid, 2.

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- ⁵⁹ Final Report of the Coordinated Air Force Competency-Based Management System Implementation Plan, 50.
- ⁶⁰ Hauenstein, *Work Roles as an Alternative to Competencies*, 2.
- ⁶¹ Luce, and Lynch, *Competency – Framework and Tools*, 5.
- ⁶² Ibid, 5.
- ⁶³ Byham, Ph.D. and Moyer Ph.D., *Using Competencies to Build a Successful Organization*, 45.
- ⁶⁴ Hauenstein, Ph.D., *Work Roles as an Alternative to Competencies*, 2.
- ⁶⁵ Jaques, and Clement, *Executive Leadership A Practical Guide to Managing Complexity*, 36.
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- ⁹⁸ Ibid, 54.
- ⁶⁸ Schoonover, *Succession Planning Best Practices*, 3.
- ⁶⁹ National Security Personnel System, *National Security Personnel System Fact Sheet*, 2.
- ⁷⁰ Ibid, 4.
- ⁷¹ U.S. Air Force National Security Personnel System (NSPS), *NSPS Basics*, 1.
- ⁷² The Federal Register, 5 *CFR Chapter XCIX and Part 9901*, 66124.
- ⁷³ Ibid, 66190.
- ⁷⁴ Ibid, 66201.
- ⁷⁵ U.S. Air Force National Security Personnel System (NSPS), *NSPS Basics*, 1.
- ⁷⁶ Thompson, and Rainey, *Modernizing Human Resource Management in the Federal Government: The IRS Model. Human Capital Series*, 8.
- ⁷⁷ Ibid, 20, 21.
- ⁷⁸ Ibid, 20, 21.
- ⁷⁹ Ibid, 21.
- ⁷⁸ Ibid, 21.
- ⁸¹ Ibid, 45-54.
- ⁸² Albert A. Robbert et al., *Integrated Planning for the Air Force Senior Leader Workforce: Background and Methods*. (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2004), 1.
- ⁸³ Ibid, 1.
- ⁸⁴ Ibid, 12.
- ⁸⁵ Ibid, 48.
- ⁸⁶ Air Force Doctrine Document (AFDD) 1-1, *Leadership and Force Development*, 18 February 2004, 14.
- ⁸⁷ Air Force Doctrine Document (AFDD) 1-1, *Leadership and Force Development*, 18 February 2004, 10.
- ⁸⁸ Ibid, 10.
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- ⁹⁰ Ibid, 15.

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- ⁹¹ Ibid, 15.
- ⁹² Ibid, 14.
- ⁹³ Ibid, 10.
- ⁹⁴ Air Force Instruction (AFI) 36-2640, Volume 1, *Total Force Development (Active Duty Officer)*, 23 January 2004, 9.
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- ⁹⁶ Major James DeHaan, USAF (Chief, Rated Analysis, Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC) Force Management and Analysis Division), interview by author, 21 September 2005.
- ⁹⁷ Ibid.
- ⁹⁸ AFI 36-2640 Volume 1, 16.
- ⁹⁹ Ibid, 7, 8, 9, 11.
- ¹⁰⁰ AFPC Force Management and Analysis Division, "Force Development Execution Update," <http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/fdso/Docs/> (accessed 16 August 2005), slide 18.
- ¹⁰¹ Major Al Smith, USAF (Chief, Executive Force Development Branch, Headquarters Air Mobility Command Directorate of Personnel), interview by author, 29 November 2005.
- ¹⁰² Albert A. Robbert et al. *Integrated Planning for the Air Force Senior Leader Workforce: Background and Methods*, 12.
- ¹⁰³ DeHaan, interview.
- ¹⁰⁴ Lt Col Scott Davis, USAF, chief, AFPC Force Management and Analysis Division, "Steady State/Skill Pairings" (briefing to Mobility Air Forces Development Team, Air Force Personnel Center, Randolph AFB, TX, 7 November 2005).
- ¹⁰⁵ Brig Gen Larry New, USAF, commander, 325th Fighter Wing, "Force Development Executive Overview" (briefing to wing, group, and squadron commanders, Little Rock AFB, AR, 13 November 2003), slide 28.
- ¹⁰⁶ General John Jumper, chief of staff US Air Force, *Chief's Sight Picture – Total Force Development*, 6 November 2002.
- ¹⁰⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁸ Lt Col Warren Hines, USAF, chief, Developmental Studies Program, Air Command and Staff College, "Air Command and Staff College Developmental Studies" (briefing to author, Maxwell AFB, AL, 14 September 2005), slide 9.
- ¹⁰⁹ Lt Col Warren Hines, USAF, interview by author, 14 September 2005.
- ¹¹⁰ AFPC, "International Affairs Specialist Program," <http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/rated-staff/IAS.htm> (accessed 10 December 2005).
- ¹¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹¹² Major Michael Seiler (Deputy Chief, Executive Force Development Branch, Headquarters Air Mobility Command Directorate of Personnel), interview by author, 29 November 2005.

Chapter 3

Military Promotion Systems

Any worthwhile study intending to make recommendations to the way an organization develops senior leaders must first begin with an understanding of the system currently in place. Once that foundation has been built it is logical to proceed with a review of the development systems used by similar organizations. Because all of the military services are part of the federal government many of their operating parameters are constrained by federal law. A review of sister service officer development and promotion systems shows that even though constrained by the same laws, service secretaries have considerable leeway in implementing policy based on service history, experience, and tradition.

This chapter will begin with an overview of the officer management and development system currently used by the Air Force and will then do the same with those of the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps. In addition it will explain the officer management system used by Great Britain's Royal Air Force to illustrate yet another system that a similar organization has chosen to utilize. It is important to understand that while the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps each have strong and vibrant warrant officer corps, this subtopic is not relevant to the Air Force, and therefore it will not be covered. Finally, this chapter will contemplate whether the Air Force can learn anything from other promotion or management systems as it develops Air Force leaders of tomorrow.

US Air Force

“The fundamental purpose of the [Air Force] officer promotion program is to select officers through a fair and competitive selection process that advances the best qualified officers to positions of increased responsibility and authority and provides the necessary career incentive to attract and maintain a quality officer force.”¹

The Secretary of the Air Force is responsible for administering the Air Force’s officer promotion system under the provisions of Title 10 United States Code.² In accordance with the law, officers compete for promotion at set phase points with other officers within the same year group and competitive category throughout their careers. Promotion opportunity to each grade is projected based upon the number officers scheduled for promotion, separation, or retirement.

