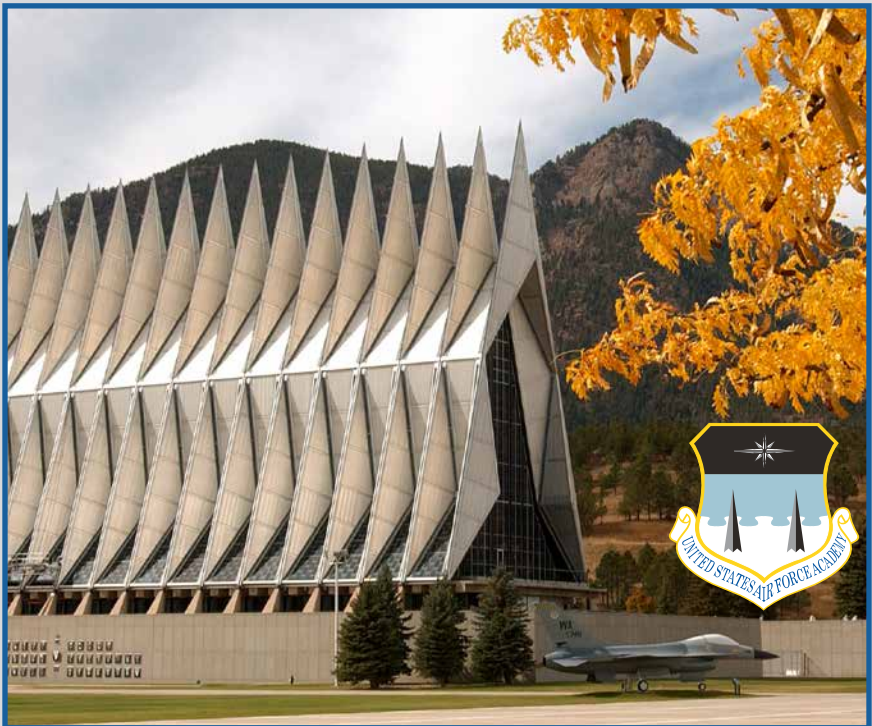


Guide to Serving on the United States Air Force Academy Board of Visitors



A Handbook for Members

Introduction

Thank You for agreeing to serve on a military service academy federal advisory committee. Your service helps to ensure that agency decisions are based on the best and most current trends in education, industry, and business while considering military requirements and service. In the words of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), independent panels of experts provide invaluable service by “furnishing expert advice, ideas, and diverse opinions to the Federal Government.”¹

The Headquarters United States Air Force, AF/A1, Manpower, Personnel and Services, Directorate of Force Management Policy, Accessions and Training Management Division (A1PT) provides administrative support to the USAFA Board of Visitors (BoV). The advisory committee operates under its own charter and reports independently to the Secretary of Defense, through the Secretary of the Air Force, and is subject to the requirements of the FACA.

Committee Structure

The USAFA BoV is currently structured to operate as a single committee with no subcommittees.



¹ 15 USC App 2 section 2(a)

Ethics Requirements

Your participation on an advisory committee is a public service to the agency and the country. To protect the integrity of the committee's advice, members are subject to certain conflict of interest and ethics rules.

Before beginning your service, and annually thereafter for the duration of your appointment, you must complete a confidential financial disclosure form (OGE-450 or SF-278 form). This form provides information to determine if your participation in an advisory activity would present a conflict of interest or might raise an appearance of a lack of impartiality. Generally, members of advisory committees are employed as Special Government Employees (SGEs) as defined under 18 U.S.C 202(a). SGEs are often recruited because they provide outside expertise or perspectives that might not be available among an agency's regular employees.

Before you participate in an advisory activity for the first time, you also must take on-line ethics training that explains the ethics rules and how they apply to you. The training must be taken annually for the duration of your service. The training can be found at the following website: http://education.oge.gov/training/module_files/ogesge_wbt_07/10.html.

