



The Higher Learning Commission

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STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ACADEMY
HQ USAFA/CC 2304 Cadet Drive, Suite 3300
USAF Academy, CO 80840-5001

Affiliation Status: Candidate: Not Applicable
Accreditation: (1959- .)

PEAQ PARTICIPANT

Nature of Organization

Legal Status:

Public

Degrees Awarded:

B

Conditions of Affiliation:

Stipulations on Affiliation Status:

None.

Approval of New Degree Sites:

Prior Commission approval required.

Approval of Distance Education Degrees:

Prior Commission approval required.

Reports Required:

None.

Other Visits Scheduled:

None.

Summary of Commission Review

Year of Last Comprehensive Evaluation:

2008 - 2009

Year for Next Comprehensive Evaluation:

2018 - 2019

Date of Last Action:

10/27/2009



ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ACADEMY
HQ USAFA/CC 2304 Cadet Drive, Suite 3300
USAF Academy, CO 80840-5001

Enrollment Demographics (by headcount) (HLC Posted: 04/14/2009)

	<u>Full-Time</u>	<u>Part-Time</u>
Undergraduate:	4537	0
Graduate:	0	0
Post-baccalaureate First Professional:	0	0
Non-Credit headcount:	0	0

Educational Programs (HLC Posted: 04/14/2009)

		<u>Program Distribution</u>	<u>Total Awarded</u>
Leading to Undergraduate degrees:	Associate	0	0
	Bachelors	32	1012
Leading to Graduate degrees:	Masters	0	0
	Specialist	0	0
	First Professional	0	0
	Doctoral	0	0
Certificate Programs:		0	0

Dual Enrollment (HLC Posted: 04/14/2009)

Headcount in all dual enrollment (high school) 0

Off-Campus Activities (HLC Posted: 04/14/2009)

In-State: Campuses: None
 Sites: None
 Course Locations: None

Out-of-State: Campuses: None
 Sites: None
 Course Locations: None

Out-of-U.S.: Campuses: None
 Sites: None
 Course Locations: None

Distance Education Certificate and Degree (HLC Posted: 04/14/2009)

ASSURANCE SECTION

REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION VISIT

TO

United States Air Force Academy
USAF Academy, CO

April 27-29, 2009

FOR

The Higher Learning Commission

A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

EVALUATION TEAM

Dr. Daniel J. Bradley, President, Indiana State University, Terre Haute, IN 47809 9989

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Ms. Julie W. Carpenter-Hubin, Director, Institutional Research & Planning, Ohio State University, Columbus, OH 43203

Dr. Fernando P. Delgado, Dean, College of Liberal Arts, Hamline University, Saint Paul, MN 55104

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Dr. Randy E. Hyman, Vice Chancellor for Academic Support and Student Life and Associate Professor, University of Minnesota Duluth, Duluth, MN 55812

Dr. Ronald D. Sandstrom (Team Chair), Chair and Professor of Mathematics and Computer Science, Fort Hays State University, Hays, KS 67601

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I. CONTEXT AND NATURE OF VISIT

A. Purpose of Visit

The visit is to conduct a comprehensive evaluation for continued accreditation at the Baccalaureate level.

B. Organizational Context

The U. S. Air Force Academy has been continuously accredited by the North Central Association since 1959. The last comprehensive visit was conducted in 1999, and there have been no changes in accreditation status since that visit.

C. Unique Aspects of Visit

None

D. Sites or Branch Campuses Visited

None

E. Distance Education Reviewed

None

F. Interactions with Constituencies

Management, Faculty, Support Staff, and Student Leaders

1. Lt Gen Regni, USAFA Superintendent (President)
2. Brig Gen Dana Born, Dean of the Faculty (Provost)
3. Col Richard Fullerton, Accreditation Steering Committee Chair
4. Col John Andrew, Vice Dean (Vice Provost)
5. Dr. Evelyn Patterson, Assistant Dean for Curriculum Plans
6. Dr. Rich Hughes, Transformation Chair on the Dean's Staff
7. Dr. Rolf Enger, Director of Education
8. Dr. Steve Jones, Director of Academic Assessment
9. Dr. David Stockburger, Deputy Director of Academic Assessment
10. Lt Col Patti Egleston, Chief, Institutional Assessment
11. Dr. Rob Fredell, USAFA Research Director
12. Col Paul Pirog, Social Sciences Division Chair
13. Col Rex Kiziah, Basic Sciences Division Chair
14. Col Gary Packard, Chair, Behavioral Sciences & Leadership
15. Col Cheryl Kearney, Chair, Dept. of Political Science

16. Col Mike Van Valkenburg, Chair, Dept of Chemistry
17. Col Neal Barlow, Engineering Division Chair
18. Col Mark Wells, Humanities Division Chair
19. Dr. Ed Scott Director, McDermott Academic Library
20. Dr. Brad Warner, Chair Department of Mathematical Sciences
21. Dr. Marty Carlisle, Chair Department of Computer Sciences
22. Lt Col Ken Knapp, Deputy Head, Dept of Management
23. Col Kathleen Harrington, Humanities Division
24. Dr. Aaron Byerley, Aero Professor/Lead on 21st Century Library
25. Dr. Dean Wilson, Associate Dean for Student Academic Services
26. Col Jim Cook Chair, Faculty Personnel Council
27. Dr. Tom Mabry, Deputy Registrar & Student Academic Services
28. Col Dan Uribe, Chair, Department of Foreign Language
29. Dr. John Sherfese, Director, Civilian Faculty Studies & Analysis
30. Maj Derek Varble, Scholars Program
31. Lt Col Brent Morris, Director of Faculty Development
32. Dr. Ken Sagehdorf, Deputy Director of Faculty Development
33. Dr. David Levy, Faculty Forum President (faculty senate)
34. Dr. Martiqua Post, Junior Faculty Council President
35. Mr. Larry Bryant, Director of Academic Computing
36. Dr. Hans Mueh, Athletic Director
37. Col "Chevy" Cleaves, Admissions Director
38. Col R.K. Williams, Vice Commandant of Cadets
39. Lt Col Marty Greiner, USAFS Financial Manager
40. Col Gail Colvin, Vice Commandant for Climate & Culture
41. Col John Norton Director, Center for Character Development
42. Lt Col Tim McCaffery, Director of Training Support
43. Dr. Earl Brewster, Director of Military Education Curriculum
44. Col Patrick Moylan, Commander of 306th Flying Training Group
45. Col David Gibson, Director of Communications & Information (IT)
46. Gen (Ret) James McCarthy, ARDI Professor of National Security
47. Maj Brian Maue, IITA Managing Director
48. Lt Col Brower, Plans & Programs/Institutional Research
49. Maj Mark Seng, Falconry Program Officer-in-Charge
50. The Honorable Sue Ross, Member of Board of Visitors
51. Lt Gen (Ret) Ervin Rokke, Character and Leadership Endowed Chair
52. Mr. William "T" Thompson, Association of Graduates President and CEO
53. Maj Tucker, (Aero Labs/classroom)
54. Col Boyer, (Aero Lab)
55. Gen Michael Smith, (Aero Lab)
56. Mr. Paul Lind, (Technician)
57. Lt Col Baron Savage, Dept of Foreign Languages
58. Dr. Miguel Verano, Dept of Foreign Languages
59. Ms Angela Brehm, (Language Lab)
60. Mr. Andrzej Pudlo, (Language Lab)
61. Lt Col Chris Foster, 306th Flying Training Group

62. Lt Col Paul Szostak, (flight team/powered flight), 557th Flying Training Squadron
63. Lt Col Brad Roller, (gliders), 94th Flying Training Squadron
64. Lt Col Todd Aaron, (Parachuting), 98th Flying Training Squadron
65. Mr. Steve Archuetta, (Parachute rigger)
66. Maj Mark Seng, Falconry Mew
67. Cadet Ryan Wichman, Sophomore
68. Cadet Patrick Arkwright, Junior
69. Mr. Sam Dollar, (Master Falconer)
70. Col Jeffrey Thompson, USAFA Inspector General
71. Col Todd Zachary, (Prep School Commander)
72. Cadet Col Jonathan Yates, Cadet Wing Commander
73. Lt Col Richard Williams, Vice Commandant of Cadets
74. Mr. Steve Sandridge, Chief, Strategic Planning

Groups:

1. Faculty Group (40 attendees)
2. Staff Group (22 attendees)
3. AOC Group (9 attendees)
4. AMT Group (9 attendees)
5. Cadet Group (20 attendees)
6. Aero Class (in session 10 cadets, 2 civilians)
7. Admissions Staff (4 attendees)
8. Climate/Culture Staff (10 Attendees)
9. Assessors (3 attendees)

G. Principal Documents, Materials, and Web Pages Reviewed

1. USAFA Institutional Self-Study Report
2. USAFA Sexual Assault Information Guide
3. USAFA Catalog (2008-2009)
4. USAFA Curriculum Handbook
5. USAFA Outcomes
6. USAFA Research Report (2008)
7. USAFA Strategic Plan 2008-2013
8. USAFA Appropriated Funds Financial Statement, 2007 and 2008
9. USAFA Self-Study Committee Meeting Minutes, 2007 and 2008
10. USAFAPAM 36-3527, "The Officer Development System: Developing Leaders of Character", 17 June 2008.
11. USAFA Mission Directives 2, 3, and 4
12. USAFA Instruction 36-3507, Curriculum Handbook and Curriculum Change Control (29 March 2007).
13. AF Inspection Agency Compliance Inspection Report, 10-18 March 2008)

