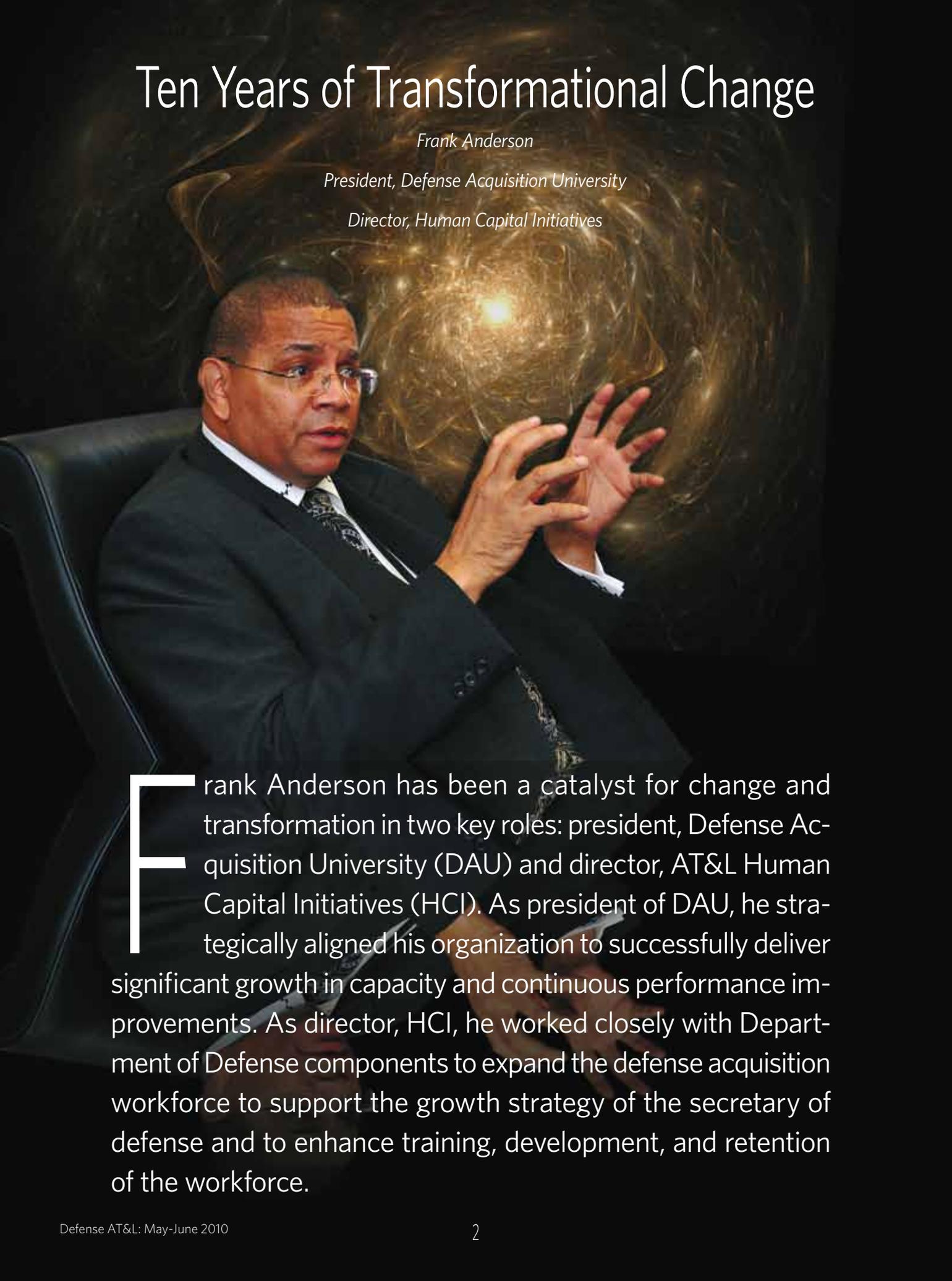


# Ten Years of Transformational Change

*Frank Anderson*

*President, Defense Acquisition University*

*Director, Human Capital Initiatives*



Frank Anderson has been a catalyst for change and transformation in two key roles: president, Defense Acquisition University (DAU) and director, AT&L Human Capital Initiatives (HCI). As president of DAU, he strategically aligned his organization to successfully deliver significant growth in capacity and continuous performance improvements. As director, HCI, he worked closely with Department of Defense components to expand the defense acquisition workforce to support the growth strategy of the secretary of defense and to enhance training, development, and retention of the workforce.

