

DSMCAA Sponsors 15th Annual Acquisition Symposium

“Developing the People Who Develop the Systems”

FRANK VARACALLI • COLLIE JOHNSON

The rolling green of Northern Virginia played host to the 15th Annual Defense Systems Management College Alumni Association (DSMCAA) Acquisition Symposium, June 23-25. Acquisition and contracting professionals from government and industry flew in from across the country to the DSMC main campus at Fort Belvoir, Va., to learn about the State of the College and the DoD acquisition workforce.

They also came to take advantage of the networking, knowledge sharing opportunities, and Acquisition Expo '98 exhibits, which gave government and support contractor offices an opportunity to demonstrate the latest acquisition education software tools and products.

The theme of this year's event was “Developing the People Who Develop the Systems.” Frank Varacalli, DSMCAA President and Lyn Dellinger, Vice President – Symposium, welcomed over 300 people on Tuesday, June 23. Immediately following the opening remarks, retired Army Brig. Gen. Edward Hirsch, the DSMC Acquisition Management Chair, delivered the keynote remarks on not only the past role of the college in educating the acquisition workforce, but also the vital importance of keeping up and accelerating the pace of acquisition education throughout the DoD acquisition workforce and defense industry.

Varacalli is President, Defense Systems Management College Alumni Association (DSMCAA) and currently works for SRA International, Inc. Johnson is Managing Editor, Program Manager magazine, Division of College Administration and Services, DSMC.

Serving the Warfighters

Hirsch began by saying that DSMC is a value-added institution. “We add value,” he said, “and I intend to convince you by fact, not hyperbole.”

Hirsch spoke of our armed forces and DSMC's role in training the DoD acquisition workforce, which has always developed and procured the world's best equipment and weapons systems for its warfighters. “We – you and I – and all of our predecessors were the ones responsible for getting the right equipment to the warfighters, and that's what this symposium is all about. It's about developing the people who develop the systems – but that's not enough.

“DoD's equipment and weapons systems,” he continued, “are developed to *win* with a minimum loss of American lives.”

Says Hirsch, “We have to be there first with the most and with the best equipment and trained personnel that we possibly can be there with. ‘There is no substitute for victory.’ We pay the penalty when we do something less than that. And we provide the forces with the equipment and the training to reach that high level of effectiveness.”

Stating that in his view, DSMC had done its utmost to serve the warfighters well, Hirsch spoke of the late David Packard, former Deputy Secretary of Defense and



SERVICE ACQUISITION EXECUTIVES PANEL. PICTURED FROM LEFT: JOHN DOUGLASS (ASN[RDA]); STAN SOLOWAY, DUSD(AR); KEITH CHARLES, U.S. ARMY DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF ACQUISITION CAREER MANAGEMENT; JOE DIAMOND, CHIEF, ACQUISITION CAREER MANAGEMENT, U.S. AR FORCE.

DSMC founder, who gave DSMC a very significant challenge 27 years ago:

Promote and support the adoption and practice of sound systems management principles by the acquisition workforce through education, research, consulting, and information dissemination; and become the academy of distinction promoting systems management excellence.

To meet that challenge, Hirsch spoke of the college's decision, back in 1971, to draw the DSMC faculty from the ranks of experienced professional practitioners — people with hands-on experience, who knew what had to be done and knew what to avoid. The prevailing thought at the time, according to Hirsch, was that DSMC could train good practitioners to be good educators, trainers, facilitators, and learning managers much more readily than it could train educators to become good practitioners with the necessary experience.

He attributes much of the college's success to following that policy and notes that the current DSMC faculty are experienced, dedicated, professional, knowledgeable practitioners, who are also good educators. "Whatever good we've done at this college," says Hirsch, "please recognize, has come from the excellent faculty and staff that we've had."

He went on to say that "Our leadership has also been extremely good. On occasion the leadership [particularly when I was provost] had to run to catch up...I personally never succeeded in that. We had to *run* just to *keep up* with a good faculty. And that's been the key to whatever measure of success we have at the college. The quality of our faculty shows up in everything we do."

Once DoD directed that all program manager candidates attend the program management course [1974], the value added, according to Hirsch, really began to surface.

