

Board of Visitors' Endorsement

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Honorable Michael W. Wynne
Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense
for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics
Pentagon 3E1006
Washington, D.C. 20301-3000

Subject: Defense Acquisition University, Board of Visitors' Report

Dear Mr. Wynne,

It is my honor to serve as chair of the Defense Acquisition University Board of Visitors (BOV). As required by the OSD charter for the BOV, I am submitting an assessment and recommendations by the Board of Visitors for the current quarter. Because this is the first assessment prepared for you, I will include at the end of this report the names of members of the BOV. [See list of members on Page 11 of this Report.]

The BOV meets quarterly, first in open session in the morning, then in executive session in the afternoon. Our discussions with DAU personnel are candid, covering the range of activities within their purview. The Board is pleased with the performance of DAU and its current leadership under DAU president Frank Anderson.

Unless you advise us differently, our quarterly reports will not attempt to cover the entire range of DAU activities but will strive to update you on the subset of matters currently being considered and discussed by the BOV.

Distance Learning This report would be deficient if it did not begin with an assessment statement that DAU has made significant strides in developing and implementing distance learning courses. Indeed, DAU appears to hold a leadership position in distance learning. Where the technology of distance learning fails to provide the learning environment and mechanisms required for the desired training, DAU has been resourceful in creating hybrid courses that entail some distance learning and some in-residence learning. The reports we receive on these courses are positive. **We recommend that DAU continue to explore and develop distance learning techniques that provide high quality training, exploit interactive learning possibilities, and reduce the cost of training the acquisition workforce.**

Program Manager's Course We are pleased to report on a new DAU senior management course (formerly called the Advanced Program Management Course—APMC,

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now called the Program Manager's Course—PMT 401). The course includes more than 50 new case studies, most of which are at or near completion, reflecting the commonplace challenges and problems encountered in managing defense acquisition programs. The new course has been under development at DAU for nearly two years, is composed largely of field case studies created specifically for the course, and is ten weeks in length. In developing this course, DAU faculty surveyed and interviewed tens of DoD program offices and systems commands, identifying specific case examples of commonplace challenges and problems. The course has been patterned along the lines of leading executive training programs and is now in its initial pilot test with 24 students. We recommend that DAU gain as much insight from the current pilot test as possible, highlighting specific course material to be improved, and then moving aggressively to implement the improvements prior to the second pilot test scheduled for the end of this calendar year. If DAU accomplishes the objective it has set for this practical course (which we believe it will) it will have produced a practical, senior level course for which DoD can be proud.

It appears that your direct assistance will be needed with the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps to insure that officers and civilians sent to this course meet the course prerequisites—a goal that has only partially been achieved for the current pilot test. If students in the course do not have prior experience in program offices and cannot contribute productively to the classroom discussions, they will substantially curtail the value of the course for themselves and for their student colleagues.

Contracting Course DAU is restructuring its senior contracting course to adopt a case-approach similar to that described above. This course will benefit from the case developmental and case teaching experiences developed for the new program manager's course. As such it will bring contracting officers in touch with the challenges they will encounter in the field and the views of those from other functions with whom they will work. We applaud this course development effort and recommend that DAU proceed expeditiously.

Performance Support DAU is expanding its efforts to provide performance support to DoD acquisition field units. The BOV believes that performing this support may be a useful mechanism for building and maintaining faculty capabilities, as long as it does not distract the most capable faculty from developing and maintaining course materials describing current challenges and lessons learned. The BOV has recommended that DAU establish effective safeguards to insure that demands on high-quality faculty (a limited resource) to perform field support does not side track these faculty away from teaching assignments and course development, relegating those assignments to new or inexperienced faculty. The BOV sees teaching and course development as the central part of the DAU mission.

Lessons Learned DAU is in the planning stage of designing and developing an acquisition lessons-learned system. The BOV has endorsed DAU efforts to pursue this project because it believes such a system could be useful to DAU training programs, to developing the DAU faculty, and to assisting DoD acquisition managers in the field. Al-

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though various organizations within DoD have previously attempted to develop lessons-learned systems, their efforts appear not to have endured either because of deficiencies in the system design or because of funding limitations in declining defense budgets. **The BOV recommends your encouragement and support of efforts to establish a useful acquisition lessons-learned system.**

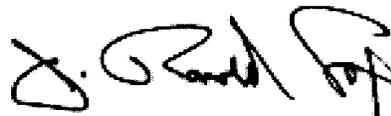
DAU Field Offices In the interest of improving managerial accountability and responsiveness to acquisition systems commands, DAU has established five regional offices located at selected Army/Navy/Air Force/acquisition bases. By doing so, DAU expects to reduce student travel time and connect selected members of the faculty with field locations. DAU representatives at these locations will seek to improve access to acquisition programs, thereby providing additional sources of classroom materials and lessons learned. **We commend these actions and recommend that DAU maintain records to ensure that field offices achieve their objectives.**

DAU Research Activities The DAU President has directed a review of the results produced by research funds consumed in house, contracted, or granted by DAU during the past five years. As a result of that review, the DAU President is establishing a clear policy to insure that research projects are selected and directed toward applied research that produces specific near-term products needed by DAU courses and/or by the DoD acquisition workforce. **The BOV applauds this policy and recommends your endorsement and support.**

Financial Management The BOV finds that DAU has taken impressive actions during the past two years to improve its financial management. The foundation has been laid for a cost accounting system; however additional work is required in this area. Useful initiatives are currently in place, but continued emphasis is required to assure a more structured cost management system with appropriately delegated responsibilities. **We recommend your encouragement and support of these efforts.**

The BOV welcomes any comments and suggestions that you may have.

Sincerely,



BOV Chair

Attachment

Cc: Donna Richbourg
Frank Anderson