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Training the Army Acquisition Workforce

Stephanie L. Watson

An integral part of the mission of the assistant secretary of the Army for acquisition, logistics, and technology (AL&T) is to educate and train the men and women of our Army AL&T workforce, who strive daily to provide high-quality, cutting-edge products for our soldiers. To this end, and in accordance with the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA), the director, acquisition career management (DACM) must ensure the readiness and sustainment of a professional civilian and military (active, reserve, and National Guard) acquisition workforce by promoting leadership and professional development. The DACM provides a wide range of recruitment and retention incentives, training, education, and leadership programs to ensure a professional Army Acquisition Corps.

To date, the Army AL&T workforce consists of over 42,000 civilians and 1,600 officers and noncommissioned officers, for a total workforce in excess of 43,500. They specialize in 14 acquisition career fields (ACFs) to support the warfighter. The Army has implemented dozens of programs to support the AL&T workforce and their commitment to learning and successfully executing mission-critical tasks. These programs focus on certification, leadership, professionalism, and experiential career-broadening opportunities. This article highlights some of the programs that best represent the diversity of Army acquisition career development.

Defense Acquisition University Senior Service College Fellowship Program

The Defense Acquisition University Senior Service College Fellowship (DAU-SSCF) program is an opportunity for Army Acquisition Corps members to receive leadership and acquisition training that will better prepare them for senior and key leadership positions. The DAU-SSCF was piloted in Huntsville, Ala., in 2006 and has since expanded to include two additional regional locations: Warren, Mich., and Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md. The program is designed for high-performing GS-14s and above or broadband/payband equivalents who have exhibited leadership potential. The DAU-SSCF is a 10-month program. An order-of-merit list determines the number of selectees. Individuals who complete the DAU-SSCF program receive equivalency for the DAU Program Manager's Course (PMT 401) and have the opportunity to pursue a master's degree. Typically, most selectees already have a master's degree, so this is an option for a second degree. The DAU-SSCF program is very beneficial for those who excel in their current positions because it prepares them to succeed in leadership through rigorous courses, a mentoring program, and extensive research. To date, 66 fellows have graduated from the DAU-SSCF program and have been assigned to vital acquisition roles.

Competitive Development Group/Army Acquisition Fellows Program

The Competitive Development Group/Army Acquisition Fellows (CDG/AAF) program is one of the premier leadership developmental programs initiated by the U.S. Army Acquisition Support Center to improve the quality of the Army's civilian acquisition workforce. The CDG/AAF program was created to provide professional development opportunities for GS-12/13s and broadband/payband equivalents, who have demonstrated potential to meet Army Acquisition Corps education, training, and experience requirements, and displayed the potential for future success and exceptional service to the Army. They are afforded developmental assignments within the acquisition community, including assignments in: program executive offices; program management offices; systems acquisition offices; and senior Army staff offices. The program was launched in May 1997 with an inaugural class of 25 participants; since then, a total of 161 civilians have been competitively selected and participated in this 3-year program. CDG/AAF program graduates are paving their way to future leadership roles within the AL&T workforce. Three CDG/AAF program fellows have achieved Senior Executive Service (SES) status, and more than 21 CDG/AAF program fellows are now serving in critical acquisition positions and key leadership positions.

Defense Acquisition Workforce Development Fund

Enabled by Section 852 of the *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008*, the Defense Acquisition Workforce Development Fund provides the Army's DACM with enhanced capabilities to ensure the "acquisition workforce has the ca-

capacity, in both personnel and skills, needed to properly perform its mission, provide appropriate oversight of contractor performance, and ensure that the department receives the best value for the expenditure of public resources." To that end, the Army has deployed numerous initiatives. The following discussion focuses on some of the most far-reaching initiatives.

Grow the Acquisition Workforce

The Department of Defense allocated 1,885 new growth positions to Army acquisition to be funded with Section 852 funds. Significant progress has been made, in a relatively short period, toward this growth directive, with over 950 interns and journeymen hired to date, across the 14 ACFs.

Student Loan Repayment Program

Army acquisition has offered its Student Loan Repayment Program (SLRP) for the second year, repaying more than three times the number of applicants' student loans in 2010 than it did in 2009. All AL&T workforce members with outstanding federally insured student loans and a college degree are eligible to apply for SLRP. This program is used as a retention incentive for individuals who are considered highly qualified in their current position. The recipients agree to remain within the DoD for 3 years, with an additional 1-year commitment with each successive payment in the following years. SLRP has been a successful recruiting tool, helping to make Army acquisition organizations competitive employers. The application process is online, using the Army Acquisition Professional Development System within the Career Acquisition Personnel and Position Management Information System (CAPPMIS). CAPPMIS is the Army's central repository for acquisition workforce data. The highly accessible application process, with the capability of displaying the dates applications are being accepted, resulted in an overwhelmingly positive response to SLRP in 2010. The 2010 announcement opened on April 21 and closed May 28. In 2009, 1,130 applications were reviewed and 438 of those were selected for funding, for a total of \$4.1 million. In the 2010 offering, 2,751 applications were submitted and 1,331 were funded, for a total of \$11.9 million spent to retain those qualified individuals.