It's important to print off the certificate and provide to the Executive Secretary as soon as it's completed. In some instances, ethics training may be completed during a meeting's administrative session fulfilling the annual requirement and negating the need to do the training on-line.

Staff Support

Air Force Accessions and Training Division or A1PT, within the Directorate of Force Management Policy provides administrative support to the chartered committee. A1PT has a Designated Federal Officer and a Primary and Alternate Executive Secretary that provide ethics, records management, and annual meeting support. Logistics support to include travel arrangements to and from meetings, hotel and reimbursement payments are provided by the Secretary of the Air Force (SAF) Legislative Liaison (LL) office.

Travel Arrangements

Typically four meetings are held each year with two at the Air Force Academy and two in Washington D.C.

The SAF/LL office arranges for your travel and reserves hotel rooms. You have options for Air travel. SAF/LL can make flight arrangements and purchase tickets for you, or you can make your own arrangements. The government will reimburse you, but only up to the government rate to and from your state of residence. For other expenses (e.g. hotels, meals, taxis), you apply for reimbursement.

As a member, your responsibilities include responding promptly to requests for your travel preferences (airports and travel times), calling the hotel to confirm your sleeping room, and submitting your receipts for hotel accommodations, taxis, and meal costs.

USAFA BOARD OF VISITORS LOGISTICS POC

SAF/LL: Point of Contact

Major Richard (Rick) Palmer 703-697-7114

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Workload

The time commitment required of members depends on the scope and nature of the advisory activity. The four meetings each year typically last a full 2 days and there may be one or more teleconference meetings over a 4 to 6-month period. In addition, you may spend approximately 20 hours reading and writing outside meetings. Your DFO can give you a sense of the workload for the current fiscal year.

All advisory activities are chaired by a member of the committee and voted on by the committee members. As the chair of the committee, the DFO works with you to schedule the meetings around your and the members' availability. The BoV Chair has additional responsibilities (e.g. to run public meetings and oversee report production). A chair should manage his/her time commitment through delegation to panel members and judicious reliance on the DFO.

FACA and You

The Federal Advisory Committee Act² (FACA) is a “government in the sunshine” statute that works to ensure that the public has access to the advice provided to the government by federal advisory committees. The key provisions of the law are that committees are to be balanced, meetings are to be announced ahead of time and open to interested members of the public, detailed meeting minutes are to be kept, and all materials presented

²The Federal Advisory Committee Act and the 2001 implementing regulations are available at <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/21244>

to or prepared by or for advisory committee are to be made available to the public. FACA spells out the duties of the Designated Federal Officer (DFO) to approve agendas, convene meetings, and keep required records.

The A1PT staff provides public access to committee materials by posting documents (e.g. member comments, public comments, review materials, meeting minutes, and panel draft reports) to the USAFA BoV website or can provide paper copies upon request.

In this day of electronic communications, emails among committee or panel members may constitute a meeting, even if only 2 committee members converse in an email, this can constitute a meeting if the dialogue discusses meeting topics. Thus, it is highly discouraged to send emails to committee panel members and you should always copy the DFO on email communications. The DFO is responsible for ensuring that email discussions do not violate the FACA open meeting requirements and retaining email records in accordance with legal requirements. If emails are sent, they must be reviewed in the public meeting.

Getting Ready For Meetings

Most advisory committees are guided by a formal charge from the agency to include questions and provide background for the request. The charge guides, but need not limit the deliberations of the committee.

Role of the Chair: Planning the Public Meeting

The DFO works with the chair and the agency to negotiate an initial set of charge topics or questions and to identify background info the BoV needs to do its task. The chair also assigns lead discussant duties to panel members and provides input on the overall meeting agenda. Under FACA, the DFO must approve the final agenda [5 USC App. 2 section 10 (f)]

Prior to meetings, BoV members are expected to thoroughly review the materials provided by the DFO, including agency documents and written public comments (if any were received).