14. Air Force Instruction 36-3502, Performance Measurement Program For The United States Air Force Academy (25 March 2005)
15. Self Study Executive Summary
16. Self Study Workshop Minutes
17. Self Study Committee Minutes
18. 2008 USAFA Funding Report
19. USAFA Faculty Operating Instructions (CD)
20. Research and USAFA 2008
21. HQ United States Air force Academy Instruction 36-3502, 21 October 2008
22. HQ USAFA Appointment and Promotion to Academic Ranks
23. HQ USAFA Institutional Effectiveness, 2008
24. Academy Scholars Program (ASP) Accreditation Book
25. AIT and Satellite Tracking of Airdropped Cargo (IITA Research Proposal
26. Annual Report (2008)—Department of Chemistry
27. Annual (Maintenance) Report (2008)—Department of Management
28. Annual Report (2007)—Department of Management
29. Annual Report (2008)—Department of History
30. Center for Character Development, Power Point Presentation
31. Character and Leadership Implementation Plan
32. Civilian Faculty Sabbatical Program
33. "Civilian Faculty", Handout describing Visiting Faculty Program
34. Core Curriculum and Outcome Alignment Plan, Spring 098
35. Core Curriculum and Outcome Alignment Plan
36. Curriculum Change Proposal Form
37. Curriculum Committee Meeting minutes and Agendas
38. Companion Data Manual
39. Fall 08 and Spring 09 Curriculum Committee Minutes
40. Dean of Faculty Assessment Plan
41. Dean of Faculty Research Publication Compilation (2007-2008)
42. Dean of Faculty Strategic Plan 2009-2014
43. 2009 Dean's Weekly Messages to Faculty and Staff
44. Charter of the Faculty Forum
45. Faculty Operating Instruction 36-179, 1 October 2007
46. Faculty Personnel Committee Findings, Spring 2009
47. Curriculum Vitae for 58 Faculty
48. Bylaws of Faculty and Staff Assemblies
49. Faculty Roster and Teaching Assignments, Fall 2008 and Spring 2009
50. Faculty Council Meeting Minutes
51. Faculty Personnel Committee Findings (Spring 2009)
52. Faculty Operating Instruction 35-101: Clearance of Material for Public Release and Academic Freedom
53. Four signed letters to Accreditation Team
54. Governance Documents: Charter, Bylaws, Policies...
55. Institutional Effectiveness
56. Institutional Animal Care and Utilization Committee report (2008)
57. Institute for Information Technology Applications Research Report (2008)

58. Institutional Review Board minutes (2009)
59. Learning Focused Education at USAFA, April 2009
60. The Library of the Future- Spring 09
61. Library Database Descriptions and Producers Alphabetical List
62. Library General, Book and Serial Budgets & Costs
63. Maintenance Plans for USAFA
64. Physical Facilities Master Plan
65. National Survey of Student Engagement (2008)
66. 2008 Outcome Survey – Decision Making
67. Minutes of Outcome Strategy Team, 10-08 and 2-09
68. Summarizing Outcomes-Related Data Not Collected By the Outcome Teams – January,
69. 2009 Outcome Team Assessment Reports – Fall 2008 (Teamwork Report, Written Communication Report, Decision Making Report, Courage Report, Engineering and Technology Report, and Civic, Cultural and International Environments Report)
70. Outcome Strategy Team meeting Agenda and minutes (October 24, 2008 and February 24, 2009)
71. Outcomes Team Reports (Ethical Reasoning and Action; Intercultural Competence and Involvement; Civic, Cultural and International Environments; Oral Communication)
72. Social Sciences Division Overview
73. Student Academic Services Center Report
74. CD provided upon arrival
75. CD provided in advance of arrival
76. *Integrity, Service, Excellence: Promoting Personal and Social Responsibility in Developing Officers: The USAFA approach*
77. Talking Paper on DF Academic Absence Policy for Civilian (AD) Faculty
78. Third Party Comments and Notices
79. “Visiting Faculty Program: The United States Air Force Academy”
80. Writing Center Cadet Usage Statistics

II. COMMITMENT TO PEER REVIEW

A. Comprehensiveness of the Self-Study Process

The United States Air Force Academy is to be commended on its Self-Study Report, process and commitment to provide evidence that it clearly satisfies the criteria for accreditation.

The process was extremely open and included a wide cross-section of the campus community and its stakeholders.

The coordinator was appointed in spring of 2007 along with a large steering

committee and a select central planning committee. The committees began their work immediately with the goal of assuring the process was as inclusive as possible. The committee's membership included representatives from all constituencies within the USAFA. Interviews with all involved parties indicated that the process was indeed open, extensive, thorough, collaborative, and conducted in a professional manner at all times

B. Integrity of the Self-Study Report

The self-study report addressed the challenges and recommendations identified during the 1999 comprehensive visit, and the Criteria for Accreditation. The Digital Resource Library, supported by an institution web site dedicated to the self-study process, provided a full range of materials that supported the evidence contained in the self-study report. Moreover, the self-study report clearly identified institutional strengths, challenges, and strategic planning initiatives related to the criteria and the nineteen often-stated learning outcomes.

C. Adequacy of Progress in Addressing Previously Identified Challenges

The team considers the response of the United States Air Force Academy to the previously identified challenge to be adequate.

D. Notification of Evaluation Visit and Solicitation of Third-Party Comment

Requirements were fulfilled.

III. COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

The team reviewed the required Title IV compliance areas and the student complaint information.

IV. FULFILLMENT OF THE CRITERIA

CRITERION ONE: MISSION AND INTEGRITY. The USAFA operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involve the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met

To educate, train and inspire men and women to become officers of character, motivated to lead the United States Air Force in service to our nation.

This is the mission that was instituted by law in 1954 “for the instruction and preparation for military service of selected persons called ‘cadets’” (Title 10, U.S. Code; self study, p. 25). For more than fifty years the USAFA has remained consistent with this original charter. The mission statement is continually being honed as times warrant, but still meets this original mandate. Under the current Superintendent, Gen. Regni, the USAFA “reviewed and adopted” the current wording of “instruction and preparation” to include becoming “leaders of character, prepared to lead and serve our nation with honor and integrity” demonstrating the continued improvement and internal updating at the USAFA of today. Although the vision can be interpreted as vague in determining what a “leader of character” is, it does still have a realistic goal in line with the mission.

Core Component 1a: The USAFA’s mission documents are clear and articulate publicly the USAFA’s commitments.

The mission documents (mission, vision and values statements, strategic goals and student outcomes) are clear, well documented and have been approved at all levels of the USAFA. All of these documents are also well publicized and known by all groups within the USAFA. Cadet intake information, the USAFA’s Catalog, the Strategic Plan, and orientation materials provided to faculty and staff clearly state and reinforce the mission, vision, and values of the USAFA.

Although the mission does have some changes to the detail of meeting Air Force needs in an ever changing dynamic world, those details are well researched by advisory and guidance boards, and the basic mission is still the same as designated by law in 1954. The USAFA has remained true to its charter and mission yet is flexible enough to adapt as necessary to meet current needs.

The USAFA’s mission statement is also reflective of the mission statement at other service academies, continues to meet the mandate of Title 10, USC, and includes a strategic plan to insure the basic mission is met.

The USAFA’s mission, vision and goals clearly identify its primary constituent as the U. S. Air Force which, in turn, serves the Department of Defense and the nation. While the Air Force is unmistakably its most important external constituent, the USAFA also recognizes that, ultimately, it serves the nation. Included in its service to the nation is its service to the local constituency of Colorado Springs. This is demonstrated by a recent UCI report which noted, “impressive community outreach programs helped cadets appreciate serving the community at large, providing over 32,000 hours [of community service] in 2007.”

The USAFA is very open to the public which it serves. There are many community programs that are a blend of civilian and military personnel both on and off base, and

there are some off base programs for cadets to use that are purely civilian and entirely outside the military chain of command (i.e. the crisis center).

The student outcome goals were approved in 2006 after a very organized development process. The outcomes in particular are in the process of being fully integrated into the curriculum. Interdisciplinary "Outcome Teams" are charged with insuring that the specific outcomes are being achieved and fully developed over the four years of a cadet's experience.

Using a generic method, with attainable goals, the USAFA is seeing that all cadets have the opportunity to grow and mature in a reasonable way. This "PITO" model focuses on PERSONAL leadership skills as a freshman, INTERPERSONAL leadership as a sophomore, TEAM leadership as a junior, and ORGANIZATIONAL leadership as a senior.

Core Component 1b: In its mission documents, the USAFA recognizes the diversity of its learners, other constituencies, and the greater society it serves.

The USAFA's Strategic Plan goal 4 calls for enhancing the diversity of the faculty, staff and cadet core. Outcome goals, established in 2006, of respect for human dignity and intercultural competence and involvement reinforce the strategic plan goal. While every institution struggles with diversity, the USAFA has made a conscious effort to attract all forms of diversity in its student body by having students from many ethnicities, and financial levels, and has been very successful overall in increasing diversity along many vectors among the cadet core. Minority enrollment now exceeds 20%. The USAFA had worked just as hard to diversify its faculty, even with the constant rotation of military instructors; unfortunately the results have not been as successful as the cadet core. Specifically:

- The USAFA's Self-Study reported in 1999 a faculty composition of 17% women and about 7% minorities.
- Today approximately 16.4% of the faculty are women and 8.8% are racial or ethnic minorities.
- In 1999, the USAFA Self-Study reported historic enrollment figures for cadets of about 15% women and 19% minorities.
- The most recent Class of 2012 cadets contained 21.5% women and 21.3% minorities.

The guidance behind USAFA's entire Officer Development System affirms and views its commitment to honor the dignity and worth of individuals as a fundamental part of its core values. Under Service Before Self, the USAFA's Officer Development System sets forth that, *"We must always act in the certain knowledge that all persons possess fundamental worth as human beings."* Within the Core Value of "Excellence in All We Do", the USAFA emphasizes that excellence requires mutual respect -- *"viewing another person as an individual of fundamental worth."* The human relations training that cadets receive through the Commandant's staff and the Center for Character Development is also reinforced in the classroom.

