

**Identification and Accessioning of
Individuals for the Officer Candidate
School (OCS)**

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**United States Army Research Institute
for the Behavioral and Social Sciences**

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IDENTIFICATION AND ACCESSIONING OF INDIVIDUALS FOR THE OFFICER CANDIDATE SCHOOL (OCS)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research Requirement:

The U.S. Army's Officer Candidate School (OCS) has recently expanded in response to requirements to increase the size of the officer corps in the Army. This has involved greater use of an alternative avenue for entry into OCS, namely, the enlistment-option program in which civilians with college degrees are recruited to enter OCS after completion of Basic Combat Training. This program supplements the traditional route to OCS, that is, the in-service program in which Soldiers are selected for OCS participation.

The U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) has an ongoing project (Measures for Selecting Individuals for the Officer Candidate School, "SelectOCS") to identify a test battery that will select OCS applicants with the most leadership potential, the best fit with the Army, and the greatest likelihood of staying in the Army. While the SelectOCS project has identified measures that show a great deal of promise for selecting officer candidates (OCs), it is an empirical study and lacks qualitative context.

The "AccessOCS" project, the subject of this report, was designed to fill that gap. Its objectives were to (a) identify and describe OCS applicants in terms of motivations, backgrounds, and incentives; (b) identify how the OCS selection and application process works, and (c) develop recommendations for improving the OCS accessions process. The project explored a very basic, but essential question about OCS candidates; that is, how do candidates, either in-service or enlistment-option, enter the program in the first place? What are the forces, considerations, dynamics, and persons that influence an individual's decision to become an Army officer through OCS? What are the steps applicants take in the accessioning process? What factors inhibit and facilitate recruitment of high quality candidates? What might be done to improve accessioning of candidates who are likely to become strong leaders and stay in the Army?

Procedure:

ARI and the Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO) conducted 18 focus groups and 9 one-on-one interviews with a number of stakeholders to learn about the OCS accessioning process from several different vantage points. These stakeholders included: OCS Candidates; OCS instructors, cadre, and Company Commanders; Basic Officer Leadership Course B (BOLC B) lieutenants; Captain's Career Course (CCC) officers; recruiters; and policy-level sponsors. Structured interview questions were developed for various types of individuals, and interview/focus group sessions were conducted.

Findings:

Content analysis of the focus group/interview notes yielded six key findings:

1. OCS attracts candidates who express a desire to serve in, and a commitment to, the Army.
2. OCS application procedures can be difficult for applicants to understand and utilize.
3. A standardized, stored database management system for tracking OCS candidate performance is lacking.
4. OCS candidates could be better prepared for OCS in four ways: (a) knowing what to expect prior to entry into OCS, (b) knowing and understanding Army culture (for enlistment-option), (c) making the transition from enlisted to officer positions and roles (for in-service), and (d) improving writing and reading skills.
5. The review board process is decentralized and lacks standardization.
6. Branching is a procedure that has multiple facets, such as (a) the tendency for some branches to be viewed more or less favorably by candidates and (b) candidates' concerns about how branch assignments are made. Currently, OCS branching decisions are made in the sixth week at OCS. The other military services (e.g., the Air Force and Navy) use a different model which might be considered for OCS in the future.

Utilization and Dissemination of Findings:

Interview sessions with the Office of the Chief of the Accessions Division, Army G-1, Human Resources Command (HRC) staff, the OCS Commandant and his staff (including company commanders, instructors, cadre, and officer candidates), and Accessions Command personnel revealed several actions that could be taken to improve the OCS accessioning process, the preparation of OCS candidates prior to and during schooling, the development of OCS standardized data elements in stored database management systems, and a broader understanding of the student branching process.

IDENTIFICATION AND ACCESSIONING OF INDIVIDUALS FOR THE OFFICER CANDIDATE SCHOOL (OCS)

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IDENTIFICATION AND ACCESSIONING OF INDIVIDUALS FOR THE OFFICER CANDIDATE SCHOOL (OCS)

Chapter 1. Background

With the expanding global presence of the military comes the growing need to commission officers in a timely fashion to fill those positions. Traditionally, the Army has used the Officer Candidate School (OCS) to fill accession gaps in officer requirements when other commissioning sources could not meet force structure requirements. OCS is flexible enough to increase or decrease its production of officers on short notice. The traditional route to OCS has been the in-service program in which Soldiers from the ranks are selected for OCS participation. One of the ways in which OCS has responded to Army mission needs has been with the addition and expansion in 1998 of the use of an alternative avenue for entry into OCS, namely the enlistment-option program. The enlistment option is the recruitment of civilians with a college degree who enter OCS after completion of Basic Combat Training. The Army commissions officer candidates (OCs) from the civilian population after 10 weeks of Basic Combat Training (BCT) and 12 weeks of OCS. Prior-service Soldiers are selected from the enlisted ranks through the in-service option. They are commissioned after they complete the 12 week OCS course. However, they are not required to attend BCT, as they completed BCT upon entry into the Army as enlisted Soldiers. In contrast to the 2-4 years required to commission Army officers through the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) and the United States Military Academy (USMA), the OCS timeline is quite short. Considering the accelerated pace of OCS commissioning, more officers can be more readily available to meet OPTEMPO needs, with the potential added benefit of lower training costs to the Army.

As a primary resource for new officer candidates, the Army needs OCS to commission officers who are likely to perform well as new junior officers, fit well into the Army culture, demonstrate leadership behaviors now and in the future, and remain in service beyond their initial Active Duty Service Obligation (ADSO). With that in mind, the Army Research Institute (ARI) initiated a long-term project (Measures for Selecting Soldiers for the Officer Candidate School, entitled “SelectOCS”) to develop and validate a test battery that will select OCS applicants with all of these qualities, that is, high leadership potential, good Army fit, and high likelihood of staying in the Army. The SelectOCS project spans a number of years (2009-2011), and data collection points. Phase 1 of that project is complete (Russell & Tremble, 2009), and Phase 2 is nearing completion (Russell, Allen, & Babin, 2010; Allen, Thibodeaux, & Babin, 2010).

AccessOCS Project Objectives

While the SelectOCS project has identified selection measures that demonstrated a great deal of promise for selecting Officer Candidates (OCs), it is an empirical study and lacks qualitative context. The “AccessOCS” project, the subject of this report, was designed to fill that gap. Both AccessOCS and SelectOCS have investigated differences among the in-service and the enlistment-option groups. While the AccessOCS qualitative approach has focused on individual characteristics and processing concerns, SelectOCS has explored candidate measures of performance (academic, physical fitness, and leadership) and career continuance.

The specific objectives of AccessOCS were to (a) identify and describe OCS applicants in terms of motivations, backgrounds, and incentives; (b) identify how the OCS selection and application process works, and (c) develop recommendations for improving the OCS accessions process. The project explored a very basic, but essential question about OCS candidates; that is, how do candidates, either in-service or enlistment-option, enter the program in the first place? What are the forces, considerations, dynamics, and persons that influence an individual's decision to become an Army officer through OCS? What are the steps applicants take in the accessioning process? What factors inhibit and facilitate recruitment of high quality candidates? What might be done to improve accessioning of candidates likely to become strong leaders and stay in the Army?

In the remainder of this chapter, we provide context to these issues by summarizing the history of commissioning programs in the Army and on-going ARI research in OCS selection and assignment. Following this is an overview of the current project, AccessOCS.

History of Commissioning Programs in the US Army

Within the US Army there are three main sources for commissioning officers. These are (a) USMA at West Point, (b) ROTC at both military and civilian colleges and universities, and (c) OCS incorporating both the in-service and the enlistment-options. USMA was the first source of commissioning, followed by ROTC. Both were eventually supplemented by OCS.

The earliest officers in the US Army came through the military academy at West Point in 1802. Congress established USMA as the primary location and avenue for training military officers. This program included professional training in the philosophy of leadership, along with specialized technical skill development in domains such as engineering.

ROTC was formally established by the Army in 1916, although a forerunner to the program was founded in 1819 at Norwich University by CPT Alden Partridge, an 1806 graduate of USMA. He saw the benefit of supplementing civilian education with military training, thus leading to the use of ROTC as an alternate form of commissioning. This idea spread to other schools, such as Virginia Military Institute (VMI) in 1839, and South Carolina Military Academy/the Citadel in 1842. Over the next 40 years, schools such as these were established as military colleges with the purpose of integrating military skills and knowledge with an accredited civilian education.

In 1862, with the Civil War at hand, President Lincoln saw a need for more officers in the Army and decided to expand the programs for training individuals in military tactics and techniques to other civilian universities. Thus began the Reserve Officer Training Program (ROTP), which emphasized expertise mainly in industry and agriculture. Later, in 1916, the National Defense Act created the Officer Reserve Corps, with federal oversight of all reserve officer training. In addition to creating the Officer Reserve Corps, the National Defense Act established OCS. This avenue allowed for commissioning individuals after they completed their federal or state OCS program of training.

Since its inception, the OCS program has been affected by modifications and changes in processes, policies, and procedures. Many modifications were enacted due to availability of pools of candidates, upgraded standards, and, of course, overall Army needs. For example, *The OCS Direct Selection Process*, initiated in 2005, allowed general officers to select enlisted personnel for OCS and to waive the requirement for the local, structured interview board for those candidates. *Direct Selection* was terminated in 2010, coinciding with a reduction in the in-service OCS mission (MILPER 10-164, 23 June 2010, <https://www.benning.army.mil/199th/ocs/index.htm>). Similarly, OCS accession policy recently changed to require in-service OCs to have a completed baccalaureate degree in-hand before entering OCS. In years past, in-service OCs were allowed to enter OCS with a specific number of college credits (90 hours) but OCs were required to complete the college degree before promotion to captain.

Although OCS officer accessions grew substantially in recent years [i.e., from 1,003 in 2002 (Henning, 2006) to 2,558 in 2009 (ATRRS, 2008)], the current trend is towards a reduction in OCS officer accessions. In FY 2011, the goal is to commission about 1,722 lieutenants from OCS. Most (1,200) of the FY 2011 goal are to come from the enlistment-option program; only 522 are targeted from the in-service program (MILPER 10-164, 23 June 2010, <https://www.benning.army.mil/199th/ocs/index.htm>).

From Application to ADSO: The Path of OCS Commissioned Officers

Over the course of the SelectOCS project, ARI gathered information about the major steps that define a junior OCS commissioned officer's career. An understanding of the steps and process is essential to understanding recommendations that can enhance the OCS program. In this section, we outline those steps, starting with the eligibility requirements, the OCS curriculum and commissioning, and finally, training beyond OCS.

Commissioning through OCS

The administrative requirements for entering OCS through both the in-service and the enlistment-option programs are similar. All applicants complete an application packet. A central element of the packet is a 4-page application form, DA Form 61 (<http://www.army.mil/USAPA/eforms/pdf/A61.PDF>), which asks detailed questions about the candidate's demographics, educational history, branch preferences, military service, special training, and civilian employment history. It also has sections that must be completed and signed by officers recommending an in-service applicant for OCS.

The in-service accessions program is overseen and run by the U.S. Army Human Resources Command (HRC) while the enlistment-option applicants are recruited and selected by the U.S. Army Recruiting Command (USAREC). The eligibility requirements to enter OCS for both the in-service and enlistment-option programs are detailed in Army Publication AR35-51 and summarized in Figure 1.1.

Eligibility Requirements: All Applicants	
• Be United States citizens. • Be at least 18 but less than 35 years of age at the time of enrollment (no waivers). • 4-year Baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university. • Achieve a General Technical Aptitude Test (GT) score of 110 or higher on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB). • Pass the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) and meet the Army height and weight standards (no waivers). • Had a type “A” medical examination within 9 months of the date of the application. • Be of good moral character. Have no convictions by civil or military courts.	
Additional Requirements by Type of OCS Candidate	
In-Service Option	Enlistment Option
• Have a Secret security clearance or higher (no waivers). • Have accumulated no more than 10 years of active Federal service when appointed as a commissioned officer (no waivers). • Have completed advanced individual training (AIT) (enlisted personnel). • Recommended by Commander O-5 or above (no waivers).	• Ability to obtain a Secret security clearance

Figure 1.1. Eligibility requirements for Officer Candidate School (OCS).