Members may be instructed to prepare preliminary written comments on the review materials. These “pre-meeting comments” serve several important purposes, including to:

- Help you prepare for discussions at the meeting.
- Help the chair identify issues that may require additional meeting time.
- Flag areas where the BoV committee may need additional information to answer the charge questions or topics.

If members’ pre-meeting comments are shared with all members, they should also be posted to the website to help the agency and the public understand your initial thinking. During the meeting, your views may be influenced by your committee colleagues. This is the strength of the committee process and your preliminary comments do not necessarily represent your final conclusions. Your final views should be reflected in the consensus report from the committee.

What to Expect at Public Meetings

With rare exceptions,³ all FACA committees are required to meet and deliberate in public.⁴ Depending on the interest in the topic of the meeting, there may be members of the public and members of the press in attendance. All statements that you make during a public meeting are on the record and professional behavior is expected.

Role of the Chair:

Running the Meeting

The chair runs the meeting, ensuring that public comments are heard, that all members have an opportunity to participate in discussions and that the committee accomplishes its work. The DFO addresses process and FACA issues and helps the chair stay on schedule.

At a meeting you can expect the following to occur:

- The DFO convenes the meeting and indicates for the record that all participating panel members are in compliance with ethics and conflict of interest rules, or notes any instances where a member will recuse him/herself from discussion on a particular aspect of the meeting.

³ FACA allows the head of an agency to close a meeting if it falls within certain exemptions under the Government in the Sunshine Act (5 U.S.C 552b), such as discussion of matters of national defense, trade secrets, or internal personnel practices. USAFA BoV must obtain permission to close the meeting from the Agency Committee Management Officer or SAF/AA per DoDI 5105.04_AFI 90-1401.

⁴ 5 USC App. 2 section 10

- The chair reviews the agenda and leads a discussion to ensure effective coverage on the agency's charge for the committee and agenda topics for adequate information gathering.
- The agency has an opportunity to present briefings on the subjects for the meeting.
- A period of time is set aside for public comments from registered speakers, if any. The committee is not required to respond to public comments, but as time allows, the chair is expected to provide an opportunity for members to ask clarifying or follow-up questions of public presenters.
- Following all presentations, the BoV members begin their deliberations. The discussions are guided by the charge from the agency and any concerns which are being addressed. It's important to consider in the deliberations any conclusions which may be drawn or recommendations which may be provided that would be forwarded to the agency for review.
- The chair, working with the DFO, may assign committee members to lead different parts of the discussion. Lead discussants also may be asked to prepare an initial draft of the panel's advice on a subject.
- At one or more points in the meeting, the chair or designated members may summarize the committee's consensus views in response to the topics at hand. This summary helps to identify issues that may require further discussion, as well as provide any early indication of the committee's views for agency staff in attendance.

- If time allows, and depending on the chair's preferences, the agenda may include writing time when committee members can capture their thoughts in writing while the discussions are fresh in mind and collaborators are seated nearby. Given the busy schedules and the members' other obligations, writing time at a meeting can be a very effective way to develop a draft report.

Role of the Chair: Seeking Consensus

Advisory committees are structured to include a range of disciplines. At times, committee members may reach different conclusions based on a review of the available data and briefings. The chair takes the lead in identifying areas of agreement and in helping members talk through issues in contention. Consensus recommendations and conclusions are most helpful to the agency. However, when there is disagreement among the experts, that information is also valuable to note. In most cases, different views can be accommodated within the committee's report. On rare occasions, a member may request that a minority report be appended to the report.

Remaining Independent: To be effective, it is critical that committees develop credible, independent and objective advice. As an SGE, your role on a committee or panel is to provide your expert advice as an individual, not as a representative of your employer. Once appointed, you are expected to carefully avoid interactions with anyone, including agency representatives or members of the interested public that might create a perception of conflict of interest. If in doubt, consult your DFO for guidance.