The U. S. Air Force Academy Honor Code was adopted in 1955 by the very first class of cadets. Since that first class, the Honor Code has been a defining part of the USAFA's culture. In 1984 in response to apparent misinterpretations, the USAFA adopted an "Honor Oath" that expanded upon the basic code by appending a resolution for all cadets to do their duty and live honorably.

Every cadet at the Air Force Academy takes the Honor Oath as a requirement for being a part of the Cadet Wing and is expected to live up to the high standards required of the Honor Oath to include treating human beings with dignity and respect. The USAFA has guidance from its Strategic Plan on implementations for diversity:

- Focus on character and leadership development
- Strengthen our communications and reputation
- Produce highly educated and trained officers
- Enhance faculty, staff and cadet diversity
- Integrate institutional processes
- Prepare and motivate the workforce
- Secure and manage resources.

Core Component 1c: Understanding of and support for the mission pervade the USAFA.

The mission of the USAFA is known and embraced by all constituent groups. It is on the wall in major offices, is repeated on relevant recruiting and informational print and electronic publications, and can be recited by administrators, faculty and cadets. The outcomes and strategic plan are based on a shared understanding of the mission and have been approved at all levels.

The Finance Department requires that units requesting budget increases provide information on how the increase fits with the mission, goals, and desired outcomes of the USAFA. Funding decisions are tied to the overall mission of the USAFA, and departments receive feedback about the appropriateness of their funding requests from the Monitoring and Implementation Team and the Finance Department. Thus, the USAFA's Strategic Plan drives its budget submissions and serves as a guide in responding to Air Force budget cuts and internal resource changes and realignments.

The military nature of the USAFA provides a chain of command, headed by the Superintendent, to disseminate the information. At the USAFA there is the 10th Air Base wing commander who reaches the majority of the cadets. In supplementary roles there are the Director of Athletics, Commander of Cadets channel, Dean of the Faculty channel, and also a chain to the preparatory school demonstrating the commitment to insuring all information whether policy or general information reaches all concerned. With the multitude of different paths to disperse written directives and information, the USAFA has excellent communication up and down the differing chains of command. Thus, information is delivered in a timely fashion to the entire system.

Overall planning, programming and budgeting recommendations are the ultimate responsibility of the Superintendent through his staff, the mission elements, the Directorate of Plans and Programs, and with Financial Management and Comptroller.

This system of reporting, although bureaucratic, does demonstrate a well established plan and procedure for budgeting and future planning.

USAFA Mission Directives clearly articulate that the primary mission of these units is to educate, train, and inspire men and women to become officers of character motivated to lead the U. S. Air Force in service to our nation. USAFA 36-3522 further directs Air Officers Commanding, faculty members, coaches, and airmanship instructors to serve as, “role models and mentors in the formation of cadets’ character, leadership skills, and professional qualities.”

The goals of the subunits are congruent with USAFA’s mission because all internal entities have the same primary mission, have adopted the same set of USAFA outcomes, and work together to evaluate and accomplish those outcomes. .

Civilian faculty report they understand and support the mission of the USAFA. Faculty and staff have a shared sense of mission and purpose and report high levels of professional collegiality and commitment to the cadets.

Core Component 1d: The USAFA’s governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the USAFA to fulfill its mission.

Faculty attending the open forum noted that the environment inside most academic departments was positive. Civilian and military faculty members work well together and support each other as teachers and scholars. One example came from the Mathematics Department, which finds common cause through teaching all cadets and a shared interest in making teaching better and focusing on student learning.

Some departments are more effective than others in briefing and preparing faculty for working in the environment of a military academy. Some departments English was used as an example go further than the standard orientation to assist faculty in understanding workload, expectations, and context. Such departments are thus freer from some of the concerns and issues that seem to trouble some units in Humanities and Social Sciences.

The USAFA continues to revise and update the goals and focus of the mission as demonstrated by the continuing mandates they have to meet:

- In accordance with the BOV (Board of Visitors) Bylaws,⁸² “It is an oversight board in the executive branch of the government established to inquire into the morale, discipline, and social climate, the curriculum, instruction, physical equipment, fiscal

affairs, academic methods, and other matters relating to the USAFA that the Board decides to consider.”

- This 15-person committee meets quarterly, with two meetings held at the USAFA and two held in the Washington, D.C. area.
- The BOV is not directive in its oversight role, but rather acts as, “an advisory board charged with providing independent advice and recommendations on matters relating to the U.S. Air Force Academy” to the Superintendent and senior Air Force leadership.
- The BOV submits semiannual reports of its actions, views, and recommendations.
- The reports are submitted concurrently to the Secretary of Defense through the Secretary of the Air Force, and to the Committee on Armed Services of the U.S. Senate and the Committee on Armed Services of the U.S. House of Representatives

Hence, there is a clear and concise plan to review and suggest changes to keep the USAFA current in both academic and military roles. The chain of governance is well organized and concise.

“The Secretary of the Air Force (SECAF) establishes policy for USAFA and prescribes the organization of the Air Force Academy. The Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF) serves as the Superintendent’s immediate supervisor and exercises direct supervision and control of USAFA as a Direct Reporting Unit. An Executive Steering Group, chaired by the Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force, provides executive-level advice to the USAFA, reviews USAFA performance measures and survey results, and notifies the SECAF and CSAF of any matters warranting their attention. As the USAFA’s commander, the Superintendent is instructed to ensure all USAFA organizational processes, procedures and instructions align with Air Force policy guidance to the maximum extent possible.”

And:

AF Policy Directive 36-35 (1 Feb 07), *U. S. Air Force Academy*, outlines the basic policies and oversight responsibilities for the Air Force Academy. Air Force Instruction 36-3501 (28 April 08), *Air Force Academy Operations*, implements AFPD 36-35, and establishes specific roles and responsibilities involving the oversight, command, operation and support of the USAFA’s mission.

Hence, the responsibilities are clearly defined in publications of governance for the USAFA. Using the chains of command, any information can be discovered and implemented.

- The Superintendent of the Air Force Academy is an active-duty lieutenant general (three stars) who reports directly to the Chief of Staff of the Air Force and is responsible for accomplishing the USAFA’s mission.
- The Dean of the Faculty and the Commandant of Cadets are both active duty brigadier generals (one star) in the Air Force.

- The current Director of Athletics is a retired brigadier general and the former Permanent Professor and Head of the USAFA's Chemistry Department.

All have been selected through a rigorous process and are high ranking active duty military professionals. They have responsibilities and requirements to be informed and active in their positions, not only with the USAFA but with the Air Force as a whole. This dual role interaction enables them to know the system and maintain both academic and military standards as appropriate.

The USAFA's Course of Instruction is developed as a single, integrated whole consisting of academic, military, athletic, leadership, character development, and airmanship training, education, and experiences. Prior to approving any changes in course offerings, academic majors, or graduation requirements at the USAFA, the Superintendent obtains the consent of the USAFA Board. Prior to bringing recommendations for curriculum changes to the USAFA Board, curriculum policy and course-offering issues are reviewed and voted on by the USAFA's Curriculum Committee, chaired by the Dean of the Faculty. Once again there is a demonstrated wealth of procedures and processes to insure the currency and appropriateness of curriculum that is driven from within.

Effective communication at the USAFA takes place through the established chain of command, as in any military organization. The Superintendent holds weekly staff meetings with his Headquarters staff and mission elements to share information up and down the chain on items of concern and interest. The Superintendent also holds weekly senior staff meetings with the mission element heads (Dean, Commandant, etc.) to deliberate on important issues and decisions affecting the USAFA's mission. In addition, the Vice Superintendent also holds weekly staff meetings of USAFA's Vice Commanders, which facilitates even more cross-mission element coordination. As needed, the Superintendent holds "Superintendent's Calls" in which he can personally address the entire permanent party faculty and staff at USAFA. There is ample communication to insure there are no missing links in the flow of information to the academic units.

Core Component 1e: The USAFA upholds and protects its integrity.

"Integrity First" is one of the core values of the USAFA. "Unit Compliance Inspections" (UCI) in 2005 and 2008 by the Air Force resulted in scores of excellent or outstanding for each component of the USAFA. The UCI checks for compliance with applicable federal law and Air Force and Department of Defense directives. In response to a well documented set of incidents in 2003, the USAFA responded quickly and openly to protect its women students and to develop processes that are changing the culture regarding gender relations.

The USAFA is governed by the same public laws that hold other public universities accountable. It also abides by numerous DoD and USAF directives, instructions, and policies. Air Force Instruction 36-3502, Performance Measurement Program For The U.

S. Air Force Academy (25 March 2005) sets forth reporting requirements for the USAFA to send performance measurement data to Headquarters Air Force, including data on admissions, character development, educational development, leadership development, physical development and general governance measures. With all these guidelines and directives, the USAFA is made aware of its responsibilities and requirements.

Besides the Board of Visitors, the USAFA collaborates openly with external organizations, including the Association of American Colleges and Universities. The USAFA responds to all inquiries fully and openly, within Air Force, Department of Defense and federal privacy constraints. The USAFA is open to the public and is a popular tourist attraction in Colorado, hosting many visits and public events. The USAFA simultaneously maintains a vigorous public relations program with the American public, the larger Air Force, and the community of its graduates. When adverse news appears regarding USAFA cadets, personnel or programs, the Superintendent actively supports releasing accurate and timely responses in a proactive and cooperative manner. The USAFA has a large and extremely active Public Affairs (PA) office to respond swiftly and honestly to general public and news media inquiries.

2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need USAFA attention

Core Component 1d: The USAFA's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the USAFA to fulfill its mission.