Under Anderson's direction, DAU greatly expanded the availability of acquisition learning assets for the acquisition community. In fiscal year 2009, DAU increased course graduates to 195,000 (up from 154,000 in fiscal year 2008—an increase of 19 percent). In addition, over 493,000 students completed DAU's continuous learning modules in fiscal year 2009 (an increase of 48 percent). Total learning assets provided to the workforce increased by over 2 million hours (from 7.6 million in fiscal year 2008 to 9.7 million in fiscal year 2009—an increase of 28 percent). In FY10, DAU is projected to surpass all of its FY09 achievements (which were the highest in its history). In addition, DAU led the industry in the development of advanced learning technologies by testing cutting-edge software related to DAU course development and delivery; and virtual world environments, such as DAU Nexus, to provide global reach; and by piloting multimedia gaming and simulations and other emerging technologies, such as TelePresence. In addition, the Defense Acquisition Portal was deployed and significantly improved enterprise knowledge sharing on a massive scale. One month after implementation, the site received over 12 million hits and has continued to average over 18 million per month. The state-of-the-art single gateway provides acquisition information and recommended best practices, creating an anytime, anywhere 24/7 learning environment.

After 10 dynamic years of innovation and transformation, Frank Anderson has retired as president of the Defense Acquisition University and as director, HCI. Anderson spoke to *Defense AT&L* before his retirement and reflected on some of his achievements and his hopes for the future.

**Q** Can you begin by providing an overview of your roles and responsibilities as DAU president and director of Human Capital Initiatives? Can you talk about the importance of both roles and how you interface with senior DoD leadership?

**A** As president of the Defense Acquisition University, I believe I am the inside DAU representative of the senior leadership team and the functional leaders who depend on DAU to deliver learning assets to the acquisition workforce—a community that numbered about 133,000 people at the end of fiscal year 2009. We are a growing community. I also spend a lot of time focusing on the strategic direction of DAU. We are blessed with a very strong leadership team. My challenges are ensuring that I stay connected with the defense leadership team and that we have DAU focus on things that represent value to the people who are out doing the acquisition work—that we create and build and

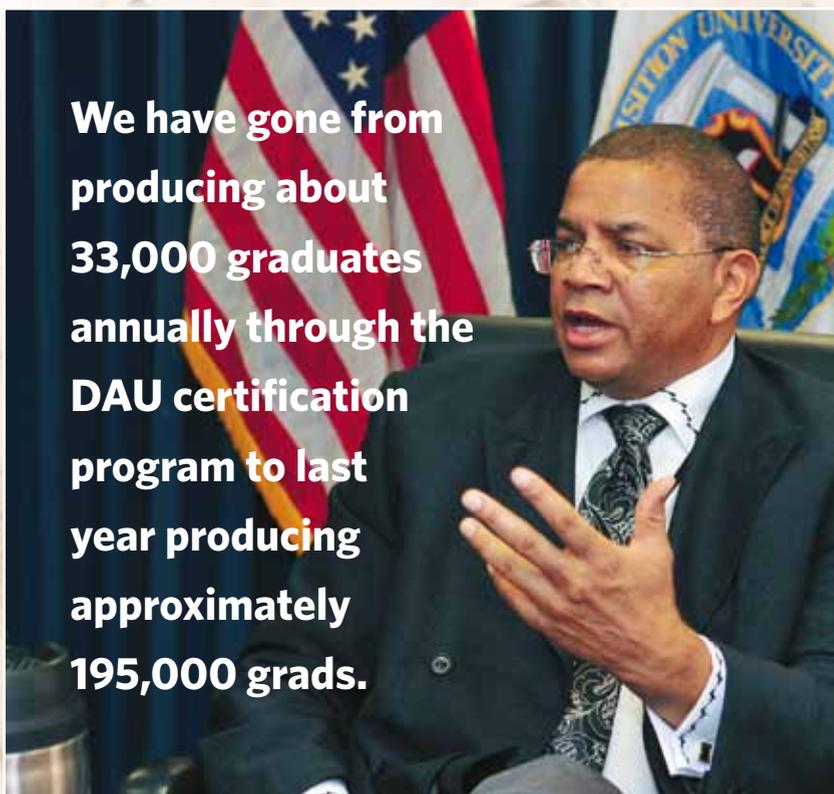
sustain a world-class learning environment for the members of the defense acquisition team who execute the acquisition mission every day.

