



Defense Orientation Conference Association

POST CONFERENCE NOTES

Virtual Conference - Friday, August 28, 2020

U.S. Air Force Academy

Insiders' View on Leadership Training, Education, and Athletics to Develop and Graduate Cadets to Be Successful Leaders in the Air and Space Forces

Post Conference Report

(All presentations were UNCLASSIFIED)

Overview of the Academy Mission, Goals and Current Activities

Colonel Otis Jones, Vice Superintendent, USAFA

Colonel Jones talked about the necessity for innovation to accomplish their mission due to the country's current COVID posture. Though he was grateful to be able to speak to DOCA virtually, he invited members to come and tour the campus in the future. Jones emphasized that the key take-away from his brief is to understand the many unique parts of the institution and the important missions they must accomplish to prepare the cadets to defend the nation. Cadets go through a rigorous regimen to be ready to graduate and serve their country in a variety of ways. The Department of Defense (DOD) has deemed USAFA's mission (as with all academies) as essential to National Security.

The essence of the Academy's development of cadets' readiness to graduate includes:

- Developing Character and Leadership
- Focusing on the Department of the Air Force Mission in Air, Space and Cyberspace
- Immersing Cadets in a Total Experience for Mind, Body, Character, and Knowledge
- Harmonizing STEM and the Liberal Arts in one curriculum
- Internalizing the Department of the Air Force Ethos
- Exposing Cadets to Air and Space Forces Professional Cultures
- Maintaining an Exemplary State of the Art Installation

The service academies are led by three-star general Superintendents, who lead the staff, faculty, cadets, and other personnel to oversee the challenging and diverse training regimen. The Academy's cadets come from every state and several different countries. In 2020, cadets came from 435 congressional districts using a complex nominating process. With about 1,200 new cadets coming in each year, they graduate and commission around 1,000 new officers into the Air and Space forces with each graduating class. USAFA, like all the academies, can even cross-commission officers into the other services (Army, Navy, and Marine Corps).

Col. Jones is proud when he references what the cadets brought to USAFA over the summer of 2020. This is one of the most diverse classes in Academy history-30.2% of the class are women and 36.2% come from ethnic minorities.

Due to USAFA's "essential mission" status, the 2020 pandemic required the Academy to adjust curriculum and activities promptly. Within a week, faculty members were able to move to a completely remote/virtual environment for the lower three classes. Seniors stayed on campus to focus and graduate early. Jones feels that the cadets' training and learning amid the pandemic and a uniquely uncertain environment, prepare them for other uncertainties they will walk into after being commissioned.



Once USAFA started re-integrating the new cadets and the lower three classes back on campus, there were strategic guidelines and procedures. They utilized off-campus hotels and mathematical predictability to create a new phased approach to living and training, all while keeping expectations on continuing mission success while keeping the cadets and faculty safe.

Overview of Curricula: Key Goals and Accomplishments

Brigadier General Linell Letendre, Dean of Faculty, USAFA

General Letendre first focused on the Dean of Faculty organization from a pre-pandemic and pandemic perspective. Letendre explained that there are 20 different academic departments separated into 4 major divisions. There is an external governing body known as the Board of Visitors, comprised of appointed senior level leadership and private citizens who provide insight. Differing from most universities, their 700-member faculty is around 60% military. Letendre then elaborated on USAFA’s core curricula:

Outcome	First Year	Second Year	Third Year	Fourth Year
Critical Thinking	Econ 201	Law 220	Statistics Option	Majors Courses
Clear Communication	English 111	English 211		Majors Courses
Engineering	Comp Sci 110	Engr Mech 220	Aero Engr 315	Astro Engr 310 ECE 315
Principles of Science	Math 141 & Math 142 Chem 100	Physics 110 Chem 200, Physics 215, or Bio 215 (must take 2 of 3)		1 or 2 upper level STEM basket options in either Principles of Science or Engineering outcomes
Ethics & Respect	Beh Sci 110	Philos 310		
Human Conditions	For Lang 1 & 2	History 300		
National Security	Econ 201	Pol Sci 211	Soc Sci 311	1 or 2 upper level Sociocultural basket options in one of these four outcomes
Warrior Ethos	Basic Cadet Tng History 100 Phys Ed	MSS 251 (4.5) Phys Ed	Phys Ed	Phys Ed
Leadership	Officership 100	Officership 200	Officership 300	Officership 400

