

### Obama Announces Military-to-Civilian Skills Certification Program

AMERICAN FORCES PRESS SERVICE (JUNE 1, 2012)

Claudette Roulo

WASHINGTON—President Barack Obama today announced a new presidential initiative aimed at preparing servicemembers for civilian employment.

Obama provided details about the military-to-civilian certification program during his visit to a Honeywell International Inc., plant in Golden Valley, Minn. Defense contractor Honeywell reportedly has hired hundreds of military veterans at its plants and facilities since early 2011.

“Let me tell you something—if you can save a life on the battlefield, you can save a life in an ambulance. If you can oversee a convoy or millions of dollars of assets in Iraq, you can help manage a supply chain or balance its books here at home,” Obama said at the plant. “If you can maintain the most advanced weapons in the world, if you’re an electrician on a Navy ship, well, you can manufacture the next generation of advanced technology in our factories like this one. If you’re working on complex machinery, you should be able to take those skills and find a manufacturing job right here—right here at home.”

But unfortunately, Obama said, many returning veterans with such advanced skills “don’t get hired simply because they don’t have the civilian licenses or certifications that a lot of companies require.”

At the same time, the president noted, business leaders often say they can’t find enough workers with the skills necessary to fill open positions.

“Eighty percent of manufacturers say this, according to one survey,” Obama said. “So think about it—we got all these openings and all these skilled veterans looking for work, and somehow they’re missing each other.”

That doesn’t make any sense, the president said, noting it’s time to fix it.

“Today, I’m proud to announce new partnerships between the military and manufacturing groups that will make it easier for companies to hire returning servicemembers who prove they’ve earned the skills our country needs,” Obama said. “Soldiers, sailors, Marines, airmen, Coast Guardsmen—if they’ve got skills in machining or welding or weapons maintenance, for example, you’ll have a faster track to good-paying manufacturing jobs.”

“Servicemembers with experience in logistics or maintenance on the front lines” will “have a faster track to jobs in those fields here at home,” he added.

The initiative will enable up to 126,000 servicemembers to obtain civilian credentials and certifications in a number of high-demand industries, officials said.

“I applaud President Obama’s initiative to help thousands of servicemembers obtain industry-recognized certifications for the trade skills they have learned and worked hard to master while in uniform,” Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta said in a statement issued today.

The Defense Department has created a military credentialing and licensing task force as part of the initiative, officials said. It developed partnerships with major manufacturing credentialing agencies to expand certifications to active duty military personnel in the fields of engineering, logistics, maintenance, and welding.

“Supported by the efforts of the Defense Department’s military credentialing and licensing task force, these certifications will give our returning troops a leg up in a competitive job market, and they will make it easier for veterans to transition to civilian life,” Panetta said.

Servicemembers can earn these credentials free of charge. The Services will also explore how credentialing opportunities can be integrated into existing military training programs and expanded to include everyone with relevant skills and training, the officials said.

The initiative was developed in response to a report on veterans’ employment by the President’s Council of Economic Advisers and the National Economic Council. The report, *Military Skills for America’s Future: Leveraging Military Service and Experience to Put Veterans and Military Spouses Back to Work*, describes the difficulties faced by veterans and military spouses in transitioning their military experience to civilian employment.

Three such partnerships will begin this summer, the officials said.

The first, a partnership between the Manufacturing Skills Standards Council and the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps, will involve a pilot program for a limited number of servicemembers. They will be eligible to “achieve industry-recognized credentials that can support a transition from military service to frontline jobs in the growing fields of ad-

vanced manufacturing and logistics,” according to a statement issued by the White House.

The second partnership, among the Army, the American Welding Society and the National Institute for Metalworking Skills, will provide unlimited certification testing at the U.S. Army Ordnance School at Fort Lee, Va., for soldiers in certain machinist and welding specialties.

The school trains about 20,000 servicemembers each year to develop, produce, and maintain weapons. Servicemembers who acquire these specialties will automatically receive the equivalent civilian credentials.

The third partnership, between the Army and the Society of Manufacturing Engineers, will expand certification opportunities for officers and warrant officers at the Army’s Engineer School at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. The school will conduct a one-year pilot program for students to qualify as Certified Manufacturing Technologists and earn Lean Bronze Certification—industry-standard manufacturing engineering certifications.