According to the Center for Character Development, the USAFA provides as its definition of character the following: "One's moral compass – the sum of those qualities of moral excellence which move a person to do the right thing despite pressures to the contrary." Lt. General (ret) Dr. Ervin J. Rokke, the Superintendent's Endowed Chair for Character and Leadership is quoted in a brochure for the Center for Character and Leadership Development as saying "Character and leadership development is the essential challenge of this USAFA, but we must have a more coordinated and integrated effort across all mission elements..." He is right. The USAFA's academic philosophers contribute to the moral and ethical development of the cadets through the required course, Philosophy 310, and through the "Ethics across the Curriculum" program, but have not been integrally involved in the Center for Character Development. Academic philosophers have dealt with questions of "the right thing" for centuries, and their increased involvement in the Center will improve its capacity to both define character and to produce cadets with greater moral and ethical character. Hence, there needs to be continued integration between academic and military arenas in accomplishing the dual mission. The challenges the USAFA will continue to have are the changing world and new foci of the threats to the United States and her commitments around the world. The basic coursework and preparation of officers will remain consistent, but there will be ever changing new threats and situations as the

world is not static but quite dynamic. The USAFA will have to be proactive in its diligence to meet the changing needs.

The USAFA, like all universities will need to continue to work diligently so there is no backsliding with respect to diversity. Their numbers have shown improvement, but they are not yet at the levels which represent the larger society.

3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.

None found.

4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)

None found.

Recommendation of the Team

Criterion met; no Commission follow-up recommended.

CRITERION TWO: PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE. The USAFA's allocation of resources and its processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met

Core Component 2a: The USAFA realistically prepares for a future shaped by multiple societal and economic trends.

The strategic vision and plan of the USAFA fit seamlessly with and contribute directly to the mission and strategic goals of the U.S. Air Force, of which it is a constituent part. The strategic plan of the USAFA consists of seven strategic goals:

- focus on character and leadership development;
- strengthen communications and reputation;
- produce highly trained and educated officers;
- enhance faculty, staff and cadet diversity;
- integrate institutional processes;
- prepare and motivate the workforce;
- and secure and manage resources.

Each of these strategic goals is further defined by 2-4 more specific objectives. It is clear from conversations with military and civilian faculty and staff that these strategic

goals are widely known and are used extensively in planning and in assessing outcomes on a wide variety of fronts ranging from cadet learning outcomes to curriculum planning and revision. Planning documents and minutes of meetings also show clearly that strategic goals are front and center as the USAFA conducts both its day-to-day and its long-range business.

The USAFA endowment was established as a charitable foundation in 2007. In only two years the endowment has raised \$13 million. These funds have been designated for an indoor athletic training facility, the Center of Character and Leadership, and to support the development of specific, learning focused teaching strategies.

Core Component 2b: The USAFA's resource base supports its educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.

The USAFA made a commitment in 2006 to become a learning focused organization. That is, the USAFA would focus its efforts on and asked to be judged by learning outcomes rather than traditional measures such as financial resources, faculty/student ratios and faculty with terminal degrees. Learning outcomes are distributed across four "pillars": academic, airmanship, military and athletic. Given that there are multiple outcome goals for each pillar, coordinating and keep track of this complex operation requires a huge effort to assess progress on meeting individual goals and to keep all goals aligned. Meetings with the Superintendent, Dean of Faculty, Vice Dean of Faculty, assessment coordinators and many others made it clear that assessment and coordination is taken very seriously and good progress is being made. USAFA documents also support this judgment, particularly the core curriculum and outcome alignment plan and reports prepared by outcome teams.

Considerable improvements in USAFA security have been accomplished post 9/11. Immediately following that tragedy the USAFA closed its gates to all visitors to ensure the safety and security of cadets. However, acknowledging the very public identity of the USAFA, significant steps were taken to invest in strategic security measures in preparation for reopening the USAFA to the public. This investment, totaling \$27 million, strengthened USAFA infrastructure in 20 specific areas including new entry gates, a new proximity system, and new protection measures for the cadet area and Falcon Stadium.

Core Component 2c: The USAFA's ongoing evaluation and assessment processes provide reliable evidence of its effectiveness that clearly informs strategies for continuous improvement.

The USAFA is adequately funded. In recent years budgets have been relatively stable. The faculty/student ratio is an enviable 8/1. Academic facilities, including laboratories, are attractive and up to date and residence halls are quite suitable. There is little if any deferred maintenance in the academic area and there are facility plans that should ensure that deferred maintenance issues do not develop in the future. The Self-Study

Report lists an impressive number of new and remodeled facilities since the last comprehensive visit in 1999. The IT infrastructure has been strengthened considerably in recent years. There are active plans to remodel the library in the near future to meet the requirements for a top notch undergraduate university library in the 21st. century.

USAFA implemented significant IT infrastructure upgrades including a new wireless network in response to 1999 accreditation recommendations. At that time the HLC visit team observed the technological infrastructure to be out of date with T-1 lines at capacity. Further, acknowledging the dual role of the USAFA as both a military base and an institution of higher education the 1999 team recommended the USAFA place the cadets, library, and other non-critical units outside of the Air Force firewall. The USAFA responded to this recommendation by installing a wireless network throughout Fairchild Hall and the library and switching to an "edu" domain for cadets and other personnel involved in the instructional delivery mission of the institution. These efforts provided further evidence of the USAFA's commitment to the responsible use of IT to advance the education and training of cadets.

USAFA has significantly increased the expectations for cadets regarding foreign language acquisition. Motivated by a strong commitment to diversity and acknowledging the rapidly changing demographics within the global community the USAFA has significantly increased its commitment to foreign language training and cultural understanding. Enrollment in foreign language classes has doubled in the past three years. Much of this enrollment increase has been in language courses deemed "strategic" (Arabic, Japanese, Chinese, Russian, and Portuguese). To address these enrollment challenges the USAFA has hired an additional 17 foreign language instructors.

Several exchange programs have been put added since the 1999 accreditation visit. The USAFA now has 20 exchange opportunities for cadets with military institutions in six countries. An additional 20 cadets have participated in exchange programs with civilian institutions in five countries. The numbers of cadet participants in these programs has incrementally increased since their inception.

The USAFA engaged in a comprehensive character commitment weekend in 2007. This event was called for by the Superintendent in the aftermath of a high profile cheating incident. All cadets participated in a three day immersion experience designed to address core USAFA values within the context of cadet academic behavior. The results of a survey of cadets immediately following the weekend indicated the goals of the program were achieved.

A Vice Commandant for Culture and Climate has been added since 2003 to provide USAFA leadership in addressing challenges emerging from concerns about sexual assault and general climate issues. The Vice Commandant established the USAFA Response Team (ART) which provides a two tiered response to sexual assault victims. A sexual assault coordinator and a victim advocate offer first responder support to victims. Second tier support comes through medical care, religious and spiritual

counseling, mental health services, law enforcement and investigation, and legal counsel. A unique curriculum that addresses issues around sexuality and sexual assault prevention has also been put in place. A Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) curriculum was established. This program provides mandated sexual assault education and training for all cadets as well as faculty and USAFA staff.

Core Component 2d: All levels of planning align with its mission, thereby enhancing its capacity to fulfill that mission.

Leaders of the USAFA have come to realize that the strategic goals of the mission will not be reached unless high priority outcomes, plans and assessments are linked closely to the budgeting process. An interview with the Financial Manager and several of his colleagues made it apparent that budget decisions are now tied closely to consideration of mission and strategic goals. Recommendations do not advance for further consideration unless they are tied closely to mission and goals established in the strategic planning process. Pet projects that lack a relationship to priority goals are not funded. Tough questions are being asked of budget requests, and as a consequence, there is much better integration of mission, planning and budgeting

2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need USAFA attention

Core Component 2b: The USAFA's resource base supports its educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.

Occasional overlap of assignments and frequent open faculty positions either left unfilled or filled create a sometimes troublesome human resource challenge, unique to this military academy.

3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.

None found.

4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)

None found.

Recommendation of the Team

Criterion met; no Commission follow-up recommended.

CRITERION THREE: STUDENT LEARNING AND EFFECTIVE TEACHING. The organization provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met

Core Component 3a: The USAFA's goals for student learning outcomes are clearly stated for each educational program and make effective assessment possible.

The USAFA has organized learning outcomes for cadets in three broad categories, with several areas of learning and development included under each of the three categories. The categories are: Societal, Professional, and Individual Responsibilities (ethical reasoning and action, respect for human dignity, service to the nation, lifelong development and contributions and intercultural competence and involvement), Integrated Intellectual and Warrior Skills (quantitative and information literacy, oral and written communication, critical thinking, decision making, stamina, courage, discipline, and teamwork) and Knowledge (heritage and application of air, space and cyberspace power; national security and full spectrum and joint coalition warfare, civic, cultural and international environments; ethics and the foundation of character; principles of science and the scientific method and principles of engineering and the application of technology). Outcome assessments are embedded in a great variety of courses taken by the cadets over four years and numerous internal and external surveys such as the National Survey of Student Engagement and the Cadet Climate Survey. Responsibility for assessing each of the 19 outcomes holistically and for integrating the several components that constitute each outcome is given to 21 Outcome Assessment Teams. Most teams are led by a department head. The assessment of course-embedded outcome effort got into full swing in the spring of 2008 and team reports were first available in early 2009. The USAFA acknowledges that these reports are quite variable in terms of comprehensiveness, quality and usefulness. At the same time a careful reading of assessment reports reveals that a culture of assessment is developing at the USAFA and there is evidence that assessment of student learning is beginning to be used in planning and in continuous improvement efforts. Recent changes in such diverse areas as the Honor Code and the content of biology and economics courses, based on standardized test results, show the USAFA's willingness to make changes in response to evidence of problems or deficiencies. In addition to wide learning outcomes in the three categories identified previously, outcomes have been identified for each major and mapped to the courses in which they should be achieved. Majors have identified an impressive array of intended outcomes. However, the extent to which they have been realized and what changes may be needed in the future are not yet clear. What is clear is that the USAFA intends to utilize assessment evidence in support of curricular changes and strengthening of academic programs.