The core requirements lead to the nine outcomes (far-right column) that the Academy leadership aims for. All classes are enveloped by answering “What does it mean to be a member of the profession of arms?” Letendre mentioned that one of the crowning jewels of USAFA is their research capabilities. There are 27 research centers on campus, leading to their standing as the number one funded undergraduate research institution. Some of their unique centers include a hypersonic wind tunnel complex, a complete cyber city, and their own satellite control facility.

General Letendre highlighted the Class of 2020 which had 43 National Competitive scholars, 3 Marshall scholars, 2 Fullbright scholars, 1 Knight Hennessy and a National Science Foundation scholar, and over 140 other cadets moving on to graduate schools across the country.

Besides the introduction of COVID-19 on campus, cyber initiatives are new to the 2021 academic year, benefitting the cyber competition team and their incorporation of development, security, and operations. Ground has been broken on a Cyber Innovation Center. A new office, the Office of Labor and Economic Analysis, was opened to solve workforce challenges within the Air Force. There are numerous outreach programs being implemented to broaden STEM education throughout the communities and country. Cultural immersion, outside of the U.S. has been uniquely challenged because of the 2020 Pandemic.

Other silver linings have come from the global pandemic. Instead of sending the cadets out to different areas of the world for Summer Programs, USAFA was able to bring world class subject matter experts to host weeklong seminars on topics about future conflicts. Additionally, there were even 458 cadets invited to participate on the first, large-scale, virtual research project with the AFRL during the summer.



All cadets are back in classes, as of August 2020. They were only able to accomplish this because they ran millions of their own Monte Carlo modeling simulations. Along with what Colonel Jones explained, Letendre expanded on the specific steps the Academy continues to implement past face coverings and 50% classroom capacities. There is robust random testing within their own biology lab, because the average age range of the cadets can carry COVID-19 without showing any symptoms. She effectively calls their method the “Fizzles Equation,” meaning that they understand how much testing they have to do to “fizzle out” outbreaks. The other academy deans are now meeting weekly to continue assessing the fluctuating posture of their respective institutions.

Cadet Training and Key Leadership Goals

Colonel Clarence “Coolhand” Lukes, Vice Commandant of Cadets, USAFA

Colonel Lukes was proud when he said that he works with a fluctuating 4,300-4,400 cadets at any given time. These cadets are separated into 40 different cadet squadrons led by an Air Officer Commanding (AOC). All AOC's, who are certified in the leadership and coaching areas, guide the cadets as they hone their leadership skills. The Academy not only ensures cadet safety, it also provides oversight to assist the cadets with upholding the Cadet Honor Code and expected ethics standards. An Honor Officer and an Honor NCO are part of every squadron because the Honor Code is much more than words on a piece of paper--Lukes and all the USAFA leadership expect the cadets to live by it.

Programs are available for cadets needing any type of help, and even allow an intermission from the Academy, if needed. Quality of life and mental health changes did not pass over the Academy amid the pandemic. Understanding that Air Force personnel and cadet suicides have been an unfortunate part of military news, Lukes talked to the DOCA members about this delicate topic. There is a holistic approach to suicide prevention through their program and agency support on campus. It is important to the Academy that the cadets have the resources and tools readily available on site to get the help they need to be more resilient and able to cope with change. Seeking help is considered a sign of strength and not a sign of weakness.

The global pandemic has been a novel problem and has led to novel ideas/adaptations. Lukes gave an example of a 2nd classman and his team re-working some of the tools inside of their communication software to provide all the cadets with better alerts within their squadrons and classes. This small innovation led to campus wide accountability for instructions and direction being handed down from the Dean of Faculty.