He noted that the Air Force was the first to recognize the value added and the behavioral change that occurred when peo-

ple attended DSMC courses. The promotion rate to lieutenant colonel at that time in the Air Force was 62 percent. For DSMC graduates, it was 89 percent

Where is the Value Added?

In 1976, DSMC was redesignated as a college and over a period of 13 years, Hirsch told the conferees, DSMC continued to focus on programs that would enhance and promote the college's value added.

Surveys. DSMC conducted at least two major surveys of supervisors who were in a position to determine behavioral change on the part of DSMC graduates. Overwhelmingly, they responded that DSMC graduates were successful in transferring the knowledge and program management skills learned at the college to their day-to-day, on-the-job activities.

That, says Hirsch, is the value added. "It's almost impossible to quantify the value added of an educational institution. You can do this to some degree in the civilian world with a place like Harvard, Princeton, or MIT because of the number of industry folks who try to recruit their graduates and the money those graduates are paid. At DSMC, it's a behavioral change that shows value added. So if there's no value added, why be here?"

Baldrige Award. Throughout industry, Hirsch noted that a Baldrige award is the most significant event to a company's marketing reputation. In 1995, the American Society for Quality Control (ASQC), which sponsors the award, developed a pilot program that would bestow a Baldrige award on an educational institution that met the same kind of discipline and requirements as industry.

According to Hirsch, 13 academic institutions applied to participate in the Pilot, but only seven made the first cut. The next level of quality, he told the conferees, was identification of only three educational institutions to receive a site visit, which meant that six or seven Baldrige examiners went to an educational institution and went over all of the requirements to judge which organization most deserved the Baldrige award.

Said Hirsch, "DSMC was one of three educational institutions selected for a site visit, and ultimately became the first government agency to receive a site visit by a team of Baldrige examiners. Of the applicants, DSMC was the sole entity in government to succeed." He went on to say that although Congress ultimately did not continue the education pilot,

According to Frank Varacalli, over 300 acquisition professionals from government and industry organizations all across the nation attended the 1998 Symposium.



FRANK VARACALLI, DSMCAA PRESIDENT, OPENS THE ASSOCIATION'S 15TH ANNUAL ACQUISITION SYMPOSIUM AT DSMC'S SCOTT HALL AUDITORIUM, FORT BELVOIR, VA., ON JUNE 23.



"Norm" Augustine, former president and CEO, Lockheed Martin, was the evening banquet speaker for the symposium and also presented Colleen A. Preston, former DUSD(AR), the 1997 David D. Acker Award for Skill in Communication.

DSMC still assesses its educational program and standards according to the Baldrige criteria.

Commercial Practices, Military Specifications and Standards Reform, Cost As an Independent Variable. Hirsch spoke of how the DSMC Commandant, in 1979 was already advocating commercial practices, tailored performance specifications, and control of total life-cycle costs by program managers. Nineteen years later, Hirsch reflected, we see these same items surfacing again under a new title: Acquisition Reform.

That same Commandant, Hirsch noted, formulated the regional education program. Four years later, regional education was implemented, and DSMC now has four regions scattered around the country in an outreach program designed to bring acquisition education and training to the workforce at their various work sites.

"That," he says, "is something we're doing not only at DSMC, but also throughout the Defense Acquisition University." He went on to say that in 1979, DSMC's Commandant was also emphasizing the use of television and computer-aided in-

struction – somewhat similar to today's distance learning initiative.

In other words, Hirsch told the conferees, DSMC has been practicing Acquisition Reform long before it was institutionalized as DoD's preferred way of doing business.

Carlucci Initiatives. Hirsch spoke of how DSMC, on its own initiative, from 1981 to 1983 actively promoted and disseminated information on DoD's 31 [later 32] Carlucci Initiatives. Similar to the Army's current "Roadshow" initiative, DSMC developed brochures, audio cassettes, and supporting videotape presentations that they took all over the country to take acquisition information directly to the workforce, at their work sites.

Acquisition Reform – Early Beginnings. Reforming and streamlining the acquisition process, according to Hirsch, has been attempted by DoD a number of times. In every attempt, he told the conferees, DSMC has been an active participant from as far back as 1984.