In 2005 the Dean began an initiative to develop a learning-focused organization and in 2006 a set of 19 learning outcomes was adopted. These outcomes, which are organized into responsibilities, skills, and knowledge, are highly visible at the USAFA

and in its publications; including strategic plans, the catalog, materials given to students at intake and those provided to new faculty during a week-long orientation session prior to the fall semester. Cadets, faculty members, and administrators alike were able to articulate these during the visit, giving concrete evidence that not only are learning outcomes clearly articulated but they are also widely understood.

A 102 credit core curriculum has been carefully aligned to the 19 learning outcomes, with courses during all four years contributing to the attainment of the outcomes. A detailed mapping of the curriculum to the outcomes illustrates that each outcome is being developed each year.

For example 2008-2009 Catalog clearly states the learning outcomes associated for each degree program. These programmatic outcomes are, in turn, connected to the nineteen USAFA learning outcomes. Faculty members appear to be very aware of these outcomes; some even carry copies of the outcomes (laminated) on their persons. Cadets were able to identify specific (and relevant) programmatic outcomes. Various cadets were able to identify and recite the USAFA's student learning outcomes and where they had come into contact with the information (faculty, advisors, the catalog, orientation materials).

A spectrum of measures including student surveys, student course performance, standardized tests, portfolios, and external reviews are used to assess attainment of learning outcomes. Rubrics have been developed for assessing the level of achievement of each outcome. Examples of reports based on fall 2008 data collection were reviewed during the visit that verified that data is being collected and assessed.

There is a deliberate effort to develop and maintain an integrated approach to achieving the learning outcomes. There is an outcomes assessment team consisting of faculty who offer the courses mapped to a specific outcome for each outcome.

In addition to the assessment based on academic and military work completed at the USAFA, it maintains data on the career paths and successes of its graduates. Data collected show rates of promotion within the military higher than those for graduates of other officer accession sources. In addition, the USAFA surveys supervisors of its graduates about their performance, and asks them to rank order their subordinates, with high percentages of USAFA graduates ranking above the mean.

The Academy Scholars Program (ASP) provides a more challenging curriculum for Cadet Scholars, which in turn provides a more challenging teaching experience for the faculty. To promote student engagement and a learner centered classroom environment throughout the scholars program, ASP leadership reviewed the Harkness Teaching Method used at Phillips Exeter Academy. The USAFA funded several faculty to travel to Phillips Exeter to learn about the Method, and has incorporated foundational principles, including the use of primary sources instead of textbooks and the exchange of ideas among students with the instructor serving primarily as a facilitator. The ASP is

intended in part to serve as an incubator for new ways to create and stimulate intellectual drive, with successful methods then transferred to non-ASP courses.

Core Component 3b: The USAFA values and supports effective teaching.

The USAFA employs both civilian and military faculty with 53% holding doctoral degrees and the remaining holding master's degrees. It is notable that for the past four years the Colorado CASE Professor of the Year has been an USAFA faculty member.

Since its last comprehensive visit in 1999 the USAFA has made significant progress in supporting and integrating civilian faculty. While tenure is not available to civilian faculty, they do now have four-year, rolling contracts that provide considerable security. They have a significant voice on many key committees, such as the Faculty Personnel Council where they hold 50% of the votes on promotion cases, and they have significant leadership roles in many departments, for example as Deputy Heads. Progress in this area is in part the result of a high profile Faculty Forum study commissioned by the Dean of Faculty in 2007.

The USAFA spends an extraordinary amount of time preparing both its military and civilian faculty for the unique teaching environment. The Center for Educational Excellence provides extensive opportunities for faculty to continuously improve their teaching expertise that demonstrate the USAFA's commitment to effective teaching:

- New faculty, particularly the term military faculty, are placed in a rigorous orientation week that includes practice lectures, syllabus preparation, and information on learning outcomes.
- Attendance at a five day teaching workshop is required for all new and returning faculty members.
- In summer 2008, a three day "Course Design Retreat" was held attended by 18 faculty resulting in the redesign of 15 courses including a core biology course; a second offering is scheduled for 2009
- The Center facilitates approximately 30 workshops and seminars annually including a 4-week Teaching Portfolio Workshop, a 6-week Ethics and Beliefs Seminar, and an annual 4-week Course Director Workshop Series for future and current course directors.

Within departments peer observation and assessment programs are in place. All new instructors are required to attend the new instructors' sessions and competence of the term faculty is evaluated multiple times, particularly by civilian faculty who typically hold terminal degrees and are most often more seasoned level teachers.

New faculty members are typically assigned a mentor and encouraged to develop their teaching and pedagogy. New faculty members are expected to be peer evaluated at least three times (this appears to vary across division) and often up to ten times. Similarly, various faculty members report being strongly encouraged to attend more seasoned colleagues' classrooms in order to better understand pedagogical tools and

resources used in various settings. The Military Science program, which requires new faculty to observe more senior colleagues 15 times during their first year at the USAFA, stands out as one example of the emphasis placed on teaching. Another example would be mathematics faculty members who visit 15 classes taught by their colleagues each semester.

Teaching is esteemed at the USAFA. Department heads and the USAFA's personnel committee report that ineffective teaching is not rewarded. Several department chairs noted that semester course evaluations are taken very seriously, particularly with the term military faculty. The USAFA's Outstanding Academic Educator award is valued across academic programs and when faculty in given departments win such an award it is typically highlighted (for example in the campus newspaper or in department end of year reports).

Core Component 3c: The USAFA creates effective learning environments.

The substantial resource base has allowed the USAFA to create multiple and flexible learning environments. A student to faculty ratio of 8:1 and typical class sizes of 20-24 provide ample opportunities for engaged learning. That this occurs is supported by NSSE results that compare very favorably with other "highly competitive" and "more selective" universities in all categories of student engagement.

The USAFA has a variety of configurations for its science labs and classrooms. Classrooms vary from intimate seminar rooms to lecture rooms with capacity nearing one hundred. Classes, particularly in the major, tend to be around 20 students. The classrooms contain a variety of media (internet, video, overhead projectors) as well as carts that can be ordered for classroom use.

There are numerous study lounge areas available in the residence halls, library, and classroom building. Students, particularly first year cadets, tend to use the library for studying.

The Student Academic Services Center has areas for professional and peer tutoring and are readily accessed by students. Students report that the support services are, in the main, very helpful and that faculty and professional staff make themselves readily available for Extra Instruction (EI) sessions, either in lounge spaces or in faculty offices.

Cadets are encouraged to participate in a Scholars Program (akin to an honors program), research, and in international programs, including language immersion programs on three continents.

Students report that there are numerous opportunities to use specialized facilities, particularly when engaged in undergraduate research projects with the teaching or research faculty.

The academic programs and departments are accredited by a variety of external organizations (AACSB, American Chemical Society, ABET) and the competitive scores achieved by cadets in various discipline-specific examinations further reinforce the quality of the learning environment. Cadets perform at high levels when compared to peers at other institutions. Cadets received a 1st and 3rd place in the Individual Paper/Presentation competition at the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics Regional Conference (April, 2009). The Mock Trial team has consistently scored in regional and national competitions.

The library is a significant resource for learning. It is truly impressive, especially for an undergraduate institution. The library operates with a 2.5 million dollar budget and a full time staff of 43. In spite of budget constrictions in recent years the library has been able to maintain high quality services and resources to support teaching and learning. As part of USAFA's comprehensive effort to plan for the future, a special committee has been formed to consider what the library of the future at the USAFA might look like, in terms of facilities and services. This committee will have a major impact on the nature and effectiveness of library services at the USAFA in the future. While the USAFA is to be applauded for the number of constituencies that have membership on this committee or have provided input, it is important that in the future the library itself have more of a role in the planning activities.

Core Component 3d: The USAFA's learning resources support student learning and effective teaching.

The USAFA's academic facilities include 250 modern classrooms and a 1.8 million item library. The engineering laboratories visited were extensive and well-maintained, with an impressive array of equipment. A wireless infrastructure is in place in all academic buildings and network access is provided in all dormitory rooms. Since 1999, \$80 million has been invested in the renovation of Fairchild Hall, the USAFA's chief academic building.

Technology is appropriately used to support learning. All cadets are issued the current year's laptop choice with the educational software that will be used in their coursework. The Language Learning Center, with 97 workstations that accommodate two students each, provides a state-of-the-art, monitored, multimedia environment that supports and reflects the increased importance of languages to today's military.

The USAFA clearly defines itself as a learner and learning-centered institution. The nominal teaching load is four courses per semester, though some divisions allow for a reduced teaching load based on a faculty member's engagement in research projects (particularly those funded by outside sources). The class sizes are relatively small and consistent even among universally required core courses.

The USAFA has funded new programs in student support areas that help with both remediation and acceleration. On the latter, the Reading Enhancement Center has been supported with additional funding and personnel to build a program to help burdened

cadets develop faster and sharper reading skills. Carrying university credit, such courses have been demonstrated to save students up to 7 hours per week in reading while increasing cadets' comprehension of materials.

The USAFA's student profile and faculty teaching load appear to reflect its status as a teaching-learning focused baccalaureate institution. Nevertheless, the quality of the faculty and facilities afford students an impressive array of research and scholarly possibilities, both on and off campus.

Students are intellectually engaged in meaningful learning and problem-solving activities. One example is the portal project completed in the Institute for Information Technology and Applications. Faculty and students identified priority materials and links for a cadet portal (through surveys of cadets) and they built the portal, including a calendaring interface, as a result of their findings.

The USAFA devotes much time, attention and resources to the coordination and integration of mission goals, strategic plans and evidence of outcome assessment across the USAFA. There are several high-level committees with broad representation across the USAFA that are responsible for coordination and integration. These include the Strategic Steering Group, the Monitoring and Implementation Team and Institutional Effectiveness Board. Given the extensiveness and complexity of USAFA's goals and intended outcomes and the complexity of the overall operation, attention to integration and good communication is vital for success. Interviews with personnel from these coordination units provided good evidence that the USAFA is working hard to coordinate its efforts to attain its many educational outcomes.