The new Space Force has been officially tied to USAFA since December 20th, 2019, just as the Marine Corps has been tied to the Naval Academy. Despite the big organizational change, the changes within the Air Force Academy were minimal. They continue to teach and train the cadets following the curriculum tailored to the space program. Lukes knows that they will continue to posture the Academy as the premier institution for the development of space professionals and space-minded joint warriors.

With all the social movements across the country, Lukes said that USAFA is doing a lot of listening. Immediately following the “George Floyd” movement, they listened, planned, and acted. A look into the racial disparity has been an ongoing study on campus. USAFA is not afraid of what they will find with the study but intend to act on whatever the results are.

Update on the Athletic Program, Physical Education Classes, Intramurals, Highlights and Updates of the NCAA Teams and Schedules

Mr. Nathan Pine, Athletic Director, USAFA

Mr. Pine addressed DOCA members with an informative slide show to understand the Athletic Department's (AD) overall mission and vision. Pine said that they are very purposeful in the way they recruit, not just based on athleticism but the traits that will inspire a lifetime of service. He mentioned that varsity athletic teams get a little extra “dose” of military training, but in a different environment enhancing their character and leadership development.



About 25%, a little over 1,000 cadets, are involved in NCAA athletics, and they bring an added level of experience and leadership ability to the Cadet Wing. This is just another way that the USAFA prepares graduates to be successful and make a positive impact within their cadet squadrons, and after graduation in their communities and military careers. Through collegiate athletics and regular physical education classes and intramurals, the USAFA AD is an integral part of cadet success at the Academy.

Athletics are predominately within the Mountain West Conference, and most of the Mountain West Fall sports have been postponed because of the global pandemic. Despite the season's challenges, Pine has hopes and sees the possibility of gaining a place for USAFA athletics to be a Top 50 program. He understands that there are many strategic moves they will have to make, since Top 50 Division I schools typically have much higher operating budgets. While working to attain this goal, Mr. Pine, however, refuses to compromise their academic successes.

Financially, USAFA remains somewhat competitive. Compared to the Pac-12 schools spending \$85-135 million, USAFA spends around \$60 million spread across the 27 varsity sports and all the other Physical Education training for the cadets. Money comes from three different sources that can all be spent separately. When looking at a "by-sport" revenue, football and men's basketball typically reap 80% of the revenue. Other methods of funding include foundational support and corporate sponsorships/fundraisers.

USAFA's football team will likely see two separate seasons in 2021, one being all 8 Mountain West games that were postponed from Fall, 2020. However, the service academy football games against the West Point and Navy are still likely to be played as scheduled later this Fall.

Overview of the Admissions Process and Relevant Insights into Recruiting, Admissions Goals, and Metrics

Colonel Art Primas, Director of Admissions, USAFA

Colonel Primas feels grateful to be a part of USAFA admissions. He finds the opportunity to be unique in comparison to typical university admissions staffs because he must look at two separate aspects of admitting. First, he thinks about the needs of the Academy, but also assesses based on the operational needs of the future Air and Space Forces. Much of the admissions department is civilian, where only 20 of the 64 staff members are military. Part of the admissions department staff includes new USAFA graduates.

Recruiting and outreach is their largest division of the admissions department. After the Air Force realized that the different recruitment events and opportunities were neither synchronized nor operated to recruit the diverse populations around the nation, they implemented a "Total Force" initiative. The Total Force recruitment means that all the areas of recruitment work together—the USAFA, ROTC, active duty, and Guard & Reserve. They also send their new graduates who were assigned to Air Force recruitment to recruitment bases around the nation, instead of keeping them in house. This method gives persistent presence in the communities and districts they serve.

Cadet selections follow recruitment. Much of selection processes are tied to the legal and other requirements. A nomination is required, but not a guarantee for an appointment. Congressional and military affiliation nominations are how nominees obtain an appointment. After a nomination comes evaluation. In 2019 there were over 10,000 applicants, and only 1,146 were brought in for evaluations. About 50% of the evaluation is about academics, knowing that the Academy is a STEM school driven by a tough curriculum. Resume diversity covers 20% of the evaluation, while committee scorings about character fills the last 30%.

