

Defense AT&L interviews
Chris Stelloh-Garner
Director, Acquisition Career Management,
Department of the Navy

As director of acquisition career management (DACM), Chris Stelloh-Garner is responsible to the assistant secretary of the Navy (research, development and acquisition) for the development, implementation and oversight of the Department of the Navy Acquisition Workforce Program (AWP) and for administering centralized funding for training and education required by acquisition workforce members.

Defense AT&L interviewed Stelloh-Garner in June to learn—among other things—how the DoN is stepping up to the challenges of the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) and meeting the rapid deployment training requirements presented by Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Q
The DoN acquisition workforce currently numbers around 40,000. Would you give us a little background: Where are the majority of these jobs located? How diverse are geographic assignments? What are the significant challenges in conducting training for this population?

A
Most of our acquisition workforce is here in the Washington and Norfolk areas, as well as Southern California, but we're also located across the United States and throughout Europe and Asia. The workforce includes both Navy and Marine Corps civilian and military members in a variety of career fields, such as program management, contracting, logistics, quality assurance, systems and facilities engineering, and business, cost estimating, financial management, and others. And it's not just active-duty military. We've included Naval reservists previously on a case-by-case basis. By the time this issue of *Defense AT&L* hits the streets, we'll have launched a new segment of our program that includes our Reserve members as well.

I like to refer to our workforce as acquisition warriors. These are the folks who are on the front line to provide capability and support to our warfighters. It's our job to make sure that we give them the right toolbox to provide this capability effectively and efficiently. They deserve that. Our warfighters need it. And the American taxpayers demand it.



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You asked about the challenges in conducting training for our 40,000-plus acquisition workforce. The most pressing challenge is relevancy. Relevancy not only in terms of what our acquisition warriors need to know, but also in terms of what and how we offer it to them. We have experts on our Department of the Navy acquisition functional boards who work with the Defense Acquisition University to make sure we meet this challenge. Another challenge is timing—getting our workforce trained at the right time in their careers. We want their training interspersed with experience throughout their careers, not “front loaded.”

Q *At a basic level, how are workforce members brought into the acquisition professional community (APC)?*

A GS-13s, Navy lieutenant commanders, and Marine majors are eligible to apply for APC membership. We have separate processes for civilians and each military service, but individuals initiate their APC membership request, regardless of their community. APC membership is required for our acquisition warriors once they reach GS-14, senior Navy commander, or Marine lieutenant colonel level, all of which are critical acquisition positions.

Q *“Register-Now!” (< <https://www.atrrs.army.mil/channels/registernow/rnswitch.asp> >) is the DoN’s Web site for acquisition training applications and career field certification. The site allows CL—continuous learning—points to be tracked online, as well providing a portal for obtaining CL points. Has this site proved successful?*

A R-Now! as we refer to it, is a smash hit! Initially, R-Now! was developed to interface with the system DAU used to register students. Before R-Now! we’d have file folders for each course offering spread out on a table. We then stuffed training request forms into each folder before manually entering registration info into the DAU registration system. We’ve come a long way since then.

R-Now! has become a sophisticated tool for us to use in managing many aspects of the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA). We use it to register DoN students in our continuous learning curriculum; for tracking and documenting CL points; for automated career field certification; for managing our robust tuition assistance program; and—brand-new to us—processing our acquisition professional community membership. We’re also modifying the system to automate many aspects of our acquisition intern program: individualized development plan (IDP) development, performance appraisals, rotational assignments, education, and so forth. It’s quite a powerful tool not only for us as managers but also for

our customers. What more can I say? Except give the commercial: R-Now! is available at < <http://www.register-now.cms.navy.mil> > .

Q *Acquisition workforce members are encouraged to develop an IDP to ensure they receive the necessary training and continual learning to enhance their performance and careers. How are such plans developed? Have they proved to be a reliable roadmap?*

A IDPs are an area where we need to do better. It’s a real hit-or-miss thing. One person may have a supervisor who’s really engaged, and the next may not. My personal experience with IDPs is very spotty. It worked as long as my supervisor was there and I was in the same position. We’re a mobile workforce. Transformation is a continuous process. We need to be able to identify basic requirements to our acquisition warriors, along with specialized skills, knowledge, and abilities—certain competencies—that they need in their toolbox.