"In 1985 and again in 1986," said Hirsch, "the Deputy Secretary of Defense di-

rected that DSMC conduct, with the assistance of all Services, a program or study effort (which was ultimately successful) that laid the groundwork for subsequent DoD acquisition workforce initiatives and formed the basis for the Defense Acquisition University."

In 1986, he continued, again by the direction of the Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition & Technology), DSMC began to educate and train all federal employees in what became known as a Total Quality Management or TQM effort [an effort, he noted, that the college had already started in 1982]. "This training," Hirsch said, "we presented literally hundreds of times."

In 1988, Hirsch continued, a major significant event occurred. The Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition & Technology) designated the DSMC Commandant as his executive agent to implement all of the functions of the proposed Defense Acquisition University, without actually becoming the university. From 1988 until October of 1992, this college did all of those things, Hirsch affirmed. "All of those things, and much, much more."

Section 800 Panel. One element of DSMC's performance that, according to Hirsch, was particularly noteworthy, was "The Section 800 panel." In Section 800 of the 1991 Authorization Act, Congress basically identified this college and enacted legislation that said DSMC would sponsor an advisory panel on streamlining and codifying acquisition laws.

Speaking of the two-year ensuing effort, Hirsch noted that the resultant report – 1,800 pages with an executive summary of 100 pages – established the very foundation upon which all subsequent activities of DoD's current Acquisition Reform efforts were built. "Without it," Hirsch stated, "in my judgment, there would not have been nearly the level of success in our Acquisition Reform efforts as we have attained to date."

As with the 1991 effort, in 1996 Congress recognized the college, Hirsch told the conferees, not only for the 800 Panel

work, but for the contribution – the value added – of the college to the acquisition workforce, to the stakeholders, to the Congress, to the Department of Defense, and DoD’s allied nations over a period of 25 years of its existence at that time.

International Activities. Highlighting a less well-known facet of DSMC’s activities, Hirsch said that DSMC has been a leader in international activities, virtually from its inception as the Defense Systems Management School back in 1971. “I believe the first really formal integration of our activities with foreign nations,” Hirsch remarked, “occurred in 1985 with Germany, and then in 1988 with England, but informally from 1974 on.”

He continued by saying that DSMC has worked with more than 30 countries on a worldwide basis to provide acquisition education and training, helping those countries understand acquisition and how it can, might, should, or should not be done. “When we [DSMC] discuss acquisition with other nations,” he explained, “we never say ‘This is how you should do it,’ because it’s up to each individual country to determine that. But we provide them a baseline from which they can then deviate.”

Research, Consulting, and Information Dissemination. Hirsch cited DSMC’s ROAR [Research of Ongoing Acquisition Research] online database as bringing real value added, not only inside and outside the acquisition workforce, but literally worldwide. He went on to explain that the ROAR database includes ongoing research activities conducted around the world and depends upon voluntary contributions of information.

Says Hirsch, “DSMC is now tracking over 3,000 acquisition-related projects because the people who are doing these projects think there is value added to putting their information into DSMC’s ROAR online database.”

Mentioning DSMC’s wide array of publications, Hirsch stated that DSMC now has more than 33 guidebooks that the

college makes available throughout the world, most of them free to DSMC students, alumni, and other government agencies. Other non-DoD and defense industry may purchase most of them, he noted, through the Government Printing Office at a reasonable price.

Another active effort he mentioned that benefits all of the acquisition commu-

“DSMC has worked with more than 30 countries on a worldwide basis to provide acquisition education and training, helping those countries understand acquisition and how it can, might, should, or should not be done.”



RETIRED ARMY BRIG. GEN. EDWARD HIRSCH, AC-QUISITION MANAGEMENT CHAIR, DSMC, WAS THE SYMPOSIUM KEYNOTE SPEAKER.

nity is the Military Research Fellows Program. Three major (promotables) or lieutenant colonels – one from each of the three Services [sometimes one from the Marines as well] – come to the college and spend a year, 12 weeks of which they spend at Harvard.

Their primary responsibility is to identify and publish the results of a research project – one which they unanimously agree is, or will be, of major value to the workforce and to the acquisition community at large.