Applicants from both options must appear before a board of officers at the local or battalion level. During the local board, applicants prepare a hand-written statement “*Why I want to be an Army officer,*” which must be prepared on-site at the board interview. For the enlistment-option, a Recruiting Battalion-level, local board interviews the applicant in person. In turn, a second boarding process occurs at USAREC headquarters, where packets and all previous information are reviewed. The second boarding process does not require an in-person interview. In-service applicants are also interviewed in-person by a local board. An HRC board then conducts a review of the in-service packets.

The 12-week OCS course conducted at Fort Benning, GA is organized into two main time blocks – Basic and Senior. In the first six weeks – the Basic block – restrictive behavioral rules are rigidly enforced. In weeks 1-3, the focus is on the development of individual skills (e.g., physical ability, survival). Training includes a confidence course, water survival test, and a leadership reaction course as well as instruction in leadership, ethics, and call for fire (i.e., how to provide the location and description of a target when calling for fire). In weeks 4-6, the instructional focus shifts to doctrine and theory instruction (e.g., troop leading procedures, Army operations, history, military intelligence).

The branching ceremony, the procedure by which OCs choose the branches in which they want to work after commissioning, occurs at the end of the sixth week. At this point, OCs are rank-ordered according to their scores on physical fitness, academics and leadership, that is, the OCS Order of Merit List (OML). Based on their OML ranking, they can select their branch. When the AccessOCS project began, in-service OCs were assigned to their branch by the HRC boards. Prior to starting OCS, only enlistment-option OCs selected branch assignment was based on OML ranking. In the summer of 2010 the use of OML ranking for branch selection was expanded to include in-service OCs (Military Personnel [MILPER] message number 10-164, 23 June 2010). Currently, OCS uses the OML ranking process for branch selection for all OCs.

Following the branching ceremony, students enter the second phase - the Senior block. After the 6th week, OCS instructional activities shift to focus more on leadership and officership. Restrictive behavioral rules are lifted and OCs change their identifying neck scarf (ascot) colors from white to black. Core activities include 18 days of field training, seminars in officership, and additional coursework such as military history.

Beyond OCS

After successful completion of their initial commissioning training through OCS, ROTC, or the USMA, all new lieutenants attend Basic Officer Leadership Course B (BOLC B), branch-specific training.¹ While BOLC B varies in length and composition according to the branch, the first few weeks focus on the development of core Soldier skills, and the remaining weeks train branch-specific knowledge and skill (<http://www.military.com/news/article/army-news/bolc-b-will-benefit-new-officers.html>).

In BOLC B, new officers become acquainted with their branch-specific duties. The importance of branch assignments becomes apparent in BOLC B. There is considerable variability in training success by branch. Field Artillery and Armor have consistently yielded high recycle rates (that is, individuals being required to repeat coursework) over the past several years, with most of the recycles reported to be for academic reasons. Along the same lines, Allen, Thibodeaux, and Babin (2010) found that officer branch satisfaction varied considerably by branch. Junior officers in the Military Police Corps were most satisfied with their branch assignments, and Field Artillery respondents were least satisfied.

After graduation, most BOLC B graduates proceed to their duty assignment in their role as a platoon leader. Promotion to first lieutenant (1LT; O2) occurs at approximately 18 months time in service (TIS is from the date of acceptance of the commission). Promotion to first lieutenant is usually automatic, except in those rare cases of officers who are under investigation or pending dismissal. For OCS commissioned officers, the Active Duty Service Obligation (ADSO) is 3 years. (In comparison, ROTC ADSO is 4 years and USMA ADSO is 5 years.) For those who remain beyond the OCS ADSO, promotion to captain currently occurs at about 4 years TIS point. Promotion to captain is by a Department of the Army (DA) selection board.

¹ Early in 2010, the short general officer leadership course (BOLC II) was merged with the branch-specific training course (BOLC III) to form one course – BOLC B (<http://www.military.com/news/article/army-news/bolc-b-will-benefit-new-officers.html>).

The next formal step in an officer's education is the Captain's Career Course (CCC). While CCC is open to senior first lieutenants and Army captains with 4-6 years of military experience, currently almost all participants are captains. Like BOLC B, CCC is branch-specific and varies in length and substance. Upon graduation, students transition to their next duty assignment as a company commander, battalion staff officer, brigade staff officer or to a similar position.

Overview of the Project

The Army seeks OCS applicants with high leadership potential, good fit with the Army, and high likelihood of staying in the Army. As described above, along with the AccessOCS project, over the last two years there has been an ongoing project ("Measures for Selecting Individuals for the Officer Candidate School", "SelectOCS") which is attempting to build a non-cognitive test battery that will select OCS applicants with the most leadership potential, the best fit with the Army, and the greatest likelihood of staying in the Army. Thus far, the SelectOCS analyses, based on two years of data collections from fifteen OCS classes, have found that non-cognitive measures add value to cognitive measures in the prediction of actual performance and attitudes as measured at the end of the OCS classes. While the SelectOCS project has identified measures that show a great deal of promise for selecting officer candidates (OCs), it is an empirical study lacking qualitative context that can be provided by the AccessOCS project.

The goal of AccessOCS was to identify patterns that could be useful in recruiting and selecting OCS candidates with the qualities supporting retention in service and performance at higher officer levels. The AccessOCS project was conceived to identify and, as appropriate, describe differences and patterns in OCS applicants/candidates in terms of (1) their motivations to become officers through OCS and (2) their approaches in the early stages of the recruiting and accessions process for learning about, becoming attracted to, and deciding to apply and enter into the OCS program. AccessOCS was conceived to provide context which may generate new information that will improve selection battery. AccessOCS is able to contribute to a richer understanding of OCS accessioning issues for both in-service and enlistment-option OCs.

AccessOCS involved collecting data from a host of individuals involved in the OCS process. It entailed focus groups with OCS candidates, company commanders, instructors and cadre. It also collected information from Army personnel within HRC and Accessions Command. Using both target populations we were able to gather first hand experiential data, along with information regarding Army regulations, procedures and processes. Chapter 2 of this report describes the data collection methodology. Chapters 3 and 4 summarize the interview findings for both the enlistment- and in-service options, respectively. Chapter 5 summarizes findings and describes our recommendations.

Chapter 2. Method

We conducted focus groups and one-on-one interviews with a number of stakeholders to learn about the OCS accessioning process from several vantage points. These stakeholders included:

- OCS candidates, instructors, cadre, and company commanders;
- USAREC recruiters;
- BOLC B lieutenants;
- Captain's Career Course (CCC) officers; and
- Policy-level sponsors (e.g., USAREC, Accessions Command, US Army G-1 Policy Division, and HRC).

This chapter describes the development of the interview protocols and provides demographic information on the focus group participants and relevant one-on-one interviewees.

Materials

ARI and HumRRO developed comparable protocols for interviewing both enlistment-option and in-service option OCS candidates in line with the objectives of the study. The questions on the protocols focused on the following areas:

- (a) Candidate background/Why OCS?;
- (b) Information seeking behavior/Perceived fit with OCS;
- (c) Experience with USAREC/HRC; and
- (d) Outcomes of entering OCS.

The entire text of the initial protocols appears in Appendix A (enlistment-option) and Appendix B (in-service option), respectively.

We also developed protocols for interviewing BOLC B and CCC graduates of OCS, OCS company commanders, cadre, and staff, USAREC recruiters, and HRC staff. These protocols focused on:

1. improving OCS recruitment and accessioning (cadre);
 - (a) general perceptions of OCS candidates and recommendations for improvement to OCS (OCS Company Commanders and OCS staff);
2. identifying the motivating factors for applying to OCS and describing the application process OCS (BOLC B);
3. officers' experiences with recommending an applicant for OCS and officers' knowledge of the application process (CCC);
4. perceptions of the motivations of OCS applicants, misconceptions and knowledge of the application process (Army recruiters); and

- (b) the policy decisions that inform OCS recruitment and accessioning (USAREC and HRC).

The interview protocols appear in Appendices C-H.

Participants

We conducted 27 individual interviews or focus group sessions with stakeholders from various locations and Commands within the Army. Table 2.1 provides an overview of interviews and focus groups conducted. Focus groups varied greatly in size. Most of the focus groups with OCS candidates had eight participants while some of the CCC and BOLC B focus groups were fairly large, with 15 or more participants.

Table 2.1. List and Location of Interviews and Focus Groups Completed

Personnel	Type	Location
OCS Candidates	In-service focus groups (3), Enlistment-option groups (3)	Ft. Benning, GA
Cadre	Focus groups (2)	Ft. Benning, GA
BOLC B	Focus groups:	
	• Air Defense Artillery	Ft. Sill, OK
	• Field Artillery	Ft. Sill, OK
	• Transportation	Ft. Eustis, VA
	• Armor	Ft. Knox, KY
CCC	Focus groups:	
	• Air Defense Artillery	Ft. Sill, OK
	• Field Artillery	Ft. Sill, OK
	• Transportation	Ft. Eustis, VA
	• Armor	Ft. Knox, KY
Recruiters	One-on-One interviews (4)	DC Metro Area
OCS Company Commanders	Focus group (1)	Ft. Benning, GA
OCS Staff/Instructors	One-on-One interviews (5)	Ft. Benning, GA
Accession Policy & HRC	Group interviews (3)	Alexandria and Arlington, VA

Enlistment-Option and In-Service OCS Candidates

We spoke with 36 in-service and enlistment-option OCS candidates within focus groups at Fort Benning, GA, where the OCS school is located, scheduled for February 17-20, 2010 (Class 2010-006), and April 15-17, 2010 (Class 2010-009). Our on-site point of contact (POC) assisted in gathering participants for these focus groups.

Table 2.2 shows the demographics of the OC focus group participants. Perhaps the most notable demographic was the number of OCs without a completed college degree ($n = 6$); HRC began implementing the requirement to have a completed college degree upon entry into OCS in October of 2009. Therefore, it is likely that these OCs had already been accepted into OCS when the requirement became official.

Table 2.2. Demographic Characteristics of Enlistment-option and In-service Focus Group Participants

	Total
<i>General Demographic</i>	
Female	4 (11.4%)
Male	31 (88.6%)
Age (Mean)	31.12
Average Time Enlisted (In-service Option only)	6.85 years
Average Time Spent Deployed (In-service Option only)	1 year
<i>Ethnicity</i>	
Hispanic	2 (5.9%)
Non-Hispanic	32 (94.1%)
<i>Race</i>	
American Indian or Alaskan	2 (5.5%)
Asian	2 (5.5%)
Black or African American	1 (2.8%)
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1 (2.8%)
White	28 (77.8%)
Multiple	2 (5.5%)
<i>Pre-OCS Status</i>	
Enlisted Army Soldier	16 (47.0%)
Enlisted Service member from another Service (e.g., Air Force)	0
A Civilian with no prior Military Service	13 (38.3%)
A Civilian with prior Military Service	3 (8.8%)
A Civilian who was previously enrolled in ROTC or at West Point	2 (5.8%)
<i>Highest Level of Education</i>	
Some college	6 (17.1%)
Bachelor's Degree	24 (68.6%)
Some graduate school credits	1 (2.9%)
Master's Degree or equivalent	4 (11.4%)
Doctorate or professional degree such as MD, DDS, or JD	--

Note. N = 36; Instances where totals do not add to 36 reflect missing data points.

BOLC B/CCC Focus Groups with OCS Graduates

We also conducted focus groups with OCS graduates currently enrolled in BOLC B and CCC at multiple posts throughout the US. In total, 72 lieutenants and 47 captains at three posts from four different branches participated (see Table 2.3 for the locations of our interviews; see Appendices C and D for the BOLC B and CCC interview protocols). The largest number of

lieutenants were officers in the Air Defense Artillery ($n = 25$), while the largest number of captains were from the Transportation Corps ($n = 15$). The demographic information for the lieutenants and captains who participated in the interview is reported in Table 2.4. Participants were primarily male, non-Hispanic, and from BOLC B.

