UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF MARYLAND

OFFICE OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

December 17, 1997

The Honorable Jacques S. Gansler
Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition and Technology)
3010 Defense Pentagon
Room #3E933
Washington, DC 20301-3010

Dear Dr. Gansler:

The Defense Acquisition University (DAU) Board of Visitors (BoV) held their latest meeting on December 2, 1997. As the newly appointed chair, I wanted to share our observations and recommendations.

1. The BoV was briefed on the Defense Reform Initiative (DRI), and they are concerned about possible consequences to the DAU. Acquisition education and training is paramount and must be supported by the Component Acquisition Executives or, the Board believes, the Congressionally mandated authority for managing the education of the acquisition workforce could be diminished. In addition, I think that I can speak for the Board in emphasizing that to a large extent the success of the DAU rests upon the University's ability to respond creatively, flexibly, and quickly to very complex demands for training and education. Administrative decisions to combine related, existing programs with the DAU may well undercut present efforts to create a unique and coherent educational experience for the acquisition workforce. To learn more about issues that will affect the transition plan for the DAU, the Board has invited the Directors of Acquisition Career Management to participate in the next meeting. Since the recent PAT report redefined the roles of the Functional Boards and the University in developing curriculum, some members thought that it might also be helpful to include the Functional Board Chairs in the discussion.

2. The BoV would like to sponsor a course dealing with commercial practices. We will work with the DAU and schedule a pilot course to be offered as part of the May 1998 Acquisition Reform Week activities. There was strong consensus that the course might provide a frank discussion of changes occurring in the acquisition process, for example, full and open competition versus an approach that focuses upon government teaming with industry. The Board will discuss the details of the course at the next meeting.

3300 METZEROTT ROAD • ADELPHI MARYLAND 20783-1690 • VOICE: 301.445.1992 • FAX: 301.445.1914 • WEB: WWW.USMD.EDU

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3. The BoV considered a proposal to develop learning incentives for the acquisition workforce that includes policy and programmatic implications. Perhaps a team could be appointed to develop a workshop to investigate both best practices in rewarding learning (mentoring and career planning) and commonly encountered barriers to continued education (funding and personnel systems). It was agreed that the DAU must show that education and training will help organizations and their employees to accomplish their goals. The Board further recommended that research in these two areas become part of the University's external research agenda.

4. The BoV will continue to meet quarterly to follow through on a number of important initiatives and to support and provide guidance to the DAU during its transition phase.

Finally, the Board unanimously praised DAU for the new meeting format. Fewer briefings and more discussion among Board members proved productive. The Consortium School Heads participated in the meeting, and the interaction with them was both informative and useful in shaping future directions for the BoV.

We appreciate the opportunity to work with you in support of the Defense Acquisition University and look forward to productive discussion in our next meeting in February.

Sincerely,

Gertrude Eaton

Gertrude Eaton
Chair, Board of Visitors

cc: Board of Visitors
Ms. Donna Richbourg, Deputy Undersecretary of Defense (Acquisition Reform)
Dr. Jim McMichael, Director, AET&CD, OUSD (A&T)
Mr. Tom Crean, President, DAU