**Q** You became president of the Defense Acquisition University on Oct. 31, 2000. During your 10 years as leader of the DoD corporate university for acquisition professionals, what major changes has DAU undertaken?

**A** First, we have become very customer- and workforce-centric. We are driven by what we perceive as the needs and desires of the acquisition workforce. We have functional integrated product teams that develop the learning outcomes they want for their members of the acquisition workforce. We then take those learning outcomes and turn them into training that is delivered. We are very good at connecting back to the workforce.

We changed the organizational structure of DAU by moving from the central location here at Fort Belvoir, Va., to major regional locations: the West Region, the South Region, the Mid-Atlantic Region, the Midwest Region, and the Capital and Northeast Region. The strategic relocation of our major teaching centers to those locations where we have large centers of acquisition workforce members was a major change in how we are organized and how we deliver training.

When I first came to the university, approximately 33 percent of the DAU budget went to travel and per diem expenses. Today that is about 17 percent. In fact, what we did



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was unique in that we self-funded our transformation, and we did that with two overarching strategies. First, we relocated the campus structure so that we reduced the need for travel for resident training. Second, we performed a strategic review of our curriculum and our curriculum development process to build the right balance between the content that would be delivered through resident courses and the content that we would deliver across the Web—creating a blended learning environment. Those were the two predominant drivers that allowed us to reduce the overall costs of travel and per diem. Because of the support and top cover we received from our senior leadership team, we were allowed to reuse savings and reinvest in learning products and services for the acquisition community.

I think the other big initiative is that we are very selective about the faculty and our senior leaders. They are true professionals and acquisition practitioners. The single highest-rated item at DAU—and we measure almost everything—is the faculty member in the classroom. Our focus on the quality of the DAU faculty and the DAU team puts the university in a position where several faculty members have come to DAU, taught for several years, and then have been selected to fill key leadership positions in the Pentagon and other federal agencies. I am very proud of the outstanding caliber of the DAU team, the DAU staff, and the fact that the staff is being recognized throughout the DoD community and the corporate learning sector.

**Q** DAU is currently undergoing what's being called its second transformation. Can you talk about some of the elements of the transformation? Where is this transformation leading DAU? How is the university emphasizing learning at the point of need?

**A** The second transformation is simple and straightforward: How do we become better connected to the workforce so that we can deliver learning assets at the individual's learning point of need. The schoolhouse will never be good enough alone—no schoolhouse is. You can never schedule a resident course so that it is convenient for every individual. What we are trying to do now is to capture all of our learning assets and make them available to the workforce so that they can get to those learning assets when they need them.

Let me expand on that a little bit. A world-class corporate university has a great e-learning infrastructure, and it also delivers great resident courses. We are linking our e-presence and our resident presence in a way that all of our learning resources are available to the acquisition workforce at their convenience. If a workforce member has gone through a course, resident or e-learning, it may have been a while since he or she has been called on to use the competencies learned, but because of a mission requirement, he or she needs an operational understanding of the subject now. There's no time to wait for a class that will be taught a month from now, or to get scheduled for a course, or to get TDY

funding—the workforce member needs to connect to that learning asset immediately, even if it is a weekend. The e-presence linkage enables that person to connect to information and use it on the job at the learning point of need.