Table 2.3. BOLC B and CCC Focus Group Sites

Post	BOLC B: Lieutenants	CCC: Captains	Total
Fort Eustis	12	15	27
Fort Knox	19	13	32
Fort Sill	41	19	60
<i>Total</i>	<i>72</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>119</i>

Table 2.4. Demographics of BOLC B and CCC Focus Group Participants

<i>General Demographic</i>	BOLC B		CCC	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Female	2	2.8%	4	8.5%
Male	69	95.8%	42	89.4%
Missing	1	1.4%	1	2.1%
<i>Ethnicity</i>				
Hispanic	10	13.9%	8	17.0%
Non-Hispanic	62	86.1%	39	83.0%
<i>Race</i>				
American Indian or Alaskan	--		1	2.1%
Asian	1	1.4%	4	8.5%
Black or African American	15	20.8%	10	21.3%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1	1.4%	1	2.1%
White	45	62.5%	28	59.6%
Multiple	6	8.3%	2	4.3%
Missing	4	5.6%	1	2.1%

OCS Cadre

We conducted two focus groups with the OCS cadre during data collections scheduled from February 17-20, 2010 (Class 2010-006). In total, we spoke with fifteen members of the OCS cadre (see Appendix E for the interview protocol). Of those 15, six were captains, while the other nine were senior NCOs (i.e., Staff Sergeant and Sergeant First Class).

OCS Company Commanders

We spoke with OCS company commanders about general perceptions of OCS candidates and recommendations for improvement to OCS. The five company commanders for OCS classes 2010-006 through 2010-010 participated in a group interview. We used the Appendix E interview protocol for company commanders. We conducted these interviews on-site at OCS at Ft. Benning, GA in April of 2010.

One-on-One OCS Staff/Instructor Interviews

We spoke with OCS staff/instructors about general perceptions of OCS candidates' capabilities and recommendations for improvement to OCS. We interviewed five OCS staff/instructors in one-on-one interviews at Ft. Benning, GA in April of 2010. The five staff/instructors were (a) staff in charge of academic instruction and reading skills evaluation, (b) the company commander for Headquarters & Headquarters Holding Company (HHC) at OCS, and (c) the staff in charge of security clearance and medical issues. Each of these interviews was conducted one-on-one and the questions were specific to each of the job types of the interviewees.

USAREC Recruiters

We conducted four, one-on-one interviews with Army recruiters in order to learn more about the number and type of OCS candidate applicants and policies that relate to recruiting for OCS (e.g., the presence of incentives for recruiting officers). Additionally, we asked recruiters about their reasons and incentives for recruiting for OCS, their knowledge of the application process, and their beliefs regarding how knowledgeable recruiters are about OCS recruiting. Finally, we asked recruiters to share their concerns about recruiting for OCS (see Appendix F for the interview protocol).

Accessions Division and HRC Interviews

Finally, we spoke to policy makers representing Army Accessions Policy (located in the Pentagon; see Appendix G for the protocol) and HRC (then located in Alexandria, VA; see Appendix H for the protocol). The policy makers from the Pentagon discussed policy-level changes as well as how both OCS and ROTC numbers work in concert to meet the Army's officer accession goals.

We spoke to HRC policy-makers about the change in the branching process for OCS and the gender balance required in some branches. HRC explained how the branch targets function with respect to branching both the enlistment- and in-service option OCs and how they are balanced with those at ROTC and USMA for male and female officers. Both of these group interviews helped us place the selection and processing of OCS applicants in context.

Procedures

Multi-person teams of HumRRO and ARI staff conducted all of the interviews and focus group data. One team member was designated as the note-taker and another as facilitator. Note-takers took notes on a laptop computer during the sessions. After reviewing and finalizing the notes, we consolidated the information and imported the electronic notes into a qualitative data analysis software. We used constructs measured by the Officer Background Experience Form (OBEF; Russell & Tremble, 2009) as a starting point for content-coding the enlistment- and in-service option Candidate interviews. Figure 2.1 shows a screenshot of imported interview text within the NVivo software. The remainder of this report summarizes information we gleaned during the interviews regarding OCS application and selection.

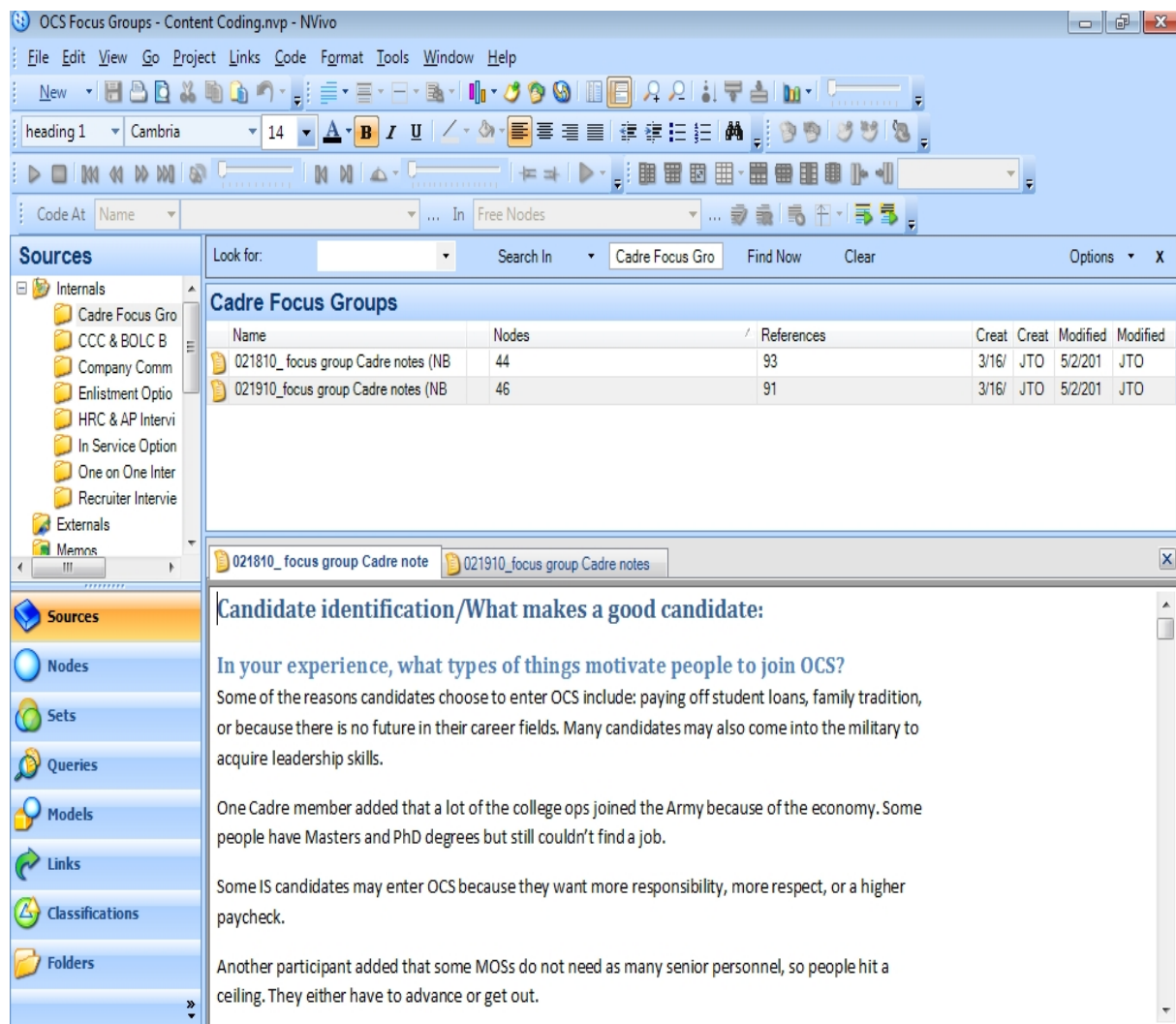


Figure 2.1. Screenshot of imported interview text into NVivo coding software.

Chapter 3. The In-Service Option

As mentioned in the Background section of this report, Officer Candidate School has two entry routes, namely via the recruiting command (USAREC) as a college enlistment option candidate or via the Army personnel division (HRC) as an in-service option candidate. In Chapters III and IV, each of the routes or options is presented separately. Although the reader will see some similarities, the individuals and the processes also reveal some differences.

This chapter describes the in-service OCS application process. It summarizes comments from *all* interviewees regarding in-service accessioning. While many of the comments were from in-service OCs or officers in BOLC B or CCC who had chosen the in-service option for commissioning, comments from other interviewees about the in-service avenue to commissioning were also included in this chapter. Where appropriate, we supplemented the qualitative interview results with relevant survey data from the SelectOCS Project (Russell, Allen, & Babin, 2010; Russell & Tremble, 2009).

Why Apply to OCS?

Motivators

Based on interview information, in-service OCs tend to apply for OCS out of a desire to (a) better themselves and their station, (b) serve in the Army, or (c) enhance retirement benefits by becoming an officer. Many of the in-service OC interviewees expressed a desire for a greater challenge in the Army and for continuing their commitment to the Army. They also mentioned that the retirement plan for officers is better than the one for enlisted service members and that the better retirement plan was a motivating force for applying to OCS. Other interviewees who gave their perceptions on in-service applicant motivations (e.g., enlistment-option, cadre) echoed the in-service OC comments.

The interview results were highly consistent with data reported by OCs in the SelectOCS Project (Russell, Allen, & Babin, 2010; Russell & Tremble, 2009). As shown in Table 3.1, the in-service OCs gave the highest ratings to the following reasons for applying to OCS “gain leadership experience,” “serve my country,” and “retirement benefits.”

In the SelectOCS project, retirement benefits, achievement orientation, and commitment to the Army were related to long-term outcomes in positive ways. That is, in-service OCs who reported to be motivated to join OCS because of retirement benefits and commitment to the Army were also more likely to intend to stay in the

“You reach the ceiling very quickly as an enlisted NCO and it takes a great deal of time to get promoted to the next level.”

“As an NCO, everything I did came easily to me. I wasn’t challenged, and the officer corps would be more challenging...”

“I found that I liked the Army, so instead of leaving after 4 years as an enlisted Soldier, I thought why not [pursue OCS] since I have a college degree.”

“Retirement plan is much better for officers than enlisted.”

“Once I decided that I was going to do 20 years in the service, it [is clear that it] would be best for [myself] and Family to be in officer corps. Benefits are good, plus I would be setting a good example for my Family.”

“Most of us have already put much time in, so it makes sense to stay until retirement.”

Army. In summary, the motivations of in-service OCs for joining OCS relate to positive outcomes for the Army.

Table 3.1. SelectOCS Project: In-Service Candidates' Reasons for Applying to OCS

<i>Reasons for Applying to OCS</i>	Phase 1 (N = 553)		Phase 2 (N = 216)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Serve my country	2.95	1.06	3.10	.97
Gain leadership experience	2.97	1.14	3.75	.50
Retirement benefits	2.51	1.34	2.55	1.27
Build a resume	2.34	1.35	3.25	.96
Pay off debts	1.13	1.43	.79	1.25
Lack civilian opportunity	.96	1.27	.92	1.18

Note. Scores range from 1 (Not at all Important) to 5 (Extremely Important). *Sources:* Russell & Tremble, 2009; Russell, Allen, & Babin, 2010.

Some in-service OCs expressed their desire to gain additional leadership experience and concern about the difficulty of transitioning from MOS-based technical experts into leaders of Soldiers. Some suggested adding additional leadership training to the OCS curriculum.

"I would have liked to learn things I needed to know as an officer. I would like to show up at BOLC B better prepared."

"Course needs to focus more on the transition from enlisted to officer and to know what to expect."