“Going forward, the president and I will remain committed to addressing the full range of challenges our troops and their families face as they leave the Service, and to making sure that these men and women have the support they so richly deserve,” Panetta said in his statement. “They are a national asset, and they stand ready to continue making our country great in their civilian careers.”

### **AF Officials Launch Online Civilian Retirement Tool**

*AIR FORCE HUMAN RESOURCES (JUNE 13, 2012)*

*Kathryn Lapichino*

JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-RANDOLPH, Texas—Air Force human resources officials added a new feature in May to the Employee Benefits Information System Web application that allows Air Force appropriated fund civilians to request benefits-related actions online.

The HR Link module will help civilians prepare for retirement, request a retirement estimate, and acquire the necessary paperwork to pay a military or civilian deposit.

“HR Link provides a means for civilians to submit a request for a retirement estimate as well as military and civilian deposit requests,” said Sharon Mack, Air Force human resources specialist. “The module asks a series of questions to help civilians submit their requests. After a request is submitted, they will be able to monitor the status of their requests through the myPers website.”

The module is the latest online tool developed by the Air Force Personnel Center Benefits and Entitlements Service Team to improve the customer service experience for civilians. It is accessible in EBIS through the Air Force Portal or the myPers website at <https://mypers.af.mil>. For additional information regarding HR Link, go to the myPers website and enter 4408 in the search box. EBIS access instructions may also be found on the myPers website by entering 4872 in the search box.

*Lapichino is with Air Force Human Resources.*

### **Review Panel Urges Changes in Combat, Incentive Pays**

*AMERICAN FORCES PRESS SERVICE (JUNE 21, 2012)*

*Jim Garamone*

WASHINGTON—The 11th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation recommends changes to combat pay and changes to special and incentive pays while saying current military pay rates are about right.

Tom Bush, the study’s director, said the review also recommended further study of compensation of wounded warriors and their caregivers, for survivors, and making compensation for reserve-component servicemembers consistent. Bush and Jeri Busch, the Pentagon’s director of military compensation policy, spoke with reporters yesterday and stressed that the review’s findings are recommendations. While some of the recommendations may become reality, they said, the review—convened by President Barack Obama—is meant to inform White House, congressional, and Defense Department leaders.

The review found that military compensation compares favorably against private-sector pay, Bush said. Enlisted pay is at the 90th percentile of overall pay meaning it is ahead of 90 percent of comparable civilian workers’ pay. The review graphed enlisted regular military compensation against civilians with high school diplomas, civilians with some college, and civilians with associate degrees. Servicemembers do better than these comparable civilians at any point in a 20-year career, the study found.

Commissioned officers’ regular military compensation is higher than that of 83 percent of civilians with bachelor’s and master’s degrees.

The review recommends an overhaul of combat compensation, Bush said. The review recommends setting hostile-fire pay higher than imminent danger pay and having more than one level of imminent-danger pay to reflect varying levels of danger in different locations authorized for the pay.

A QRMC survey of servicemembers indicates that they believe combat compensation is unfair, Bush said, noting that the longer servicemembers are in the military, the better the benefit is for them. Because they receive higher pay than junior personnel, senior servicemembers receive more benefit from the combat zone tax exclusion for military pay. The vast majority of those under fire are junior personnel—both officer and enlisted—who do not benefit as much from the tax exemption, Bush said.

The review also recommends replacing the combat zone tax exclusion with a refundable tax credit, Bush said. “Even if their tax bill is zero, they are going to get that credit back if it is refundable,” he added. The combat tax credit would be linked to coming under hostile fire, Bush explained.

Another suggestion from the review is a direct-support tax credit linked to imminent danger pay. “We would also suggest that the tax credit ... be prorated,” Bush said. “If you are not in the zone, if you are not exposed to danger, you don’t get it.”

The review also recommends an annual recertification of combat zones, which are designated by presidential executive order, in the same manner as declaration of a state of emergency.

