

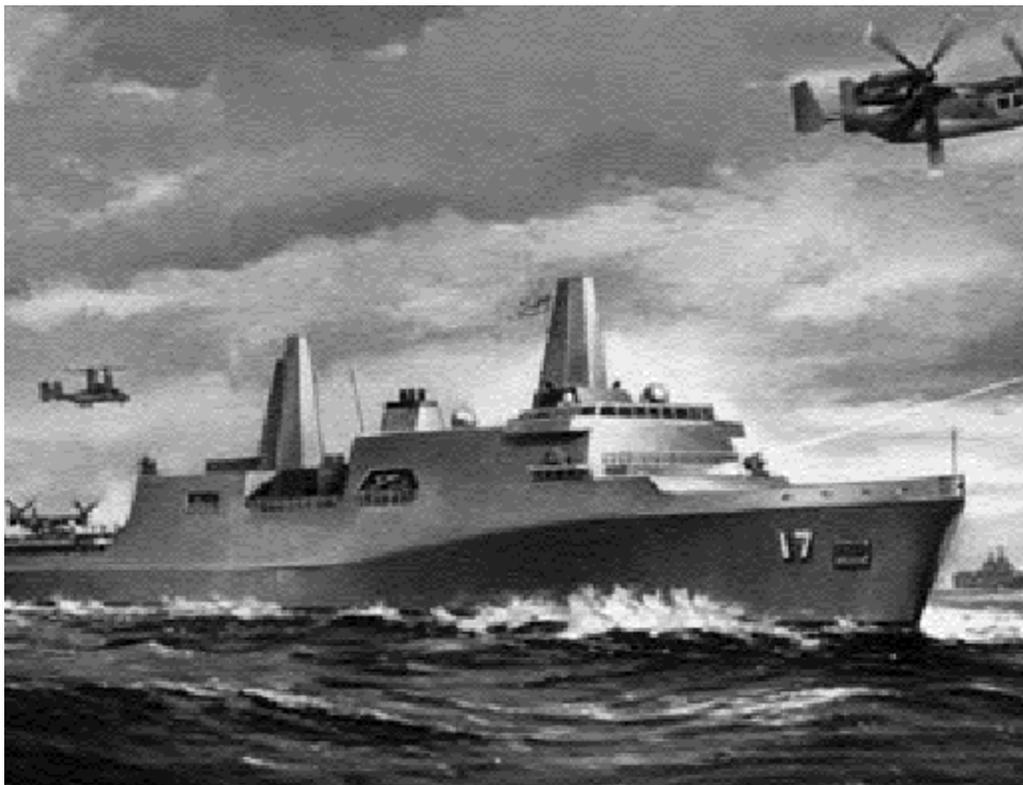
Acquisition and Logistics Excellence

DAU's New PMT-401 — A Systems Approach to Program Manager Development

BRIG. GEN. EDWARD HIRSCH, USA (RET)

"I've decided to move into something called *Acquisition and Logistics Excellence* — we're moving from *Acquisition Reform* to *Acquisition and Logistics Excellence* ... that's my theme, and you're going to hear a lot about that from a lot of people I'm sure over the next months and years. We sincerely hope it will be the right message we want to put forth."

—Edward C. "Pete" Aldridge Jr.
Under Secretary of Defense
(Acquisition, Technology and Logistics)
June 6, 2001



One of the case studies developed for DAU's new PMT-401 Program Manager's Course focuses on technology insertion (new mast) for the LPD 17. Pictured is the LPD-17, *USS San Antonio*.
DoD Image

The Defense Systems Management College, the premier College in the Department of Defense dedicated to the professional development, education, and training of members of the Program Management career field, is striving to support Under Secretary Aldridge's theme of *Acquisition and Logistics Excellence*. Most notably, the current education and training requirements for members of the Program Management career field are being changed to accord with a systems approach that recognizes Program Management as a career track that demands

a career-long commitment to learning. The former Program Management career track had evolved over time, responded to changing requirements, and presented students with increasingly complex issues to resolve as they progressed from Level I through Level II and ultimately to Level III certification.

The future Program Management career track identifies and builds upon lessons learned from the former Program Management track and relies upon new courses that are designed from the outset to create a career-long learning experience. Each new course is designed

to be dependent upon the learning derived from the previous course and is preparation for the learning expectations of the next course.

Important New Steps

Under the new systems approach, students who complete the Intermediate Systems Acquisition Course (ACQ-201) will continue Level II certification with the newly activated Program Management Tools Course (PMT-250). However, a significant change occurs in achieving the Level III certification, which is dependent upon satisfactory completion of the new Program Man-

Hirsch is a Visiting Professor at the Defense Acquisition University, Fort Belvoir, Va. A retired Army brigadier general, he served for many years as Provost and more recently, Acquisition Management Chair at the Defense Systems Management College. Also contributing to the article was **Ethan Smith**, a Technology-Based Education Specialist who helped develop online training courses for DAU.