Because early Air Force leadership had become disenchanted with the Army’s branch stovepipes, from the outset the Air Force has placed the majority of officers (except chaplains, lawyers and medical personnel) into a single promotion competitive category called the “Line of the Air Force.”³ The intent of this structure was to avoid the power struggles and stovepipes created within each corps/branch that were perceived to have weakened the effectiveness of the Army.⁴ With only one line officer competitive category the intent was to emphasize the importance of officership over an individual’s specialty as the key to career progression.⁵

Because of this emphasis, promotion boards rely on the whole person concept to select the best qualified individual for promotion. This concept focuses on the six following key promotion factors during the board process:

Future Potential

Performance: Performance reports, promotion recommendation forms, training reports
Leadership: Command, headquarters staff assignments
Achievements: Distinguished Graduates, Quarterly/Annual Awards, inspection ratings
Professional Development: Developmental education
Depth/Breadth: Experience in/out of specialty at both wing and various staff levels⁶

Based on these factors, after potential and performance the third pillar of the promotion system is the assignment history of an eligible officer. The experiential development offered through positions of greater responsibility is important for developing the depth and breadth important for a successful Air Force career. Since the early 1970's the trend has been for officers with more general backgrounds to be promoted at higher rates than others.⁷ The logic being that senior leaders selected through a best qualified system have skills that can be universally assigned to almost any functional area.⁸

The result of such a system is a potential shortage of officers with deep technical expertise when more technically oriented officers fail promotion. To prevent this scenario, the law allows the service secretary to give directions to board members providing instructions on the necessity to promote officers in shortage specialties.⁹

Recently, current promotion rates for the acquisition management and intelligence career fields have been under the Air Force leadership's close eye. There have been claims that promotion rates within these career fields may be lower than the rest of the Air Force, leading to a glass ceiling. As a result of such concerns the Air Force's current officer management system may need to be reviewed and other systems examined to seek new innovations for optimization.

US Army

The Army's Officer Personnel Management System (OPMS) III was inaugurated in October 1998 to "implement a personnel management system based on career fields, with

distinct groupings of branches and functional areas, to reflect the evolving needs of the Army today and into the future.”¹⁰ The system focused on active duty officers in the Army Competitive Category and would not affect Army medical personnel, chaplains or judge advocates.

With implementation of OPMS III, initial accession of officers into their basic branch did not change. Officers would serve in their basic branch for their first 8 to 12 years of commissioned service to develop their leadership and tactical skills. Army leadership also believed it was important to instill the “muddy boot” culture into its officer corps.¹¹ Upon promotion to major, officers would be assigned to one of four career fields which would also function as promotion competitive categories.¹² These career fields were divided into families of branches and related functional areas as follows:

Operations: The 16 Basic Branches, Psychological Operations, Civil Affairs, and Multifunctional Logistics.

Operational Support: Foreign Area Officer, Research/Development and Acquisition, Systems Automation Engineering, Systems Automation Acquisition and Contracting/Industrial Management.

Information Operations: Information Systems Engineering, Information Operations, Strategic Intelligence, Space Operations, Public Affairs, Information Systems Management and Simulations Operations.

Institutional Support: Human Resource Management, Comptroller, Academy Permanent Faculty, Operations Research / Systems Analysis, Force Management, Nuclear and Counterproliferation, Strategic Plans and Policy.¹³

Career field designation is managed through a centralized board process with an officer’s record and personal preferences being taken into consideration. Approximately two-thirds of the officers promoted to major are designated to the Operations Career Field, with the remaining third being divided amongst the other three. Of that third, up to 50 percent of them are drawn

from the four combat arms branches (infantry, armor, field artillery, and air defense artillery).¹⁴ The rationale for this decision was the smaller field grade requirements within these branches.

Once selected, officer career and future development is managed solely within the career field but, officers continue to wear their branch insignia until promoted to general officer. Since these career fields are also competitive categories, officers compete for promotion to lieutenant colonel and colonel only against other members of their career field. The main changes to the promotion process are the additional competitive categories. The officer promotions are still managed through a central board process and promotion opportunity to lieutenant colonel and colonel is fairly consistent across career fields.¹⁵ Since OPMS III is still fairly new, it is uncertain how the promotions to general officer will be affected.

The most significant changes have been to some officer career paths. Only officers in the Operations Career Field continue to gain the tactical expertise necessary for preparation for battalion or brigade command after being promoted to major. In fact, this new system allows these officers more time in tactical assignments, increasing their skill and decreasing turbulence as fewer officers need to rotate through key positions. In fact, unless a unique command requirement exists within a career field, only members of the Operations career field will command after the company level. This focus on tactical skills and command is probably the most significant difference between Operations and the other career fields.

In the Operations Support, Information Operations and Institutional Support Career Fields the focus is on the technical expertise and experience required within the career field. Without branch-qualification requirements, officers in these career fields can now focus on the advanced education and experience needed to become true experts in their fields.

Even though OPMS III could be called a return to a more stove-piped promotion system, it is in fact an extremely creative way to meet the needs of the Army while still giving, “officers the greatest opportunity possible to develop the appropriate skills at each level of responsibility.”¹⁶

US Navy

Like all of the services, the Navy’s promotion system is driven by vacancy. Each year officers are selected for promotion through centralized promotion boards similar to those used by the other services. Officers compete against others in the same competitive category with the same time in service or flow point. The grade tables established by DOPMA drive the number of captains, commanders, and lieutenant commanders on active duty. Promotion opportunity is established through a planning process which estimates the numbers of vacancies in each grade occurring each year based on promotions, separations, and retirements.¹⁷

Based on the long separation of the line and staff in the Navy and the authority invested in service secretaries to create separate competitive categories when specialized training and narrow utilization makes it impossible for some groups to compete for promotion equally with generalist officers, the Navy established twenty officer competitive categories.¹⁸ The Navy currently has eight Staff Corps, each of which is a separate promotion competitive category:

Civil Engineering Corps
Chaplain Corps
Dental Corps
Judge Advocate General Corps
Medical Corps
Medical Service Corps
Nurse Corps
Supply Corps
Limited Duty (Staff).¹⁹

In addition the Navy currently uses the following eleven competitive categories:

Unrestricted Line (Surface Warfare, Submariners, Aviation, & Special Ops)
Aerospace Engineering (Engineering)
Aerospace Engineering (Maintenance)
Cryptology
Engineering Duty
Human Resources
Information Professional
Intelligence
Oceanography
Public Affairs
Limited Duty (Line).²⁰

Due to this large number of competitive categories, the Navy holds separate promotion boards for each of them. The Secretary of the Navy has established specific guidance for the demographic composition of the boards to ensure all officers receive fair consideration.²¹

Historically officers in all of the categories have a fairly equal opportunity for advancement through the ranks and in fact 15 of the competitive categories have members serving in the flag ranks.²²

As a result of this system, the Navy is able to focus much more heavily on the technical development of its officers. Officers begin their careers in a specific specialty with specialized training. Future education, developmental assignments, and command opportunities will all focus on creating an officer able to perform satisfactorily in an operational environment. Depth and not breadth appear to be the keys to success.

US Marine Corps

The Marine Officer's promotion system is a vacancy driven centralized promotion system. Officers of each rank compete against others within the same competitive category with the same number of years of commissioned service for promotion to the next grade. The major

differences between the Marine Corps and the other services is that the Marines are a much smaller service and only have two competitive categories.²³ This is partly due to the fact that unlike the other services, the Marine Corps has no medical or chaplain corps since these functions are provided by the Navy.