The review also delved into pay incentives such as bonuses and monthly incentive pays the Services use to manage particularly vital career fields. For example, nuclear officers, aviators, and some military medical personnel receive special pay. The review recommends establishing a general career incentive pay authority that isn’t linked to specific career fields such as aviation or medicine, but could be tailored to grow or shrink as circumstances warrant.

President Barack Obama’s letter of instruction on the review panel’s mission specifically cited four examples: special operations forces, remotely piloted vehicle operators, linguists and translators, and mental health experts, Bush said.

The QRMC is looking at whether an authority exists to offer a career incentive pay that can be applied to any career field deemed critical. The review recommends that rather than just asking for another special pay category, the Defense Department would have the authority to pay anyone—cryptanalysts, for example—when needed, Bush said. This would require legislation, he added.

The review also made recommendations on wounded warriors and their caregivers, and for survivors. The review found that wounded warriors are well provided for financially, and

recommends continued study of wounded warriors’ earnings and disability payments to monitor long-term financial well-being. Another recommendation looks to create a seamless transition between the Defense and Veterans Affairs departments for servicemembers leaving the military. The review revealed that DoD and VA need more empirical data on the financial situation of wounded warriors’ caregivers, and the report recommends more study of this.

Finally, the review recommends modifying the survivor benefit plan to allow surviving spouses to receive the portion of the SBP annuity funded by retiree premiums.

### **Reforms Improve DoD’s Security Clearance Process, Official Says**

*AMERICAN FORCES PRESS SERVICE (JUNE 21, 2012)*

*Donna Miles*

WASHINGTON—Reforms in the personnel security clearance process have improved the speed and efficiency of background investigations and adjudications with a direct, positive impact on the Defense Department’s ability to carry out its mission, a senior defense official told Congress today. Streamlined policy and processes have cut duplication and waste, Elizabeth A. McGrath, the Pentagon’s deputy chief management officer, told a subcommittee of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee.

Reforms also have reduced the time required to adjudicate clearances even lower than the 20-day goal Congress set in the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, to as little as seven days, she reported.

McGrath attributed this success in large part to a new electronic adjudication capability developed by the Army and now deployed across DoD. The Case Adjudication Tracking System enabled the department to adjudicate 110,000 cases—or 24 percent of its secret clearance applications—electronically last year, she said. This, in turn, freed up adjudicators to concentrate on other, more complex cases.

Other federal agencies have expressed interest in this technology, McGrath told the panel. So far, the Department of Energy has adopted the new system, and the Social Security Administration plans to do the same next year, she said.

In addition, DoD also has initiated a “robust” adjudicator certification program that ensures all adjudicators receive comprehensive, standardized training, McGrath reported.

“The results are clear, she said of the reform initiatives. “We have a higher quality security clearance program today.”

One of the tangible measures of that progress was the Government Accountability Office's removal of the DoD personnel security clearance process from its "High-Risk list" last year, she noted. The list, provided to Congress every two years, identifies federal programs at high risk for waste, fraud, abuse, mismanagement, or in need of broad reform.

DoD's improved personnel security clearance process has a sweeping impact on the Defense Department, McGrath said. "It improves our ability to safeguard classified material, place qualified individuals in jobs faster, effectively use our contractor workforce, and reduce the burdens and inconveniences on both the federal workforce and our military members," she reported.

Joining officials from the Government Accountability Office, Office of Management and Budget, Office of Personnel Management, and Office of the Director of National Intelligence at today's hearing, McGrath credited the Joint Reform Team founded five years ago with paving the way for these strides.

One of the big outcomes, she said, was the establishment of the Performance Accountability Council that bridges agency divides and keeps each agency on track toward even greater efficiencies.

The work isn't yet done, McGrath said, emphasizing the importance of continued collaboration in reaching toward greater efficiencies and cost-effectiveness in background investigations and adjudications.

"Our results represent the progress possible when agencies commit to joint goals informed by government-wide priorities and establish proper controls to ensure results," she said.

