

Conversations with the DACMs

Their Views and Visions for the 21st Century Acquisition Workforce

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Today is definitely an exciting time for the Acquisition Workforce (AWF)! As a Department of Defense (DoD) acquisition professional, I can personally attest that the world of acquisition we once knew is continuing to change at a very rapid pace. Some of the main forces driving these changes are: new and different requirements; improved technology; fewer dollars; and a smaller, aging workforce.

At first glance, it almost seems like too much to manage, but the senior leaders of Acquisition Career Management are optimistic, hopeful, and comfortable with the progress we are making during this time of constant flux. All acknowledge, however, that actions on varying levels will be needed to address the newly identified needs and requirements—as well as those requirements not yet identifiable—that will enable acquisition professionals to better perform their jobs in support of the warfighter.

New Job, New Challenges, New Responsibilities

Two months ago I started a new position in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Acquisition Education, Training and Career Development (AET&CD) as a Program Analyst and Liaison to the Defense Acquisition University (DAU), where I previously worked as a Procurement Analyst and Professor of Contracting. Both AET&CD and DAU are a part of the Acquisition Initiatives (AI)

Office under the leadership of Donna Richbourg, Director, AI.

Having spent the past nine years of my career working in education and training, I felt somewhat comfortable that I understood what education and train-



Carolyn Bean-Willis
Air Force Associate DACM

ing meant and what was required as it pertains to acquisition. I was a little less confident in my understanding of exactly what career management is within the acquisition community.

I believe it is imperative that employees fully understand the mission, structure, and dynamics of an organization to make a contribution and hopefully, a positive difference. Based on that belief, I set out to research the *career management side* of my organization and share my findings with those who, like me at the time, may not be fully confident they understand Acquisition Career Management and all it encompasses. This article shares the results of my research.



Dr. James McMichael
DoD DACM



Lt. Gen. John Caldwell, USA
Army DACM

As background, I re-familiarized myself with **The Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA)**, Sub-

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chapter 1, **General Authorities and Responsibilities**. As stated in Section 1705, “**Directors of Acquisition Career Management in the Military Departments**”:

“There shall be a Director of Acquisition Career Management for each Military Department within the Office of the Service Acquisition Executive to assist the executive in the performance of his duties under this chapter. The Secretary of the Navy, acting through the Service Acquisition Executive, may appoint separate directors for the Navy and Marine Corps.”

Also stated in Subchapter 1, **Section 1703, “Director of Acquisition Educa-**



William “Bill” Hauenstein
Navy DACM

tion, Training, and Career Development”:

“The Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition shall appoint a Director of Acquisition Education, Training, and Career Development within the Office of the Under Secretary to assist the Under Secretary in the performance of his duties under this chapter.”

In addition, **Section 1707, “Personnel in the Office of the Secretary of Defense and in the Defense Agencies,”** states:

“(b) **Management**—The Director of Acquisition Education, Training, and Career Development, appointed under Section 1703 of this title, shall serve as the Director of Acquisition Career Management for the Office of the Secretary of Defense and for the Defense Agencies.”

Better informed, I set out to talk to the people who are accountable for the challenging responsibility of career management for the AWF, so that I might gain insight into their views and visions. Toward that end, I scheduled interviews with the Directors of Acquisition Career

Management (DACMs) for the Military Services and DoD.

Navy DACM

First, I visited William “Bill” Hauenstein, Director of Acquisition Career Management, Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Research, Development, and Acquisition). Hauenstein began by speaking of the tremendous impact of redefining *who* actually makes up the AWF. He discussed the assimilation process that Department of the Navy (DON) and the other Services are currently undergoing to complete the identification and count of the newly defined workforce.

To facilitate that task, the Services are using a new methodology (identification model) for defining the AWF. The model builds on the Packard Commission algorithm of using occupational and organizational data for identifying the workforce.

According to Hauenstein, the number of DON personnel covered by the DAWIA legislation has grown as a result of the new methodology.

He also mentioned the need to enhance the acquisition personnel data management capability, the need to identify certification requirements for new members of the AWF, and ensuring that these individuals meet the certification requirements within specified timeframes.

Hauenstein shared that the Chief of Naval Operations has stated that the civilian workforce is a critical element of the DON manpower team, and that increased emphasis on how to reshape the workforce of the future is a high priority. He added that although the DAWIA model is not the only viable model to use in career development, it is certainly one that works and should be considered.

“Because we can not predict what’s going to happen,” Hauenstein stated, “we can not adopt any one system ... we must create systems with enough agility and flexibility to accommodate our changing and growing needs.”

He noted that with proper planning and precautions—which DON is developing and implementing—they will be prepared for the exciting, yet challenging times ahead.

Hauenstein concluded by saying that this Administration is dealing with significant change, exacerbated by the events of Sept. 11; and that John Young, the Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Research, Development, and Acquisition), by recognizing this need for change early on, is shaping the DON AWF of the future.