Continuing, Hirsch told the conferees that another value-added aspect of DSMC is that the college has been continually responsive to requests from Congress for consultation and research. An example he cited was a major research effort that has been ongoing for years – working with the House Armed Services Committee concerning the industrial base.

Hirsch also talked about another element of DSMC’s research effort – an element currently under the mission and responsibilities of the Research, Consulting, and Information Division: training the DSMC faculty in how to do good research.

“We’re totally capable of teaching our faculty to do good research with in-house personnel. We have a problem though,” he admits, “in our faculty finding the time to teach the subject nearly as often as we’d like, for as many people as we would like.”

On the quantitative side, Hirsch stressed that the fact that DSMC responds to 75 to 100 requests per week for research and consulting is a clear indicator of value added – that the DoD acquisition community and defense industry are, in fact, taking advantage of the resources DSMC has to offer.

He also mentioned DSMC’s Management Deliberation Center, which averages five to seven users a month



"NoRM" AUGUSTINE PRESENTS THE 1998 DAVID D. ACKER AWARD FOR SKILL IN COMMUNICATION TO MARK SCHAEFFER, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, SYSTEMS ENGINEERING, DTSE&E.

and is in use an average of 20 days a month.

Qualitative measurement of value added in the research and consulting area is a little more difficult to project, he notes. "I use an analogy that's commonly known. If you find someone is hungry and you give them a fish, you satisfy them for a meal; but if you teach them how to fish, you can satisfy their appetite for life."

Ultimately, Hirsch says that contextual consulting is what DSMC is striving for, and he is quick to point out that it's much harder to do than merely answering telephones and questions over the "Ask A Professor" link to the Defense Acquisition Deskbook on the Internet.

"Contextual consulting is hard to do," says Hirsch. "It takes expert consultants, facilitators who are capable of causing the customer to learn how to improve their own processes in the absence of consultants after the consultants leave. That's what we try to do."

In the area of information dissemination, Hirsch traced how in 1972, DSMC started with a small newsletter with limited distribution. That small newsletter

became the *Program Manager* magazine, now read throughout the world.

He also spoke of the Defense Acquisition University's decision in 1994 to publish, through DSMC, the first issue of the *Acquisition Review Quarterly*, a refereed journal. And in 1995, he told the conferees, DSMC really stepped into the information age with development of its own Home Page on the Internet that puts the college in touch with the world.

Hirsch also talked about the push in 1995 for DSMC to actively market the college and its products by putting on exhibits and displays at conferences and symposia.

Speaking of Acker Library, the college's [and DoD's] first-class, most extensive acquisition-related library in the world, Hirsch said, "It's not the largest library in the world, but it certainly is the largest one dedicated to acquisition activities that we are aware. And it is available on the Web on our DSMC Home Page so that anybody, anywhere can tap into it.

"Our Learning Resource Center," Hirsch continued, "has the same capability. We serve our students and our faculty and government employees here, and it too,

can be reached through our DSMC Home Page."

Value As an Independent Variable

Offering a challenge/proposal to the conferees and reiterating that the proposal was his and does not represent the college or DoD's official position, he joined the conferees to consider the concept of "Value As an Independent Variable."

Noting that most of the acquisition workforce was familiar with Cost As an Independent Variable (CAIV), he stated that CAIV was indeed a wonderful attempt to move forward in Acquisition Reform and good for systems development. But from his point of view, he maintains that it is not right for educational efforts.

"What is right, is that for education it should be *value* as an independent variable, not *cost*," he asserts. "If you constrain education by cost without understanding the adverse impact on education," Hirsch cautions, "we're making a mistake."

To illustrate his point, he spoke of General George C. Marshall during World War II, who after the war, asserted time and time again that the major contributor to our success in World War II, from his viewpoint, was the education process that the Army put in place and continued from World War I until World War II.

Regardless of the fact that the U.S. Army was reduced in strength and that the pay of the officer corps was reduced by 50 percent, still the officers went to school. It left the combat elements short of leadership at times, but the U.S. Army did it — because it was right.