### **U.S. Army Acquisition Support Center—Competitive Development Group**

The Competitive Development Group—Army Acquisition Fellows (CDG/AAF) announcement will be open from Aug. 30 to Nov. 27 to all eligible personnel in grades GS-12 through GS-13 or broadband/pay equivalent positions who are Level III certified in any career field. The CDG/AAF Program is a three-year developmental program that offers assignments in program executive offices and offices of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics, and Technology; Headquarters, U.S. Army Materiel Command; and functional organizations. In addition, the program provides expanded training, leadership, experiential, and other career development opportunities. For more information, visit <http://asc.army.mil/web/career-development/programs/competitive-development-group-army-acquisition-fellowship/announcements/>.

### **U.S. Army Acquisition Support Center—Acquisition Leadership Challenge Program**

The Acquisition Leadership Challenge Program (ALCP) is the newest program in the Army's Acquisition Education and Training Portfolio. Based upon the huge success that the U.S. Air Force has had with ALCP, the Army piloted multiple offerings of the 2.5-day course in FY12. For FY13, the Army is bringing the course to you. ALCP teaches that self-awareness is the key to both leadership and diversity development, and helps people to create an innovative culture through understanding each individual's preferences and behaviors, paying close attention not only to how they interact with co-workers, but also to how others view them. This approach includes addressing people's unconscious biases to help them discover new approaches to doing things, and emphasizes the strength and power in accepting individual differences to produce a stronger "whole." The ALCP training will ensure that people can communicate with their supervisors through a common language and will help develop leaders who value individual styles and behaviors, creating a leadership corps that is more capable of critical thinking, problem solving, teamwork, collaboration, creativity, and innovation. ALCP is broken into two separate, 2.5-day courses.

Look for announcements coming out shortly for early FY13 offerings.

<b>FY13 ALCP Plan</b>		
<b>DATE OFFERED</b>	<b>TYPE (ALCP I or II)</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>
Oct. 29 - Nov. 2	Level I & Level II	Atlanta, Ga.
Nov. 5-9	Level I & Level II	Alexandria, Va.
Dec. 3-7	Level I & Level II	Huntsville, Ala.
Jan. 14-18, 2013	Level I & Level II	Atlanta, Ga.
Feb. 25 - March 1	Back-to-back Level I offerings	Huntsville, Ala.
March 11-15	Level I & Level II	Huntsville, Ala.
April 29 -May 3	Level I & Level II	Aberdeen, Md.
May 20-24	Level I & Level II	Atlanta, Ga.
June 10-14	Back-to-back Level I offerings	Warren, Mich.
July 29 - Aug. 2	Level I & Level II	Huntsville, Ala.
Aug. 19-23	Back-to-back Level I offerings	Aberdeen, Md.

For more information, visit <http://asc.army.mil/web/career-development/programs/acquisition-leadership-challenge-program/>.

### **Air Force to Offer Online Training Site for Contracting Professionals**

*AIR FORCE MATERIEL COMMAND PUBLIC AFFAIRS (JUNE 29, 2012)*

*John Scaggs*

WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Ohio—When officials launch the Air Force Contracting Learning Center SharePoint site July 12, it will culminate efforts to provide contracting professionals with a single entry point for continuous learning.

Per DoD Instruction 5000.66, contracting professionals must accumulate 80 continuous learning points every two years. The learning center, which is accessible at [https://cs.eis.af.mil/airforcecontracting/training\\_repository/default.aspx](https://cs.eis.af.mil/airforcecontracting/training_repository/default.aspx), will facilitate meeting that requirement.

Air Force Materiel Command, whose mission includes providing acquisition management services and logistics support necessary to keep Air Force weapon systems ready for war, is leading this Air Force initiative for an enterprise approach to contracting training. AFMC employs 3,765 contracting professionals, or about 40 percent of the total Air Force contracting workforce.

Creation of the learning center is in support of the Air Force Contracting Strategy Council's Goal 2, which involves "aggressively recruiting, developing, retaining, and supporting a trained and capable Air Force Contracting corps, ready to meet the Air Force and Joint Contracting mission." Goal 2 team members included participants from Air Force Contracting, five Air Force Major Commands, and the Air Force Personnel Center.

The learning center also supports AFMC's "Year of Continuing Education" initiative.

According to Col. Roger Westermeyer, AFMC Contracting deputy director, the learning center provides numerous advantages and opportunities.