My vision is to adapt the so-called five-vectored model (5VM) that the uniformed Navy is using. Rear Adm. Kevin Moran, commander of the Naval Personnel Development Command in Norfolk, is spearheading this effort. We identify the competencies one needs for any given job at any given level in the areas of professional development, personal development, certifications and licenses, leadership, and performance. We then allow the individual to map his or her present levels against this. The gap is the IDP. And it’s all automated! Many of our activities are engaged in varying levels of implementing 5VM. We’ve recently jumped in, and I’m hoping that we can build on their good efforts and can serve as a clearinghouse as well.

Q *Are there new programs and initiatives ongoing in the area of educating the Navy/Marine Corps acquisition workforce?*

A We’re constantly providing new programs to our acquisition warriors through our continuous learning program. An internal network of functional advisors, who serve as the chairs of the DoN Career Management Boards, keep me abreast of new initiatives. They identify new training requirements. Last year, we trained over 7,000 DoN students through our CL offerings. By the time this article goes to print, we’ll be well on our way to adding several new courses, including LEAN Manufacturing, Six Sigma, Theory of Constraints, and Risk Management, all of which support Secretary [of the Navy] for research, development and acquisition (ASN(RD&A)) Young’s strategic vision for the naval acquisition community. Our CL curriculum dove-

Journalist 2nd Class Shane Tuck investigates possible casualties during a General Quarters drill aboard *USS Ronald Reagan* CVN 76 U.S. Navy photo by Photographer's Mate Airman Apprentice Jacob Childre



Students at Fleet Training Center (FTC) work as a team to extinguish a Class Bravo fire while instructors, dressed in red jerseys, observe and evaluate their performance. U.S. Navy Photo by Photographer's Mate 2nd Class Johansen Laurel

U.S. Marines assigned to the 3rd Marine Regiment cross a field after exiting CH-53D Sea Stallion helicopters. U.S. Navy photo by Photographer's Mate 2nd Class Richard J. Brunson





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tails with DAU offerings. We pride ourselves on keeping the CL program current with the latest acquisition strategies and processes.

Q

Is DAU doing its job to get training to where the Navy acquisition workforce is located? What could DAU do better to support the educational needs of the Navy/Marine Corps acquisition workforce?

A

An enthusiastic yes to your first question! Is it perfect yet? No. DAU's Centers of Excellence, located near our large populations, have made a tremendous difference. And DAU is doing a great job accommodating our needs for on-site training. Rapid deployment training (RDT) is responding to emerging, urgent needs. My biggest challenge here is with Navy and Marine Corps activities that go directly to DAU with their needs for RDT. The result is that I don't get a chance to balance one activity's need against those needs of the rest of the workforce. But we're working with DAU to improve this situation.

From a requirements standpoint, we are ever-hopeful that DAU can increase throughput on high-demand classes. I believe this is achievable through cost savings in other areas. In FY04, we started using DAU's cost-effective location model to determine the best geographic match between a student's activity or duty station and the closest DAU campus. We need to think about including a student's home rather than activity, because we have a couple of fairly large commuting areas near DAU campuses. It turns out that some of our students live closer to one campus, but their duty station is closer to another. Despite this, we've had great success in cutting travel costs, and that translates into more students in classes.

Another area we're working on with DAU is how to reach students in Europe and the Pacific Rim more effectively. And our new reservists policy is impacting our needs as well. And what about our industry partners? These would be our contractor support team-mates, as well as our business partners. We need to make sure they have equitable access to the training and support that we think would allow them to be effective, efficient, and successful. We all want the same thing: to deliver capability and support to our warfighters.

As we implement DAWIA II, I believe our biggest challenge will be to accommodate cross-functional training. With ever-increasing pressure to make the acquisition workforce smaller and more efficient, we're demanding more of our acquisition warriors. They need to be more sophisticated about business. They need to be fluent in their primary career fields, but—more important—they must be fluent in other fields as well. They need to know how their pieces of the puzzle fit into the overall picture.

Christine Stelloh-Garner
*Director, Acquisition Career
Management,
Department of the Navy*



Christine Stelloh-Garner joined the Naval Air Systems Command as a clerk-typist in 1974. As an upward mobility program trainee, she transitioned to program and management analysis, serving in positions involving various facets of program and facility management. Assignments included the joint-Service, tilt-rotor V-22 deputy for program appraisal, and program manager for both Caribbean regional operations center upgrade and, later, the AH-1 night targeting system. Additionally, she served on the Command Federal Women's Program Committee.