We are also connecting policies and procedures. We are linking e-learning and resident training material (a kind of "open university" construct), and we have a very robust, enterprise-wide knowledge-sharing system, including many communities of practice that people can connect to when they have a need. It is the totality of these resources for members of the acquisition workforce to access at will that we believe will keep DAU on the leading edge of transformation learning assets.

**Q** DAU's mission is to support a mission-ready defense acquisition workforce that develops, delivers, and sustains effective and affordable warfighting capabilities. Can you discuss ways that DAU is meeting that mission?

**A** The second transformation is a continuation of the foundation that is in place today. It is accepting the belief that there is no "there." Many people who look at the accomplishments, the achievements, and the progress we've made today might say, "Well, we've done great. We're there." But the business world and the challenges of the acquisition workforce don't stay in one place. We have to move with the pace of business to ensure that we're prepared to support the mission of the acquisition workforce and the acquisition community. And, of course, we also have our critics and we accept criticism from all sources as we try to continuously improve our products and services.

We're trying to improve the courses that the community has indicated they want and need. We are developing new programs, such as the Basic Contracting course, the CON 90 course, that in and of itself is a transformational course. What we are doing is preparing contracting employees through a deep immersion course to think critically and to become the knowledge workers that people have talked about for several years. While this course is a resident course, students operate from their computers every day in class. They do research, they connect to policies and procedures on our websites, and they learn how to connect to other learning resources. When they return to the workplace, they become a part of the transformation of how DoD will be completed in their workplaces. This is a four-week deep immersion course in the fundamentals of contracting. Students leave with a very deep knowledge and understanding of the basics of contracting.

What we see is a mutually enriching environment where newer employees coming into the workplace will be mentoring their superiors in terms of the availability of information and learning resources, and the more senior employees will be mentoring the newer employees with their corporate

knowledge of how to do things and what the policies and procedures mean.

As I leave, I have a certain remorse and sadness that I will not be able to continue to participate and share in everything that is ongoing, but I am really excited about what I believe is going to be the state of training over the next three to five years and the products and services that DAU will be able to deliver to the community.

**Q** *DAU developed the Performance Learning Model to provide a visual representation of the training and additional learning assets the university provides. Can you give an overview of the Performance Learning Model and how it has evolved over the years?*