"Content will be viewable in three ways: by process, Federal Acquisition Regulation part, or topic," the colonel said. "Process view aligns with the new Contract Information Management System. This view will provide buyers ready access to learning material at their desktop computer while buyers are in a particular procurement phase. The concept is to instantly connect buyers to knowledge or subject matter experts while buyers are performing their jobs.

"The learning center will allow people at all levels, from unit training monitors to senior contracting officials, to examine existing training materials and extract relevant information

instead of developing new content," Westermeyer said. "This will eliminate the need for local units to expend resources developing training because the learning center will provide it for them."

Mary Petkoff, a procurement analyst in Headquarters AFMC's Contracting Processes Management Division, added that consolidation of material onto the learning center will provide more consistent and standardized contracting training across the Air Force.

"More than 70 contracting organizations throughout the Air Force, as well as MAJCOMs and other organizations, are sourcing, developing, and maintaining training products," Petkoff said. "Additionally, people are maintaining more than 20 training repositories and/or portals, many of which reside in Air Force Knowledge Now, which will be eliminated. The learning center will reduce redundancy and enhance standardization and quality of contracting training materials.

"Content owners will be responsible for maintaining and updating material to ensure information is current," Petkoff continued. "While many content owners for topics appearing on the site will reside in AFMC, the learning center currently has content owners at SAF/AQCP, Air Force Logistics (AF/A4), and Air Force Space Command. Efforts to add knowledgeable content owners from across the Air Force continue.

"Related to this is the concept that the learning center was set up to link to source documents, so that when a source document is updated, that information is updated on the learning center," Petkoff said.

More content will be migrated to the learning center through incremental phases, which is often referred to as spiral development. For instance, at the initial rollout the contingency contracting section of the learning center will contain material on the mobilization phase of deployment. Additional training material will be added later for the buildup, sustainment, and redeployment phases.

According to Westermeyer, the need for a centralized learning center arose from an increased demand for training while at the same time resources to develop and maintain training material have decreased.

"About 40 percent of the Air Force's contracting workforce has less than five years of experience," the colonel said. "Contracting staffs at all levels throughout the Air Force are shrinking, and we face the potential of more budget and personnel cuts. By consolidating contracting training

content into one location, we can be more efficient and effective in providing quality standardized training content to the workforce.”

AFMC’s interest in leading the effort to create the learning center escalated following the command’s reorganization announcement in November 2011. AFMC is consolidating its centers from 12 to five as part of AFMC’s response to a Department of Defense challenge to find efficiencies and save tax dollars. AFMC officials say that by reducing and consolidating overhead, the command will improve the way it accomplishes its diverse mission and will provide better support to the warfighter.

“As we move forward, we must train and develop our people to fully implement the Better Buying Power initiatives,” Westermeyer said. “This requires a firm understanding of contracting processes and principles as well as industry business practices. The Air Force Contracting Learning Center will help us get there.”

### **Railways Industry Announces Job Opportunities for Vets**

*AMERICAN FORCES PRESS SERVICE (JULY 10, 2012)*

*Lisa Daniel*

WASHINGTON—Soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines considering separating from the active duty military this year may seek employment options in the railways industry, which today became the latest to pledge jobs to veterans. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood announced the 5,000-job pledge in a conference call with reporters, making rail the latest industry to offer jobs as part of the Joining Forces campaign. He was joined by Ed Hamberger, president and CEO of the Association of American Railroads, and Navy Capt. Brad Cooper, director of Joining Forces, which First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden, created to help servicemembers, veterans, and their families.

Obama and Biden announced the hiring campaign last summer, with a goal of hiring 100,000 veterans or military spouses by 2013. Today, Cooper said, 1,600 companies have signed on to the Joining Forces challenge, hiring 90,000 veterans and spouses with pledges to hire 170,000 more in the coming years.

What is unique about today’s announcement, Cooper said, is that the 5,000 rail jobs are open now or in the very near future. They are listed on the association’s website, [www.aar.org](http://www.aar.org).

The jobs, offered by about 500 companies, range from operating locomotives to working in signaling and telecommunications. “It’s the whole spectrum of work,” Cooper said. Most of the jobs are in freight rail, but also with Amtrak, commuter rails, and rail supply companies, he said.