Deterrents

Focus group respondents reported two drawbacks relating to OCS application. Many indicated that the NCOs in their units were not supportive of their decision to apply to OCS and discouraged them from applying. They believed that many NCOs were concerned about losing good Soldiers to the officer ranks.

Another deterrent had to do with the application process itself. Those who wanted to go to OCS found that their direct superiors knew little about OCS or the application process. They indicated that they were more or less on their own to learn what they needed to do to apply and how to push their application package through the process.

In-Service Application Process

In-service applicants to OCS are processed through Human Resources Command (HRC). HRC publishes the eligibility requirements via a military personnel (MILPER) message. Applicants must complete DA Form 61 (Application for Appointment) and solicit up to four letters of recommendation. The letters of recommendation can be from anyone. However, the applicant must provide a completed Commander's Evaluation (DA Form 5339) recommending him/her for OCS completed by an officer with the rank of O5 or above. As shown in Figure 4.1, HRC processes the application packets, schedules board interviews, notifies applicants of their status after the board interview, and posts the dates they are assigned to attend OCS.

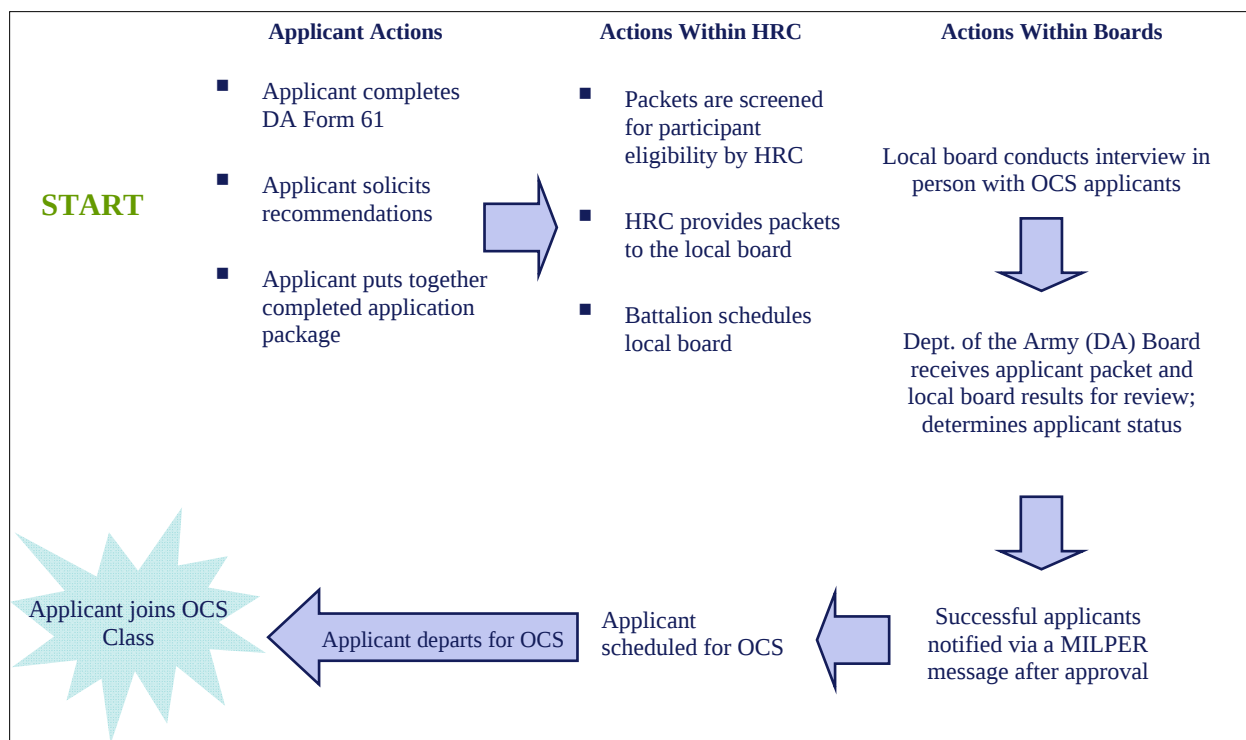


Figure 3.1. The application process for in-service OCS applicants.

While a few in-service focus group respondents had officers or other enlisted personnel suggest that they apply for OCS, most of them indicated that they sought out OCS websites or information as well as the procedures and forms to apply to OCS on their own. The application processing time frame appears to vary widely, from as little as four months to as long as 14 months, due to delays in application packet preparation and scheduling for their local board. Typically, applicants waited between 2-3 months from the time they were scheduled for the board until they departed for OCS. Applicants also indicated that they had to routinely check HRC postings to see if they were scheduled for OCS because no message was sent to them directly.

In sum, interviewees indicated that in-service applicants had to be self-motivated people who persevered to find information and push their own applications through the system. Some of the interviewees viewed this as a good thing – as a way of ensuring only highly motivated personnel would apply. Others felt that information such as sample packets and how-to instructions should be more accessible on the Internet.

Changes in Eligibility Standards

HRC indicated that the OCS accession policy recently changed to require the in-service OCs to complete their baccalaureate degree before entering OCS. Before this time, they could enroll with 90 credit hours completed and complete their degree before promotion to captain. In reality, with the recent OPTEMPO, officers without a degree were often not able to obtain one before entering the zone of consideration for promotion to captain. The change in degree

requirement was made by HRC to enhance the number of promotable lieutenants and overall applicant quality and as a way to respond to a reduced mission for in-service OCs.

To get a feel for how the policy change might have altered the demographics of the in-service candidate population, we compared demographics for in-service OCs from Phases I and II of the SelectOCS project (see Table 3.2). Prior to the policy change, in FY 2008-2009, Russell and Tremble (2009) collected survey data from 553 in-service OCs. Of those 553, 205 (37%) reported having “some college,” but no degree. In Phase II (Russell, Allen, & Babin, 2010), the percentage of the in-service OCs reporting having “some college” dropped to 24.5%. In summary, more in-service personnel in the Phase II cohort held college degrees than in Phase I.

Table 3.2. SelectOCS Phases I and II: In-Service Officer Candidate Sample Demographics

	Phase I 2009 (N = 553)		Phase II 2010 (N =216)	
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Gender</i>				
Male	404	73.1	166	76.9
Female	124	22.4	34	15.7
<i>Ethnicity</i>				
Hispanic	95	17.2	38	17.6
Non-Hispanic	428	77.4	156	72.2
<i>Race</i>				
White	276	49.9	122	56.6
Am. Indian/Alaskan	3	0.5	0	0
Asian	21	3.8	10	4.6
Black/African Am.	193	34.9	61	28.3
Pacific Islander	0	0.0	1	.5
Multiple	17	3.1	9	4.2
<i>Education</i>				
Some college	205	37.1	53	24.5
Bachelor's degree	244	44.1	114	52.8
Some graduate school	58	10.5	30	13.9
Master's degree	35	6.3	18	8.3
Doctorate or equivalent	3	0.5	1	.5
<i>Number of Children</i>				
None	163	29.5	83	38.4
One	101	18.3	48	22.2
Two	144	26.0	41	19.0
Three or More	131	23.7	44	20.4
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age	32.96	4.27	31.57	3.89
Time in Service (in months)	102.72	59.15	86.94	48.11
Time Deployed (in months)	14.57	18.51	16.96	30.17
AFQT	69.34	20.05	71.68	18.80

Note. Phase I of the SelectOCS project was comprised of 10 classes, while Phase II was comprised of only 5, which account for the large sample size differences in the in-service population.

The change to the degree requirement appears to have resulted in slightly higher AFQT scores for in-service OCs. The average AFQT in Phase I was 69.34; in Phase II, it was slightly higher (71.68). Additionally, a larger percentage of in-service OCs indicated that they had a

Bachelor's degree, Masters degree, or Doctorate or equivalent degree, indicating that the in-service OCs had higher education in Phase II than in Phase I of the SelectOCS Project.

During our interview with HRC personnel, we learned that HRC was planning to lower the age cap for applying to OCS from 38 years to 35 years. This change occurred on June 23, 2010, after we completed our data collection efforts. Therefore, we have no data on the effect of that change. However, many of the interviewees expressed a preference for having in-service OCs who are younger and of lower rank before entering OCS.

"The E7s are older and their aspirations aren't to become a general officer when they have three kids. They are going to get out and use their experiences to get another job. The younger officer will stay in because he is still thinking he has an opportunity to achieve a battalion commander."

In-Service Applicant Boarding Process

After packets are received, HRC screens them for eligibility and then provides approved packets to the local board. HRC provides names of Soldiers and NCOs selected for board interviews so that the battalion can schedule the local board interviews. The local board conducts in-person interviews with all in-service applicants. The DA board then receives the applicant packet and the local board results. The DA board makes ratings on the applicants. MILPER messages are posted listing successful applicants.

"...chains of command are not doing the proper quality control on these [in-service] individuals. Often there has not been a careful review of the person's performance and their record. At the lowest level, an individual might receive a recommendation from someone they know who likes them. Then, such recommendations simply get rubber stamped as they go up the chain. When local review boards are conducted, 90% of the time these boards are simply checking the box."

While no OCs expressed any major concerns over the content or format of the interviews, a number of the OCS cadre and staff expressed concern over the degree to which in-service OCs are screened carefully by the local board. For instance, the OCS cadre and other interviewees expressed concerns over the reading and writing ability of in-service OCs and felt that the selection process may not adequately screen candidates for reading and writing ability. Likewise, some interviewees expressed concern that some in-service OCs are passed through the board process without a comprehensive evaluation of their qualifications.

In-Service Applicant Branching Process

When we began this project, all branch assignments for in-service OCs were made by HRC. This process changed in June of 2010. In-service candidates are now branched after the first 6 weeks of OCS. According to HRC, this process changed because the OCs indicated that they would rather compete for branches through OCS than have their branch assigned. The idea to change the branching process began in 2008; prior to then, all OCs were branched prior to OCS by HRC. Then, HRC decided to use the enlistment-option OCs as a pilot for competing for branch via the OML after the first 6 weeks of OCS. Based on the success of that decision, HRC decided to allow both in-service and enlistment-option OCs to compete for branching based on

their OML status at the 6-week point and based on the number of slots available for each branch.²

HRC expects that this change will remain permanent, but indicated that the OCs need to keep in mind that they are applying to OCS to become officers, not for a specialty within the officer field.

In our view, HRC's decision should help improve satisfaction with the branch assignment process, which was generally quite low in some of the BOLC B and CCC

"Makes more sense for us to have a greater say in our branch – given our understanding of the Army and our experience."

interviews. At the time we conducted the interviews with in-service OCs and with BOLC B and CCC in-service officers, HRC was still branching in-service candidates. The majority of in-service OCs were highly critical of that process. The majority of lieutenants that we spoke with at BOLC B expressed similar sentiments; they were generally very critical of the branching process and they did not see the logic behind the process, nor did they feel that the branching process valued their previous training in their MOS.

The OCS staff and cadre also expressed frustration with the process of branching the in-service OCs prior to OCS. They generally shared the concern that the branching should relate to one's college degree, or that OC branches should be selected by HRC on the basis of how they would benefit the Army as a whole.

In contrast to the perceptions of the OCs, OCS staff, cadre, and BOLC B participants, some of the participants in the CCC agreed with HRC's rationale to not branch in-service OCs based on their prior MOS.

"Army could emphasize that you are always an officer no matter what field you are in. Some enlisted want to become officers but want to be in a specific branch. This is not realistic. [The] person may not get the branch of their choice."

Summary of Recommendations for the In-Service Accession Process

In-service OCs made a number of recommendations related to the initial application process.

1. *On-line application resources* - The in-service OCs felt that they did not have enough information from HRC on how to apply to OCS and that the OCS website was difficult to use in the application process. They suggested that it might be useful to provide sample application packets similar to those provided on the Warrant Officer website. Directing candidates to a standard website would help to make information consistent for all.