"Currently," Hirsch said, "the acquisition workforce is at war. We do the same thing during peacetime as we do during wartime. We try to develop the best equipment for our warfighters that we possibly can, and that's what we're doing now. *If we educate and train the workforce constrained by cost without regard for value, we're making a mistake.*"

Speaking directly to the Alumni Association, Hirsch asked them, as members of the DSMC Alumni Association, because they're postured and positioned to exert some measure of influence on DoD's acquisition policies and practices, to consider undertaking "Value As an Independent Variable" as one of their own, future thrusts.

To the Alumni Association

Hirsch commended the Alumni Association for its progress over the years. "You started out with virtually nothing, and you've done remarkably well."

He noted that in 1976, the Alumni Association had the first of three informal luncheons attended by as few as 60 people. By 1984, the Association held its first annual symposium. "And now in 1998," he commented, "the Alumni Association has a current membership of over 1,200 (and growing), four chapters (and growing), and now has an alumni foundation in the works. "That," he told the conferees, "is remarkable progress indeed."

Concluding Where He Started — The Warfighter

Hirsch said that his address at the Symposium was intended to show DSMC's past value added. Future value added, he told the conferees, would be discussed following his presentation by DSMC's Commandant, Navy Rear. Adm. "Lenn" Vincent.

Concluding his remarks where he started, Hirsch returned to the subject of the warfighter — the primary reason for the 15th Annual Acquisition Symposium. He reminded the conferees of their unchanging mission: to ensure that DSMC continues to educate the acquisition professional "to develop and provide the best equipment and weapons systems for the 21st century warfighter. That's the only reason that we have for existing."

State of the College

DSMC Commandant, Navy Rear Adm. "Lenn" Vincent, followed Hirsch's presentation on the college's past accomplishments with an update on the

present. He began by reiterating DSMC's goals:

To fulfill the acquisition management learning needs of customers, enable our people to operate as world-class teams, to serve as an institutional change agent, and to exploit technology to maximize effectiveness.

As Commandant, his plans for the college are to "stretch the limits of learning" and to "instill a sense of urgency for change" throughout the acquisition workforce.

"This symposium," he said, "gives our members an excellent opportunity to update their skills and to participate in a meaningful and informative dialogue with leaders in acquisition, education, and training."

Legislative Update, Panels, and More

Over lunch, attendees heard Mark Brasher, Senior Policy Director, Government Reform and Oversight Committee, U.S. House of Representatives, provide an update on developing legislation affecting the acquisition workforce. He also discussed legislation on Defense privatization and outsourcing.

After lunch, a panel discussion began on "The Acquisition Workforce in the 21st Century." Panelists were Keith Charles, U.S. Army Deputy Director of Acquisition Career Management; John Douglass, Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development, and Acquisition; Joe Diamond, Chief, Acquisition Career Management and Resource Division, Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force; and panel moderator, Stan Soloway, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition Reform).

Douglass acknowledged the Navy acquisition corps has 50 percent fewer people than in 1989. "With the op tempo higher for forward units," he said "we will need to maintain numbers or we will lose technical competency."

Charles and Diamond both acknowledged that the acquisition corps struc-

ture is shifting. Diamond said the Air Force would establish a "corporate structure" to which Soloway remarked that the structure must be redefined. Said Soloway, "This is not the time to salami slice the workforce."

Panelists then answered numerous questions from the conferees — many representing a workforce facing dramatic change.

After a short recess, the group reassembled in the auditorium for the second panel discussion of the day. "Acquisition Reform — Continuous Learning for the Workforce" was moderated by Dr. James McMichael, Director, Acquisition, Education, Training and Career Development, ODUSD(AR). Panelists included Alex Bennet, Director of Communications, Education, and Training, Acquisition Reform Office, U.S. Navy; Mary Thomas, Acting Director, Acquisition Career Management Office, OASA(RDA); and Air Force Col. William Selah, Chief, Acquisition Management Policy Division, SAF/AQ.

Each speaker brought their unique Service perspective on continuous learning and provided a face and point of contact for these initiatives.

Workshops — Focus on Lessons Learned

The second day of the symposium was an opportunity for attendees to break up into smaller classroom-size workshops. Twenty-four workshops presented by subject matter experts covered a variety of topics from "Keeping Current on the World Wide Web" to "Risk Management."