There is solid evidence that the USAFA creates effective learning environments for students. The most recent results of the National Survey of Student Engagement show that USAFA cadets are deeply engaged in their educational experience. In comparison to national averages, cadets report high levels of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, a good deal of faculty-cadet interaction and a supportive campus environment. A 2007 commissioning survey of seniors shows that cadets feel that their educational experiences are very important in the development of USAFA strategic learning outcomes, especially in the knowledge and skills areas. Cadet scores on Major Field tests, where available, are strong in comparison to national averages.

2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need USAFA attention

Core Component 3c: The USAFA creates effective learning environments.

Assessment data for the outcomes established in 2006 were collected on a pilot basis in spring 2008 and for the first time on a regular basis in fall 2008. Thus the process is still in its initial stages and needs to be monitored and continue to be provided with adequate resources.

The USAFA has mounted an extensive assessment effort from the outset rather than starting small and building its assessment effort in incremental steps over multiple years. This is an ambitious strategy that is admirable but it does carry some risks. Results will need to be commensurate with the effort if the enterprise is to continue at its current level. There will need to be stability in the knowledge, skill and responsibilities goals and the personnel who oversee assessment. Of course adequate funding will need to continue to be available for this complex and extensive undertaking.

Core Component 3d: The USAFA's learning resources support student learning and effective teaching.

Civilian professors were first employed in 1993 and now constitute 33% of the faculty. Until 2008 they served on 3-year initial appointments, followed by 5-year term appointments that were up for renewal one year prior to expiration. In response to a recommendation by the Faculty Forum, a four year rolling contract has been implemented on an interim basis pending a study of changes needed in the performance appraisal system. Given the fact that approximately one fourth of the faculty is replaced each year, the stability of the civilian component of the faculty is paramount and the impact of this change should be monitored to assess its impact.

The USAFA employs both civilian and military faculty with slightly over half holding doctoral degrees. A Center for Educational Excellence oversees faculty development designed to improve teaching. Attendance at in-house workshops and educational conferences is encouraged. It is notable that for the past four years the Colorado CASE Professor of the Year has been an USAFA faculty member. At the same time, deployment and rotation out of military faculty members present unique challenges.

While the USAFA is making a serious effort to assist faculty to learn pedagogical strategies that lead to significant learning, learning that persists and transfers to different contexts, there is some concern at the USAFA itself that a good number of faculty are still using passive learning strategies, such as the lecture, that can produce learning that is short-lived and shallow. While the lecture still has a place in higher education, more active and engaging learning strategies are needed given the complexity and depth of the USAFA's intended learning outcomes. There is evidence in student feedback (cited in the dean's reports to faculty) that some students recognize a disjuncture between sophisticated learning goals and the simplistic teaching strategies used by some faculty. For example a lecture on ethical behavior followed by a multiple choice test is not likely to have much impact on a cadet's maturing ethical framework. The teaching strategies used at the USAFA need to be as sophisticated as the learning goals. This will require a high level of expertise and support for teaching

3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.

None found.

4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met

and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)

None found.

Recommendation of the Team

Criterion met; no Commission follow-up recommended.

CRITERION FOUR: ACQUISITION, DISCOVERY, AND APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE. The USAFA promotes a life of learning for its faculty, administration, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met

Core Component 4a: The USAFA demonstrates through the actions of its board, administration, students, faculty, and staff, that it values a life of learning.

Under the leadership of the current Dean of Faculty, a strong emphasis has been placed on creating and sustaining a learning-centered environment. Evidence of this is seen, for example, in the Dean's faculty newsletter that contains an article on what it means to be learning-centered in each issue, in signage on campus, and in the extensive faculty and student development programs available.

Eleven research centers, five of which have been added in the past decade, and two research institutes, provide a focus for research conducted by faculty and students. In the past eight years, the funding devoted to research, including the value of faculty time and laboratory space, has increased nine-fold from \$5 million to \$45 million.

Faculty members are entitled to take six months sabbatical at full pay, 12 months at half pay, or any combination thereof. There is no limit to the number of faculty members who may be on sabbatical as long as the department can still achieve its mission. In addition, faculty members may take academic absences of up to 30 days in the summer for research purposes.

The USAFA has a robust Visiting Faculty Program that brings scholars from other institutions to USAFA, providing additional teaching expertise to the cadet experience. In addition, these scholars bring external intellectual perspectives that enrich the USAFA faculty. The USAFA reimburses the visitors' home institutions for salaries and benefits, and the visitors continue to receive their salaries from their institution. The USAFA is working on ways to provide housing for Visiting Faculty in order to create a more attractive opportunity for faculty who may not be able to afford maintaining their permanent home as well as USAFA housing.

Core Component 4b: The USAFA demonstrates that acquisition of a breadth of knowledge and skills and the exercise of intellectual inquiry are integral to its educational programs.

In keeping with the goal of creating a learning-centered environment, a first year experience course has been added to the curriculum, required starting with the class of 2011. This course, focusing on active involvement in learning and the skills needed for a lifetime of learning, introduces students to the 19 learning outcomes that have been established.

Since the last visit, the general education program has been revised to ensure that the 19 outcomes are attained by all students. This 102 credit core program spans all four years of the curriculum and provides a solid grounding in the humanities, social sciences, physical and natural sciences, and engineering. A two semester foreign language sequence has been added in recognition of the global responsibilities faced by graduates.

Although it is an undergraduate institution, the USAFA provides ample opportunity for student involvement in research. A Summer Cadet Research Program provides opportunities for cadets to apply classroom knowledge in a variety of environments during the summer prior to their senior year. In summer 2008, 187 cadets participated in research at 50 locations in the United States and five other countries. At the USAFA itself, students participate both in funded research and in senior capstone projects. Of particular note are the FalconSAT and FalconLAUNCH programs, the latter setting world altitude and speed records for university-built rockets in April 2009.

Core Component 4c: The USAFA assesses the usefulness of its curricula to students who will live and work in a global, diverse, and technological society.

The curriculum is formally reviewed each semester in accordance with Air Force instructions. Two major reviews led to curricular changes implemented in 2001 and 2007. External reviews of engineering programs are conducted through the Engineering Accreditation Commission of ABET, Inc. Chemistry-based curricula meet standards established by the American Chemical Society and programs within the Department of Management are reviewed by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business.

The effort to integrate the outcomes of the academic, military, and athletic pillars of the USAFA's mission has led to specific outcomes that skills, knowledge and attitudes required for effective leadership in a global society. Among these are ethical reasoning and action, intercultural competence and involvement, respect for human dignity, teamwork, and civic, cultural and international environments. While these are among the most difficult outcomes to assess, the USAFA is to be applauded for the efforts to date to do so.

Core Component 4d: The USAFA provides support to ensure that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.

“Integrity First” is the first of the USAFA’s core values that are prominently displayed throughout the campus. Department of Defense directives, the Cadet Honor Code, and the Dean’s policy statements all support this value. All proposed research projects require approval by the Department of Research to ensure that research is conducted ethically and responsibly.

2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need USAFA attention**Core Component 4b: The USAFA demonstrates that acquisition of a breadth of knowledge and skills and the exercise of intellectual inquiry are integral to its educational programs.**

The site visit team received conflicting reports regarding academic freedom and transparency of decision-making. Faculty members who expressed concerns also endorsed the USAFA as an “outstanding educational institution,” “very deserving of full accreditation,” and “a great institution that provides a truly solid education to its students.” These same faculty members, however, described a chilling environment that constrains and even punishes faculty who publish or voice views that are controversial or unpopular with higher-ranking officers. Administrators, along with other faculty, described the USAFA’s administration as being tolerant of a broad range of views, excluding only those views supporting actions counter to the laws and well-being of the United States. The team did not have the resources to determine the validity or fallibility of the faculty concerns. The USAFA should take seriously, however, the concerns of loyal, senior faculty about academic freedom and should in every instance where academic freedom is questioned insure integrity of process and free and open debate.

Core Component 4c: The USAFA assesses the usefulness of its curricula to students who will live and work in a global, diverse, and technological society.

The core curriculum has changed twice since the last visit to be responsive to the evolving needs of today’s military. In order to effectively assess the efficacy of these changes, this curriculum should remain stable and the assessment efforts continue to be supported and refined for a reasonable length of time.

Core Component 4d: The USAFA provides support to ensure that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.

The USAFA is continually under scrutiny by the public and the military. This has led to a perception among some faculty members, particularly in the social sciences, that legitimate intellectual inquiry may be stifled when the subject matter is a sensitive one. It was noted during the visit that an appeal process is in place to be used when

research proposals are denied. Care should be taken that all faculty members are aware of this process.

3. **Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.**
None found.
4. **Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)**
None found.

Recommendation of the Team

Criterion met; no Commission follow-up recommended.

CRITERION FIVE: ENGAGEMENT AND SERVICE. As called for by its mission, the USAFA identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways both value.

1. Evidence that Core Components are met.

Core Component 5a: The USAFA learns from the constituencies it serves and analyzes its capacity to serve their needs and expectations.

The U. S. Air Force is the USAFA's primary external constituent. Its faculty and administrators come primarily from the Air Force and its students almost universally go on active duty after graduation. Through multiple interactions, audits and inspections the USAFA receives input in the form of directives, goals and advice to which it has demonstrated a high level of responsiveness as demonstrated by its scores on Unit Compliance Inspections. The USAFA regularly polls the supervisors of its recent graduates to obtain information which is used to improve the overall cadet experience. The nature of the Air Force and the USAFA result in this being a much more valuable process than it is in most institutions. All of their graduates work for one employer.

The Board of Visitors (BOV) initiative with low yield congressional districts has enabled increased interest and applications from previously underserved geographic regions. These historically underrepresented regions have often had significant populations of ethnically diverse constituents. Consistent with the USAFA's commitment to diversify its enrollment, members of the BOV who are also members of the U.S. Congress have initiated meetings with the congressional representatives from these regions to secure their participation in a pilot program to increase the number of USAFA nominations from these congressional districts. This initiative also presents an opportunity for close coordination with the USAFA admissions office.