Some congressional districts have representatives who do not strongly support the military and sometimes choose not to nominate candidates to the service academies. Col Primas said that it is important to communicate with these congressmen about the opportunities these kids have with gaining a world class education and serving their country. Additionally, recruitment teams are now focusing on these districts to help ensure those interested in applying are given the opportunity to seek an appointment. Balancing diversity can be a challenging part of the admissions process, but Col Primas stated that USAFA admissions cannot choose someone purely based on race or ethnicity



background. He also stated that they have a congressional guide to encourage them to keep considering a more diverse population of applicants.

A small portion of each graduating class will not graduate for a myriad of reasons. Academic performance is the number one reason a cadet would drop out of the Academy. However, 85% of cadets will graduate with a service commission, fulfilling the Air Force training pipeline goals. By law, only 60 international students can be enrolled at any given time. International student reviews happen once there is a nomination, and they are evaluated similarly to applicants who are U.S. citizens.

Primas recommended to the DOCA audience that anyone who is interested in applying to USAFA should:

- Go to the website to address questions and locate events and then come to see the campus
- Have the applicant contact recruitment and outreach representatives

Roundtable: Retrospective Discussion

The Academy's Profound Contribution to Personal, Professional and Community Growth

Colonel Chris MacAulay, USAF, Retired

Lieutenant Colonel Jannell MacAulay, USAF, Retired

Ms. Kristen Christy, Past Chair, Military Affairs Council

Colonel Chris MacAulay began the discussion expressing that though he is grateful to be “from” USAFA, it was certainly a tough place to be “at.” Many of the speakers preceding MacAulay mentioned just how tough the environment can be regarding academics, physical, and mental stamina. Being 22 years removed, he knows that the environment was built with the intention of creating a warrior mindset, and he recognizes that much of his professional and personal successes have stemmed from his time at the Academy.

All three speakers told of memorable, and most impactful, experiences that shaped their Air Force careers. Ms. Christy quoted one of the General's she met during her life, “If you never ask, the answer is always no...and sometimes no is the answer.” This was a major piece of the stories each of them told. Their experiences with USAFA gave them the strength to take a hard situation and make the most of it. Each hardship gave them exactly what they needed to start their careers. The MacAulays, as young and newly graduated officers in the Air Force, stated that their experiences from the Academy gave them a high level of confidence in themselves and their diversity of thought. Additionally, they had the skills to lead their peers while upholding honorable characteristics such as humility, respect, and loyalty.

Ms. Christy talked about the impact of USAFA in her community. There are five large military installations in Colorado Springs. The communication between the facilities and the community has become extremely important, and the Chamber of Commerce's Military Affairs Council works hard to lead the way. They get together with the public affairs officers from each installation, once a month, to discuss events and help they might need. She can also help with parent communication, sponsorship families, and funding gaps.

Chris MacAulay elaborated on the idea of repetitive “forced to failure” by sharing how the concept builds on overcoming challenges and developing a positive attitude and confident way of thinking. He expects that most cadets will leave USAFA with a strong will to succeed, ability to coach, and capacity to work in team environments. Jannell MacAulay expressively explained what the high stress environment can do to a cadet because “the hustle” is rewarded. She found “the hustle” to be unsustainable however, even though they were being trained physically and developing their technical skills at such a high level. The training at the Academy mostly lacking was the psychological training, and how to find harmony with all the competing activities and stresses. For this reason, she began her Warrior's Edge program, to benefit not only military members, but doctors, Olympians, etc.

Ms. Christy helps with cadet resiliency, as well. Once she was able to share her story, she found avenues to direct cadets to what they need for military and life resilience. She attempts to leave a piece of her heart in every room. She knows that life is a tough teacher and wants to be an emotionally supportive person.