

# Highly Educated, Trained Officers

## Strategic Goal #3

“First and foremost, our future leaders must have the qualities necessary to meet the Air Force’s operational needs: they must be intelligent, innovative, principled in discipline, and fit-to-fight” — Air Force Academy Strategic Plan.

This is the foundation of the third strategic goal: Produce highly educated and trained officers. However, this goal involves more than teaching cadets information and skills.

“The Officer Development System goes in line with maturity development, the education development, the athletic development, and the military development,” said Dr. Hans Mueh, director of athletics. “It’s all tracking by plan, the strategic plan. But it’s not just the formal things; it’s the education that comes from experience.”

The goal seeks an institutionally integrated manner to develop officers of character with in-depth academic, technical and military skills and competencies for leadership in air, space and cyberspace in Air Force and joint operations.

The integration among mission elements focuses on formal and informal education through the daily schedule of calls. Cadets receive formal education during classroom lectures and course work. The formal education continues during military sessions and time spent at the airfield.

At the same time, the very nature of a cadet’s day develops skills through informal training.

“Time management, organization, taking pride in one’s work — everyone knows cadets must have these skills to make it through the Academy,” Dean of the Faculty Brig. Gen. Dana Born said. “But these are not cadet skills. They are officer skills; they are leadership skills.”

The Academy is not unique in its mission to develop officers with these skills. Every commissioning source in the Air

Force is charged with producing the same outcomes. Air Force Instruction 36-2014 outlines it as: “The purpose of officer commissioning education and training is to develop and produce a leader of character with a warrior ethos and expeditionary mindset, who is a culturally aware, motivated professional, dedicated to serve the nation and prepared to lead in the 21st Century.”

Part of this development and the goal is rooted in exposing cadets to an active and operational Air Force environment.

One graduation requirement is completing Operation Air Force, a threeweek immersion at operational Air Force bases around the world.

“We send about 100 cadets to the AOR each summer. These cadets are totally integrated into the mission. They wear DCUs and they are working on the flightline, with security forces, with intel or anything along those lines,” said Commandant of Cadets Brig. Gen. Susan Desjardins. “They are gone for 30 days and when they come back they are tasked to teach a cadet professional military education class on what they learned and what deployed life was all about. This allows the rest of the cadet wing to share in their experiences and learn what they are doing abroad and how important it is. It really helps to keep them engaged with the operational Air Force.”

“On the other hand, it’s exposing our operational Air Force to our cadets. They can feel very confident in what we are producing,” she said.

Other programs at the Academy also expose cadets to various Air Force programs and Air Force Specialty Codes.

“We send about 190 cadets out on summer research programs at Air Force bases and other Department of Defense agencies,” said General Born. “This year we will involve more than 600 cadets in interna-

tional programs. This includes the international exchange program, where cadets spend a semester abroad, and other exchange programs where cadets spend one to five weeks visiting another country.”

Programs such as these are helping integrate mission element efforts and ensure a consistent, unified education experience. “

We have an integrated core curriculum which seeks to develop the USAFA outcomes in cadets,” said General Born. “We also have 32 majors and two minors where cadets engage in a deeper level of learning in a specific academic discipline, which, by its nature, also lets us develop some of the outcomes to an even greater degree than we can in the *core*.”

In addition to classroom work, the dean of the faculty updated the curriculum handbook to address all requirements for graduation such as summer programs and military training requirements.

“Much of cadet learning is hands on and takes place within the structure of the cadet wing, as cadets increase in scope of leadership responsibility throughout the four-year program within their cadet squadrons,” General Desjardins said. “They learn to determine a vision, set expectations and goals, enforce standards, mentor subordinates, and support superiors.”

“Our cadets are better prepared for their futures as lieutenants,” the commandant continued. “We continue each year to get as close to a ‘full-up round’ as we can, minus the specific technical skills cadets require for their specific AFSCs. They know what to expect when it comes to an expeditionary environment.”

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