

PM Interviews DoD's New Chancellor for Education & Professional Development

Dr. Jerome F. Smith Jr. – Strong Advocate of
Developing an Educational “Net Worth”

P. A. BARNES

If it were up to Dr. Jerome F. Smith Jr., we would all have not only a rich financial portfolio, but also an educational portfolio that we invest in for life. That’s just one of the ideas he brings to the table as DoD’s new Chancellor for Education and Professional Development.

“I think it is important for people to have an educational portfolio much like a financial portfolio. As your financial portfolio has, hopefully, not minuscule holdings of stocks, bonds, or CDs [certificates of deposit], your educational portfolio would include similarly diverse investments: investments in formal schooling; investments in graduate education; investments in training courses; investments in seminars, experiences, and conferences; and investments in work experience.

“All of those,” he contends, “would sum up to some kind of a net worth that reflects your ability and readiness to undertake the kinds of challenges you want to take on, much the same way that your financial portfolio tells you whether you can meet the expenses of retirement or buy a new home, or whatever it is you want to do.”

Barnes is a professional journalist with over 26 years of military and civilian experience. She is retired from the U.S. Army Reserve, where she served in the Public Affairs and Communications Media career field. She is a past recipient of the Army's Keith L. Ware Award for Excellence in Journalism.



SPEAKING AT THE DEFENSE SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT COLLEGE JAN. 28, SMITH TOLD THE STAFF AND FACULTY, “I UNDERSTAND THAT THE EMERGENCE OF ANOTHER NEW PLAYER ... CAN BE UNSETTLING TO MANY WHO HAVE SERVED IN THE DEPARTMENT’S EDUCATION BUSINESS FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS. MINE IS AN OPERATIONAL AND NOT A POLICY OFFICE. MY JOB WILL NOT BE TO IDENTIFY WHAT SKILLS ARE GOING TO BE EFFECTIVE IN THE NEW DEFENSE ORGANIZATION; RATHER, MY TASK WILL BE TO ENSURE THAT THE CURRICULA, FACULTY, AND ACADEMIC OPERATIONS OF INSTITUTIONS MEET QUALITY STANDARDS TO ENSURE THAT OUR CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES OBTAIN THE COMPETENCIES THAT THEY NEED.”



Smith's value-based perspective, together with his outstanding military and educational "net worth" undoubtedly figured in his selection to be first Department of Defense (DoD) Chancellor for Education and Professional Development. He's a man who's been building his "educational portfolio" since his early days in the military education system, after signing up in 1957 as a midshipman. At his Oct. 1, 1998, swearing in ceremony, Smith gave the first indication of his No. 1 priority as Chancellor:

"... One of the [best] things about the professional military education system [is that] it's a lifelong process ... I know just how much these folks [military] benefit from and value their opportunity for education, but I also know that few of our civilians get such a chance."

He believes that DoD absolutely can improve the quality of education for the civilian workforce, and ultimately make the civilian education system every bit as good as the military system.

In his words, Smith is "delighted" to be given the task of working with the educational and career development resources that the Department supports. He's not hesitant to assume responsibility and considers himself personally



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accountable to DoD's senior leaders: "I must be able to assure Departmental leadership," he said at his swearing in, "that the significant funding invested in education resources is receiving the highest quality return possible."

Toward that end, he has already begun work in his Northern Virginia office and is assembling a staff and developing close working relationships with the leaders of many educational institutions and programs throughout DoD.

From DRI, A New Position Emerges

The position of Chancellor was established as a result of the November 1997 Defense Reform Initiative (DRI) report, which made specific recommendations for reducing DoD infrastructure and improving efficiency by adopting effective practices used in corporate businesses. Since his appointment as Chancellor on Oct. 2, 1998, Smith has addressed several groups to explain his role as the principal advocate for the quality and cost effectiveness of education for DoD civilian personnel.

This article, based on Smith's Jan. 28 speech to the staff and faculty of the Defense Systems Management College (DSMC) and his recent interview with a representative from *Program Manager* magazine, communicates the goals, challenges, and overall management philosophy of the man who will lead civilian education into the 21st century.