An ATACMS missile is fired from the Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) M270 weapons platform. Photo courtesy Lockheed Martin Missiles and Fire Control — Dallas

agement Office Course (PMT-352). Following completion of those courses, certain students are selected for PMT 401, the Program Manager's Course (PMC)—based on past performance and future potential — to continue their training with the new Program Manager's Course.

The new Program Management career track differentiates between personnel who have demonstrated capabilities as acquisition leaders and do not aspire to be program managers of Acquisition Category (ACAT I or II) programs, and those that seek these positions and have been selected by their Service as being potential candidates for these positions.

The chart at the bottom of the next page highlights the differences between the former Program Management career track and the new Program Management career track.

The New Program Manager's Course, PMT-401

The Program Manager's Course is an intense, executive-level, highly integrated 10-week, case study-based learning experience. Most importantly, the case-study approach that will be used in PMT-401 accurately develops the critical thinking skills necessary to lead major ACAT programs. Learners will actively participate in two to three case studies every day, and be required to devote two to three hours of study every evening in preparation for the next day's classes. The case studies are presented by a specially selected teaching team of senior faculty members who will use a variety of learning methodologies, including role playing, simulations, distinguished guest practitioners, team projects, study groups, and an elective feature designed to enable learners to customize a portion of the course to meet specific needs.

Time will be available to internalize the material through independent study and informal work and interaction with peers through small group discussions. Course content will rely upon challenges, problems, and dilemmas derived from extensive interviews with program managers, program executive officers, and other stakeholders. The case-based

Harvard Business School

A Case-Based Success

The HBS case-study method incorporates three essential elements inherent to the case study that facilitate a student's understanding of the major dilemmas found in the acquisition programs (cases) being studied. The pure Harvard model, which will be used to help guide the faculty as they modify case studies, usually contains most or all three of the following critical elements:

- A myriad of general business knowledge is included, so that several important business (or acquisition) applications can be explored.
- Successful application of the case study often relies on situation-specific variables applied to the managerial action; that is, students are able to understand what matters in any given dilemma and relate those situations to real-life problems.
- The case writer has sufficient knowledge to understand and apply the dilemmas identified in a highly relevant way that will help students better understand some of the issues taking place in major ACAT programs.

dilemmas will be those that course graduates can expect to confront when they return to their workplace.

Objectives

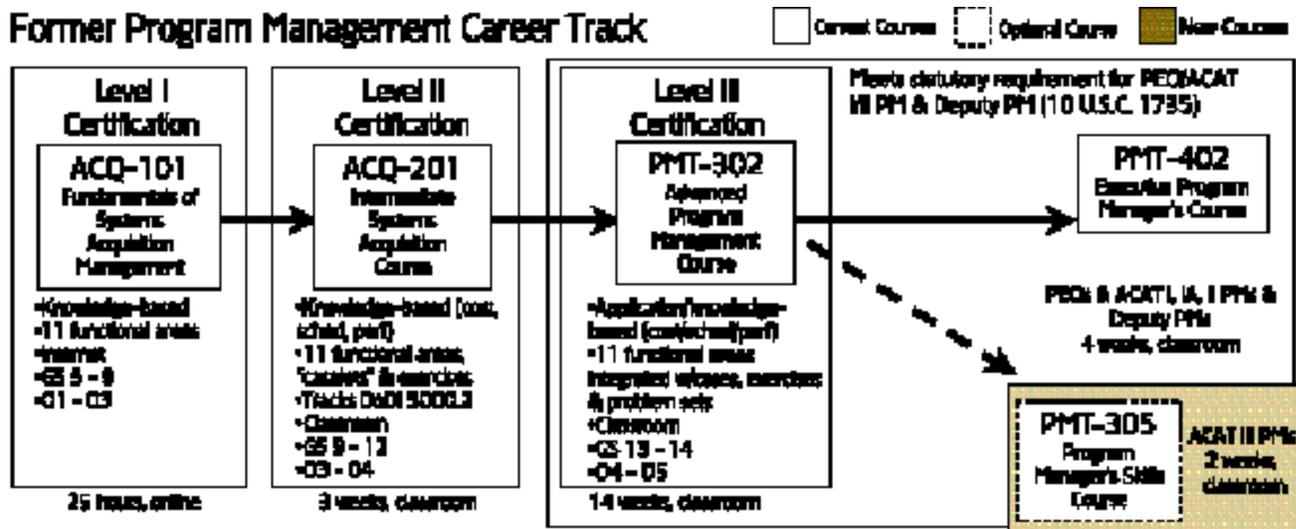
Graduates will be able to:

- Apply critical thinking when confronted by problems and dilemmas on a day-to-day basis.
- Lead and integrate disparate functional groups and develop a cohesive team capable of coping with the complex problems that are common to program management and program executive offices.
- Identify and apply best business practices to achieve win-win relationships with their industry partners.