After agency, i.e. Air Force, USAFA, or special topic briefings, and prior to final approval of a report by the chartered committee, agency members are treated as members of the public to maintain the independence of the advisory process. Draft materials being discussed by the committee are available to the agency and the public via the website. Papers or emails shared among members in the course of the advisory process are federal records and may be requested under FOIA. The DFO should be copied on all such communications. Members may conduct fact-finding with outside experts, including colleagues both inside and outside the agency. However, these contacts should first be discussed with the DFO and the DFO should be copied on any email communications.

After The Meeting: Report Preparation

Report Format: All final reports are approved and transmitted to the Secretary of Defense (SecDef), through the Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF) by the chartered committee. The committee's advice is conveyed to the Air Force in a written report with an executive summary and cover letter to the Secretary of the Air Force. The report can be outlined in the following manner:

The **cover letter**, a few pages in length, addresses the larger issues in a policy context that is expected to be meaningful to the SecAF. The letter should summarize the issues that were reviewed and present the key findings and recommendations with a minimum of detail.

The **executive summary** is directed at Academy senior leadership and should provide more detail on the issues addressed in the report, including summary responses to each of the issues being evaluated.

The **body** of the report contains the greatest level of detail along with supporting references, data, and analysis.

Role of the Chair and DFO: Meeting Minutes

Meeting minutes are to be prepared within 90 days after an advisory committee or panel meeting (41 CFR section 102-3.165). Minutes are drafted by the DFO, and must contain a record of persons present, and a description of matters discussed and conclusions reached [(5 USC App. 2 section 10(c)]. The chair is responsible for certifying the accuracy of the minutes.

Report Development Process: Draft reports are usually developed by the chair, with assistance from the DFO, based on the discussions at the meeting(s) and the writing assignments submitted by panel members (if any). The chair is responsible for the accuracy of the report and the DFO is responsible for ensuring that the report is written in such a way that it is understandable to the agency.

Once the draft is completed, it is provided to the committee for review and concurrence. Substantive discussions and revisions to the report must be conducted in a public meeting; often this can be conducted as a teleconference.

When the chair determines the draft reflects the findings and recommendations of the committee, members are asked to concur on the draft report or to concur with minor editorial comments. In rare cases, a member may conclude that his/her viewpoint cannot be reconciled with the panel's majority view or adequately expressed within the report. In such instances, the non-concurring member(s) may draft a short dissenting view or minority report that is appended to the draft report.

Role of the Agency in the Report Process: The Air Force or Academy should not in any way approve or attempt to influence the content of the draft committee report. However, the agency is provided an opportunity to request technical corrections (errors of fact) or clarification of text in draft reports. These requests should be made in writing. Occasionally the DFO requests additional information from the agency on behalf of the committee and this information is also a public record.

Report Approval: Quality Review

The report must be reviewed and approved by the committee. The quality review should be guided by four questions:

1. Were the charge questions or issues to the committee adequately addressed?
2. Are there any errors or omissions or issues that are not adequately dealt with in the draft report?
3. Is the draft report clear and logical?
4. Are the conclusions drawn or recommendations provided supported by the body of the draft report?

After A Report Is Approved

Report Transmittal: When the chair is satisfied that all issues have been addressed, he/she authorizes signature of the cover letter. The final report can be emailed by the BoV Chair to the SecAF for further submission to the SecDef. The report can also be transmitted via the Air Force's formal correspondence management system to

the SecDef, through the SecAF. The final report is posted to the BoV website.

Agency Response: All FACA committees are advisory and the agency is not required to accept the committee's advice. However, the agency response usually acknowledges the committee's recommendations and discusses which recommendations will be taken and which cannot be acted on and why.

DESIGNATED FEDERAL OFFICER

Designated Federal Officer

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USAFA BoV WEBSITE & SUPPORT POCS

<http://www.usafa.af.mil/superintendent/bov/>

Executive Secretary

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MAN'S FLIGHT
THROUGH LIFE IS
SUSTAINED BY THE
POWER OF HIS
KNOWLEDGE.