2. *Leadership training* - A number of in-service OCs requested more content in OCS on how to make the transition from being an enlisted NCO to becoming a

² OCS gets branch allocations by "must fill" and "can fill" quotas. For any branch, they are authorized to go one over "can fill" or to fall one short of "must fill."

commissioned officer in the Army. Considering the purpose of OCS is to prepare in-service OCs for their new position, this last recommendation is especially potent.

Other interviewees made similar recommendations for addressing some of the weaknesses of the accession process. The recommendations focused on providing more resources for in-service applicants to produce their application packages, improving the boarding process, and addressing the complaints regarding the branching process.

3. *Application resources* - Like the OCs, the other interviewees also believed that application resources could be improved.

4. *Better accountability for qualifications screening* - There were concerns that existing standards for reading, writing, personal discipline, and positive recommendations from superior officers were not being enforced.

5. *Standardize the board process* - Interviewees felt that the purpose of the board process needed clarification and that the board's procedures should be standardized and made clearer. Stakeholders also suggested that board members should be made accountable for their recommendations of applicants to OCS.

6. *Branching* - Several recommendations were made with regard to branching. However, HRC has addressed most of those recommendations in recent modifications to the branching process.

Chapter 4. The Enlistment-Option

Chapter 4 addresses the enlistment-option into OCS. The enlistment-option is the newer avenue into OCS (started in 1998). The enlistment-option OCS candidates are non-prior service civilians who have completed a college degree. These civilians enlist in the Army, and enter OCS after completion of Basic Combat Training. This chapter describes the enlistment-option OCS application process from the vantage point of (a) enlistment-option OCs, (b) officers who were commissioned through this avenue, and (c) other stakeholders (e.g., recruiters, cadre) interviewed for this project.

Why Apply for OCS?

Enlistment-option OCs' reasons for applying to OCS were very similar to those of the in-service OCs. Like in-service OCs, enlistment-option OCs tended to apply for OCS out of a desire to (a) better themselves and their station, and (b) to serve their country. A desire to achieve was mentioned by many of the enlistment-option OCs during the interviews as well as their desire for a challenge in the Army.

Recall that in-service OCs also valued the retirement benefits; retirement benefits were not much of a motivator for enlistment-option OCs.

Another difference was that enlistment-option OCs said that they placed value on exercise and being able to command by demonstrating one's fitness to subordinates. Despite the importance of fitness motivation to many of the enlistment-option OCs, many of the OCS company commanders, cadre, and staff generally felt that the enlistment-option OCs had difficulty meeting standards for physical fitness within OCS. SelectOCS data also showed that enlistment-OCs scored lower on the APFT and fitness in OCS (Russell & Tremble, 2009). Therefore, it appears that there may be a disconnect between the importance of fitness to enlistment-option OCs and their actual fitness ability. It could be that enlistment-option interviewees were very focused on fitness because at the time of the interview it was something they needed to improve. Cadre members were commenting based on their observations of OCs' performances.

Generally, these motivations are consistent with those reported by OCs in the SelectOCS Project (Russell, Allen, & Babin, 2010; Russell & Tremble, 2009). As shown in Table 4.1, the enlistment-option OCs in that sample gave the highest ratings to the following reasons for applying to OCS: "serve my country" and "gain leadership experience."

"I wanted a challenge. I was able to join enlisted, but it [enlisted service] didn't seem challenging enough."

"The whole entire thing is a test. It's a test of your determination to see this process through. To see if you can maintain your self-discipline."

"I was getting bored in my job. Wanted greater responsibility and challenge."

"You are the face of the Army and the country. You are among one of the most honored and respected professions, and you need to honor and respect that."

"Lost a good friend who was killed fighting in Iraq. He served his country for the benefit of those living freely in the U.S. Felt I wanted to serve and do my part."

"PT is something everyone can improve -- it's the easiest thing to improve."

"If you can't perform PT well with your Soldiers, you will not be looked up to by your subordinates."

Table 4.1. SelectOCS: Enlistment-Option Candidates' Reasons for Applying to OCS

Reasons for Applying to OCS	Phase I (N = 521)		Phase II (N = 434)	
	M	SD	M	SD
Serve my country	3.26	.97	3.27	.97
Gain leadership experience	3.15	1.03	3.25	.99
Build a resume	2.28	1.31	2.38	1.30
Retirement benefits	1.67	1.29	1.75	1.25
Pay off debts	1.64	1.55	1.74	1.53
Lack civilian opportunity	1.17	1.31	1.54	1.35

Note. Scores range from 1 (Not at all Important) to 5 (Extremely Important). Sources: Russell & Tremble, 2009; Russell, Allen, & Babin, 2010.

Enlistment-Option Application Process

Enlistment-option applicants to OCS are processed through US Army Recruiting Command (USAREC). Recruiters conduct the initial interview of the applicant. The purpose of the interview was to engage in a general informal discussion of whether or not OCS is a good fit for the applicant and if the interviewer thinks the applicants meet the general requirements (i.e., have completed a college degree, are morally qualified with no legal issues, and can pass the physical fitness test). If the individual completes the initial interview with accompanying paperwork in a satisfactory manner, the applicant is then sent to a Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS) to complete the ASVAB. Enlistment-option OCs must score 110 or greater on the General Technical (GT) composite of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) in order to go forward in the application process.³ As shown in Figure 4.1, after the applicant completes the ASVAB, background check, medical examination, and physical fitness examination, HRC continues with the rest of the application process. HRC works with applicants to schedule local board interviews, conducts the Department of the Army (DA) review of the packet, notifies applicants of their status after the board reviews, and posts assigned dates to attend OCS.

While many OCs had family members suggest that they apply for OCS, most applicants indicated that they sought OCS on their own and approached a recruiter on their own. This portion of the application process is where most of the enlistment-option OCs experienced the most frustration. While some described their recruiters as helpful, others said that their recruiters were not knowledgeable about the process, or resistant to having them pursue the OCS route. Interviewees indicated that enlistment-option applicants had to be persistent because of the

"My recruiter suggested enlisted because the paperwork was taking so long. He told me I could go green to gold after joining the Army."

"They [Recruiters] were helpful but not knowledgeable about OCS. Everyone in the station was enlisted so they didn't know much about the officer side."

"Usually you are lucky to find one person in a recruiting station who has put together an OCS packet before."

³ GT is a composite of scores from the Arithmetic Reasoning (AR), Word Knowledge (WK), and Paragraph Comprehension (PC) ASVAB subtests.

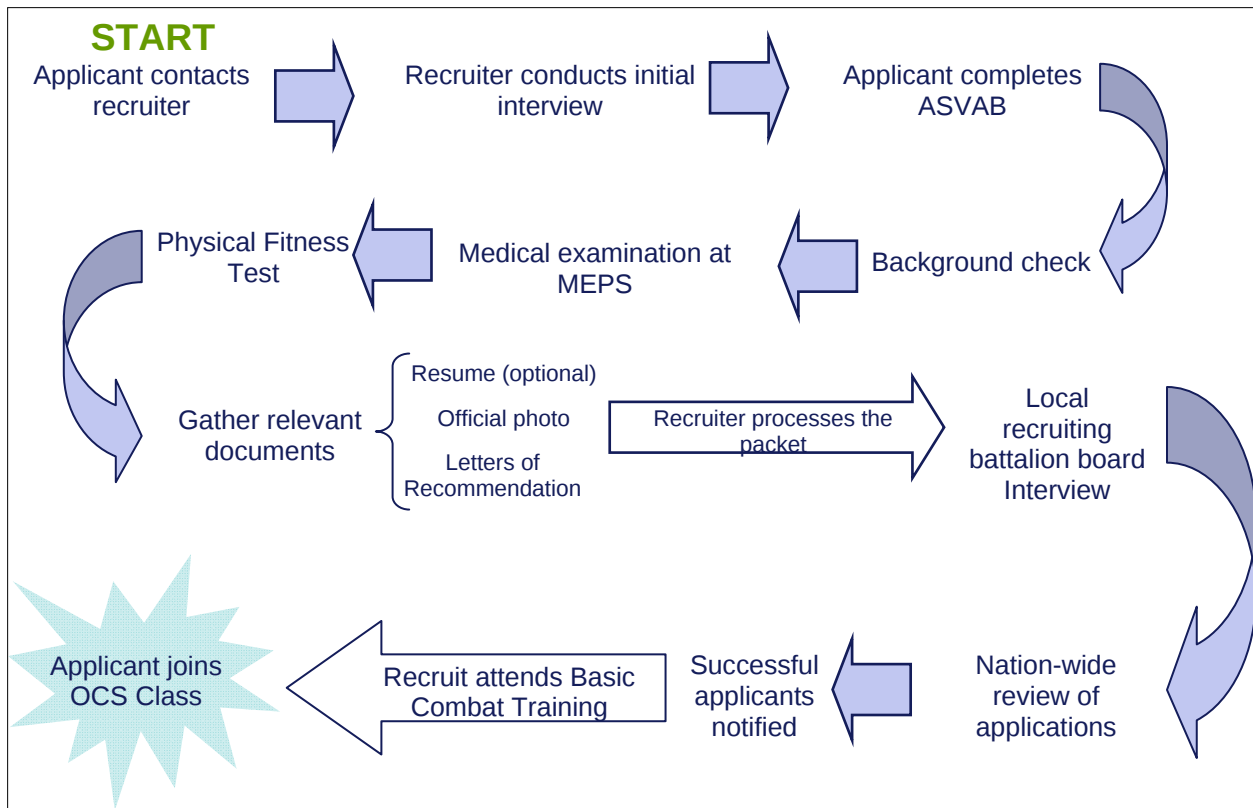


Figure 4.1. The application process for enlistment-option OCS applicants.

lack of specialized Army OCS recruiters, the general lack of knowledge about the OCS application process, and/or unwillingness to direct a potential recruit into OCS due to the lack of incentives for doing so. Some claimed the recruiters tried to steer them into the enlisted ranks because that is what the recruiters knew best and those were the slots they needed to fill.

Recruiters told us that they do not receive formal training on OCS recruitment, but that they do have a checklist to follow. There are no incentives to recruiters for recruiting an OCS applicant, and there are no quotas. Like enlisted recruitment, recruiters get points for each recruit and they get more points for recruits with the highest ASVAB scores. Recruiters do typically get slightly more points for an OCS applicant than an enlisted applicant, but the packet takes longer to prepare than the enlisted packets, and the recruits take longer to get in the pipeline. The net effect is that there is no particular incentive nor disincentive for OCS recruitment. Recruiters also noted that applicants have misconceptions about the Army or about being an officer (e.g., that all you need is a college degree to get in or that you can pick your branch before signing up). Another issue is the fact that OCS seats must be reserved and are typically filled a few months in advance. This means that the successful applicant will have to wait for seats to open, which can be frustrating for the applicant and, for recruiters, it means their points for that applicant will be delayed.

“My recruiter did not explain things, Tried to push things to pad his numbers. Tried to get me to go to the enlisted side first. He noted that I would get a bonus through the enlisted path, and that that OCS folks will have less respect for you if you weren’t previously in the enlisted ranks. I then went to different recruiter.”

A number of lieutenants at BOLC B suggested that the Army would benefit by having one recruiter at each station who cross-trains for OCS recruitment or, if possible, one dedicated recruiter for OCS. For example, the Marine Corps trains a specific set of recruiters for officer recruitment (see Appendix I). One lieutenant suggested that incentives for enlisting OCS candidates might be necessary for recruiters to improve their knowledge of the OCS application process. One deterrent is that the recruit numbers are so small for officers relative to the enlisted that the incentives may not be there. Given that the interview with a new OCS candidate is not the norm, the recruiter needs to invest more time and effort in finding, explaining and coordinating information for processing. Another option is to have a centralized source for OCS recruiting in the form of a POC or a data resource. Recruiters also indicated that when identifying recruiting locations, the Army should take into account the economic status of the community population and potential applicant pool.