The Marine's first category is relatively small and reserved for limited duty officers (LDO). LDOs are officers commissioned from the noncommissioned or warrant officer ranks to perform duty within a technical field and function outside the normal development pattern for other officers. These officers compete within their Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) for promotion and are limited to attaining a maximum rank of lieutenant colonel.²⁴

The largest competitive category is reserved for Unrestricted Officers. This category includes officers from every MOS deemed eligible to compete for promotion from captain through major general.²⁵ Unique among the services, the Marine Corps includes its Judge Advocates in this competitive category. As Marines select officers for promotion it is striking that all officers compete equally whether aviator, infantry or logistician. As part of the Marine culture, everyone is trained as a rifleman and all officers have important roles in the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF). To ensure fair consideration of officers, the Secretary of the Navy has directed promotion board membership to include fair representation of the ground and air communities.²⁶ Since Unrestricted Officers are not promoted within their MOS, in those cases where a MOS is experiencing shortages, the Secretary of the Navy can identify this in the board's precept or instructions for special consideration.²⁷

Royal Air Force

Within the last two years, the Royal Air Force (RAF) has instituted a competency-based officer management system. This system allows for the best use of all officers regardless of their specific occupational branch. The main purpose for development involves officers in the rank of Wing Commander (O-5) and above. Competency is gained and managed at all levels but the primary emphasis of the competency system is within the general duty branch.

To understand the competency system, one must first understand the structure of the RAF. The RAF is divided into two commands, Strike, and Personnel and Training. Within those commands, they have over 20 officer specialties, placed into five branches:

- Air Operations
- Operations Support
- Engineers and Logistics
- Support Services
- Professions (lawyers, doctors)

Once promoted to the rank of Wing Commander, officers are placed into the General Duty (GD) branch. The GD lacks functional assignment, jobs and personnel are no longer defined by a specific branch or specialty. Instead, GD officers are developed and managed by the competencies they've gained during their career.

To enable this system the RAF maintains a personal profile of every officer containing the skills and experiences proven in previous assignments. To gain an additional competency, jobs are detailed with the competencies required for the position and the competencies expected to be gained from the position. This allows the assignment officer to match officers more accurately, with a controlled approach to broadening and development.

The RAF begins the management of competency skills at the rank of squadron leader (O-4). Prior to that, officers concentrate on their specific career field technical competency. To accomplish this, the RAF ensures officers are broadened into three areas of employment: strategic warfighting, strategic planning, and higher management. They also have six areas of associated employment, including operations, support to operations, policy plans and programs, personnel, acquisition and training. In the rank of O-4 and O-5, officers are managed to gain experience in at least two of the employment fields. For example, a flyer would expect to have a flying assignment followed by a ground assignment in each of those ranks. This exposure to a broad range of employment areas when combined with staff and in-command experience helps identify and prepare officers for senior grades/ranks. Selection for future assignments and progression in rank is based upon an officer's performance in their competency gaining jobs.

Working in tandem with this competency development system is an extensive and selective education and training system again tied to an officer's performance. Officers identified for future promotion or increased responsibility will attend developmental courses when appropriate. Unsuccessful officers or those not able to progress to the strategic level will only be assigned to levels and positions at which they were successful.

The tools enabling such a competency-based system to operate are the long career system, coupled with a form of dual tenure, allowing for the management and utilization of those identified on and off the competency development track. The driving factor in all is proven performance that enables the selection for competency gaining jobs. The fact remains that this system is relatively new and it will take time to measure and validate the success of this system.

Summary

Analysis of each service's officer promotion system has revealed a great deal about their histories and cultures as their officer management philosophies evolved. This can be illustrated by the fact that even though each service is governed by the same legislation, they have been able to manage their officer corps in slightly different ways while still complying with law.

The biggest lesson the Air Force can take away from this study of the other services is the great degree of latitude offered to Service Secretaries through DOPMA. The Army and Navy have made extensive use of multiple promotion competitive categories to ensure development and equitable promotion of needed officer specialists. While the Air Force may not need to create 19 separate competitive categories, an additional one or two could offer an avenue to ensure development and promotion of senior leaders in critical career fields who have difficulty competing with other officers of the line.

Of equal importance is the lesson to be learned by tying leader development to an organization's key mission areas. The Marine Corps' philosophy of training every Marine the basics of being a rifleman and developing officers to focus on their part of the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) has provided that service with a pool of technically deep but, doctrinally broad officers. The similarities between the MAGTF and Air and Space Expeditionary Force (AEF) become more apparent everyday.

The RAF provides yet another model which may be useful to our Air Force's personnel planners. Although a smaller service, it seems to provide for more structured career development and an avenue to ensure the service continues to develop the right number of technical experts and generalists.

Before a final decision is made on the best method to promote and develop Air Force officers, the service needs to reflect on all of the models presented. Each of them has strengths which may be useful as we develop tomorrow's senior Air Force leaders.

¹ Ibid, 285.

² Ibid, 285.

³ Ibid, 285.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ DAL briefing.

⁷ Ibid, 298.

⁸ DAL briefing.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., iv.

¹¹ Ibid., xviii.

¹² Ibid., iv.

¹³ Ibid., xii.

¹⁴ Ibid., xvii.

¹⁵ Ibid., xv.

¹⁶ Ibid., iii.

¹⁷ SECNAVINST 1420.1A, *Promotion and Selective Early Retirement*, 2.

¹⁸ Navy Personnel Command, "FY-06 Active Officer Promotion Plan."

¹⁹ SECNAVINST 1400.1A, *Officer Competitive Categories*, Enclosure (1), 3.

²⁰ Navy Personnel Command, "FY-06 Active Officer Promotion Plan."

²¹ SECNAVINST 1401.3, *Selection Board Membership*.

²² Thie et al., *General and Flag Officer Careers*, 11.

²³ SECNAVINST 1400.1A, *Officer Competitive Categories*, Enclosure (2).

²⁴ MCO P1400.31B, *Officer Promotions*, 1-6.

²⁵ Ibid., 1-6.

²⁶ SECNAVINST 1401.3, *Selection Board Membership*, Enclosure (2).

²⁷ MCO P1400.31B, *Officer Promotions*, 3-8.

Chapter 4

Course of Action Development & Recommendation

COA 1: Change to a “Wexford-Type” Competency-Based Assignment & Promotion System for Active Duty Officers

The first COA adopts a “Wexford-type” competency-based management system for all active duty officers. It would start with a comprehensive detailed job requirements analysis by position to build individual competency descriptors. This analysis could develop 30-40 competencies per occupational position. The system would produce a methodology to allow the strategic management of human resources enabling the Air Force to forecast future job competencies requirements.

A “Wexford-type” competency-based system would also initiate a major cultural change for the Air Force. Key aspects would effect changes in performance evaluations, promotions, and assignments. A similar system to the current Air Force senior leader performance and development management system would be required for all levels. This would produce an open system allowing officers to view, measure, and learn their competencies and measure against promotion potential, assignment matching, and performance expectations. Promotions and assignments would be outcome driven based on individual competency measures and matching which produces an objective system.