The industry is hiring because it’s growing, Hamberger said, with some \$23 billion in investments at the same time that nearly a quarter of the freight rail workforce will be eligible to retire by 2015.

“We want to reach out and let veterans know that we’re hiring,” he said.

The industry has actively recruited veterans since it sought out military academy graduates to build the first railroad system more than 200 years ago, Hamberger said.

“We’ve learned that the skills servicemembers learn in the armed forces translate very well to our industry,” he said. “We, first and foremost, are focused on safety. You learn in the armed services that if you don’t follow the rules, bad things happen.

“We need teamwork, dependability, and high tech,” he added, noting that military experience builds those skills.

The rail industry made more than 20,000 new hires last year—which was more than 5,000 than it expected—and one in four are veterans, Hamberger said.

Improving the nation’s railways and hiring veterans are two of President Barack Obama’s priorities, LaHood said. “Today’s generation of heroes has made the United States safer and more respected around the world,” he said. “The president has asked that we serve them as they have served us.” About 15,000 veterans work for the Transportation Department, LaHood said, and 3,000 of those have disabilities, many from their military service. The department recently created a Web portal—<http://www.dot.gov/veterantransportationcareers>—“that tells our returning warriors what jobs are available and how they can become certified,” he said.

“Helping our veterans find work and fulfilling our transportation needs is a win-win,” he said.

### **SBA Program Helps Veterans Start Businesses**

*AMERICAN FORCES PRESS SERVICE (JULY 12, 2012)*

*Terri Moon Cronk*

WASHINGTON—Transitioning servicemembers and veterans will be able to learn how to become entrepreneurs

through a U.S. Small Business Administration-sponsored pilot program, SBA Administrator Karen G. Mills told reporters here yesterday.

Operation Boots to Business: From Service to Startup is a pilot program designed to provide the training, tools, and resources that transitioning service members and veterans will need to establish businesses, Mills said.

"We know that a quarter of veterans are interested in buying or starting their own businesses," she said.

The pilot program will begin at four Marine Corps bases: Quantico, Va., Cherry Point, N.C., and the Camp Pendleton and Twenty-nine Palms installations in California.

Mills said the SBA wants veterans to have the capital, advice and counseling, and access to federal contracting opportunities to start, build, and grow successful businesses.

"Operation Boots to Business will increase their likelihood of success," Mills said.

The program has four phases:

- Exposure to entrepreneurship as a potential career path, which will be offered to all servicemembers leaving the military;
- In-person and interactive classroom training;
- A feasibility analysis for potential business plans; and
- An eight-week online course outlining the basics of business ownership.

Mills said the SBA has partnered with the Defense and Veterans Affairs departments and a network of resources to train 20,000 returning Marines. By fiscal year 2013, she said, the program will be offered across the board to transitioning servicemembers.

### **Harnessing the Power of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math**

*AIR FORCE ACADEMY PUBLIC AFFAIRS (JULY 24, 2012)*

*Amber Baillie*

U.S. AIR FORCE ACADEMY, Colo.—The chair of the U.S. Air Force Academy's Engineering Division and head of the Aeronautics Department here said the nation faces a crisis in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and math.

To help avert the crisis, Col. Neal Barlow and other academy officials are developing educational workshops for teachers such as the STEM boot camp held here July 11-13 and 16-18.

The academy hosted its third STEM boot camp, divided into sessions for elementary, middle school, and high school teachers. Ninety-eight teachers attended this year and were encouraged to become STEM enterprise managers at their schools.

Barlow said the percentage of college students who chose majors associated with STEM has dramatically decreased over the years and led to more wealth being produced overseas. In order to develop new technologies and new products, Barlow said kindergarten through 12th grade teachers play a critical role in the expansion of STEM students.

"The purpose is not only to bring together the curriculum and materials needed for effective STEM, but also the resources and partners in the community to effectively do STEM," said Billy Crisler, the assistant professor of aeronautics here and director of the Academy's K-12 STEM Outreach Center.

The boot camp included projects on GPS use, rockets, space medicine, history, and economics.

