

Transformation of Acquisition Training within DoD

DAU Poised to Offer Students a 21st Century Transformed Training Environment

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I am truly proud to be an acquisition professional working within the Department of Defense (DoD) today. The professional education and training DoD has afforded me over the past 20 years, as well as my current studies at the Naval War College (NWC), have more than equipped me to take my place in the professional acquisition workforce. And after completing the National Security and Strategic Studies curriculum at NWC in June 2003, I will have fulfilled all requirements of the Defense Leadership and Management Program (DLAMP).

DLAMP is yet another fine developmental program designed to provide Department of Defense civilians extensive leadership and management training and education. Its goals are to develop future civilian leaders who clearly understand DoD's national security mission as well as strengthen communication between senior military and civilian leaders.

NWC—A Life-Altering Experience

Prior to attending NWC, my DLAMP mentor, Air Force Brig. Gen. Darryl Scott, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Contracting, told me that attending NWC would be a life-altering experience. Well, he was correct—I am permanently altered in that my insight into the mindset and needs of the warfight-



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DAU President

ers I support has increased exponentially! Since NWC is my third graduate program, I can honestly say that it is the most intellectually challenging and mentally stimulating of my educational experiences. For the first time in my 20-year career, I have a real opportunity to learn, share, and gain significant insight into the warfighters—the men and women who are my ultimate customers, and whom I support as a member of the Acquisition Education, Training, and Career Development (AET&CD) professional staff.

As a student in the NWC senior class, last trimester we studied National Security Decision Making (NSDM). In NSDM, we discussed many interesting topics relevant to DoD's strategy and force planning, executive decision making, and policy making and implementation today. We examined the way DoD did business in the past, how the Department currently does business, and explored the concept of *transformation*, and how DoD will do business and fulfill its various missions in the future.

Having entered the career field of acquisition training in 1992 as a Professor of Contracting with the Naval Center for Acquisition Training—now a part of the Defense Acquisition University (DAU) Mid-Atlantic Region—I can personally attest to the remarkable transformation in acquisition training. This

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article seeks to share what I learned about the transformation of acquisition training not only from those NWC discussions, but also from two interviews I held with key acquisition executives.

DAU Transformation

Acquisition training within the Department of Defense has been and is transforming. The leadership of the DAU is determined to find new and improved ways to better serve the acquisition workforce and become a premier Corporate University. They are working side by side with their customers, developing the skill and know-how to provide just-in-time training for new and evolving practices and becoming more internally efficient by making data-driven decisions.

In January 2000, I served as a member of the DAU strategic planning team; from that time to now, DAU's transformation has been nothing short of remarkable. In January 2000, the University's transformation was in its infancy and since that time has fully matured. Currently, DAU has a Strategic Plan in place for the years 2002–2009, *Training Transformation (T2)*. As DAU President Frank Anderson has expressed on numerous occasions, "The strategic plan, the guiding strategy for managing the organization, must be a document that is continuously reassessed and updated. As long as we remember that, we are heading in the right direction. If ever we reach a point that we feel we've done everything correctly, that we're finished—that's when we are probably in trouble."

Strategic Relocation of Facilities

One of the first initiatives that DAU implemented was to strategically relocate its facilities (campuses) with major acquisition customers. Although this was a very intense process because of structural requirements as well as the physical relocation of personnel—both faculty and staff—the end result is a constant DAU presence co-located near commands with the largest concentrations of acquisition workforce members, which fosters closer professional relationships with the customers and, ulti-



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mately, enables DAU to build speed and agility into the products and services it provides.

Corporate University

As previously noted, DAU is now a Corporate University. By definition Corporate Universities provide customers tailored information and learning aids *when they need it*. This in no way means that DAU will cease to provide Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) training. On the contrary, DAU's success in providing certification training that satisfies DAWIA acquisition career field requirements is one of the areas of which it is most proud.

Tailored Training

In a short video DAU recently produced, *DAU Fine Tuning*, Anderson states, "Sat-

isfying our core competencies, providing certification training is one area where we've got it right; we will continue to monitor and update those courses, as required." Throughout the video and during a recent interview I conducted with him in December 2002, Anderson emphasized that providing tailored training (rapid deployment learning packages) with speed and agility on evolving practices such as evolutionary acquisition, will be a primary focus for DAU during 2003.

E-Learning

E-Learning is another area in which DAU is making tremendous progress. Anderson explained that in 1998, approximately 2 percent of the training provided by DAU was through e-Learning; in contrast, by 2002 70 percent of DAU graduates were participating in e-Learning to varying degrees. Although this is significant progress, he acknowledged that DAU is still learning and growing in this area, and added that DAU will also be establishing its Virtual Performance Learning Center this year.