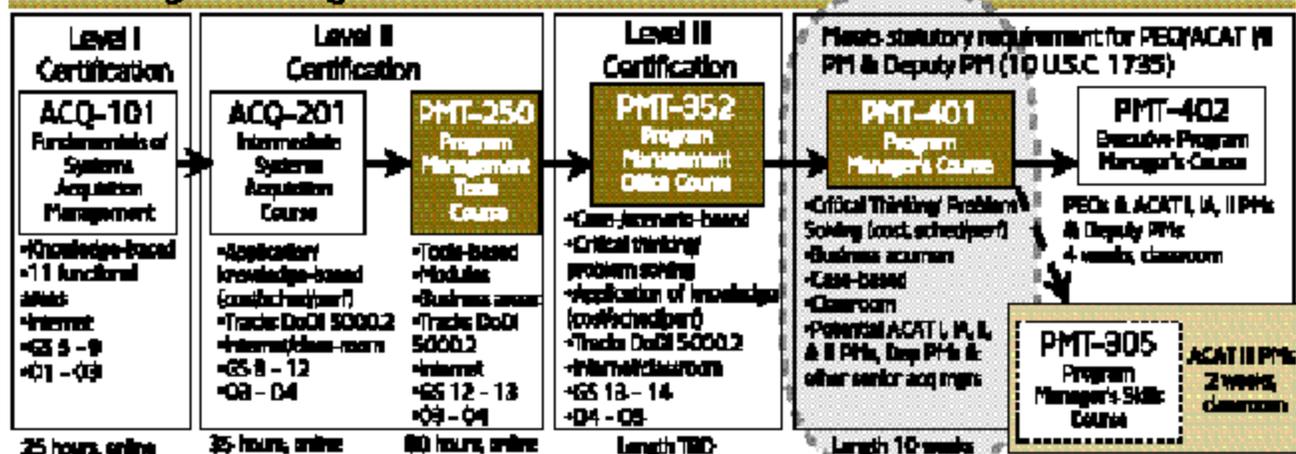
Who Should Attend

This course is designed expressly for specially selected, Level III-certified members of the acquisition workforce motivated to,

Former Program Management Career Track



Future Program Management Career Track



and capable of, becoming the DoD senior acquisition leaders of the future. Attendees must be O-5/GS-14 or above with extensive experience in acquisition, including four years in a Program Management Office or in direct support of a Program Management Office.

“The challenges and problems that program managers, program executive officers, and other stakeholders in the defense acquisition community have encountered or expect to encounter in their conduct of business — properly emulated in the classroom — can provide the basis for a profound, practical learning experience,” says Stephen Israel, who is responsible for the design, development, and production of the course.

About the Case Method

He notes that many of the leading universities that have offered executive development programs over the past 50 years have used the case method to provide such learning. Their experience has established as fact that a course based on the case method can provide students with the opportunity to consider, analyze, and discuss the kinds of challenges and problems they can expect to face in their future assignments — and do so in a challenging and risk-free environment.

This reality-based learning, he adds, demands that the participants analyze issues, define problems, compare options, formulate solutions, and implement action plans by placing themselves in the position of the acquisition leaders involved. Of paramount significance, Israel emphasizes, is the fact that a case-based course demands the learner apply critical thinking — as the norm — both when confronted by problems on a day-to-day basis during the course and when returning to the workplace.

“The new PMT-401 course is not only a different approach — case studies — but will be a student-directed learning environment, as well,” he explains. “Within this type of learning environment, the faculty has the responsibility of facilitating the students’ learning by



Stephen Israel, Leader, PMT-401 Course Development Team, DAU.

Photo by Army Sgt. Kevin Moses

“This course [PMT-401] is a harbinger for how the DoD is changing training and education at the senior acquisition level. We see this as a way for DAU and DSMC to really raise the bar on Program Management training overall, and feel that this case-based approach is the best way to accomplish that.”

analyzing the case studies with them and working through them together, rather than using a traditional lecture format.”

According to Israel, the course will incorporate a modified version of the case-based approach practiced at Harvard Business School (HBS), where students are submerged in 10 weeks of rigorous case-study evaluation, known as the “pure Harvard model.” Although the format for PMT-401 won’t be quite that time-intensive, it will be equally rigorous, he adds.