Civilian Education Falls Short

"Looking at the whole realm of education for the Defense workforce," says Smith, "we have a wonderful military education system. Our PME [Professional Military Education] system is world-class and clearly organized with authorities assigned. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff gives the basic guidance for the system; the Services each

SMITH (CENTER) MET WITH DSMC COMMANDANT, NAVY REAR ADM. "LENN" VINCENT AND ARMY COL. JOSEPH JOHNSON JAN. 28 DURING HIS FIRST VISIT AS DoD CHANCELLOR. ON THE SUBJECT OF LEARNING, HE HAD THIS TO SAY: "YOU JUST DON'T STOP LEARNING WHEN YOU COMPLETE YOUR FORMAL SCHOOLING. AND ALTHOUGH WE CAN PROVIDE MORE SCHOOLING, MORE EDUCATION, AND MORE TRAINING EXPERIENCES ALONG THE WAY OF A CAREER, IT IS REALLY THE WILLINGNESS OF THE INDIVIDUAL TO ENTERTAIN NEW IDEAS. WE LEARN FROM EVERYTHING — FROM OUR FORMAL EDUCATION EXPERIENCES, FROM OUR INTERACTION WITH OTHERS ON THE JOB, AND FROM THE LIFE EXPERIENCES WE ENCOUNTER EVERY DAY. WE NEED TO KEEP THE PROCESS OF FORMALLY ENTERTAINING NEW IDEAS ALL OF THE TIME."



support components of the process in a very integrated fashion.

“Second, we have a dependents’ education system [Department of Defense Dependent Schools] that is well organized, has standards, and accomplishes its job.

“But if you look at our system for the civilian workforce, it is not remotely equivalent to what we provide our military members or military dependents. Our civilian workforce is trained and educated in a variety of ways or not at all.”

He points out that the quality of DoD educational programs is mixed. “If you’re working in the acquisition area, there is a pretty systematic process to develop requirements for job areas or the classifications, to categorize them by Levels I, II, and III to develop the competencies required at each level, and then to task the schools with developing courses that will deliver those competencies to the members.



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“But even so,” he questions, “Are we sure that the right people go to school? Are we selecting the people who would most benefit the institution by being educated?” Those two questions are often asked of Smith.

He believes that in many areas, we haven’t made enough headway to clearly lay out what competencies are required, because we haven’t effectively defined the needs of the workforce. “Our No. 1 problem,” according to Smith, “is that our civilian education system is not responsive to the needs of the civilian workforce.”

He goes on to say that the problem [of defining the necessary competencies] is not a static one. What people need to know is changing all of the time. If we are going to accomplish what the leadership has directed and make a world-class support organization to back up our world-class military, Smith believes we need an infusion of new skills within

DR. JEROME F. SMITH JR.

Department of Defense • Chancellor for Education and Professional Development

Dr. Jerome F. Smith Jr., was named as the first Chancellor for Education and Professional Development by Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen and sworn in by Deputy Secretary of Defense John Hamre Oct. 2, 1998. In this position he serves as the principal advocate for the quality and cost effectiveness of education for civilian personnel in the Department of Defense.

Smith is a native of San Diego, Calif. He began a career in the U.S. Navy upon graduation from the U.S. Naval Academy in June 1961. He then attended Stanford University for graduate study under U.S. Navy sponsorship, where he earned an M.S. and a Ph.D. in Electrical Engineering. Smith went on to serve in research and development of sensors and information systems aboard the escort research ship, *USS Glover* (AGDE-1); in the Office of the Secretary of Defense; and as Executive Officer of *USS Downes* (FF-1070). From June 1974 to June 1976, he was commanding officer of *USS Marvin Shields* (FF-1066), an anti-submarine frigate homeported in San Diego.

After serving as C3I Program Analyst in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Smith returned to sea duty as Commanding Officer of the guided missile cruiser, *USS Reeves* (CG-24), operating out of Yokosuka, Japan; and Chief of Staff, Battle Force Seventh Fleet, based in Cubi Point, Republic of the Philippines. After his selection to flag officer rank, Rear Adm. Smith assumed duties as Director, Politico-Military Policy and Current Plans Division

on the staff of the Chief of Naval Operations; followed by assignment as Commander, Cruiser-Destroyer Group Five. During this assignment, he deployed to the Western Pacific and Indian Oceans as Commander of the *USS Ranger* Carrier Battle Group, and later organized and commanded the *USS Missouri* Battleship Battle Group.

Smith next served as Deputy Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Southern Command, responsible for U.S. military forces in Central and South America, with headquarters in Panama. His final active duty position was Commandant, Industrial College of the Armed Forces, National Defense University, Fort McNair, Washington, D.C. He completed 34 years of commissioned service before retiring from active duty in August 1995.

Prior to his appointment to the newly created position of DoD Chancellor for Education and Professional Development, Smith was the civilian Dean of the Information Resources Management College, National Defense University. He is a member of several professional societies. He and his wife, Jill, live in Falls Church, Va. They have two adult children: Dorothy S. Bradley, an editor with the University Press of America; and Navy Lt. (select) Jerome F. Smith III, a 1995 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and naval aviator.



the Department, especially if we're going to adopt those business practices that have been successful in reengineering and revitalizing the American commercial sector.

"Simply put," says Smith, "our workforce needs the types of skills that enable the American civil life to regenerate and relearn."