Communities of Practice

The leadership throughout DoD has placed a lot of emphasis on the need for more collaboration throughout the Department. The establishment of Communities of Practice (COPs), which are online portals that subject matter experts from within DoD, civilian agencies, and industry can go to share information on various acquisition and acquisition-related topics, is but one attempt by DAU to foster and support the collaboration effort.

Metrics

Another area that DAU will be focusing on as a part of its transformation is efficiency. Proper balance is always crucial and although DAU has many exciting challenges ahead, it will also strive to become as efficient as possible, especially during a time of limited resources and budgetary streamlining. Anderson intends to make DAU a data-driven, decision making environment using metrics to support those decisions. Data-driven decisions were not necessarily the way DoD in general and

DAU specifically operated in the past. "All leaders must use their knowledge, experience, and intuition when making decisions," he stated, "but smart leaders use knowledge, experience, intuition, and *metrics*."

"Regardless of the challenges we in the acquisition training community face," Anderson concluded, "we must always keep foremost in our minds that all of our efforts, large and small, must constantly be reassessed to ensure that we are always providing our very best in support of the needs of the warfighter."

Customer Perspective

Claude M. Bolton, Assistant Secretary of the Army (Acquisition, Logistics and Technology) and Army Acquisition Executive represents the Army's acquisition workforce—customers—who receive training/certification through DAU. His diverse background affords him the ability to assess situations from various perspectives. Bolton was a warfighter and aviator tested in combat, served as Commandant of the Defense Systems Management College (DSMC), directed the Air Force Materiel Center (AFMC), and is a 1986 graduate of the NWC, to name a few.

"This is an unprecedented time of transformation," Bolton told me. "The Army has not seen such change in over 100

years." Although a great deal of progress is being made, he is concerned that we may be slipping in the acquisition community. He believes that rescinding the DoD 5000 series may be a part of the challenge because the 5000 gave managers direction on how to manage—and now that guidance may no longer be relevant.

Bolton supports DAU's e-Learning strategic direction in that, because of TDY constraints, incremental packages of tailored learning, delivered via e-Learning, represent a vehicle that the Army and DoD as a whole will have to perfect and utilize more in the future.

Noting that some new, innovative, and exciting changes are going on within DAU/DSMC, Bolton added that he would like to see a course(s) on "Lead Systems Integration" and "Other Transaction Authority" as opposed to all Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR)-based training.

Returning to his main focus during the interview—the warfighter—Bolton concluded, "The mission of the acquisition workforce, including the acquisition training community is ultimately to provide support to the warfighter, when and where required."

More Joint Operations

In March 2003, I entered my last trimester at Naval War College, "Joint Military Operations (JMO)." Jointness has been a constant theme throughout our seminars, and a topic we as students have debated and discussed extensively. Our discussions invariably concluded that the Services as we currently know them will not soon disappear and our armed forces become one Service, but most if not all of us agree that more joint operations will and should take place in the future. My personal conclusion is that we will see more joint operations, more joint acquisitions, and more training on developing joint policies, processes, and procedures for joint acquisitions.

Finally, although we are allocating energies and monetary resources for transformation throughout the Department, we are not preparing for the future at the expense of maintaining our current military superiority. It is still very reassuring for me to learn first-hand at NWC that *Air Dominance*, *Forward Naval Presence*, and *Boots on the Ground!* are still the warfighting strategies upon which our acquisition and procurement efforts must focus.

Editor's Note: The author welcomes questions or comments on this article. Contact her at marcia.richard@dau.mil.

IN MEMORIAM

Paul O. Ballou Jr.

The Defense Acquisition University has received word of the death of Dr. Paul O. Ballou Jr., in mid-June 2003, from a sudden massive brain hemorrhage. Often referred to around campus as the "Kentucky Colonel," Paul joined the Defense Systems Management College (DSMC) as a Professor of Contract Management and Financial Management (1978-79), and in 1980 became a Professor of Multinational Program Management.

He came to the college with more than 26 years of acquisition experience in buying and selling for major companies and government agencies. Prior to joining DSMC, he was Acquisition Manage-



ment Officer for the U.S. Army Information System Selection and Acquisition Agency; Director of Acquisition, Defense Mapping Agency Systems Center; and Director of Acquisition, National Defense Stockpile at the General Services Administration. He had extensive industry experience with the Hughes Aircraft Company and United Technologies Corporation in the fields of finance, contracts, and administration.

Paul was interred in Kentucky in June 2003. He is survived by his wife, Patricia, son Paul III, and daughter Jane.