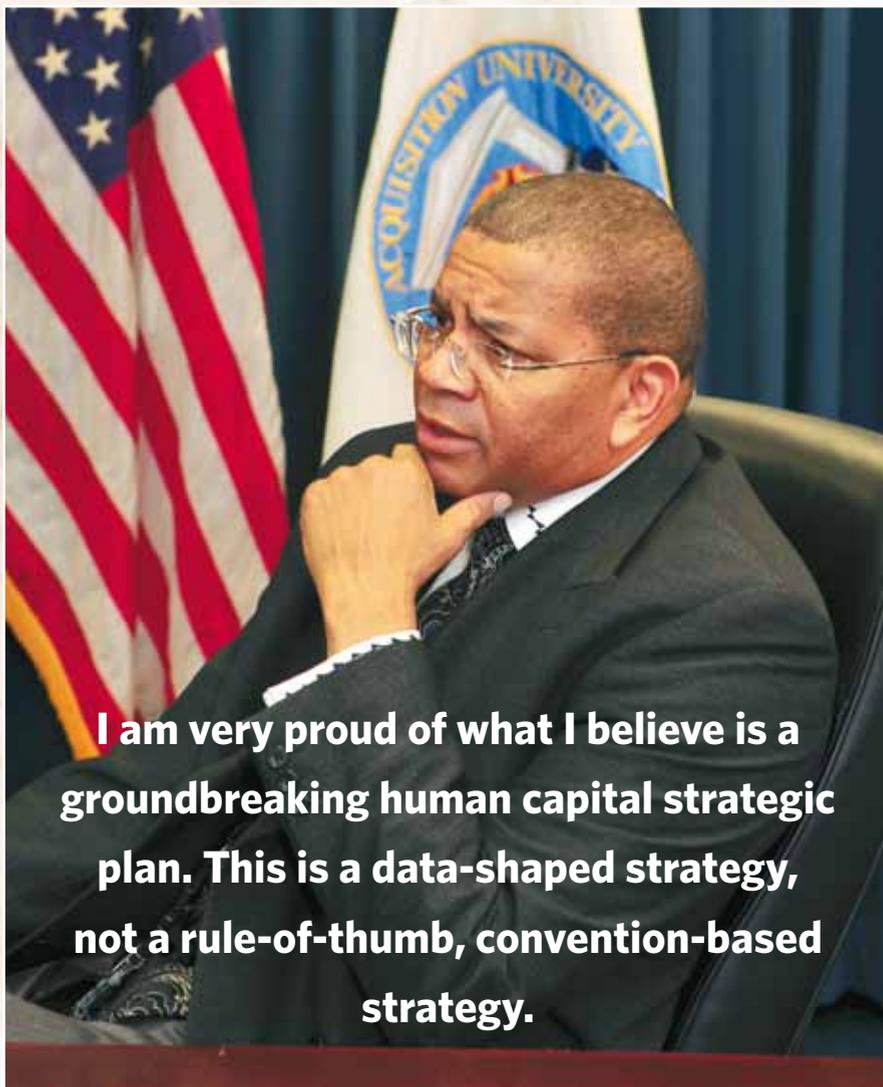
**A** When I came to the university, we were only one dimension. We delivered resident classroom courses and trained around 33,000 people a year. We started to look at what DAU really does for the community and how we should be organized and shaped to perform our mission. We concluded that DAU was in the knowledge-sharing business. We knew that we should be making resources and the intellectual capital of the department broadly available to the community, and while we delivered training in the classroom, we had a gap.

We started to look at how we get at those two dimensions, and then as we thought about it, we asked ourselves how to make contact with the community? We believed that there were things we needed to do with the acquisition workforce whereby we would serve the community through group activity resident courses, conferences, and seminars; and then there was the connectivity we needed with individuals through the Web presence, where an individual who needed a resource and didn't have time to get into a course could reach out and draw on the intellectual capital properties of the department because he or she needed a specific bit of information and needed it now. It was through trying to understand how we could connect with the workforce and what our business truly was that we came up with the Performance Learning Model (PLM).

The construct was to build a learning architecture that would allow a

member of the acquisition workforce to be connected with the university 24 hours a day, seven days a week. And even when workforce members were not at DAU participating in a course, they would have the capability to reach back and review things discussed in a classroom, to reach back through the university to touch others they might need for special projects. That was how the Performance Learning Model evolved over time with the thoughtful work of a lot of really smart people.

The Performance Learning Model is how we have organized all of our learning resources. Think about communities of practice—they didn't exist when I came here. Look at the idea of performance support, the way we have organized, and it is all tied to the organization. Moving the physical structure of DAU allowed us to connect with program teams and actively participate in helping the acquisition workforce solve real problems. The e-presence and the Continuous Learning Center started in 2001. That first year, we had about 5,000 people participate; this year, we had almost 500,000 participate. And that has grown by word of mouth, where people in the field were saying, "Hey, do you know



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that these resources are available.” We now have over one million users on our on-line student accounts. And these are assets that were not available just a few years ago. Technology has increasingly accelerated our ability to provide what and when they need it anywhere and anytime.

The important thing to recognize when you look at the growth is that we have gone from producing about 33,000 graduates annually through the DAU certification program to last year producing approximately 195,000 grads. Phenomenal growth! But through 2006, we had no increase in budget. Because of the Secretary of Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Program that was announced April 6, the community is allocating more resources to DAU. We are on a path of growth right now. We are creating more classrooms because the community wanted more resident training; we are expanding our e-presence and improving the quality, content, and interactivity of our Web-based courses. I am excited about what the university will do in the future.