IMPORTANCE OF FUNCTIONAL LEADERS

All civilian education and professional development programs fall under functional leaders who retain the responsibility for ensuring that the civilian workers in their functional areas are being properly prepared and supported in their jobs by education and training programs.

Functional boards made up of representatives of the workforce and representatives of the policy community, he explains, meet and hammer out what the workforce should have in the way of skills, competencies, and levels of capability, and then pass those competencies onto the schools. The schools then develop curricula and teach courses to deliver education on the competencies.

For example, the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Technology is responsible for the proficiency of the acquisition workforce. He funds and directs the Defense Acquisition University to provide the required education and training. The President of DAU carries out that mission through the component schools.

He sees these functional leaders and boards as vital to the civilian-education system, and describes them as DoD's best means of "coupling what the workforce needs today to what the schools are teaching today."

NO "CZAR OF EDUCATION" FOR DoD

Smith stresses that the educational process does not change with the establishment of his position. He's concerned by the image conveyed by various media of the Chancellor for Education



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and Professional Development being a "Czar of Education" for the DoD.

"I understand that the emergence of another new player ... can be unsettling to many who have served in the Department's education business for a number of years. Mine is an operational and not a policy office. My job will not be to identify what skills are going to be effective in the new defense organization; rather, my task will be to ensure that the curricula, faculty, and academic operations of institutions meet quality standards to ensure that our civilian employees obtain the competencies that they need."

ACCREDITATION

According to Smith, his first task is to ensure that every DoD training institution is accredited or actively pursuing accreditation by Jan. 1, 2000. As noted in the DRI report, only one-fifth of OSD-sponsored educational institutions are accredited by a recognized academic accreditation association. Only five of 37 educational and professional development programs have at least some course certified for college credit by the American Council on Education.

CONTINUING EDUCATION AS A BENEFIT

With infrastructure reduction a primary goal of improving the way that DoD does business, how can it attract and keep top-notch personnel? Smith admits that's a tough one.

"Shaping the demographics of the civilian workforce is a complicated, tough problem that is staring us in the face right now. The military services carefully managed the recent downsizing process, reshaping their workforces to retain the proper balance of skills and experience levels, and continuing to admit new entrants.

"Downsizing the civilian workforce was a significantly different process. Consequently, our civilian workforce is not precisely the shape we would have it, and it doesn't include precisely the skills that we need. So we have a problem that has many facets in front of us.

Smith says that we can address this problem in two ways: *reshape* our workforce or *re-skill* our workforce.

"In a full-employment economy that is strong and vital," Smith predicts, "we are going to have to compete for people against that strong economy. So, we have to ask ourselves, 'What do world-class companies offer their workers?'"

In last year's DRI report, Defense Secretary [William S.] Cohen answers that question:

Among the lessons of corporate America is that every successful or-

ganization finds its people to be its most important asset, and reflects their importance in a strong, corporate-sponsored program of continuous training and professional development.

“The signal that I’m getting,” says Smith “is that we will have to compete by providing training and education as a *benefit*, if that is the appropriate term, if we are going to have people capable of adopting new ways of doing business (and I’m not just talking about today’s needs, I’m talking about future needs).

“They must repeatedly have new experiences in education or training,” Smith emphasizes. “We cannot attract and keep quality people if we bring them in with the view that they have learned everything they have ever needed to know, and from then on it’s a matter of being a practitioner. We have to engage in what is called continuing education.”

The importance of continuing education, he explains, can be seen in the new policy on continuous learning for the defense acquisition workforce recently promulgated by USD(A&T) that clearly recognizes people’s skills cannot remain static, and that experiences in training or education and application of those skills are both needed regularly to refresh students and educators alike — “to keep them alive and alert,” as he puts it.

Determining Training Needs — Who Takes the Lead?

“How can we best develop the training needs of employees from different backgrounds and different Services? That question has no single answer,” Smith observes. Part of the answer, he believes, is employee-driven — what employees want.

If employees want to grow in their positions or want to improve as individuals, they have their own sense of what they need to acquire in the way of specific skills or general knowledge, training, or education.

Supervisors, Smith explains, have another view — one that is equally important — of the skills they want to see in



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employees. They have some idea of where they want to place or grow a particular employee through the organization. But even the supervisor’s view is not enough, according to Smith, because it does not address the aggregated need of the larger workforce. Managers at higher levels may put more emphasis on the skills affecting the overall demographics of the workforce in determining training needs.

“I would argue that the individual needs to take charge of his or her educational program by means of the Individual Development Plan [IDP]. Be a major player in putting it together; be a driving force in making sure something happens. Supervisors must look out for not only the institution’s needs, but also the development of their individual employees, making sure that they have IDPs and that they have a role in preparing them.