Enlistment-Option Applicant Boarding Process

After packets are received, USAREC provides a referral to the local board. The local board interviews all enlistment-option applicants in person. The DA then receives the applicant packet and the local board results for review. For the most part, successful applicants are notified of their acceptance very soon after the boards.

For many enlistment-option applicants, the content questions in the local board interviews were suggested to them ahead of time. We found no consistent themes regarding enlistment-option OCs' opinions on the content and format of the interviews.

While it appears that there is variation on how the board interviews are conducted, USAREC Regulation 601-91 contains an appendix explaining board requirements (i.e., how it is to run, what forms need to be filled out, what aspects need to be rated, even formats, wording, and questions). Therefore, standardized requirements exist, even though they are not always followed.

"People have different experiences with the boards. They can last for 10 minutes to up to one hour. I received a template of questions but none of the questions were asked in my board."

"One of the captains on the board couldn't have cared very much. The major's body language also suggested that they were just trying to get through it. The other captain was fully engaged. I realized that the boards were not that important at all."

"My expectations for OCS were a lot higher than it really was. It seemed like you already had the job by the time you got to the board."

Enlistment-Option Applicant Branching Process

Most of the enlistment-option OCs were satisfied with the competitive OML-based branching process. However, many expressed concern that physical fitness was heavily weighted in the OML and that a small difference in APFT scores can have a critical effect. This happens because, at the 6-week point when the OML scores are produced for branching, OCs have not yet had much opportunity to demonstrate and develop leadership skills, which are emphasized in the second six weeks of the course. Some lieutenants in BOLC B shared the OCs' concern about the weight of the physical fitness test in the OML. Consequently, OCS may want to review the weight of factors comprising the OML score.

Summary of Recommendations for the Enlistment-Option Accession Process

Enlistment-option OCs made a number of recommendations related to their contact with the recruiters. The OCs perceived that the recruiters they dealt with were resistant to them applying to OCS, or felt that they had to deal with recruiters who did not have the required knowledge of the OCS application process. They often had to take the initiative in order to get their application packets put together. They suggested that it might be helpful to provide additional training to recruiters on the OCS applications process, and perhaps consider incentivizing recruiters differently for recruiting OCS applicants.

“In the initial PT test one pushup could get you your branch assignment or not. 10 spots down in the rank distinguishes between 1st or 3rd branch. The APFT is very heavily weighted.”

“In the initial PT test one pushup could get you your branch assignment or not. 10 spots down in the rank distinguishes between 1st or 3rd branch. The APFT is very heavily weighted.”

“The academic tests do not make up the ground after the APFT.”

“The process is very competitive. The difference between me and the number 1 slot was only 10 pts. The difference between the 1st and 2nd places was by a thousandth of a point. The PT makes a big difference in choice of branch assignments.”

The enlistment-option OCs also had mixed feelings about the effectiveness of the boarding process. For instance, some OCs had what they termed more professional interviews. Others experienced poorer interviews with officers who were not engaged in the process. Furthermore, some OCs received the questions prior to the interview, while others did not.

Despite the higher levels of fitness motivation expressed by enlistment-option OCs, many of the OCS company commanders and cadre felt that the enlistment-option OCs were having difficulty meeting standards for their physical fitness. It could be that enlistment-option interviewees were very focused on fitness because at the time of the interview it was something they needed to improve. Cadre members were commenting based on their observations of OCs' performances.

Many of the company commanders and cadre and in-service OCs indicated that because the enlistment-option OCs are relatively new to the Army, they require more training resources on doctrine and customs in order to prepare for OCS and the Army. They may over-rely on

their in-service counterparts. Some in-service OCs felt that the enlistment-option OCs might benefit from serving in the enlisted ranks prior to applying to OCS in order to increase commitment and have everyone hit the ground running once they enter OCS. Others felt that there is a lot to understand about military life, and that enlistment-option OCs should be exposed to it before OCS. For example, one OC felt that there should be a pre-OCS for enlistment-option candidates to provide a realistic preview of the Army culture.

“The enlistment-option [candidates] don't know a lot about the military whereas the in-service option [candidates] have military experience.”

Additionally, the stakeholders made some comments on the use of the OML for branching purposes. Although the company commanders and cadre generally expressed the need for physical fitness in order to be an effective leader, some lieutenants in BOLC B expressed disbelief in the relationship of physical fitness to long-term performance as an officer. The

manner in which fitness (motivation versus behavior) is measured may be the issue. Also, one needs to weigh the importance of other elements, such as leadership and academic training, relative to physical fitness. It might also be possible for the SelectOCS project to simulate different OML scores, giving more weight to leadership and academics to see how well different simulated OML scores predict performance later in the officers' careers.

Chapter 5. Findings and Recommendations

Based on the interviews, focus groups and the analysis of various documents, we identified six primary findings pertaining to OCS accessioning. We developed recommendations aimed ultimately at enhancing officer performance, fit with the Army, and career retention.

Six Key Findings

1. *OCS attracts candidates who express a desire to serve and have a commitment to the Army.* The OCs we interviewed expressed a high degree of dedication to the country and to the Army. They were proud of their OCS participation and their accomplishments in OCS.
2. *Information about OCS application procedures and application status is difficult for applicants - both to access and use.* In-service and enlistment-option applicants often have to do significant work on their own to prepare application packages. Applicants had difficulty finding out how to apply and did not have access to examples of completed forms or materials. Often recruiters and other service members were not knowledgeable of the process or requirements. Once the application was filed, the applicants had difficulty learning about the status of their application.
3. *OCS does not have a data management system for tracking officer candidate application and performance data.* There are two separate database issues. One has to do with the data from application processing via USAREC or HRC, and the other has to do with performance data at the OCS schoolhouse. Most of the application data exists only in paper files. There is no on-line application form or database to retain the application information. Furthermore, in OCS, each company has its own way of tracking OC performance. Scoring is inconsistent across companies and OML scores are not retained over time. Ideally, an application database would be linked to an OCS schoolhouse database so that information about an officer candidate could be easily obtained.
4. *OCs could be better prepared for OCS in four ways.* First, OCs would have liked to have known more about what to expect from OCS before applying. They were surprised by certain aspects of OCS (e.g., the difficulty of the physical events, rules governing behavior in the first 6 weeks). Second, enlistment-option OCs lack knowledge of the Army; as a result, they lacked understanding and credibility with their in-service peers. Third, in-service option OCs must undergo a shift in attitude and leadership style to move from the enlisted to officer ranks. There are concerns that this shift is not easy for many to make. Finally, there were concerns that OCs (in-service) lacked adequate reading and writing skills needed for quality performance as an officer.
5. *The review boards may not be following policies and procedures.* There is published guidance on how review boards are to be conducted and the criteria they are to impose. However, our interviewees expressed concern that review boards did not do an adequate job of screening applicants according to the specified criteria.

6. *The branch assignment affects officer's attitudes and performance in BOLC B.* In general, Army officers embrace the notion that an officer is an officer. Even so, branch assignment has a strong relationship with officers' branch satisfaction and intent to stay in the Army (Allen et al., 2010). The current process allows OCs to select their branch based on the OML ranking at week six of OCS. Those at the bottom of the OML have fewer branch options left than those at the top of the OML and may find themselves in branches that they do not want. In some branches, such as Field Artillery, some new officers have difficulty mastering the content and need to go through parts of training repeatedly, costing the Army additional training resources (Allen et al., 2010). There are other branching models that the Army might consider. The Navy and Air Force make branching decisions *before* candidates enter OCS based on test scores and candidate preferences. (Appendix G describes selection and branching procedures for Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps OCS programs.) These other services also use tests that were specifically developed for the officer population⁴ with more extensive testing of verbal, spatial, and mathematical abilities. Thus, there are minimum qualifying scores for particular officer specialties.

Recommendations

Our primary recommendation is to create a *one-stop shop website for OCS applicants and officer candidates*. We think such a website could address a number of the key findings listed above. The site would cover several topics including:

1. *Officership and Realistic OCS Job Preview* - Information that prospective applicants can use to make a decision about whether to apply to OCS. This would include information about OCS itself, what to expect in OCS, and what it means to be an Army officer.
2. *OCS Application Guide* - This guide would include examples of completed OCS application packets, an on-line DA Form 61, and answers to frequently asked questions. It would also explain eligibility requirements, the in-processing, and the boarding procedure at OCS.
3. *Reading and Writing Module* - This module would include a preliminary diagnostic test of reading and writing skills and self-paced instruction to improve reading and writing skills. It would be aimed particularly at in-service candidates, but could be used by any OC.
4. *Enlisted to Officer Module* - This training module would be intended for in-service candidates. It would be designed to facilitate the move from the enlisted ranks to the officer corps. It might contain vignettes from officers highlighting their personal experiences with the transition and issues they faced.
5. *Greening Module* - This training module would be intended for enlistment-option candidates and candidates with prior service in the one of the other military services. It would be

⁴ The Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) was developed for selection and classification of enlisted personnel. It was normed on a population of American Youth 18-22 years old, with at least a high school degree.

designed to provide greater Army knowledge and understanding and facilitate the transition from civilian to the Army way of life.

6. *Branch Previews* - This module would describe each branch (or a set of the primary branches), the training and aptitude requirements, and lessons learned from officers in the branch.

The one-stop-shop website could provide a concrete set of modules to help OCs learn about and process through OCS. The first two modules listed above, having to do with OCS application, are probably the most important. Content for other modules could be developed over time as the website is expanded. Key considerations will be (a) where the website will reside (whose server) and (b) who will maintain the website over time. These fundamentals would need to be addressed early in the development process.

Our second recommendation is to create a data management system that would include data on both applicants to OCS and officer candidates attending OCS. Convenient access to accurate data about OCS applicants and OCs would allow decision makers to make better decisions about the applicants and the OCs and foresee the impact of their decisions. It would also facilitate future research on OCS. This database could be populated by the applicant, beginning with an on-line, interactive administration of DA Form 61, the OCS application form. Other data collected at the website could also be stored in the database. As the candidates go to OCS, the cadre would need a means of adding scores on exercises and other variables. Such a database would (a) allow OCS Company Commanders and cadre a standardized data entry system in which to document performance, (b) provide OCS leadership with convenient access to data on candidate performance, and (c) facilitate future officer research.

Finally, we recommend conducting research to identify tests and/or models that can be used to improve the fit between the individual officer and the assigned or chosen branch. As mentioned, the other Services use composite scores on test batteries to identify the officer occupations for which the candidates qualify. This process is also used for all of the enlisted occupations.. Better fit with a branch could enhance officer retention as well as the quality of the officer's branch-specific technical skills. It is possible that branch-fit information could be used either as a simple guideline for officer candidates in choosing their branches or more programmatically in terms of limiting the branches that an officer candidate can choose to apply to those that he/she fits with best. Of course, the model would need to take into account the availability of seats for different branches

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol: Enlistment-option OCs

- *Candidate background/Why OCS:*
 - 1) What led you to decide to pursue OCS?
 - a) Was it your decision to apply to OCS, or did someone prompt you to apply?
 - i) If someone prompted you, who was it (e.g., friend, parent)?
 - ii) What were you doing when you decided to pursue OCS?
 - 2) How long has it been since you completed your degree?
 - a) Do you have a family member or friend that is or was an officer?
 - b) Did anyone ever discourage you from applying to OCS?
 - 3) Did opportunities in the civilian world affect your decision to go to OCS or affect your requested branch assignment?
- *Info seeking/Perceived fit with OCS:*
 - 4) What factors did you consider in deciding whether to pursue OCS?
 - a) Why did OCS seem to be a good option for you?
 - b) Did you search for information related to OCS? Was it positive?
 - c) Were you offered any incentives to enlist?
- *Experience with Recruiting Command:*
 - 5) Please describe your experience with Recruiting Command.
 - a) How did you learn about OCS?
 - b) Did you hear about OCS through a recruiter or online research?
 - c) Did you go to a recruiting office?
 - d) How long did the process take from your first contact with a recruiter to your acceptance into an OCS class?
 - e) Did you find your recruiter to be knowledgeable about OCS and what it would entail?
 - i) Did you go in front of a selection board?
 - ii) In your opinion, how could the process be improved?
- *Outcomes of entering OCS:*
 - 6) Do you believe entering OCS was a good decision for you?
 - a) Why or why not? In retrospect, would you have done anything different?
 - b) What did you find challenging about OCS?
 - c) How is the branch selection process?
 - d) How long do you think you'll stay in the Army?