"The projects were related to cyber defense, marine engineering, robotics, and aviation," Barlow said. "The first week was like a college course, to help teachers understand fundamentals of space and how you would use it in your classroom as a theme to teach everything. It's a lot of material, but it allows them to take a portion they're interested in and use it as a lesson plan."

Barlow said the Academy supports the Challenger Learning Center of Colorado to provide opportunities for teachers and students year-round in addition to the workshops.

"The center has a very robust, effective network throughout the Pikes Peak region with the local schools," Crisler said. "It's very easy for us to engage with them and we're able to execute what we want because they have such a great relationship with all of the school districts."

Crisler said when kids are doing STEM properly, it looks like chaos: It involves taking things apart, putting them back together, setting things on fire, and breaking them.

"That's why engineering is different than basic science," Barlow said. "One of our challenges is most of our children are only introduced to math and science. They think all engineering is about sitting in your cubicle all day and solving equations, but it's not."

"Engineering is producing things that have not existed before," the colonel said. "It certainly relies on math and sci-

## Career Development

ence fundamentals, but it's about designing things, figuring out how to solve problems, leveraging new technologies as they emerge, and developing other new ones."

Crisler said there is a distinction between the STEM academic mission to undergraduates here and K-12 STEM outreach.

"There are three different kinds of activities with STEM here," Crisler said. "There's the undergraduate education mission, outreach mission, and this new institutional outreach to the community, where we're trying to be a partner with the rest of the community and solve this together."

Tracey Tomme, president and CEO of the Challenger Learning Center of Colorado, said the center closely evaluates teachers at boot camp.

"We take evaluation data on everything we do, because ultimately this is a research project and education research is always tricky," Tomme said. "We ask the teachers at the end of the boot camp what they got out of it and ask them about six months later how they're using things in the classroom. The goal is to get them interested, keep them interested, and sustain it."

The STEM boot camp is only one component of the academy's K-12 STEM outreach. Individual faculty and departments conduct a wide range of activities, such as the STEM Outreach Club created by cadets.

"In addition to going out to K-12 classrooms, interacting with students, and judging science fairs, if you're somebody who needs a cadet to come and do something STEM-oriented, the club will send you someone," Barlow said. "This is done by the cadets with their desire to go out and be a part of that."

Barlow said those initiatives make an impact.

"Billy and I don't motivate kids like cadets do," Barlow said. "Cadets are very important to us."

Crisler said the next big step is the follow-up.

"We will know if we succeeded two or three years from now when we are having a conference where two dozen other communities and regions come to us and say, 'How did you do this?'" Crisler said. "We're investing in an infrastructure for these programs and the people who sponsor them to create and market these things nationally."



Teachers Bobbie Bastian, left, and Warren Astler watch their rocket launch July 12, 2012. The teachers were participating in the U.S. Air Force Academy's STEM Boot Camp, which helps introduce science, technology, engineering, and math into the teacher's curriculum through projects learned in the educational workshop.

U.S. Air Force Photo by Elizabeth Andrews

Representatives from New Mexico, Tennessee, California, and Arizona attended the boot camp to observe and gather ideas for STEM outreach in their state.

Barlow said the hope is to solicit STEM interest, provide materials, and help teachers institute age-appropriate and cognitive techniques that explore science and math.

"By the time students come out of middle school, they've not all decided for sure if they're going to be engineers or scientists, but most of them have decided they will not be," Barlow said. "If you're going to capture them in those areas, you've got to capture them during that time."

### **Panetta: Program will Help Transitioning Troops Get Jobs**

AMERICAN FORCES PRESS SERVICE (JULY 25, 2012)

Lisa Daniel

WASHINGTON—A redesigned program for servicemembers separating from the military will help veterans better apply the experience they've gained in uniform, Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta said.

President Barack Obama announced the revamped program, called "Transition GPS," in a speech yesterday at the Veterans of Foreign Wars national convention in Reno, Nev.

"I applaud the leadership of President Obama to bring together government agencies around the goal of enhancing career opportunities for servicemembers," Panetta said in a statement. "Our personnel have developed extraordinary technical expertise and world-class leadership skills that are in high demand. Transition GPS will help military members apply their experience to additional training, formal education, and develop successful civilian careers."