Briefly leaving the Naval Air Systems Command in the mid-1980s, Stelloh-Garner remained active in naval aviation as a Booz-Allen & Hamilton consultant at the Naval Aviation Depot in Cherry Point, N.C., and as family readiness advisor for Marine Medium Lift Helicopter Squadron (HMM) 264. She also represented Advanced Technology, Inc., as a program consultant for naval aviation.

Stelloh-Garner joined the staff of the program executive officer (PEO) for tactical aircraft programs as a deputy for acquisition before being selected to the Senior Executive Service and assuming responsibility as deputy PEO for air anti-submarine warfare (ASW), assault and special mission programs in March 1998. As the deputy PEO, she provided oversight and insight for over 100 efforts with an annual appropriation of approximately \$4 billion.

Selected as the Department of Navy's acquisition reform executive in May 2001, Stelloh-Garner was the facilitator and catalyst for innovation, streamlining, and change across all acquisition processes of the Navy and Marine Corps. She also served as the department's standardization executive. In November 2002, Stelloh-Garner became the director for program analysis and support in the newly formed office of the deputy assistant secretary of the Navy for acquisition management before assuming her current responsibilities.

As a collateral duty from early 2000 until January 2003, Stelloh-Garner served as the defense acquisition management functional advisor. In this capacity, she led a team of representatives across the Department of Defense in establishing requirements and providing recommendations to the under secretary of defense (acquisition, technology & logistics) concerning certification requirements and fulfillment of more than 10,000 Department of Defense acquisition workforce members in the program management career field.

A graduate of the Defense Systems Management College Program Manager's Course, Stelloh-Garner also holds a bachelor's degree in business administration from Mount Vernon College. An amateur garden designer, she and her husband, Robert Garner, enjoy their southern Maryland oasis.

They must be able to think globally and act locally. This will add a new level of complexity to DAU's offerings. It may even dictate modules like "cost estimating for PMs," "logistics for systems engineers," "contracts for logisticians"—you get the point. We need to make the training experience timely and relevant to the individual student in a time of transformation if we're to expect meaningful change in behavior.

Q *As acquisition workforce members pursue cross training and career development to meet their continuous learning requirements, the demand for DAU courses continues to increase. Using technology in such applications as distance learning (DL) is a response to this increased demand; it increases the availability of training and offers students control over the location and timing of their training. Do you feel distance learning will ultimately replace the traditional classroom training experience? Will anything be gained or lost in this transition?*

A Distance learning is an efficient way to impart basic knowledge. But we want our acquisition workforce to be critical thinkers. I don't think you can get that from a diet of distance learning only. I believe true learning comes from discourse with others, and you need the classroom for that. That's why many of the basic classes are DL while the more senior ones are classroom or a combination of the two.

It takes a team to make a program successful. The DAU curriculum provides students a safe environment. They can learn how to become effective team members through case-based studies and meaningful discourse. With many of our courses, it's much like simulator training. We don't offer only DL and classroom lectures to our sailors and Marines who will pilot ships or tanks or aircraft, or operate communications

equipment: we use simulators to provide a real environment. We in the AT&L workforce should be no different. We entrust thousands, millions, billions of taxpayer dollars to our acquisition teams. Why should they not have the chance to train in a real environment?

Q

There are some alternatives to mandatory acquisition training, such as equivalency exams or courses taken at a university or college. Have such options increased the ability of workforce members in remote locations to obtain the necessary training?

A

This is an area we've really taken advantage of, especially for the contracting community. DAU has granted equivalency to a number of colleges for their contracting curriculum. Some of our naval activities are taking advantage of that, and they have "lunch-time college" going on in several locations. This enables our contracting folks to get credit for DAU courses, while earning the 24 semester hours of credits required for the contracting workforce. This truly is a win-win situation!