Air Force Associate DACM

Carolyn Bean-Willis, Associate DACM for the Department of the Air Force, was the subject of my next interview. Willis spoke of several initiatives that she—under the guidance of Darleen A. Druyun, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition and Management—would like to see implemented throughout the Air Force.

Willis would like to see the training required for acquisition certification tailored to include Just-In-Time and Re-

quirements-Based Training, so that training is based more closely on an individual's needs. The Air Force acquisition community, she emphasized, wants to focus more on results, not processes, and expects Evolutionary Acquisition to be the tool most used to put capability into the hands of the warfighter quickly.

Willis explained that the broader Air Force strategy is captured in a new initiative dubbed *Agile Acquisition*. Its thrust is to pare down acquisition cycle times and create an acquisition culture that promotes innovation and managed risk. Agile Acquisition, she added, is underpinned by six new *Lightning Bolts*, designed to be a road map for change. Of particular interest, Willis noted, are Lightning Bolts No. 3 and No. 4, which focus on changing the mindset of the community to promote the change inherent in adopting Agile Acquisition.

In fact, she added, the Air Force plans to establish a *Change Culture University*, designed to create and nurture innovation in the Air Force acquisition community. The idea is to expose the AWF to innovative ideas and approaches within the Air Force, DoD, and Industry. Because the Air Force is already an exciting place to work, Willis believes introducing new practices as well as improving upon some of the existing ones, will help attract and retain AWF personnel.

"Mrs. Druyun is a superb leader," she said. And one of the things Willis admires most is Druyun's philosophy on leadership, which is "... to help people become leaders, you must let them try out leadership." This is something, Willis pointed out, "that Mrs. Druyun practices and tries to cultivate throughout the Air Force acquisition workforce as an innate part of career development and management."

Army DACM

Army Lt. Gen. John Caldwell, Military Deputy to the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Acquisition, Logistics, and Technology) is new to his position but already has some definite ideas of what

he wants to see happen in Acquisition Career Management within the Department of the Army.

Caldwell wants to ensure that the primary concern of the AWF is the warfighter—and that the warfighter *knows* that to be true.

"We must create excitement, by doing exciting things," Caldwell stated. "Then we must do a better job of advertising and marketing in our recruiting efforts."

He believes that the unfortunate attacks of Sept. 11 "shined the light" on public service, and although a horrible incident, it did help stop a lot of unwarranted public-service bashing.

DoD DACM

Last, I spoke with Dr. Jim McMichael who is wearing two hats as both the Director of Acquisition Education, Training, and Career Development and Director of Acquisition Career Management for the Office of the Secretary of Defense and for the Defense Agencies.

McMichael stated that "...in addition to what most people think is the primary role and responsibility of the DACM—managing training quotas and travel expenses—they must also identify resources and allocate them properly to effectively perform their duties."

He explained that the DoD DACM office is also responsible for developing policy, such as the Continuous Learning Policy, and managing programs such as the DoD Intern Program.

"Yes, I believe we are facing a crisis," McMichael stated. "We are experiencing the most dramatic demographic change in this century."

He believes, however, that DoD has some innovative recruiting initiatives. One is the DoD Civilian Acquisition Workforce Personnel Demonstration Project, which links pay to performance and the individual's contribution to the organization's mission. Another is the Human Capital Strategic Plan, which develops and implements a compre-

hensive needs-based human resource plan for the civilian AWF. McMichael believes DoD is definitely heading in the right direction, but acknowledges we still have work ahead.

AWF of the Future

Although all of the DACMs do not share the same level of concern regarding the possibility of an aging AWF crisis, each acknowledged that some action must be taken to improve our recruiting, hiring, and retention practices for the AWF of the future. During my conversations, the DACMs expressed slight differings of opinion as to which career field(s) should be targeted for intense recruiting, but those differences understandably appeared to be mission-driven.

Capitalizing on my visits with the DACMs, I shared a recruiting initiative I am working jointly with DAU—the DoD AT&L Student Education, Employment, and Development (SEED) program. This program is specifically designed to provide non-DoD workforce and college/university students with opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills to qualify for employment and obtain certification in the DoD AT&L workforce.

All were supportive of the concept and consider it a viable option where DoD experiences difficulty in recruiting for certain DAWIA-sanctioned career fields.

Assurance Renewed

Continuing to think of new and innovative ways to attract "youngsters" into the DoD AWF is and will continue to be a challenge and concern that must be addressed. Senior leaders in charge of and responsible for Acquisition Career Management are indeed not only aware of, but actively addressing the issues. I am reassured that our AWF of the future will be highly qualified, motivated, and ready to perform their complicated and complex jobs in support of the warfighter.

Editor's Note: Richard welcomes questions or comments on this article. Contact her at Marcia.Richard@dau.mil.