“Finally, through the functional boards, we have to communicate the aggregated requirements — that’s the big “R” — of the institution, whether it be the DoD, the Army, the Navy, or wherever, to the employee and to the supervisor.”

Smith looks forward to working cooperatively with the functional leaders — “the line leadership that has the command authority over the institutions and the programs — to ensure that we are doing the very best job we can of educating our civilian workforce. We want to ensure that we are doing as good a job of educating our civilian workforce as we do with our military workforce.”

Technology and Course Delivery
Smith acknowledges that technology is having a *huge* impact on education. “I’m proud to say that DoD is at the leading edge in this area.” He relates that in his trips throughout the United States to educational institutions run by DoD, he has found remote teaching via television, and has personally participated in, and put online, Web-based instruction.

He notes that many organizations are putting out instruction on CD-ROM. “There are countless ways that technology is influencing the delivery of in-

struction. That having been said, you still have to find the appropriate media to deliver instruction to the individual student.”

He explains that this involves identifying the level of student, the complexity of the subject, the time the person has available to devote to that instruction, and the purpose for teaching the subject matter or skill. Technology, he believes, can assist in educating, but technology is not necessarily the answer to every question in education.

Smith notes that there are people at all ages who find technology difficult. When it comes to students, he prefers to measure “*brain* age, rather than *bone* age.” He believes we have to give credit to people who keep their minds alive.

One of the hopeful things about education, he says, is that “We can take a worker who has been in the workforce for a long time, who has developed some *bone* age, but has a lively mind and is willing to consider new ideas, and expose the mind to education. We don’t want to, in any way, disregard the wonderful life experiences this person had. We just want to add to that the flexibility of mind that education encourages.”

Never Stop Learning

If he has a learning philosophy, it could be captured in three simple words: “Never stop learning.” Smith believes it is vitally important for each individual to keep his or her mind engaged throughout their whole life.

“You just don’t stop learning when you complete your formal schooling. And although we can provide more schooling, more education, and more training experiences along the way of a career, it is really the willingness of the individual to entertain new ideas.

“We learn from everything,” he says. “From our formal education experiences, from our interaction with others on the job, and from the life experiences we encounter every day. We need to keep the process of formally entertaining new ideas all of the time.

“As I mentioned earlier, we need to keep an educational portfolio much like a financial portfolio. As individuals have to manage their investment portfolios, they likewise have to manage their educational portfolios. We ought to encourage people to do that, to have a sense of their educational net worth from accumulation of multiple experiences.

“If we in the Department can contribute to building individuals, the members of our workforce, through helping them with those investments, I think that is a valuable contribution we can make,” says Smith. “It benefits the individual, but I’m absolutely certain that it benefits the DoD in a very, very direct way.”

Meeting Challenges, Measuring Progress

Smith is excited about the new challenges he faces as Chancellor. “I left a job as head of an institution of education, a college where I truly enjoyed working, because I believe Secretary Cohen and Dr. Hamre [Deputy Secretary of Defense John Hamre] have a very good appreciation of the changes that Defense needs to make.

And part of that challenge, says Smith, will be measuring our progress. “As you’re taught at DSMC, the process is not manageable without measurements. We’ll be working cooperatively with all players to ensure we can breathe some new life or shed some new light on this rather under-organized process of civilian education, and *help it help us*,” he concludes, “to deliver a more effective DoD education.”

QUESTIONS ABOUT ACQUISITION?

If there is any information you need to know about Department of Defense acquisition, the place to look is the Defense Acquisition Deskbook located on the Web at <http://www.deskbook.osd.mil/>.

WHAT IS DESKBOOK?

The Defense Acquisition Deskbook is an electronic knowledge presentation system providing the most current acquisition policy for all DoD Services and agencies. Deskbook’s extensive reference material includes information on the various functions, disciplines, activities, and processes of the Department of Defense beginning with “User” requirements, flowing through concept development, program establishment, contracting, testing, production, sustainment, and ending with disposal.

Deskbook’s database includes over 1000 mandatory and discretionary policy documents, DoD and component discretionary practices, software tools and descriptions,

front-line wisdom, and advice, formats, and samples.

Deskbook is sponsored by the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition Reform), and the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition and Technology)/Acquisition Program Integration.

The Defense Acquisition Deskbook originated from an acquisition reform initiative to reduce directives while assisting managers to make informed decisions.

Its capabilities include: complete text of documents, full-word search, and structured information grouped by subject matter and level of authority.

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1. A Deskbook reference set listing mandatory and discretionary documents such as laws, directives, policies, regulations, and guidance and handbooks. The reference set also includes forms and templates, front-

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- Learn about upcoming events and training opportunities.
- View new policies and guidance.
- Obtain access to pertinent Web sites through acquisition links.