Another area where we've maximized the equivalency option is for our Navy officer community. Many of our schools have some level of equivalency with DAU courses: Civil Engineer Corps Officer's School, Naval Test Pilot School, Supply Corps Officer's School, Naval Postgraduate School, Engineering Duty Officer School, to name a few. We also have robust programs in some hard-to-reach areas such as Groton, Conn., where DAU has granted equivalency to local training facilities, making it easier for our workforce to gain much-needed training. And the recent acquisition workforce policy memo that recognizes certification by PMI (Program Management Institute) and SOLE (International Society of Logistics, formerly the Society of Logistics Engineers) is a big first step in opening up opportunities for our industry partners to join us as members of the acquisition workforce. It takes a big whack at the "can't be one unless you already are one" syndrome that's plagued us for years. Our industry partners have a great deal of expertise, and we need to make it easier for them to get certified.

Q

What has been the result of hybrid courses (which contain a mixture of classroom and distance learning)?

A

Hybrid courses are a great way—very efficient—to convert multiple weeks of classroom instruction into a combination of distance learning and shorter-duration classroom training. The only problem we had with these hybrids was that our students couldn't sign up for the distance learning portion of the course until they were registered for the classroom portion. That created a backlog of students await-

ing the availability of the "total" hybrid course, and it meant that we were denying students the ability to gain knowledge when the capability to deliver it existed.

In our spring 2003 acquisition training reps' annual conference, our experts in the field shared this issue and told us they wanted to separate the linkage between the DL and classroom parts of hybrid courses. Dr. Bob Ainsley was DAU's rep at the meeting. Bob Ainsley carried that message back, and within a few months, DAU separated the parts. As a result, we've seen an enormous increase in the number of students completing the DL portions. We see many non-acquisition workforce members enrolled in these offerings in addition to our acquisition professionals working through modules in a career field other than their own. What does this tell me? That we're transforming professionals into a team. And that we're preparing them for discourse that accompanies critical thinking.

Q

Let's turn to deployment training. The deployment of our forces around the globe has a large impact on the DoN acquisition community. How is your organization responding to the increasing tempo?

A

Much of what we already have in place supports this—our program specifically geared toward Naval reservists, for instance. We've made sure that individuals being deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan for contingency contracting get the training they need beforehand. One of the reservist challenges is attending mandatory DAU courses during "drilling" periods. We're working with the Reserve community to develop a contracting "boot camp" that will provide critical skill sets needed when individuals deploy to contingency contracting billets. Sailors, Marines and civilians around the world can take advantage of distance learning. And, of course, we're continuing to automate key workforce program elements, such as the APC membership application and approval process, along with certification.

Q

On the transformation front, does the Integrated Learning Environment (ILE) touted as part of DoN transformation affect the training and education of the APC? Will it change the way current training is performed?

A

We've been discussing transformation throughout all of the previous Q&As. While DAU provides a foundational knowledge base, one of my goals is to make sure I can provide just-in-time training for Service-specific initiatives. We talked earlier about the DoN Career Management Board functional advisors. These advisors, along with the extensive network of acquisition training reps across our major claimants, are my eyes and ears in the workforce. They're on the front lines and are

the first to let us know what our acquisition warriors need to know.

One of the areas we've not discussed yet is DAWIA streamlining, or DAWIA II, the result of the FY04 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). By the time this article appears, DAWIA II will be almost in place. We've been actively involved in the steering and work groups with DP/AP, DAU, other Services, and functional advisor reps to take advantage of the flexibility that the law gives us. We've designed a program with centralized policies and procedures—OSD level—that's executed locally by the Services. I'm confident that these changes will help us focus on the right issues: a competent acquisition workforce, rather than checks in the boxes.

Another significant element is the Chief of Naval Operations Civilian Community Management effort. Marcia Tremaine is leading this charge (her code is "N11"). Much of the effort is building on the commandant of the Marine Corps' "civilian marines" training. There are around 20 or 21 communities, which are identified by civilian job series. Some have a loose match to our DAWIA communities, except we define ours functionally. Each civilian community has a flag or general officer or Senior Executive Service individual as its leader and an N11 manager to identify those skills and competencies required. I happen to be the leader for the program management community, and we're about to launch a survey to all of the GS-340s (the program manager job series) in the DoN to validate the effort that the PM IPT has accomplished. We'll also include pockets of people who are in other job series but who admittedly are performing PM functions. Our ultimate goal is to develop basic program management training, which then I, as director, acquisition career management, will augment with program manager training required for acquisition positions. Each of the civilian communities is at a bit of a different stage, but I view this as an opportunity for "corporate Navy" to provide basic training, with the acquisition community providing those specialized DAWIA competencies. This is not unlike our military communities today. And we all can take advantage of the 5VM, so I see this as an exciting challenge as our Navy and Marine Corps prepare to enter their 230th year of service.