COA #1 Pros and/or Benefits

The proposed “Wexford-type” system would be a hybrid combination of several methods from the systems discussed could be beneficial. Schoonover offers scalable competencies, DDI presented a mix of methods to assist in measuring competency performance, while RAND provides a unique approach for competency development directly relating to the institutional culture and current personnel practices.

Since competencies can be assessed and documented, the system would provide the ability to match Airmen’s developed competencies with assignment requirements. The system would “incorporate minimum and maximum time-in-job requirements, standardized job advertisements, and encourage members to identify and apply for jobs.”¹ Assignments would be made through a centralized selection system to match an individual’s competency to fill positions based on needed competency matches and developmental needs. The promotion system would project “requirements and provide promotion opportunities to individuals with the highest performance potential based on” demonstrated competency.²

COA #1 Cons and/or Costs

A “Wexford-type” system would have high dollar cost to revamp existing classification, performance evaluation, assignment, and promotion systems. It also would require significant cultural changes over many years of system development and implementation. The research group believes the significant money, time, and cultural investments required to implement COA #1 are not worth the marginal benefits gained. Our research and experience lead us to conclude the benefits promised by consultants are overstated when set against the current Air Force development, assignment, and promotion systems.

The Air Force must acknowledge that a difference exists in the application of competencies at lower levels, from those competencies needed for senior leader development. A one size fits all solution will neither be efficient or sufficient. Caution must be exercised when developing a system that is additive to current systems, requiring a new layer of support and constant training to maintain a standardized competency-based system for the Air Force. The process would disrupt current force development programs, including subjective personnel inputs from MAJCOMs, career fields, or by name requests; void current investments in Force Development and evolving systems development before they were allowed to fully mature, and validate their impact on future Air Force competency development; and require a long time and significant senior leader investment to inculcate sweeping cultural change.

COA #2: Stay with the Present AF Assignment & Promotion Systems

This COA maintains the status quo and rejects adopting the “Wexford” type competency system described in COA #1. A system such as Wexford proposes would have high dollar costs—to revamp existing classification, performance evaluation, assignment, and promotion systems—and require significant cultural changes over many years of system development and implementation. The research group believes the significant money, time and cultural investments required to implement COA #1 are not worth the marginal benefits gained. Our research and experience lead us to conclude the benefits promised by consultants like Wexford, DDI, Schoonover, etc. are overstated when set against the current Air Force development, assignment, and promotion systems.

Underpinning COA #2 are the current officer FD initiatives described in Chapter 2. Through FD, the Air Force already does competency development and management.

Development Teams (DT) deliberately develop—via experience (assignments), education, and training—both career fields with primary competencies and the institution with secondary competencies, by year group, to derive a pool of senior officer candidates with the required skill pair distribution. Under this COA, the current, whole person promotion system remains unchanged. RAND flow models are used for deliberate secondary competency development targets and to identify skill pair deficiencies in year groups following promotion.

COA #2 Pros and/or Benefits

The current competency development and promotion systems leverage prior analytical investment, existing assignment and performance reporting mechanisms, and well-established institutional culture. It also draws on the current FD momentum and maturation of the FD and DT concepts over the past three years. Real, targeted, and valued development, through broadening of officers, is happening today. Information technology (IT) mechanisms are already planned and funded to facilitate experience and DID skill tracking in personnel data systems, as well as ease and automate the DT review and vectoring of officers. COA #2 requires no additional or unprogrammed monies or legislative action or relief. FD also enjoys increasing acceptance among Air Force senior leaders.

COA #2 Cons and/or Costs

The mechanisms General Jumper called for in his November 2002 *Chief's Sight Picture* are now in place and maturing: DT-shaped field grade officer assignments to purposely develop to requirements, revamped and expanded IDE, targeted education/training opportunities and selection. However, it will take 3-4 more years to fully understand how actions taken thus far will impact the ability of the Air Force to meet its' senior leader occupational competency/skill

pair requirements. It is likely position-candidate skill mismatches may still occur in the interim. Officers with needed skill pairs may not be promoted to O-6 or O-7 ranks. Until the planned IT systems are fielded and matured, it will be difficult and time intensive for DTs to retroactively award DIDs.

COA #2 Analysis

Realizing the FD process is still maturing, the research team sees several potential issues with this COA. First, DTs vector officers to the flow model secondary skill requirements targets, ATs put officers on assignments they believe fulfill the DT vector. However, there are currently no standardized definitions for the secondary competencies (or DIDs) described in the RAND flow models or what constitutes a developmental assignment (DA) to garner those competencies. This raises several questions. What skills, experience, etc. are needed to qualify for award of a DID competency? What broadening assignments will ensure gaining of those skills, experiences, etc., vice a duty title? How do we measure success in gaining secondary competencies? Are we really developing deliberately to get the competencies we need? Under the current system, an officer could plausibly receive a DID without possessing the requisite secondary competency consistent with RAND's job analysis of GO and O-6 positions.

Second, research interviews and analysis of published guidance indicate the 28 DTs lack standardization. The research team believes this partly due to the limitations described above. Some DT members we interviewed lamented a lack of guidance from the Force Development Council, leaving them to vector largely "in the dark." Others, who had participated in multiple meetings of the same functional DT, noted the nature and basis of officer vectors were very different (i.e. lacked consistency) depending on which GO chaired the DT.

Third, in addition to guidance, DTs lack regular oversight. DTs are given significant power and responsibility, in the form of assignment vectors and DID awarding, to shape their career fields to meet Air Force senior leader requirements. Many officers group members talked to expressed real concern that without oversight—checks and balances—DTs could function as “crime families” or “mafias.” The apprehension is that development opportunities will be determined by who knows who, i.e. a super-empowered “good old boy network,” rather than individual qualification and performance. Regardless of whether absence of a level playing field or equal opportunity is real or perceived, it is a potentially significant issue in an all-volunteer, retention force.

Adding fuel to the “crime family” concern is the fact that most DTs currently vector officers and assign DIDs without reviewing officer performance reports (OPRs). The rationale given to the research team for this compromise is time constraints, especially for the DTs managing larger pools of officers. Minus the OPRs, DT’s review an officer’s previous job experience using Air Force Specialty Codes, duty titles, job levels, organizations, and education documented on the SURF. However, this information does not tell either how well an officer performed in previous assignments (to include a developmental assignment) or how an individual officer’s performance compares to others the DT is vectoring for development. The straight-up evaluation of relative officer performance and potential based on the whole record, embodied in the current Air Force promotion board system, is thus not present in the current DT structure.