Transition GPS is the first major overhaul of the military's Transition Assistance Program, or TAP, in nearly 20 years, White House officials said. TAP was developed by an inter-agency team from the departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, Labor, Education, and Homeland Security, along with the Office of Personnel Management and the Small Business Administration.

Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric K. Shinseki said the redesign will better ensure that veterans today and in the future will receive the care and benefits they have earned.

"One of our fundamental responsibilities as a government is to properly prepare and support those serving in our military so they are career-ready as they transition back into civilian life," he said. "This collaborative effort will have an impact well beyond this current generation of individuals returning from combat."

The redesign is being developed by the Veterans Employment Initiative Task Force created in August to help separating servicemembers successfully transition to the civilian workforce, start a business, or pursue higher education.

TAP consisted of pre-separation counseling and a voluntary, three-day workshop from the departments of Labor, Defense, and Veterans Affairs that was presented at selected military installations and attended by nearly half of the servicemembers who separated from the Services each year, White House officials said. Transition GPS is designed to

strengthen, standardize, and expand counseling and guidance for servicemembers before leaving the military, and transform the military's approach to education, training, and credentialing, they added.

Transition GPS is to be implemented throughout the military by the end of 2013.

It will:

- extend the current three-day transition program to five to seven days;
- offer individual assessment and counseling, including an individual transition plan;
- include a five-day curriculum of financial planning, available veterans benefits and services, and a redesigned employment workshop;
- include a "Military Occupational Code Crosswalk" to translate military skills, training, and experiences into civilian occupations and credentialing;
- include optional training specific to pursuing higher education, technical skills, and training, or starting a business;
- include a "capstone" event to verify that the participant is career-ready;
- give a "warm handover" to appropriate government agencies and organizations for continued benefits, services and support of veterans; and
- create a "Military Life Cycle Transition Model" to incorporate career readiness and transition preparation early into a servicemember's career.

### **New Civilian Pay System on The Way**

AIR FORCE PUBLIC AFFAIRS AGENCY (JULY 25, 2012)

Master Sgt. Cecilio Ricardo

WASHINGTON—All Air Force civilian employees are slated to be using a new, standardized Air Force pay system by June 2013.

The Automated Time Attendance and Production System will standardize the pay method across the Service and will be implemented first at Air Force Global Strike Command and Air National Guard bases on July 29.

According to Doug Bennett, associate deputy assistant secretary for Air Force Financial Operations, the system will be implemented Service-wide in eight waves during the next year and is meant to save time so personnel can focus on accomplishing the Air Force mission.

"It allows folks to focus on the mission, and allows the Secretary of the Air Force and Chief of Staff of the Air Force to make informed decisions about where we need to spend our money," Bennett said.

---

## Career Development

Along with better accountability and efficiency, the system also eliminates paper use. Currently, many Air Force civilians manually report their hours using the old paper-based system, Bennett said. ATAAPS will allow a user to enter his or her time and have the supervisor approve it electronically, providing an audit trail, while increasing the accuracy of financial statements.

"It's a lot easier to trace timecards when it is centrally located," said Benjamin Yarish, Air Force Financial Management Information Technology Portfolio manager.

According to an Air Force study, 50 percent of the Air Force's civilian timecards were not properly approved by supervisors, or entered into the Defense Civilian Personnel System in a timely manner.

These inaccuracies have resulted in overpayments, underpayments, or, in some cases, no payments, according to the study.

"This standardized system will provide transparency and auditability," said John Koski, director of Air Force Information Systems and Technology.

"When your boss spends two hours every other week signing time cards, that's time that person isn't making sure that aircraft are being repaired or ready to fly," said Bennett.

The Air Force is not the first Service branch to use the system.

"This system has been around for about 10 years. Army is already using it. Navy is looking to use it," said Yarish. "Therefore its track record provides confidence to use the system Air Force-wide."

The first bases to receive the ATAAPS system are Barksdale Air Force Base, La., Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo., Minot Air Force Base, N.D., F.E. Warren, Wyo., and Malmstrom Air Force Base, Mont.

"I think this is a great step forward," said Bennett. I hope folks approach this system with an open mind and embrace this opportunity."