I have had a great 10-year run. I’ve enjoyed every day, the people that I’ve worked with, the challenges that we’ve dealt with, and I am just as excited about what the university will be doing in the future. I think we are in a great place. We have an outstanding team in the university today—so in many ways, I am envious of whoever is selected to replace me. And I want to make a plug for both Dr. Ashton Carter [*under secretary of defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics*] and Frank Kendall [*principal deputy under secretary of defense for Acquisition and Technology*]. They have both been very strong advocates for the acquisition workforce and fantastic supporters. We are blessed to have two excellent leaders who have clearly communicated their efforts and support for the workforce, and for the university. That is very encouraging, and I am convinced their leadership will be an integral part of the continued growth of DAU.

**Q**  
You also are director of Human Capital Initiatives for the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics. What priorities have you focused upon as director, HCI?

**A**  
Director of Human Capital Initiatives is a role that I started in 2006, and it has been very exciting to help shape the Department’s human capital strategic plan and human capital strategy for the acquisition workforce.

The human capital strategic plan for the acquisition workforce has been completed and sent to the Hill. I am very excited about that. It was one of the major milestones I wanted to complete before my retirement. This strategy, we believe, is going to be a game changer. This has been a very complex program to work; it involves all of the components and defense agencies that are responsible for leading and developing their acquisition workforces. We had great teaming and partnering with the comptroller community, with the human

resource community, as we literally worked all elements of the Department in shaping this program.

There is no doubt that without the very strong leadership of Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, who is committed to making major investments in the acquisition workforce, we would not be where we are today. Dr. Carter has taken on a very active leadership role. He has reinstated the Acquisition Workforce Senior Steering Board. This board involves all of the senior acquisition executives; all of the Office of the Secretary of Defense functional leaders for program management, contracting, engineering, cost estimating, the IT community—all are in the room at the same time as we go through and look at the status of the initiatives that we have.

Senior leadership is actively involved and engaged in shaping the future of the acquisition workforce. One of the controversial issues was insourcing [*moving positions from contractor-controlled to government-controlled*]. There have been a lot of negative comments along these lines: “Well, that wasn’t strategic. You guys rushed into it. You’re chasing numbers.” Nothing could be further from the truth. All the Services were actively engaged in shaping their particular community and deciding how they wanted to reshape their workforce for the future. We had priorities. The Department wanted to improve its oversight capability, to improve pricing capability within the department, and to build up our contracting workforce. We wanted to strengthen our systems engineering capability within the Department, as well as program management.

The Services, who are responsible for their force planning, did an outstanding job of trying to understand the right configuration for their workforce as they move to the future to ensure that they can manage the work that they believe they will be responsible for. They were actively involved, and I think they did an outstanding job.

Again, I credit Dr. Carter and the reestablishment of the Acquisition Workforce Senior Steering Board. It gets everyone together, and all the initiatives are reviewed by the senior leadership. I think that since I have been in the people business over the last 10 years, this has been the most strategic initiative that we have worked. There are improvements that will be made to acquisition workforce training, work that we are doing to build a stronger technical/engineering capability, rework of courses and logistics, and the strengthening and improvement of our Web presence. We are creating the Living Library where we are starting to record acquisition experts—people with strong backgrounds in acquisition—so that their expertise will be caught and so people can capture the lessons learned and previous experience. We have created a very robust lessons learned capability that is available for the community.

When we consider the fact that the acquisition workforce is a very mature workforce, we are capturing that experience

so it will be available for the future workforce. How do we deal with the fact that we know we are going to lose members of the senior acquisition workforce—how do we capture that expertise so that it will still be available to the acquisition community and future workforce as lessons learned? The Living Library—all of these things are in place and we are starting to get usage out of it.