Finally, the research team’s personal command experiences, along with interviews and statements from several GOs, current and former wing/group/squadron commanders, provide convincing evidence of widely diverse levels of familiarity with the FD concept, structure, programs, and responsibilities. Commanders and/or staff supervisors of officers placed in

developmental assignments have a critical role in ensuring their charges gain the desired skills, experiences, etc to qualify for the desired DID, through training, deliberate development, and performance documentation. Supervisors cannot adequately perform these functions absent more specific DID definition and identification or designation of developmental (DID qualifying) assignments.

Further, commanders at all levels need detailed understanding of the both the FD vision and its mechanisms in order to locally develop and mentor all of their officers to meet institutional Air Force requirements. In our experience, current squadron commander courses and IDE/SDE programs do not give commanders adequate tools to perform these critical tasks. Exacerbating these issues is the absence of a formal DT feedback mechanism to commanders to critique their officer development plans, explain vector rationales and limitations, or educate on current or projected changes to career field dynamics and senior leader requirements. Since institutional requirements and individual performance drive development decisions, not all officers within or across career fields, will be—or are intended to be—developed the same. Without detailed understanding of FD and useful support tools, commanders have difficulty with realistically assessing and counseling their officers on the current system. The consequences of this are unrealistic or false expectations of FD by individual officers.

COA #3A: Minor Modifications to the Present Force Development System

This COA makes several minor modifications which build on the current officer FD program while capitalizing on the successes the Air Force has already achieved. The Air Force has made great strides in the last five years toward the deliberate development of its officers to meet senior leader primary and secondary occupational skill pair requirements. Officer FD

initiatives are at the heart of this progress. Mechanisms are now in place, or are being built, to purposefully leverage experience, education, and training to develop the required mix of occupational and enduring leadership competencies to meet Air Force/joint senior leader requirements. Still, additional maturing work is needed. The issues surrounding what qualifies as a DA, the criteria for awarding a DID, and DID-awarding authority need much more work to resolve. In their present configuration, it will be difficult for the Air Force to measure whether or not the FD assignment initiatives discussed are really meeting stated requirements.

COA 3A would devise standardized definitions for secondary competencies (DIDs) and the developmental assignments (DA) to garner those competencies. In addition, the COA prescribes modifications to enable the Force Development Council (FDC) to provide standardization and overarching strategic guidance to Development Teams (DTs) lacking today. Finally, the COA addresses a perceived need for more education at all levels on the officer FD concept, structure, programs, and responsibilities. The goal of the research team's recommendation is to enable the deliberate development of field grade officers to populate a large pool of quality senior officer candidates with requisite secondary competencies that meet Air Force senior leader requirements within the current "whole person" promotion process.

COA #3A Mod-1: Define DIDs & Designate DID-qualifying DA positions

Standardized definitions are needed to describe the RAND flow model-derived secondary competencies, labeled by the Air Force for tracking purposes as DIDs. For each secondary occupational skill (see Figure 2.14), the Air Force must define what knowledge areas, experiences, technical skills and certifications (if applicable) are required. Careful judgment must be applied – the goal of the DID definition and award criteria is to ensure a baseline of skill

capability in a secondary competency, not create an officer with full-fledged primary competency-level skill set. The Air Force already uses a process functional communities could emulate in its flying training where training events/performance tasks are normally specified as requiring proficiency item or familiarization. This determination, made by weapon system experts based on user MAJCOM inputs and requirements, drives training program curriculums, flying hour allocations, and evaluations. More training time is spent on proficiency events as they are evaluated to a higher standard than familiarity items.

The process of defining each DID, and its award criteria, would start with analysis by the DID owning community leading to a proposal. The proposal would include the requisite knowledge areas, experiences, technical skills for the DID, as well as specify the level of proficiency and/or familiarity senior leaders require in each for to achieve secondary occupational competency. The proposal would be vetted through a cross-functional working group, representing multiple DTs for fine tuning and validation. The Force Development Council would then review, modify if needed, and approve the DID definition and award criteria.

Once a DID definition is complete, AFPC would then lead a process to designate DID-qualifying DA positions. One method would be for AFPC to host a world-wide DA conference, modeled after the worldwide AEF and UTC conferences hosted by the AEF Center. At the conference, MAJCOMS would nominate positions in their assignment portfolios they think meet a particular DID's criteria. Cross-functional working groups consisting of DT and AT members would coordinate on the positions to achieve consensus. An AF-wide list of qualifying positions for each DID would be forwarded to the FDC for approval.

Two additional considerations are important for this modification to be maximally effective. First, AFPC must ensure it has more DID-qualifying positions than the number of DIDs required

by the flow model target percentage ranges. This is necessary to hedge against fluctuations in year group size (inventory) or changes to senior leader position requirements. Unfilled designated DID-qualifying DA positions can always be filled with a functional officer once all officers vectored by DT to that DID are placed. Second, the FDC must direct a periodic review every 5-7 years of DID requirements—essentially revalidating/updating the RAND flow model—and DA positions. This is needed for the FD architecture to keep pace with changes in the Air Force and the environment it operates in.

COA #3A Mod-2: Strengthened, Active Force Development Council

The team also believes additional oversight of and standardization between DTs is needed to better control deliberate development of future senior leaders. We recommend centralized direction and periodic metrics review by a strengthened FDC (with AF/A1 acting in a standardization/evaluation role). This would shift some control and autonomy away from DTs and MAJCOMs. The primary goals of this modification are: 1) accountability, to preempt career field “mafias” and/or “county options,” ensuring both equity for officers and development to Air Force requirements, and 2) increased facilitation of cross career field DAs.

The FDC would give overarching guidance, a commander’s intent-like document, to each DT-chair, standardizing: what documents DTs would review when vectoring officers (some method of performance review must be added into the current vectoring process), what performance, experience, force shaping factors DTs should consider, etc. This centralized direction would be similar to the Secretary of the Air Force board instructions given to each officer promotion board before they begin scoring records. The FDC would also meet regularly (propose 4 time per year) to review metrics in order to gage how well DTs are meeting senior

leader skill pair vectoring requirements, whether ATs are placing officers in accordance with skill pair vectors, etc. These vector checks would allow the FDC to review: institutional trends and career field trends; adjust DID/DA guidance based on new missions, force build-ups or draw-downs, and/or new Congressional or OSD direction; sanction and approve updates to the RAND senior leader competency requirements in order to revalidate DID requirements (add/subtract/maintain individual DIDs); analyze a sampling of officers' post-DA utilization and performance to ensure paired skills in fact gained in DID-qualifying assignments and then leveraged to advance institution vice career field needs; and finally examine recent senior leader job-person matches to determine whether FD programs in a macro sense are developing the skill pairs the Air Force requires in its senior leader force (FD success).

A strengthened and more active FDC will likely require a more robust support staff for the FDC (which should reside in HAF/A1) and close coordination with AFPC. However, the team believes periodic FDC review of the areas described above is critical to ensuring the Air Force's substantial investment in FD realizes its intended returns. All of these items become more critical as we draw down the force and our margin for error decreases. Random, or at least non-deliberate, non-optimized skill pair development—which in the past provided a large enough pool of most required competencies—may not meet future Air Force requirements when the slop is taken out of the system.