Appendix B

Interview Protocol: In-service Option OCS

- *Candidate background/Why OCS:*
 - 1) What factors did you consider in deciding whether to pursue OCS?
 - a) Was it your decision to apply to OCS, or did someone prompt you to apply?
 - i) If someone prompted you, who was it (e.g., friend, parent)?
 - b) What was your MOS and rank when you applied to OCS?
 - 2) Do you have a family member or friend that is or was an officer?
 - 3) Did anyone ever discourage you from applying to OCS?
 - 4) Did opportunities in the civilian world affect your decision to go to apply to OCS or affect your requested branch assignment?
- *Info seeking/Perceived fit with OCS:*
 - 5) How did your process of applying to OCS begin?
 - 6) Why did you want to leave the enlisted ranks to apply to OCS?
 - a) Was OCS an option for you when you first enlisted in the Army?
 - i) If yes, why did you choose to enter the enlisted ranks rather than pursue OCS at that time?
 - 7) Did you ask for a recommendation, or were you offered a recommendation by a senior officer?
 - a) Who recommended you for OCS?
 - 8) If you asked for a recommendation, how did you decide who to ask for a recommendation?
- *Experience with HRC:*
 - 9) Please describe your experience with HRC.
 - a) Did you enter OCS through active duty Army, Reserves, or Nat'l Guard?
 - b) How long did the process take from when you started your application to your acceptance into an OCS class?
 - 10) Did you go in front of a selection board?
 - a) How long does it take to hear the outcome of a board decision?
 - 11) In your opinion, how could the process be improved?
- *Outcomes of entering OCS:*
 - 12) Do you believe entering OCS was a good decision for you?
 - a) Why or why not? In retrospect, would you have done anything different?
 - b) What did you find challenging about OCS?
 - c) How is the branch selection process?
 - d) How long do you think you'll stay in the Army?

Appendix C

Interview Protocol: Basic Officer Leadership Course B (BOLC B)

- *Candidate identification/What makes a good candidate:*
 - 1) What characteristics, personality traits, background, or experiences would you look for if you were recommending or encouraging or trying to recruit someone to apply for OCS?
- *Previous experience:*
 - 2) Describe the typical recruitment (if in service)/identification (if enlistment option) process that you experienced when you applied to OCS.
 - 3) What events, factors, or experiences contributed to your decision to apply to OCS or become an officer in the Army?
- *Suggestions for improvement:*
 - 4) When you look back on your experiences, do you see things that might have been done differently? Better?

Appendix D

Interview Protocol: Captains Careers Course (CCC)

- *Candidate identification/What makes a good candidate:*
 - 1) Please describe the typical process by which In-Service OCS applicants are identified and recruited.
 - a) Do you generally only approach an enlisted Soldier if they express interest first?
 - b) What types of things do you look for in a good candidate for OCS?
- *Previous experience:*
 - 2) Tell us about a time when you recommended an enlisted Soldier for admission into OCS.
 - a) What was it about the Soldier that made you think he or she would be a good officer?
 - b) Did the Soldier request your recommendation?
 - c) What processes did you need to go through to get the request through the chain of command?
 - d) Did the Soldier go to OCS?
 - i) If the Soldier did go to OCS, how long did the process take between the recommendation being made and the Soldier's acceptance into an OCS class?
 - ii) Is he/she an officer now?
 - iii) In retrospect would you have done anything differently?
- *Suggestions for improvement:*
 - 3) Does the Army provide clear direction on the process an officer must follow to recommend an enlisted Soldier for OCS?
 - 4) Are most captains familiar with the process of how enlisted Soldiers apply to OCS?
 - 5) What aspects of OCS or the accession process into OCS could be improved?
- *Outcomes of entering OCS:*
 - 6) Were you assigned to the duty station of your choice after OCS?
 - a) How does that affect your Army career decisions?

Appendix E

Interview Protocol: OCS Cadre

- *Candidate identification/What makes a good candidate:*
 - 1) In your experience, what types of things motivate people to join OCS?
 - 2) Of the candidates you have, what are the characteristics of the strong performers who have potential to be good officers?
 - 3) Of the candidates you have, what are the characteristics of the low performers?
 - 4) Do you see differences between officer candidates that are commissioned through enlistment- versus in-service options?
- *Suggestions for improvement:*
 - 5) How do you think the OCS recruitment and accessioning process is working?
 - 6) What do you think could be improved about the OCS recruitment and accessioning process?
 - a) If you see differences between officer candidates that are commissioned through enlistment- versus in-service options, how could the differences be addressed by HRC or Recruiting Command?

Appendix F

Interview Protocol: Recruiters

- *OCS accessioning process*
 1. To what extent are recruiters knowledgeable about OCS accessioning?
 1. Are there specific quotas in place for OCS applicants?
 1. If yes, what are the quotas and are they generally met?
 2. If yes, what percentage of your time is spent recruiting potential OCS applicants?
 3. If not, does the number of OCS applicants you recruit contribute to your regular quota?
 2. What is the Army's policy on recruiting incentives?
 1. Is there an incentive to the recruiter for recruiting an OCS applicant?
 1. If yes, what are the incentives and are they generally met?
 2. If yes, when does the incentive kick in (e.g., when the applicant completes OCS)?
 3. If yes, are there differences between the incentives for recruitment of an OCS applicant versus an enlisted applicant?
 1. Do you know anyone who has received an incentive for recruiting an OCS applicant?
 4. If no, would an incentive to recruit OCS applicants change the way you conduct you think about recruiting for OCS?
- *OCS as an avenue for recruitment*
 - 2) To what extent do recruiters use OCS as an avenue for recruitment?
 1. Is recruiting for OCS an Army directive or is it by your own initiative?
 2. Are you actively recruiting for OCS?
 1. If yes, how do you go about recruiting OCS applicants?
 2. If yes, where do you go to seek potential applicants?
 1. Do you go to college campuses?
 2. Do you go to places of work?
 3. Are there recruiting "hot spots" in town for OCS applicants?
 3. Do you try to find out what types of characteristics an officer should have?
 4. If you do not actively seek OCS applicants, why not?
 - 3) When you have a potential OCS applicant, do they indicate that they have come in to join the Army, or do they come in specifically to join OCS?
 3. What are the typical reasons you see for individuals wanting to go to OCS?
 1. What are some reasons that a recruiter would want to point someone to OCS instead of the enlisted ranks?
 2. What are some reasons that a recruiter would want to point someone to the enlisted ranks instead of OCS?
 3. Over the last year, how many OCS applicants came through your recruiting station?
 1. Of these applicants, what percent failed to complete the application process?

- *Recruiter training for OCS recruitment*
 1. How much training did you receive about OCS in recruiter training?
 1. Does recruiter training cover OCS recruitment and the OCS accessioning process?
 2. How is an OCS applicant processed by recruiters?
 1. How much time does it typically take to process an OCS application?
 2. How does that time compare to the time it takes to process an enlisted application?
 3. Do you know the types of information that needs to be collected from an OCS applicant when they go to MEPS?
- *Availability of outreach materials in OCS recruitment*
 1. To what extent are outreach materials, such as publications, brochures, and web-based information about OCS, readily available to recruiters?
- *Clarifying questions*
 - 6) To what extent are all of your answers to the questions above standardized across the Army versus specific to the location?
 - 7) To what extent are all of your answers to the questions above relevant to both Active Army and the Reserve/Guard?

Appendix G

Interview Protocol: United States Army Recruiting Command (USAREC)

- *Standards for entry:*
 - 1) Are there USAREC guidelines on what makes a desirable candidate?
 - a) What qualifications are required for entering OCS through the enlisted-option program?
 - b) Are there any USAREC-level initiatives in place to improve the quality of the applicants to OCS through the enlisted-option program?
 - 2) What kind of characteristics are you seeing among individuals who apply to OCS?
 - 3) What is the typical reason that you hear for someone wanting to apply to OCS?
 - a) Do you think that the US economic conditions have impacted the number of individuals applying to OCS?
 - b) Do you think that the length of the war on terror has impacted the number of individuals applying to OCS?
- *Volume of applications/Trends in applications:*
 - 4) What is the average number of applications to OCS received each year?
 - a) Has this number fluctuated greatly in the last 5 years?
 - b) Are there any USAREC-level initiatives in place to increase the number of applications to OCS through the enlisted-option?
- *Processing of enlistment-option OCS applicants:*
 - 5) How does the processing of applicant to OCS begin?
 - a) How long does this process take between an individual submitting an application to OCS and s/he beginning at OCS?
 - 6) Do denials occur?
 - a) Why might someone be denied for OCS?
 - b) How does a denial occur?

Appendix H

Interview Protocol: Human Resources Command (HRC)

- *Standards for entry:*
 - 1) Are there HRC guidelines on what makes a desirable candidate for OCS?
 - a) What qualifications are required for entering OCS through the in-service program?
 - b) Why was the policy change on the requirement of a college degree prior to entering OCS implemented?
 - 2) What kind of characteristics are you seeing among enlisted Soldiers who apply to OCS?
 - a) Have you seen any changes in the characteristics of Soldiers who are applying to OCS since the implementation of the college degree requirement?
 - b) Are there any other HRC-level initiatives in place to improve the quality of the applicants to OCS through the in-service option?
 - 3) What is the typical reason that you hear for someone wanting to convert to OCS from being an enlisted Soldier?
 - a) Do you think that the US economic conditions have impacted the number of Soldiers applying to OCS?
 - b) Do you think that the length of the war on terror has impacted the number of Soldiers applying to OCS?
- *Volume of applications/Trends in applications:*
 - 4) What is the average number of in-service applications to OCS received each year?
 - a) Has this number fluctuated greatly in the last 5 years?
 - b) What impact has the requirement of a college degree prior to entering OCS had on the number of applicants?
 - c) Are there any other HRC-level initiatives in place to increase the number of applications to OCS through the in-service option?
- *Processing of In-service OCS applicants:*
 - 5) How does the process of converting an enlisted Soldier into an applicant to OCS begin?
 - a) How long does this process take between a Soldier submitting an application to OCS and s/he beginning at OCS?
 - 6) Do denials occur?
 - a) Why might someone be denied for OCS?
 - b) How does a denial occur?
 - c) How much influence does the recommendation of a commanding officer have on whether the OCS applicant is accepted?
 - 7) Are individuals that come out of the Reserves and the National Guard processed differently than those from active duty Army?
 - a) Do you see any differences in the quality of applicants based on which Component they came from?
 - 8) Will the relocation of HRC have any effect on the way that in-service OCS applicants are processed?
 - 9) Does HRC have any involvement in the processing of enlisted (college)-option applications?

Appendix I

Comparison of the Military Services' OCS Programs

Each branch of the U.S. Armed Services operates an officer commissioning school program similar to the Army's OCS. The Navy and the Marine Corps call their programs OCS, while the Air Force's program is the Officer Training School, or OTS. All of the OCS/OTS programs are roughly 3 months long. Marine Corps OCS is slightly shorter, 10 weeks, and Air Force OTS is slightly longer, 13.5 weeks.