**Q** *As you look back on your 10 years at DAU, what are things that you believe are important attributes for a learning officer within the Department of Defense community?*

**A** I think it is important for a chief learning officer to connect to the community that he serves, and to connect to the business of mission objectives of the senior leadership team he supports. I think you need great people skills because you have to deal with various senior leaders throughout the acquisition community and the people who come to the campus. I think probably the most important thing is you need to bring a strong passion for working with people and a strong care for the mission. You need to come here really wanting to make a difference, and it is not just here at DAU—anyone who is wanting to be a chief learning officer needs to have a strong commitment to the mission and a strong desire to help people. I think it is important to have a pretty good sense of humor because at times, the job can be very tough. A sense of humor helps you to get through the hard points.

I think you need to care about people, especially your team. You need to be a team builder because for a learning enterprise as large as DAU, there are so many issues and challenges that you have to deal with at once. If you are uncomfortable handling multiple challenges at once—multi-tasking—the job can be very taxing. The building of relationships is very important. You have lots of people you have to deal with, but you also need to be loyal and understand the principles of alignment.

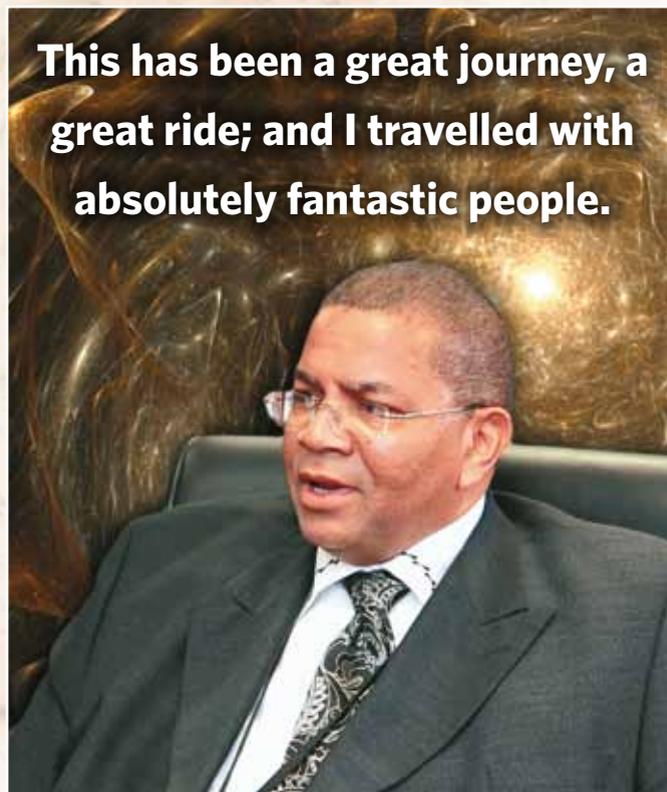
Learning organizations don't exist for themselves. They are established for one reason alone: the development of a specific segment of the workforce. You need to understand that mission, and you need to stay focused on the cus-

tomers. It is not about a schoolhouse, not about the learning organization; the focus must always be aligned and attuned with the workforce you support.

It is also important you develop an enterprise perspective. You can't have a narrow point of view. You must connect to the point of view of the leaders you represent. You've got to understand the mission objectives, and that means there are times you will need to compromise on things that you might believe are best for the community for the greater benefit of the enterprise. Ultimately, you exist to support employees who are depending on the schoolhouse to help them excel at their jobs and to stay aligned with the leadership team in terms of mission support.

**Q** *Is there anything in particular about your time at DAU that you think will be your greatest achievement or the item of which you are most proud?*

**A** There are just so many things I am proud of. I will start off by saying I love how DAU has come together as a team. We are truly a great team with lots of great players throughout the organization. I am very proud that we took on two really big missions. Being president of DAU and running DAU—that is clearly a big, important, full-time job. I am very proud of the fact that we were asked to do the human capital strategic plan, that senior leaders thought that we could bring the right strategic perspective and understanding of the acquisition workforce and the acquisition mission because of the work that we are doing with the university.