COA #3A Mod-3: Comprehensive Strategic Communications & Education Campaign

The research group believes the Air Force requires an extensive FD strategic communication and education campaign to facilitate commander mentoring and inform individual officer involvement. The first recommendation is to revise and expand the Air Force

Instruction governing FD for the Air Force (AFI 36-2640 Volume 1). Some guidance in the January 2004 document needs to be updated to reflect current practice and the AFI must be operationalized to be useful to the force as a whole—DT members, commanders, individual officers—not just personnelists on an A1 headquarters staff or at AFPC.

Second, this modification would add clear definitions (approved by the FDC) to AFDD 1-1, Leadership and Force Development. The current AFDD 1-1 discussion of competency and occupational skill sets is confusing and unclear. It is critical the Air Force develop solid definitions of competencies to fit within doctrine and culture. The research has identified four competency definitions we need to develop within the framework of existing doctrine. Those terms will define competency, enduring leadership competencies, occupational competencies, and occupational skill pairs. Each of these terms are building blocks to a competency-based FD system. The suggested definitions are:

Competency is a grouping of behaviors that are measurable or an assessable collection of observable knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors, and other characteristics that an individual needs to perform a particular job or function successfully. They are the capabilities an individual must demonstrate to be an effective Air Force Airman and include enduring leadership competencies and occupational competencies.

Enduring leadership competencies are the common leadership qualities needed by all Airmen. They are developed as Airmen progress through increased levels of responsibility and are not specific to any one organization or function. They are gained through education, training, and mentoring by leaders from all levels of the Air Force. Enduring leadership competencies are focused and manifested differently at different organizational levels (tactical, operational, strategic) and/or leader roles.

Occupational competencies are the specific knowledge, skill, ability, and other personal characteristics, that define the required capabilities of a specific Air Force job, or function. They are gained through successful completion of on-the-job training, technical training, and skill level training, or certifications that have defined performance requirements, standards of behaviors, or other focused capability descriptors that define successful job or mission performance.

Occupational skill pair is the specific knowledge, skill, and/or experiences Airmen gain from deliberate force development in a secondary occupational competency (outside their primary occupational competency) to meet Air Force requirements. These skill sets enable Airmen to succeed across the Air Force mission spectrum. They are gained through education, training, and developmental assignments, which could include; career broadening positions, recruiting, training instructor, language, or expeditionary skills. Some secondary occupational competencies are tracked in the military personnel system using a Developmental Identifier (DID).

AFDD 1-1 should also include a brief overview of the mission, organization, structure, and functioning of DTs as well as the basis and purpose for DIDs and DID-qualifying DAs.

Third, the Air Force should launch a strategic communications and education campaign to teach officers about the FD concept, its structure, and its programs, as well as their roles and responsibilities. Communications and education should be tailored to target audiences (CGOs, FGOs, commanders), with the goal of imparting both factual knowledge and realistic expectations. Current PME courses provide ample opportunity to get the right words out at the right level (AFROTC, OTS, USAFA, ASBC and SOS to educate CGOs; IDE and SDE to educate FGOs, etc.). The Air Force should also develop a standardized, comprehensive one-day “FD for Commanders” course. This course should be taught at all squadron, group, and wing commander’s courses by MAJCOM/A1s or AFPC.

Finally, AFPC should develop a “responsibilities memorandum” for raters of officers in designated DID-qualifying DAs. This educational tool would give these critical supervisors general information concerning DAs and specific information regarding the necessary skills, experiences, certifications, etc. the officer must gain/earn to qualify for the desired DID, plus performance and experience documentation guidance. The memorandum would set key supervisor and officer expectations up front, and would enable an essential part of the

feedback loop needed to determine whether officers in DAs are gaining the DID-required skills (which requires a DID definition as discussed in COA 3A Mod-1).

COA #3A Pros and/or Benefits

This COA addresses shortcomings of the current FD system (described in COA #2) to gain maximum return on prior analytical investments, existing assignment and performance reporting mechanisms. Like COA #2, it draws on the current FD momentum and maturation of the FD and DT concepts over the past three years, and fits within existing Air Force institutional culture and core values. As the COA is implemented, institutional leaders will get well-defined DIDs tied to analytically-derived senior leader requirements along with an approved list of DID-qualifying positions, which will focus the officer FD construct and ensure unity of effort and synchronization at tactical, operational, and strategic levels.

COA #3A Cons and/or Costs

Caution must be exercised when developing a system that is additive to current systems, requiring a new layer of support and constant training to maintain a standardized competency-based system for the Air Force. Implementation may require additional staffing to support the strengthened, more active FDC plus short-term analytical investment to define the DIDs and DAs. It will also require more time of institutional leaders who sit on the FDC.

COA #3A Analysis

The modifications proposed will enable 1) institutional leaders to determine officer FD system performance, via metrics, relative to deliberate development of primary and secondary occupational competency pairs required by Air Force/joint senior leaders; 2) provide for overarching guidance, standardization among career fields, and a systems of regular review,

checks, and balances to ensure equity and facilitate adjustment; and 3) educate officers across the force on their roles, responsibilities, and realistic expectations under FD, as well as Air Force corporate leadership intent. The benefits of the COA facilitate achieving the full potential of FD, which is even more critical as the Air Force draws down, and outweighs the relatively minor additional investments needed (when compared to prior sunk costs).

COA #3B: Modify current Force Development system by promoting to senior officer ranks to meet assignment requirements

Currently, Air Force officers are promoted to the next rank through a competitive, centralized promotion board structure. All line officers, within certain promotion year groups, compete against each other with competing records being rank-ordered. Annex X outlines the Air Force Officer promotion system and the “whole person” concept of record scoring. One criticism of this practice is while the officer with best record (and thereby the most potential to serve at the next rank) may be promoted, the Air Force Colonel’s Management Office (and therefore, later on the Air Force General Officer Management Office) is presented with a group of newly promoted colonels without regard to the requirements of immediate or projected assignment vacancies. This can create a skills mismatch between Air Force requirements—vacancies created by colonels being promoted to general, or pending retirements—and the inventory of available colonels. Given this requirements-to-inventory mismatch, the Air Force is placed in a position where officers promoted to the rank of colonel may not be best qualified from an occupational experience standpoint for vacant senior officer positions.