While the eligibility requirements for the different OCS programs are quite similar, there are a few key differences in how the Services recruit and select OCs. One of the main differences is that the Navy and the Air Force use specially developed cognitive tests for officer selection to determine eligibility for officer jobs or occupations. The Air Force is the only Service that administers a non-cognitive measure; currently, this measure is only used experimentally. For both the Air Force and the Navy, classification or branching occurs before the applicant goes to OCS based on cognitive test scores and applicant preferences. In contrast, Marine Corps OCs who complete OCS successfully attend a second training school, The Basic School, and at that time they receive their branch assignment. The paragraphs below describe specific application and selection procedures for the different programs and Table I.1 provides a summary across all the Services.⁵

Eligibility

Eligibility requirements are highly similar across the different OCS programs. All applicants must be US Citizens and must have a college degree prior to beginning their respective commissioning programs. The age requirements differ somewhat across Services, with the Army tending to allow older applicants. Applicants to the Army OCS must be at least 18 years old, but (beginning in FY2011; MILPER 10-164) less than 35 years of age at time when the applicant's packet reaches HRC. Applicants for the other Services must be younger than 29 (USN), 31 (USMC), or 35 (USAF).

Cognitive Ability Screening for OCS/OTS

While all the Services have cognitive ability requirements, they vary greatly in how they assess cognitive ability. The Army relies primarily on scores on the ASVAB; the Navy and Air Force use tests specially developed for the officer population. The Marine Corp requires that applicants meet or exceed minimum scores on college admissions tests as a cognitive screen. Army applicants must score a minimum of 110 on the ASVAB General-Technical (GT) composite, which is comprised of the Arithmetic Reasoning (AR) subtest and the verbal composite (VE; the sum of Word Knowledge [WK] and Paragraph Comprehension [PC] tests).

⁵ The US Navy's OCS is located at Naval Station Newport, Rhode Island. Officials from the Naval Officer Training Command (OTC) estimate that OCS will attract 1,263 candidates in FY2010; approximately 75% of those candidates have no prior military service (http://www.navy.mil/search/display.asp?story_id=49348). The US Air Force's OTS is located at Maxwell Air Force Base (AFB), Alabama. OTS is the second largest commissioning source in the USAF behind the USAF's Reserve Officer Training Corps (AFROTC). The US Marine Corps' OCS is located at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia.

USN applicants must pass either (a) the Aviation Selection Test Battery (ASTB; required for aviators and flight officers) or (b) the Officer Aptitude Rating (OAR) portion of the ASTB which is comprised of the Math Skills Test (MST), Reading Comprehension Test (RCT), and Mechanical Comprehension Test (MCT). The aviation specific portions of the ASTB include the Spatial Apperception Test (SAT), Aviation and Nautical Information Test (ANIT), and the Aviation Supplemental Test (AST). These tests are combined to form three scores: the Academic Qualifications Rating (AQR), the Pilot Flight Aptitude Rating (PFAR), and the Flight Officer Flight Aptitude Rating (FOFAR). The AQR, PFAR, and FOFAR are standardized and reported as stanines, ranging from 1 to 9. The AQR, PFAR, and FOFAR are the basis for USMC and Naval aviation accessions; scores are formed by combining either the AQR and the PFAR or the AQR and the FOFAR (Naval Aerospace Medical Institute (NAMI) <http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/navmedmpte/nomi/nami/Pages/ASTBOverview.aspx>). The USMC and Naval aviation programs require an AQR/FOFAR of at least 4/5 (Program Authorization 106, 107). However, the minimum scores for entry into the flight programs are determined by Naval Personnel Command (NPC) and Commandant, Marine Corps.

U. S. Air Force OTS applicants take the Air Force Officer Qualifying Test (AFOQT). The test battery covers areas such as word knowledge, math knowledge, general science, table reading, and aviation information. Scores contribute to five composites; verbal, quantitative, academic aptitude, pilot, and navigator/technical composites. All applicants must achieve minimum scores or better on composites of scores on verbal (verbal analogies and word knowledge) and quantitative (arithmetic reasoning and math knowledge) tests. Individuals who apply to certain specialties (e.g., pilot, combat systems operator, and air battle manager) must achieve these minimum scores and also meet minimum scores on the pilot and navigator/technical composites. Furthermore, these applicants must pass the Pilot Candidate Selection Method (PCSM), which is comprised of results on the AFOQT, the Test of Basic Aviation Skills (TBAS), and the number of flying hours.

In contrast, USMC OCS applicants do not complete a special cognitive ability test; rather, they must score either (a) 1000 or higher on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), 22 or higher on the American College Testing (ACT) exam or (b) 74 or higher on Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) if the applicant does not have SAT or ACT scores. In addition to sufficient SAT/ACT or ASVAB scores, USMC aviation officer candidates take the ASTB.

Additional Screening for OCS/OTS: Physical, Medical, & Security Screens

Prior to beginning OCS/OTS, Army, Navy, and USMC OCs must take and pass the Army Physical Fitness Test (AFPT), the Navy Physical Readiness Test (PRT), or the USMC Physical Fitness Test in order to begin training. Air Force Officer Trainees (OTs) must take and pass the Physical Fitness Assessment (PFA) in order to begin training. All applicants to OCS/OTS must also pass the medical examination at MEPS; as of FY11, the Army OCS will suspend medical waivers for OCS indefinitely (MILPER 10-164). The Army's enlistment-option applicants must pass the same basic medical evaluation and height and weight standards that are required of all Army enlistees, since they must first enlist in the Army and go through boot camp.

Each of the Services conducts a background check on applicants to OCS/OTS. In addition to this check, applicants to OTS are also interviewed by different personnel depending

on whether they are enlisted in the USAF at the time they apply to OTS. For non-prior service OTS applicants, the interviewing officer reviews the special qualifications required of an officer and evaluates potential in terms of motivation, goals, leadership ability, communication skills, adaptability, and other qualities. For enlisted applicants, the unit commander completes the interview. The Marine Corps has officer recruiters called Officer Selection Officers (OSOs). OSOs complete an interview with U. S. Marine Corps (USMC) OCs. Upon completing a satisfactory interview, the candidate goes on to the next step, which is the review board.

Board Review

Army OCS selection boards are conducted somewhat differently for enlistment and in-service option applicants. For the enlistment-option, a battalion-level, local board interviews the applicant in person. The second boarding process occurs at nation-wide level, but does not require an in-person interview. A local board also conducts in-person interviews for in-service option applicants. The Department of the Army (DA) board then conducts a review of the in-service option packets.

Navy OCS selection boards are conducted within each of the ratings (known as Military Occupational Specialties, or MOSs, in the Army and USMC, and specialties in the AF). Navy OCS graduates can choose to become restricted line officers (Aviation Maintenance officer, Specialist in Cryptographic Support, Intelligence, Automatic Data Processing, Public Affairs, and Oceanography), unrestricted line officers (officer qualified in Surface, Surface, or Special Warfare, Pilots, Navy Flight Officers, Aviation Support Officers, SEALs, and Divers), or staff officer (physicians, nurses, chaplains, lawyers, civil engineers, etc). For the interview process, three officers in pay grade of lieutenant (O-4) or higher must interview the OCS applicant. Additionally, one of the interviewers must be from the rating for which the OCS applicant is applying.

For OTS applicants, board members review applicants' academic history (i.e., GPA, AFOQT scores), work experience, accomplishments, adaptability, character, leadership ability, potential for future growth, and other recommendations (Jeanne M. Holm Center for Officer Accessions and Citizen Development). Board members also evaluate performance reports and commander recommendations for enlisted applicants. Three Air Force Colonels review every application. Applicants enlist in AFOTS via the Delayed Enlistment Program (DEP) once they are accepted by the board review.

The USMC officer selection review board only reviews those candidates that are passed forward by OSOs. The board votes to decide if the candidate should be accepted to OCS; the majority of the board must approve a candidate in order for the candidate to be accepted into OCS.

Branching/Classification Process in OCS/OTS

Prior to March, 2010, the Army's Human Resources Command (HRC) branched all successful in-service applicants to OCS prior to their departure for Ft. Benning. However, OCs now compete for branching via their placement on the OML during their OCS participation (MILPER 10-164, 7/23/10). Since Navy midshipmen can only apply for admission to those career field communities for which they have been deemed eligible through special qualifications

and exams, there is no branching process during OCS. For AF OTS, the job assignment process is also quite different than that of Army OCS. Classification occurs prior to departure to OTS and after the board process. Each OT selects 3 possible AFSCs for classification; OTs are classified based on meeting minimum requirements (whether for the rated specialties or non-rated specialties), the availability of the AFSC, and Air Force need. Similarly, the USMC does not branch its officers during OCS. Rather, the Marines require that officers attend OCS, and then subsequent to successful completion of OCS, they are invited to pursue commissioning through The Basic School (TBS) at Camp Barrett in Quantico, VA. This program lasts for 26 weeks, during which officers receive their MOS.

Table I.1. Comparison of the Military Services' OCS Programs

Type of Screen	Army	Navy	Air Force	Marine Corps
Cognitive	ASVAB GT (minimum 110)	Aviation Selection Test Battery for aviators and flight officers. Non-aviation ratings take the Officer Aptitude Rating portion of the ASTB, which is comprised of the Math Skills, Reading Comprehension, and Mechanical Comprehension tests.	AFOQT Form S - V and Q composites. Different composites for rated specialties (flying careers). Pilot Candidate Selection Method for rated specialties.	SAT Score of 1000 or higher (Math & English). Composite ACT Score of 22 or higher. AFQT Score of 74 or higher on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB). For applicants lacking the required ACT/SAT Score. Aviation Selection Test Battery for aviators and flight officers.
Non-Cognitive			AFOQT Form S includes the Self-Description Inventory (SDI), which measures Big 5 type personality characteristics along with service and team orientation; however, this inventory is not operational	An Officer Selection Officer, (usually a Captain), meets with a prospective Officer Candidate.
Security	Background check	Background check	Background check	Background check
Physical	APFT (Army Physical Fitness Test) on site at OCS	Navy Physical Readiness Test at OCS	Physical Fitness Assessment (PFA) on site at OTS. Flying applicants must complete a flying class 1 or 1a physical examination at an Air Force aircrew examining center.	USMC Physical Fitness Test at OCS
Medical	Medical Examination conducted at MEPS for Enlisted option	Medical Examination conducted at MEPS for Enlisted option	Medical Examination conducted at MEPS for Enlisted option	Medical Examination conducted at MEPS for Enlisted option

Type of Screen	Army	Navy	Air Force	Marine Corps
Recommendations	Recommendation by an officer of rank O-5 or higher	4 Letters of Recommendation	Up to 5 Letters of Recommendation for non-prior Service. Only 1 Letter of Recommendation required for Active Duty AF (must be in chain of command).	5 Letters of Recommendation
Board Review	Local board review for enlistment-option; second interview at nation-wide level For in-service, local board done in person. DA board done after local (not in person).	Selection boards are conducted within each of the ratings. Navy OCS graduates can choose to become Restricted, Unrestricted Line, or Staff Officers. Must have minimum of 3 interviews by officers in pay grade of LT or higher (must include one interview for each designator applying for). ²	Selection boards are conducted by the Air Force Recruiting Service, with multiple boards held each year. Individuals meet panels based on the AFSC for which they apply. Rated specialties are considered only by the rated board. Nonrated candidates are considered for technical or nontechnical boards, depending on their academic majors. Each board establishes a board OML based on board score. Once the nonrated boards are complete, individuals selected to receive commissions are classified manually using qualifications for each AFSC as outlined in the Air Force Officer Classification Directory. ²	Upon completing a satisfactory interview, the OSO then makes the decision to move the prospective candidate onto the next step; review board, which will vote to decide if the Candidate should be accepted to Officer Candidate School. After receiving a majority vote of acceptance from the review board, the Officer Candidate is officially accepted into the Officer Candidate Program and scheduled for a class.
Curriculum Length	12 weeks	12 weeks	13.5 weeks	10 weeks
Location	Ft. Benning, GA	Naval Station Newport, RI	Maxwell AFB, AL	MCB Quantico, VA

Type of Screen	Army	Navy	Air Force	Marine Corps
Branching Period	via OML during OCS	Apply only for admission to career field communities for which they have been deemed eligible through special qualifications and exams.	Cadets interested in becoming rated officers meet a selection board at their respective source of commission and are classified based on that commissioning source's criteria and AF requirements. ²	All newly commissioned officers in the Marine Corps attend TBS (The Officer Basic School) for six months before the branching process begins. ²