Excellence in Government Fellows Program

The Excellence in Government Fellows (EIGF) program is conducted by the Partnership for Public Service, located in Washington, D.C. EIGF is a leadership development program tailored specifically to federal and state government professionals with an acquisition concentration. This is why Army acquisition chose this program as a retention incentive for AL&T workforce members with demonstrated leadership potential. EIGF provides attendees with a hands-on, transformational experience focusing on leadership and management challenges specific to the government. During the course of a year, each fellow participates in multiple training events in different locations, where they spend several days developing their management and leadership competencies with their coaching teams. An EIG fellow of



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the 2010 class, Lisa Stangle, director of Apache Contracting for Army Materiel Command in Huntsville, Ala., said, "I found that the benchmarking activities we conducted at commercial, not-for-profit, and government organizations to understand their leadership perspectives provided excellent insight into varied leadership approaches. Networking with the many EIGF program participants from numerous civilian and DoD agencies allowed me to share ideas and learn from other leaders facing many of the same challenges in the federal workplace."

Each of the training events complements the five core qualifications for SES: Leading Change; Leading People; Results-Driven; Business Acumen; and Building Coalitions. The fellows also devise and test strategies to achieve results for their own organizations. All AL&T workforce members at GS-13 and above or broadband/payband equivalent who have met their current position certification requirements are eligible to apply. Army acquisition's latest class of eight fellows graduated in August 2010. Members of the class of 2010 were selected from all over the country, including several traveling from acquisition positions in New Jersey, Virginia, Alabama, Michigan, and Colorado. The ACFs represented were life cycle logistics, contracting, program management, and test and evaluation. As a result of the success of this program in 2010, Army acquisition will sponsor 19 participants for the 2011 class. These new fellows are from the following locations: Maryland, Alabama, Florida, Michigan, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Arizona, and Missouri. They are certified in the following ACFs: business, cost estimating, and financial management; test and evaluation; program management; systems planning, research, development, and engineering; information technology; and contracting. With these two pilot offerings, we have a great cross-section of people from different areas and with different functional and leadership expertise.

Active Duty Special Work

Currently, Army National Guard (ARNG) and U.S. Army Reserve (USAR) soldiers are not afforded an opportunity to gain contracting experience before deploying; therefore, they lack the full-time experience necessary to meet the certification requirement. AL&T contracting personnel are required to be a minimum of DAWIA Level I-certified in contracting. This leaves the multi-component force structure at risk because of a lack of skill within the ARNG/USAR workforce. Active Duty Special Work (ADSW) was implemented to provide ARNG and USAR soldiers a chance to become familiar, over the course of a year, with expeditionary contracting prior to deployment. ADSW facilitates developmental opportunities to build solid leadership skills, while providing career-broadening experiences that will prepare our ARNG/USAR workforce to develop, design, deploy, acquire, field, and maintain all soldier systems that will impact the success of our soldiers in tactical, strategic, and operational environments. To date, 19 soldiers have benefited from ADSW and gained the necessary experience.

Army Intermediate Contracting Laboratory

The Army Intermediate Contracting Laboratory (AICL) was implemented in 2008 to teach new acquisition officers and newly reclassified acquisition noncommissioned officers how to use procurement desktop-defense (PD2) contracting software and how to operate and work in a contracting organization. AICL provides them DAU equivalency training in contingency contracting (CON 234). PD2 supports all phases of the procurement cycle, from inputting the customer's requirements to closing out the contract. The software tool uses desktop icons that resemble folders, documents, envelopes, and filing cabinets to replicate an office environment; and divides procurement functions into three contract phases—requirements, pre-award and award, and post-award. This 2-week course is held five times per year at the Army Acquisition Center of Excellence in Huntsville, Ala. Each AICL is scheduled to follow the Army Acquisition Intermediate Contracting Course (AICC). AICC provides DAU equivalency for Level II DAWIA contracting certification training. Approximately 144 soldiers have completed the AICL training during fiscal year 2010.

Army Acquisition Workforce of the Future

The Army's success starts with the education of its current and future leaders. Army AL&T civilian and military professionals will become 21st century leaders who personify the warrior ethos in all aspects, spanning warfighting support, statesmanship, and business management. Army acquisition education, training, and experience programs encourage our AL&T workforce to develop functional expertise, seek career-broadening experiences, and obtain strategic leadership positions. Career development opportunities and initiatives, such as the ones discussed in this article, establish a qualified and professional AL&T workforce that is properly trained, educated, and poised to meet the needs of our warfighter.

Watson is a human capital strategic analyst in the Army DACM office, Fort Belvoir, Va. She welcomes comments and questions and can be contacted at Stephanie.L.Watson@us.army.mil.