One potential solution for this situation would be to annually inventory colonel and general officer billets to determine the nature of the occupational competency requirements of the billets to be filled during the upcoming assignment cycle. Requirements could then be matched against the inventory of senior officers available for assignment during that cycle. Areas where the available inventory was insufficient to meet the requirements could then be cataloged and provided to the Air Force Promotion Board. Then Promotion Board members would be made aware of the Air Force Specialty Codes, and developmental specializations (language, prior developmental assignments, specialized education, etc) needed to fill billets in upcoming assignment cycles. For instance, if the Air Force assignment system needed a Farsi-speaking, rated officer with acquisition experience, the promotion board would select the best qualified rated officers meeting this requirement. The priority of the promotion board would be to promote to the RAND flow model of skill pair requirements. In order to ensure the Air Force had enough qualified officers to meet both specific inventory requirements and the less-specified, but still highly needed leadership position requirements, this promotion schema would promote more officers than the yearly inventory-to-requirements mismatch. If, say, three officers were promoted for every mismatched assignment billet, then enough officers would be promoted to ensure sufficient quantity to fill the mismatches and other generic leadership positions (group commander for instance). The exact number of officers to be promoted each year would be a factor of the number of requirements-to-inventory mismatches plus enough officers to fill non-specified leadership billets. DOPMA constraints would provide an upper limit to overall promotion numbers. This way, the Air Force promotion system would better meet the needs of Air Force assignment system while continuing to provide a pool of highly qualified officers to compete for general officer rank.

COA #3B Pros and/or Benefits

The promotion schema suggested in this COA would ensure immediate and short-term Air Force senior officer assignment requirements would be in sync. No longer would the Air Force Colonel Matters Officer have to make assignment matches based on a promotion system blind to Air Force senior leader occupational competency requirements. In addition to meeting the year-to-year needs of the Air Force assignment system, DTs would be in a position to ensure sufficient numbers of high-potential company- and field- grade officers are given development assignments and education opportunities to meet specific future Air Force needs. Lastly, because this COA suggests promoting more qualified officers than the immediate/short term assignment requirements, enough high-potential officers are promoted to ensure a viable pool of officers are available to compete for enduring leadership positions as well as for general officer rank.

COA #3B Cons and/or Costs

The DOPMA provides legal authority for the service secretaries to create a promotion-to-requirements system. However, such a radical modification to the Air Force promotion system would be a significant cultural change from the historic “whole person” promotion concept. This COA’s promotion schema would ensure the best officers meeting specific Air Force assignment requirements would be promoted. But a significant shortfall of this COA would be the potential that officers with the best overall records may not get promoted. Since the requirements-to-inventory mismatches would drive the overall promotion numbers, the officer best meeting the mismatched assignment requirement could potentially be promoted before an officer with better enduring leadership competencies. In other words, this COA has the potential

of favoring those officers who, through developmental and educational assignments, do not have the same leadership opportunities of squadron command and higher-headquarters staff tours of otherwise high-potential officers following a leadership track of assignments.

COA #3B Analysis

The creation of an assignment mismatch-to-officer inventory promotion system would ensure the Air Force an inventory of qualified officers to meet immediate and short term assignment requirements. In addition, instructing the Promotion Board to also promote otherwise high-potential officers would ensure a pool of competitive officers for future general officer rank. However, adopting this promotion schema requires a significant cultural change to the “whole person” concept of Air Force promotions, and carries the very real possibility of non-selection of high-potential officers with strong enduring leadership competencies, but lacking in the specific requirements to meet short-term Air Force assignment needs.

COA #3C: Modify Current Force Development System by Adding Additional Promotion Competitive Categories

A major criticism of the current Force Development system is the perceived inequality in development and promotion opportunities offered to officers in certain career fields. Two of the career fields most often mentioned when discussing this issue are acquisitions management and intelligence. Like other career field developing technical competence is extremely important however, both of these career fields traditionally had far fewer command opportunities at all levels than the rest of the Air Force. Since officers with such “non-standard” career paths may be disadvantaged during the Air Force’s promotion, the Air Force may not be able to fully

develop as many senior acquisition and intelligence leaders as are required to fill projected requirements.

A possible solution for this type of situation would be to separate these officers from the rest of the Line of the Air Force into new competitive categories. This would allow these types of officers to compete only with others in their career field for promotion into projected vacancies. No new legislation would be required to accomplish this as the provisions of the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA) allow service secretaries to create separate promotion competitive categories when specialized training and narrow utilization make it impossible for certain groups of officers to compete with generalist officers.

Such an approach to officer management is not without precedent in the United States military and as mentioned earlier in this paper is currently being used by both the Army and Navy. The Army equivalent of Line of the Air Force is divided into four competitive categories while the Navy's is divided into fourteen. The resulting flexibility provides these services with the ability to develop the right number of senior leaders possessing needed competencies in all specialties.

COA #3C Pros and/or Benefits

The addition of one or two promotion competitive categories would offer the Air Force a mechanism with which to fully develop needed technically proficient officers without attempting to redefine long established narrow career paths solely to make these functional officers more competitive for promotion with the rest of the line. Creating separate promotion categories for the examples of acquisition and intelligence officers already discussed could become an ideal mechanism to manage and develop "technical corps" of officers with the professional credibility

needed to acquire Air Force weapon systems or to serve as combatant command directors of intelligence in the future.

COA #3C Cons and/or Costs

While the legal authority already exists to create additional promotion competitive categories when required to meet the needs of a service, the cost of such a change are significant. Since it's inception as a separate service, Air Force leadership has been opposed to the creation of separate categories or "branches" within the line. The service has always preferred to develop officers through experiential assignments as they progress through the ranks. In this way officers begin their careers developing technical abilities but gradually broaden their expertise as they gain experience in wider areas through developmental assignments.

While the administrative action of assigning officers to new competitive categories or branches is not insurmountable, the cultural change within the Air Force would be difficult. Each competitive category would have a separate panel at each promotion board and could only promote the exact number of officers required to fill its own projected vacancies. Promotion opportunity would become much more constrained by an officer's career field and would no longer be solely based on selecting the best qualified officer.

COA #3C Analysis

The creation of additional officer promotion competitive categories would offer the Air Force a more structured method to manage the grade structure of each career field. Unfortunately, this drastic change would result in a switch from selecting the best officer for promotion to selecting the best technician. It also runs counter to the thrust of the problem Gen Ryan observed (too many specialist senior officers) resulting in RAND's job analysis and skill

pair requirements flow model. While in the future the Air Force may need to relook at this option to meet operational requirements, the Air Force should stay the course and enhance its current force development system.

COA Recommendation

Based on the analysis of each COA presented, **the research group recommends the Air Force implement COA 3A, “Minor Modifications to the Present Force Development System.”** The group believes this COA represents the best avenue to meet Air Force senior officer occupational competency requirements within current Air Force institutional culture.

Recommended Areas for Further Study

The research group further believes there are many related areas, outside the scope of our research question, which should be examined ensure to there are no unintended and/or counterproductive second or third order consequences produced by COA 3A implementation.

Recommended areas for further study are:

- Officer Career Lengths – Is there enough “time” given current DOPMA phasing points to develop/gain experience in all the areas the Air Force says are important prior to becoming a senior officer? (E.g. AOC/warfighting headquarters tour [2 years], joint duty [2 to 3 years], IDE/SDE [1 year, 2 years if international DE requires language training], command in primary AFSC [2 years], secondary occupational competency gaining DA [2 years]).
- Centralized rated squadron commander boards – What are the pros and cons of moving to centralized CAF/MAF/SOF squadron commander boards vice the current MAJCOM specific rated squadron command boards?