Core Component 5b: The USAFA has the capacity and the commitment to engage with its identified constituencies and communities.

Cadets, faculty members, and administrators are actively involved with the Air Force in numerous long and short relationships. Service learning is an integral part of the Academy's program with 10,000s of hours of service performed annually. The USAFA has been on the U.S. Higher Education Honor Roll for Community Service each of the last four years. The Academy's athletic teams draw 100,000s of spectators to the campus to view sporting events and the Falconry program sends cadets to many public displays of the birds around the country.

Core Component 5c: The USAFA demonstrates its responsiveness to those constituencies that depend on it for service.

The annual CORONA conference brings a significant body of Air Force leadership to the USAFA annually for exchange with USAFA faculty, staff and cadets. This conference provides the opportunity to examine the most critical issues facing the Air Force including the potential establishment of a nuclear-focused major command and allocating an increase in authorized personnel across the Air Force. The conference is considered a "forum for decision" and presents a tremendous learning opportunity for cadets as several of the invited senior officers spend time with cadets in classes and informally.

Core Component 5d: Internal and external constituencies value the services the USAFA provides.

The Air Force provides the USAFA with a budget of several hundred million dollars per year and 75% of its faculty. In return the USAFA provides about one quarter to one third of the new commissioned officers each year. The USAFA is viewed by the Air Force as an important key to its future. The USAFA is one of the major tourist attractions for the Colorado Springs area. Hundreds of thousands of people visit each year to watch sporting events, tour the grounds, view the falcons in flight, hike, hunt and many other activities.

2. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need USAFA attention**Core Component 5c: The USAFA demonstrates its responsiveness to those constituencies that depend on it for service.**

The USAFA's "Outcome" goals statements are remarkable in their scope and are tightly integrated with its mission, vision and values statements. Achievement of the outcomes is therefore critical to the overall success of each cadet and of the USAFA as a whole. The broad cooperation required to develop them will now be needed to achieve continued success over the long term. The current structure that is exemplified by the academic, military and athletic "GPAs" that are maintained for each cadet should be

reviewed and attempts made to better blend the efforts to obtain an overall desired result. In particular it is suggested that the junior academic faculty and the squadron leaders work and plan together how to achieve the outcomes. Gains in this area to date are evident but need to be cemented to insure continued progress. A seamless experience for the cadets could yield major improvements in outcome achievement and be a model for all of higher education.

- 3. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.**
None found.

- 4. Evidence that one or more specified Core Components are not met and require Commission follow-up. (Sanction or adverse action may be warranted.)**
None found.

Recommendation of the Team

Criterion met; no Commission follow-up recommended.

V. STATEMENT OF AFFILIATION STATUS

A. Affiliation Status

NO CHANGE

B. Nature of Organization

1. **Legal status** No Change
2. **Degrees awarded** No Change

C. Conditions of Affiliation

1. **Stipulation on affiliation status**
No Change
2. **Approval of degree sites**
No Change
3. **Approval of distance education degree**
No Change
4. **Reports required** None
5. **Other visits scheduled** None
6. **Organization change request** None

D. Commission Sanction or Adverse Action

None

On Notice

Due Date for Report

**Rationale and Expectations
Areas That Must Be Addressed**

Probation

Next Evaluation Visit

Rationale

Areas That Must Be Addressed (requirements for removal of probation)

Denial or Withdrawal of Status

Rationale

E. Summary of Commission Review

Timing for next comprehensive visit (academic year – 2018-2019)

Rationale for recommendation:

The U. S. Air Force Academy clearly, thoughtfully, and thoroughly responded to the challenges indentified in the 1999 accreditation report by reducing the core curriculum, adding capstone courses, “Leveling the playing field” (147 semester hours for all majors), developing and instituting Outcomes and Outcome Assessment Teams, developing and implementing a revised Core Curriculum and Outcome Alignment plan, creating an Associate Dean for Curriculum and Strategy, becoming a learning-focused institution, making IT improvements, expanding library hours and related support services including computers, and hardware, and creating a USAFA Cadet Wing Diversity Plan.

The learning-focused culture promotes academic rigor, enrichment opportunities, and educational excellence for cadets and faculty.

The USAFA has a clear mission focus which is linked to its constituents, is committed to improve and has the ability to change. It is adequately resourced for its mission which is future focused and able to change based upon results attained from extensive data collected for assessment and evaluation. Its commitment to teaching excellence is exceptional as is its commitment to providing an extraordinary learning environment supported by robust assessment structures. It provides a broad, integrated core curriculum which includes cadet-focused research programs and strong stake holder support and involvement. Its relationship with its outside stakeholders is strong and substantive.

VI. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND EXPLANATIONS

None

ADVANCEMENT SECTION

REPORT OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION VISIT

TO

United States Air Force Academy
USAF Academy, CO

April 27-29, 2009

FOR

The Higher Learning Commission

A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

EVALUATION TEAM

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I. OVERALL OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

The United States Air Force Academy USAFA is a learning-focused institution of higher education which promotes academic rigor, enrichment, and educational excellence for cadets and faculty. The USAFA core competencies are:

1. A blend of humanities, social sciences, engineering, and basic sciences courses embodied in a rigorous academic core.
2. A diverse set of major programs tailored to encourage service to the Air Force and the development of ethical and effective leaders.
3. A faculty with research expertise in areas specifically addressing Air Force and Department of Defense needs.

II. CONSULTATIONS OF THE TEAM

IT Infrastructure:

The USAFA offers a robust IT infrastructure for the education of its cadets. While there is currently no use of a commercial course management system, there is capacity to share files of various sorts, author blogs, post messages and create instructional and testing materials. Some military education is provided online and there is good access to online tutorials and data bases for classroom use. As a next step in taking advantage of the educational power of technology, the USAFA might consider introducing cadets to fully online or blended/ hybrid courses. There are several reasons. It is highly likely that graduates will continue their formal education and training in an online environment. Online learning may be the only option for officers stationed at bases far away from higher education centers. In addition, those under the command of USAFA graduates will want to take online courses and will be seeking advice and mentoring. Air Force Officers should know about best practices in online learning, course development and evaluation and signs of the quality for online courses and programs.

At the USAFA, both networks (.MIL and .EDU) are run by the 10th Communications Squadron. It is part of the 10th Mission Support Group, which reports to the 10th Air Base Wing, which reports to the Superintendent. Before 1995, the network was run by an organization headed by the Director of Academic Computing. Faculty perceive that moving the IT support personnel away from the faculty organization has made them less responsive to adding innovative technologies to the classroom, as their staffing, training and culture are aligned with running a network for a traditional Air Force base. Further, this organization does not currently have sufficiently trained personnel to manage the complexity of academic network infrastructure. The USAFA should investigate whether or not the .EDU network should be run by an organization related to the faculty, or at least be a direct report to the Superintendent, with sufficient staffing and training to be able to keep up with how technology is being used in the classroom.

Faculty Turnover:

Given the high faculty turnover rate due to military deployment, the USAFA must continue to provide sufficient resources and personnel to strongly support faculty training and mentoring in teaching. The ambitious learning goals that the USAFA has for its cadets will be hard to attain without a uniformly strong cadre of talented faculty who are able to use multiple pedagogies to motivate students, design courses for active learning and conduct both formative and summative assessments of student learning. The Center for Educational Excellence has been, and will continue to be, a key resource in the quality of teaching at the USAFA. The Center should continue to be fully supported in the future.

Research Expectations:

As the USAFA works to clarify research expectations for its faculty in the context of its primary focus on teaching and advising, special attention needs to be given to opportunities available to faculty whose research is done outside the confines of the institution. The fine library and research labs available at the USAFA may be more than adequate for many faculty but not entirely adequate for all faculty, especially those who study human behavior, unless they restrict themselves to secondary sources or cadet behavior. In addition, the merits of research teams and co-authorship of publications might be stressed in appropriate circumstances.

Future-focused “Library and Learning Center:”

McDermott Library is well-resourced compared to many peer institutions but could be challenged by levels of funding relative to costs of operation, acquisitions, and the maintenance of databases. Engaging the entire institution in prioritization for library use and purpose may alleviate some pressures but the current trend suggests that the library may lag behind the needs of primary users (cadets and research and teaching faculty) before the next accreditation visit. The institution’s self-study asserts, “DoD-imposed security requirements” limit the library’s ability to partner with other entities and programs and this may exacerbate the impact in funding versus need gaps, particularly in acquisitions of materials and access to databases and resources.

Beyond resource constraints the USAFA, like many institutions of higher education, will be confronted with changes to usage patterns, particularly among cadets. As the library becomes more dependent on electronic resources (journal and periodical databases and the emerging phenomenon of e-books) cadets will continue the drive to secure resources via on-line access. The library as a physical entity, however, will continue to serve as a focal point for students’ studying and using the facility as a group resource and study space. The library should be engaged in discussions about space utilization and programming, particularly among the cadets. The “Library for the Future” project has value but only to extent that all users are engaged and the parameters allow for envisioning options not currently contained within the library. Important learning opportunities are available through programs spearheaded by the library, including outcomes such as ethical reasoning (e.g., use of information, copyright, First Amendment, intellectual property), teamwork/groupwork (creating formal learning

opportunities leveraging the space of the library, creating social/study space for cadets' working on class projects), and curricular and co-curricular learning in quantitative and information literacy.

As the library moves forward, the institution would do well to assess patterns of use and expectations (among cadets, staff, and faculty) of the facility. Research and reference librarians can provide important benchmarks for how institutions are altering the form and function of the library but they need to be integrated into a comprehensive review of the library's services and modes of operation. The library appears to be a discrete service and support entity that is not comprehensively engaged with the academic side of the house (connecting to programs, learning outcomes, instruction) and distinct from the academic student support areas. As USAFA moves forward, the library can be more directly connected to the learning outcomes and the modes of instruction and instructional support.