A big hit with participants were the "Acquisition Reform Success" classes with separate workshops focusing on the Services and OSD individually. Another crowd pleaser was the "Lessons Learned on Acquisition Reform" workshop, featuring Walter Zeitfus, Deputy Program Manager for the Advanced Amphibious Assault Vehicle. Zeitfus highlighted several improved procedures that bear repeating: *conducting training together (government and industry), changing the*

corporate mentality, and most importantly, listening to and empowering the workforce.

Other speakers on Day 2 of the Symposium included the luncheon speaker, Defense Acquisition University President, Tom Crean, who spoke on the "Future of Acquisition Education"; and the evening banquet speaker, Norman "Norm" Augustine, former Chairman of Lockheed Martin. Augustine, a frequent and popular participant in DSMCAA Symposia, spoke on "Restructuring the Defense Industry – One Person's Perspective."

David D. Acker Awards

Before beginning his presentation, Augustine presented the David D. Acker "Skill in Communication" awards for 1997 and 1998. The David D. Acker Award is presented annually in memory of former DSMC professor David Acker, to one distinctive individual who has promoted and communicated acquisition management excellence to the acquisition workforce.

The first award was presented to Colleen A. Preston, former Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition Reform), "for providing the inspiration, dedication, and energy that turned the concept of Acquisition Reform into a profoundly new way of doing business."

The 1998 award was presented to Mark Schaeffer, Deputy Director, Systems Engineering, Office of the Director, Test, Systems Engineering and Evaluation (DTSE&E), "for leading integration of functional disciplines, assuring effective risk management, and facilitating strong communications between the acquisition corps and the warfighter."

Day 3 — A Diversity of Speakers, Presentations

The last day of the Symposium began with a presentation from retired Navy Rear Adm. Frederick Lewis. Lewis is currently the Executive Director, National Training Systems Association. Introduced by Cathleen D. Garman, Vice President, Government Affairs, National Defense Industrial Association, he spoke on the subject of "Training Today's Work-

force." In a riveting presentation that drew a high level of interest from conferees, Lewis noted that the problem was training the military in an era of declining budgets and higher-cost items.

"This symposium gives our members an excellent opportunity to update their skills and to participate in a meaningful and informative dialogue with leaders in acquisition, education, and training."



DSMCAA COMMANDANT, NAVY REAR ADM. "LENN" VINCENT SPOKE ON THE STATE OF THE COLLEGE.

"It's tough," he said, "to try and justify expending live missiles during fighter-pilot training. Instead, we must start to focus on other, less costly ways to realistically train the workforce." Lewis cited simulation, modeling, and distance learning as three methods that industry has used successfully, and said that "Sikorsky and Boeing have cut time and man-hours on design costs with simulation." After his presentation, Lewis took questions from the conferees.

A Program Manager/Functional Board Panel, moderated by Defense Acquisition University President, Tom Crean, followed Lewis' presentation. Focusing on the "Program Management Office/Functional Board Perspective" in developing the people who develop the systems, panelists included Mark Schaeffer, Director of Systems Engineering, (DTSE&E), representing the Technical Management Functional Board; John C. Wilson, Jr., Executive Director of Air Force Materiel Command's Electronic Systems Center and Chair of the DoD Acquisition Management Functional Board; Marine Brig. Gen. (Sel) James Feigley, the Marine Corps Systems Command's Program Manager for the Advanced Assault Amphibious Vehicle; and Air Force Col. James B. Armor, Jr., NAVSTAR Global Positioning System (GPS) Program Director.

The formal part of the symposium concluded with a luncheon presentation by John Monroe, the 777X Deputy Program Manager in Boeing's Commercial Airplane Group. Monroe spoke on the "777 Program – A New Development Process."

DSMCAA Needs a Few Good Men and Women

Are you interested in joining the Defense Systems Management College Alumni Association? A future issue of *Program Manager* will address the many benefits of DSMCAA membership. Meanwhile, the DSMCAA Home Page at <http://www.dsmcaa.org/dsmcaa> on the Internet provides a wealth of activities on the Association, its activities, affiliations, membership eligibility, and even an online application for membership.