- Current Air Force language capability – Are there language proficient officer and enlisted personnel in today’s Air Force that are unaccounted for? Conduct an inventory of current Air Force member language skills.
- Cultural/Language skill requirements for officer accessions – Should the Air Force require 4 years of college-level cultural and language study for all USAFA and AFROTC scholarship students in an AF-designated culture/language?
- Graduates of International IDE/SDE – Is the Air Force maximizing the cultural awareness and language skills of its current inventory of officers who have graduated from foreign IDE/SDE programs? Is there a tie-in to the International Affairs Specialist programs?
- Standardize Officer, Enlist, Civilian Force Development terminology – Examine FD initiatives for enlisted and civilian personnel to ensure common terminology (e.g. can an enlisted person on a broadening assignment earn a DID?) and understanding.

¹ Report of The Wexford Group International, “Final Report on the Coordinated Air Force Competency-Based Management System (CBMS) Implementation Plan,” Task 3.4, 15 July 2005, 30.

² Ibid, 31.

Notes

(All notes appear in shortened form. For full details, see the appropriate entry in the bibliography.)

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Appendix 1

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS¹

AAD—Advanced Academic Degree
AEF—Air and Space Expeditionary Force
AF—Air Force
AFI—Air Force Instruction
AFIP—Air Force Intern Program
AFIT—Air Force Institute of Technology
AFMAN—Air Force Manual
AFPC—Air Force Personnel Center
AFROTC—Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps
AFSC—Air Force Specialty Code
AFSLMO—Air Force Senior Leader Management Office
ALEET—Acquisition Logistics Experience Exchange Tour
ASBC—Air and Space Basic Course
AT—Assignment Team
BDE—Basic Developmental Education
CAF—Combat Air Forces
CFM—Career Field Manager
CGO—Company Grade Officer
DE—Developmental Education
DID—Developmental Identifier
DT—Development Team
FD—Force Development
FDC—Force Development Council
FGO—Field Grade Officer
HAF—Headquarters Air Force
IDE—Intermediate Developmental Education
ISS—Intermediate Service School
MAF—Mobility Air Forces
MAJCOM—Major Command
ODP—Officer Development Plan
OTS—Officer Training School
PCS—Permanent Change of Station
RDTM—Rated Distribution and Training Management
SDE—Senior Developmental Education
SOF—Special Operations Forces
SOS—Squadron Officer School

SSS—Senior Service School

USAFA—United States Air Force Academy

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC)—A code identifying an AFS or skill; officer AFSCs are 4 digits, enlisted AFSCs are 5 digits; they may have alpha prefixes or suffixes to provide more specificity (AFI 36-2101).

Assignment Team (AT)—Oversees assignment policies and execution within a functional community. Makes assignments using the Air Force Assignment System.

Basic Developmental Education (BDE)—DE directed at Tactical Level of development, usually received as a company grade officer. It includes both appropriate level professional military education (PME) (i.e., Air and Space Basic Course and Squadron Officer School) and select DE opportunities (i.e., AF-sponsored advanced academic degree programs and the Air Force Intern Program) designed to develop knowledge and experience through education and leadership training within the officer's primary career field.

Career Field Manager (CFM)—The Air Force focal point for the designated career field within a functional community. Serves as the primary advocate for the career field, addressing issues and coordinating functional concerns across various staffs. Responsible for the career field policy and guidance.

Developmental Assignment Definition:—An assignment inside or outside of an individual's Core ID or RDTM designed to develop breadth once depth of experience has been achieved. These assignments are designated with a DID.

Developmental Education (DE)—Education designed by DT comprised of two components, 1) military education at the appropriate level (e.g., ISS), 2) select AAD programs designed to develop people either within their career field, or to prepare them for an assignment outside their career field.

Developmental Identifier (DID)—An identifier to show experience in a functional community outside of the person's core ID or RDTM. The DID will be a 3-digit alpha numeric code. The criteria to award the DID is determined by the functional community that owns the DID. Award of a DID is determined by the AT. The DID is awarded to individual officers who are deliberately assigned to developmental assignments and who perform these duties for a minimum of 12 months.

Development Team (DT)—The group primarily responsible for managing FD. DTs are comprised of members from functional areas, MAJCOMs and AFPC and led by a senior officer. They are organized around functional areas or logically related operational groupings to maximize the potential of our people, our career fields and our Air Force. Some responsibilities

include oversight of health and development of AFSCs, development plan review, and developmental assignments, cross flow to new AFSCs, communication with individuals and their chain of command.

Enduring Competencies—The personal and leadership qualities that provide a common grounding for all Air Force members.

Force Development (FD)—The series of experiences and challenges, combined with education and training opportunities to produce AF leadership. It satisfies necessary Air Force job skill and enduring competency requirements (personal and leadership qualities); follows doctrine; has coordinated policies that concentrate on the right level of and focus of experience, education, and training...at the right time...and best uses the amount of time we have for development. In short, the processes used to ensure we properly develop our people in order to meet their expectations and AF requirements.

Force Management—The overall management of the functional community with respect to the mission, the people, and the available resources. Also, the processes used to analyze, assess, and direct personnel actions to ensure the continuing ability of each career field to meet mission demands within the career field and for other required Air Force missions.

Functional Category—The group of career fields managed by the same Headquarters Air Force functional community (AFI 36-2110).

Functional Community—A group of career fields led and managed by a single Headquarters Air Force office, grouped according to related disciplines.

Functional Manager (FM)—Senior leaders, designated by the appropriate functional authority, who provide day-to-day management responsibility over specific functional communities. While they should maintain an institutional focus with regards to resource development and distribution, FMs are responsible for ensuring their specialties are equipped, developed, and sustained to meet the functional community's mission as well as encourage FD opportunities in order to meet future needs of the total Air Force mission.

Intermediate Developmental Education (IDE)—DE directed at the Operational Level of development, usually received as a field grade officer. It includes both appropriate level PME and select DE opportunities (i.e., AF-sponsored advanced academic degree programs) designed to develop broader experience and increased responsibility within a related family of skills, in preparation for an assignment outside of or within the Officer's primary career field.

Officer Development Plan (ODP)—An individual's plan outlining his or her desired assignment and career objectives combined with the commander's assessment of those desires and the Development Team's recommendation for education and assignments. Also refers to automated assignment selection and officer feedback.

Senior Developmental Education (SDE)—DE directed at the Strategic Level of development, usually occurring near or at the senior officer ranks, i.e., lieutenant colonels and colonels. It

includes both appropriate level PME and select DE opportunities (i.e., AF-sponsored advanced academic degree programs, Air Force Fellowship programs) designed to develop a breadth of experience and leadership perspective necessary for an assignment outside of the officer's primary career field.

¹ Most of the Acronyms, Abbreviations, Terms, and Definitions contained in this Appendix are extracted from Air Force Instruction (AFI) 36-2640, Volume 1, *Total Force Development (Active Duty Officer)*, 23 January 2004, Attachment 1.