Systemic Planning for Turnover of Senior Leadership:

The USAFA has made an enviable commitment to student learning and assessment that connects course embedded activities with program level assessments. However, the sheer volume of the assessment effort raises questions about the institution's ability to sustain the assessment effort and the leadership's ability to manage and evaluate meaningful assessment data. The institution has a core of committed military and civilian faculty who are deeply enmeshed in the assessment efforts but it is still feeling its way through systems and processes. Much of the advancement in student-learning assessment is motivated by key administrators. As a culturally top-down institution, the USAFA needs to make decisions about what assessment data are meaningful and to automate their collection and usage lest there be fatigue on the ground and a shift in leadership focus at the top of the academic chain of command.

The USAFA has made significant strides and its learning and student focus is a positive feature of the institution. But the aggressive pursuit of an institutional assessment culture has yielded a desire to assess everything that could be assessed rather than a more systematic approach to prioritizing what needs to be assessed. It appears that the key elements include the mapping of learning outcomes across the curriculum (and related extra-curricular learning opportunities) and the leadership would be well advised to keep that focus and further develop the administrative infrastructure to support this effort at the academic program and learning outcomes team levels. The academic leadership is advised to identify the next generation of faculty and staff champions for assessment, particularly as senior military and civilian faculty and administrators leave the institution. This will be a continuous challenge given the contingent nature of so many of the military faculty and the need to continuously engage in formative faculty development. Like most universities and colleges, the USAFA would be better served by having a broader faculty and staff base with primary expertise to comment and advise on the basics of assessment and the relationship to continuous improvement and even transformation.

Mission and Integrity:

The USAFA provides a unique learning environment that must sustain students (cadets) in meeting multiple challenges (physical development, intellectual development, military development). The USAFA is very well resourced in comparison to most civilian peer institutions. However, the relative understaffing of its teaching faculty and the regular deployment of its term military faculty challenge it. Institutional reports suggest that the USAFA is short thirty-seven full-time faculty. While military deployments can enable career advancement for the military faculty they pose challenges to the learning environment already stressed by the absence of a fully allocated teaching faculty.

Faculty in the Humanities and Social Sciences, particularly civilian faculty, appear to have a different experience than faculty in other divisions. The accreditation team received numerous emails, letters, and comments that indicated a frustration with the governance structure, concerns about academic freedom, irritation with the presumption of on-campus availability to students (thus inhibiting off-site research opportunities), and dismay with what was seen as restrictions on the kind of research possible on campus. This concern was not as evident with military and civilian faculty in the sciences and engineering. The USAFA is encouraged to develop responses that may create greater consistency among expectations and understanding among civilian and military faculty, regardless of academic division.

Student Learning and Effective Teaching:

The USAFA is comprehensively engaged in assessment of student learning and of program outcomes. The many efforts to map curricular and co-curricular efforts as part of each outcome team may exhaust the faculty and staff of the institution. Moreover, the continued intense engagement in all forms of assessment may lead to a focus on assessment for its own sake and misdirect USAFA staff from important individual points of assessment. USAFA Outcome Teams remain committed to the endeavor but register their own fear over too much data and too little time to consider implications. Cadets in the open forum noted that the curriculum had changed a lot in their short time at the USAFA and wished that such change would come more slowly and deliberately.

Faculty orientation materials appear to reinforce the heavy emphasis on teaching and student development. Nevertheless, this focus on teaching when research and scholarship are also valued and expected for promotion may lead to a skewed sense of work obligations among faculty. The publication expectations for first promotion (2-3 articles or its equivalent) is not out of line for promotion with a 4/4 teaching load at an institution with the resource base of the USAFA, but there may not be as concerted an institutional effort to signal such expectations to faculty. It appears that many of these expectations are left to department and divisional heads and there is variance in how

this may get expressed. Since faculty, particularly civilian faculty from Humanities and Social Sciences, seem most vocal about disparities and misaligned expectations, the USAFA may wish to pursue ongoing, university level discussions and workshops that are university-wide and developmental in their focus.

Cadets reported that their number one challenge is time management. They continue to report that there are challenges in meeting all their academic, physical, and military obligations. While upper-class students noted that the purpose of the environment was to test your limits, all students noted that it was hard to find time to think and reflect on their learning. Moreover, some department heads acknowledged their concerns that students might be overwhelmed and prone to cutting corners (not reading all the assigned work) or cramming for tests and assignments without retaining the material long term. Faculty members voiced concerns about the relationship between the total cadet workload and their intellectual curiosity. As one faculty member put it, "It is absolutely fanciful for me to think that my students read a primary text more than once."

Assessing "Courage:"

Assessing character growth, especially an attribute such as courage, is a difficult task. With regard to assessing courage, USAFA's psychology faculty could best advise the institution regarding the quality and relevance of the work of Clemson professor Cynthia Lynn Sandstrom Pury. Co-creator of the Woodard Pury Courage Scale, her CV notes that her primary research interest "involves courage, cognitive processing and emotions. She goes on to note that along with here students and colleagues, she is examining different typologies of courage, the interaction of subjective experience and courage, individual differences in courage, and deliberate strategies to increase courage."

Closing the continuous feedback loop to achieve an upward learning spiral:

Over the past five years, the USAFA has devoted considerable effort to develop a comprehensive set of 19 outcomes and corresponding assessments. Data collection and analysis began in spring 2008. These efforts are highly commendable and must be sustained so that continuous improvement in learning is achieved. However, the assessment process that has been defined will require massive effort if all outcomes are to be assessed every year; the danger is that the sheer magnitude of the work entailed will threaten the sustainability of the process. There are several ways in which the assessment process can be made more manageable without jeopardizing its effectiveness. A subset of outcomes might be assessed each year, with those of more concern being assessed more frequently than those where a track record of success exists. When it is known that it will be several years before the impact of a change will be measurable, this can be factored into an assessment timetable.

Closing the gap in gender relations:

Gender relations at the USAFA have shown improvement since the institution of education and training programs, focus groups, women's fora and ongoing climate assessments that address sexual assault and other issues encountered by the 19% of cadets who are female. These laudable efforts must be continued and perhaps expanded in order to achieve the USAFA's goal of increasing diversity in its student, faculty, and staff populations. In a society where military leadership has long been associated with men, there are preconceptions that must be overcome as each new class of cadets is admitted. The focus on overt actions, such as sexual harassment, that create an unwelcoming environment for women must be complemented by attention to more subtle signals in the use of language and in procedures that may inadvertently reinforce stereotypes and preconceptions.

Attracting and retaining more diverse cadets and faculty:

The USAFA has worked strategically to address diversity among the cadet population. Working with the Board of Visitors (BOV) the admissions office has identified geographic regions of the country where significant populations of historically underrepresented groups reside. Board members who hold congressional appointments have worked directly with their colleague congressmen from these districts to more aggressively identify potential nominees from these underrepresented populations.

The Preparatory School has also served as an effective bridge for candidates who lack the academic preparation necessary for success at the academy. Many of these candidates who are accepted into the program are ethnic minority applicants to the academy. The yearlong program has effectively served to prepare these candidates for successful matriculation into the academy.

Growing and Leveraging Student Services and Academy Scholars Program:

Cadets are expected to fulfill their educational responsibilities in three critical areas; academics, military training, and athletics. Each of these areas is viewed by senior academy leadership as equally important to the development of cadets as officers.

The performance expectations in each area are clearly communicated to cadets. While staff members in each area acknowledge several examples of collaboration across areas in support of cadet development this collaboration is inconsistent and often contributes to conflict in terms of clarity and authority for decisions cross areas. We recommend junior military faculty and AOC's engage more directly and actively through a learning community model, working together with squadrons of cadets.

III. RECOGNITION OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS, PROGRESS, AND/OR PRACTICES

- Shifted to a language requirement that will better serve their constituents (the citizens of the United States).
- Added many programs to remove bias and prejudice for the cadets, and focusing on the individual.
- Shifted from a standard instructional based learning system to a more learner focused system.
- Reduced the total semester hour requirements to 141 for divisional majors and 147 semester hours for disciplinary and interdisciplinary majors
- “Leveled the playing field” by requiring all disciplinary and interdisciplinary majors to have the same number of semester hours (147) for graduation
- Added a core course in leadership and a core energy/systems requirement at the request of Air Force senior leadership, but reduced the overall core academic curriculum from 94 to 91 semester hours
- Added more flexibility to the academic majors and established a requirement for all majors to have a 3-semester-hour open “USAFA Option”
- Created two new majors at the request of Air Force leadership: Systems Engineering, and Systems Engineering Management
- Dropped the core foreign language requirement for technical majors, but boosted the foreign language requirement for non-technical majors to 12 semester hours
- Made the successful completion of the USAFA’s four character development seminars (ACES, LIFT, VECTOR, R&R) graduation requirements for all cadets
- Another significant change during this period was the establishment of a Bachelor of Science Program (BSP) beginning with the Class of 2007. The BSP enables a limited number of cadets to graduate without a major, providing a pathway to graduation for cadets who are struggling with the high academic course loads at USAFA, but who have otherwise demonstrated the character and leadership qualities needed to succeed as Air Force officers
- A second curriculum change was highly significant in that it was the first transformation that intentionally linked the core curriculum in both content and sequence to the USAFA Outcomes. By intentionally linking and sequencing the curriculum to the USAFA Outcomes, this curriculum change fulfilled a recommendation made by the 1999 NCA accreditation report
- Two other significant changes to USAFA’s integrated curriculum that have occurred since the last accreditation visit are the re-establishment of a Powered Flight Program (PFP) at the USAFA’s airfield, and the creation of a Combat Survival Training (CST) program to be taken by cadets in the summer prior to their third class academic year.