One of the primary aspects of the HBS experience is the networking and bonding that takes place as a result of the extensive time that the students spend working together on these cases. “Although the PMT-401 course won’t be quite as time-intensive,” says Israel, “we are definitely trying to replicate the HBS networking and bonding experience for our own students.”

To prepare for writing and developing the course material needed for PMT-401, DSMC faculty completed intensive training in case-writing methodology and case-study presentation. Distinguished guest lecturers, including Dr. J. Ronald Fox and Dr. Michael J. Roberts of Harvard University, as well as Dr. Mike Leenders and Dr. Jim Erskine of the University of Western Ontario, Canada, conducted extensive onsite training for the faculty.

Key Dilemmas

The primary aspect of the case-study approach is that it focuses on specific activities in the life cycle of the acquisition program being studied, where a decision had to be made on a “key dilemma” faced by the program manager or deputy program manager — a decision that might have significantly impacted the overall program. Students will develop and hone critical-thinking skills by evaluating these common dilemmas and looking at how decisions made at these stages can impact the overall success of the program. The dilemmas will then be replicated in the simulation exercises that take place throughout the course.

Identifying and articulating the key dilemmas, which is considered essential to the success of the course, represents a significant challenge to the faculty responsible for developing the new Program Manager's Course. The faculty team has conducted dozens of personal interviews and hundreds of surveys with Program Management Offices, Program Executive Offices, and other stakeholders to obtain specific examples of challenges and problems they have encountered — or expect to encounter — in their conduct of business. As a result, the cases developed reflect current reality and are updated on a continuing basis by faculty contact with serving program managers and program executive officers. Approximately 100 learning experiences will be created for the course. Twenty percent of the cases are expected to be updated or discarded/replaced on an annual basis to ensure currency.

One case study involves the Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) program while it was undergoing a software-based weapons systems upgrade. The case study centers on the program manager's dilemma about whether to stay

PMT-401 Timeline

First Pilot • March 4, 2002
 Second Pilot • Sept. 9, 2002
 First Offering • Jan. 6, 2003

with the original contractor software, try a new software developer, or even to integrate a commercial off-the-shelf product instead. In making that decision, cost trade-offs, market research, and robust design are some of the many dilemmas the program manager evaluated, all of which directly impacted the upgrade.

“With the latest acquisition reform, many regulations are shrinking. Program managers are being told to be more creative rather than following a specific decision-making checklist that they might have had in the past,” explains Dr. Chris Roman, Professor of Systems Acquisition Management and a member of the PMT 401 development team that wrote the MLRS case study. “Our mandate has been to tackle the hard decisions, where the current regulations

don't necessarily tell a program manager what to do in each situation.” Roman adds that the program manager involved in the MLRS was partially responsible for initiating the case study in an effort to analyze what went right and wrong during his program's life cycle.

By contrast, DSMC faculty, in an effort to create a pool of case studies available to the new course, spent extensive time researching, interviewing, and analyzing cases from project start to production. “There are case studies you can write based on tips or your own experience, but a successful case study ultimately requires a lot of networking,” says Roman. “It requires significant time from the program manager, and you need to mine those key activities or dilemmas in their program to make the case study useful.”

In addition to the MLRS, other case studies include the Bradley Fighting Vehicle, the F-22 fighter, the Advanced Amphibious Assault Vehicle, the DDG-51 Guided Missile Destroyer, and other high-profile acquisition projects throughout all of the Services.

A Significant Improvement

Even though much work remains in writing and honing the case material that will be used in the March 2002 pilot offering, Israel expresses confidence that this new approach will provide a significant improvement in the education and training of our program management professionals. “This course is a harbinger for how the DoD is changing training and education at the senior acquisition level,” says Israel. “We see this as a way for the Defense Systems Management College to really raise the bar on Program Management training overall, and feel that this case-based approach is the best way to accomplish that. We are developing a world-class Program Manager's Course based on the Harvard case-method approach.”

Editor's Note: The author welcomes questions or comments on this article. Contact him at ed.hirsch@dau.mil.

HELP FOR SURVIVORS OF SEPT. 11 ATTACK ON PENTAGON

Department of Defense officials say they have been inundated by donations of goods and funds, and they want to make sure people are sending their donations to reputable charities. Below is a list of organizations DoD officials recommend individuals contact to make donations to assist survivors of those killed in the Sept. 11th attack on the Pentagon.

- Army Emergency Relief Society, Pentagon Victims Fund, (703) 325-0463, www.aerhq.org.
- Navy and Marine Corps Relief Society, Pentagon Assistance Fund, (703) 696-4904, www.nmcrcs.org.
- Federal Employee Education and Assistance Fund, (303) 933-7580, www.feea.org.