I am very proud of what I believe is a groundbreaking human capital strategic plan, as I mentioned earlier. This is a data-shaped strategy, not a rule-of-thumb, convention-based strategy. I think that we have a capability to analyze the workforce and an understanding and appreciation of the acquisition workforce that does not exist in any other place. It took a lot of hard work and a lot of great teammates to get us to where we are today.

A lot of good work is also going on in the components. It is not just about the human capital role, although I am very proud of what I think we accomplished during my time here. It is the state that I believe the ac-

quisition community is in, in terms of shaping a strategic view of where we should be taking the community. We are pulling together. Over time, we have had a number of disagreements, and we have worked through a lot of very hard and complex issues. I just feel very good about where we are in terms of our understanding and the strategy that is in place.

There is an old saying that once conventional wisdom congeals, facts and data don't seem to matter. We are changing that paradigm. Human capital strategy is data-driven. The leadership is engaged. They are reviewing information, and we are shaping decisions on the basis of that. I don't want to declare 100 percent success, but we do have the right foundation in place, we do have the right oversight structure, and we do have the right people engaged—so I feel very good about our state. We will obviously be better a year from now and significantly better two years from now, but the right foundation is in place for us to make monumental change in terms of how people management has occurred in the past.

I am excited about the leadership team that is in place here at DAU. It is the best team I've worked with. They are dynamic and they bring strong leadership talents to the playing field. Faculty are still the highest-rated resource in DAU; they have consistently stayed above the 6.5 scale on a 7-point scale, and that is hard to do over time. Our ongoing initiatives to upgrade and improve the quality of the course content are very exciting.

I'm proud of the awards that we have received from independent agencies and industrial agents. They clearly say that we are a sector leader. We've received awards from *Computerworld*; we've twice received *Chief Learning Officer* magazine's Chief Learning Officer of the Year award; our e-infrastructure has been recognized as best in the industry; and DAU has been selected as the best corporate university in America by almost every organization that makes those kinds of assessments. I've had the privilege to be part of a world-class team. My wish is that everyone in the university and the people that have worked with the acquisition workforce and on the human capital strategy all feel the same sense of pride that I do about the things that we have collectively achieved.

I feel extremely good when I am out traveling around the Department and I run into someone who says, "Sir, I've just taken a course and it was absolutely outstanding." That is probably the best compliment that I can get from anyone. That is positive confirmation from those who use our products and services that they are as good as we believe they are.

Now having said all that, we cannot become complacent. We have to continue to strive every day to be the best that we can be. What I like about this team is I believe that happens every day. I don't think the recognition that we have



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received means luck; it is about hard work that really great people have put in.

**Q** *Is there anything else you'd like to add?*

**A** I have been in the Department of Defense for 44 years. I spent seven years enlisted before I was commissioned. I spent 27 years as an officer, and by the way, during the seven years I was enlisted, I was selected for tech sergeant before I was commissioned. I retired from the U.S. Air Force as a brigadier general. I was very proud of my service and the people I dealt with—I've been blessed during my enlisted time and as an officer. I was around great people, I had great leaders. I had people who mentored me along the way who, I believe, really cared about me and tried to make a difference; so I've attempted in every job I've had to live up to the standards of those who mentored me, shaped me, and provided unique opportunities for me to try to make a difference.

I believe you are blessed if you have a job you love going to every day, if you can work around people you enjoy being around, if you can do things that you believe are important and make a difference. When you look back, you can walk away believing that you really did make a difference. As you know, I love sports and sports analogies. I believe if you play the game and play it as hard as you can, and you walk away believing you've left everything on the playing field, you walk away with a sense of pride because you know you gave it your best. For those people I have worked with, I'd like to believe they feel that I gave my very best every day and I left it all on the playing field. This has been a great journey, a great ride; and I travelled with absolutely fantastic people.

**Q** *Mr. Anderson, thank you for your time.*