That's a good lead-in to the next area we'd like to address: preparing for the future. For the third straight year, the DoN has reported the highest retention in history, yet there exists concern that there may be an insufficient number of professionals to fill acquisition positions in the near future. Is the Navy/Marine Corps acquisition workforce expecting a large exodus by 2006 as the workforce reaches retirement age? What is being done to retain and recruit talent?



We continue to support USD(AT&L) human capital strategic planning efforts. We have also rigorously reviewed our retirement eligibility data. We see that many members will be eligible to retire, but historically, we haven't experienced a mass exodus as soon as people can retire. Of course, things like BRAC (base realignment and closure) often change that.

Of greater concern to me is our ability to attract and retain professionals, especially in the fields of contracting, cost estimating, and systems engineering. We've gained some good insight from the AT&L strategic effort, but we also have started working with some of the SYSCOMS (Naval Systems Commands) to drill down and identify the reasons we're having some problems with recruitment and retention. Another tool I anticipate being helpful is a skills-mix model that will help us identify alternative skill mixes along with numbers of people—military, civilian, and support contractor—to accomplish future missions. This past summer, we proved the concept with a pilot program at Marine Corps Systems Command, and I'm very excited about these prospects!

Finally, our major claimants rely heavily on acquisition interns. At any given time, we have nearly 900 in our Naval Acquisition Intern Program, a three-year program of education, training, and experiential assignments that results in a GS-12 posting. That number represents around 8 percent of our total acquisition professional community. Candidates are selected by the activity that will host the interns. We then work with the interns and their host activities to ensure that all interns engage in a rigorous program of training and experience to prepare them to assume senior leadership positions later in their careers.

We also fund undergraduate and graduate-level courses if they're needed to fulfill required or desired career field requirements. We're instituting a number of changes to be more effective and more cost-efficient. Some still have rough edges, but we're working with our customers to smooth them over. One big mismatch, for example, was our qualifying over 4,000 applications for 300 positions. This is what we did in FY03. So we're using "open windows" when candidates can submit applications to better match our applicants to needs. We're still working to determine the optimal timing. Our biggest challenge, as I mentioned earlier, is attracting qualified candidates for contracting, systems engineering, and cost estimating. We've examined a couple of new ideas for targeted recruiting, and I'm confident they'll pay off this year. For any of you aspiring acquisition warriors reading this, please visit our Web site: <<https://wwwnt.cnet.navy.mil/navyintern>>. The bottom line is that we've had huge successes with the program. When I look around the naval acquisition com-



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munity today, I see a number of SES-ers who started their careers through an acquisition internship.

Q *Who is most benefited by the DoN's acquisition workforce tuition assistance program (AWTAP)? Is the program being used as a recruiting vehicle to fill entry-level acquisition postings?*

A Ultimately, the sailors, Marines, soldiers, airmen, and allies who use the capability our acquisition warriors provide benefit from our AWTAP. So does the American taxpayer. AWTAP makes a more professional, business-savvy workforce. It starts with the individual AWF member. All members who want to pursue mandatory or desired DAWIA education requirements, or statutory requirements for acquisition professional community membership, can take advantage of AWTAP. We use certification and CL compliance as prerequisites to receive AWTAP funds, which serves as an incentive for members to focus first on basic DAWIA requirements. AWTAP is a strong selling point for prospective acquisition interns. They're immediately eligible for AWTAP funding; they don't have to wait some prescribed time period first.

Q *One last question. How does the emergence of a new acquisition career field, such as facilities engineering (FE), affect training? How do you incorporate new training into the system? What kind of outreach is done?*

A When the facilities engineering career field was formed, we transferred about 1,600 existing AWF members from other career fields. We also included about 2,000 more people based on the new FE definition. That's a lot of people and a lot of training. In partnership with DAU and the FE Functional Board members, we've incorporated training into certification and CL requirements. We've also provided 36 months, rather than 18, to meet certification requirements. To get this information out, we use a variety of methods: Web sites, Facilities Engineering Functional Board, articles in Register-Now! and our DACM Web site. We also work closely with commands that have large numbers of facilities engineers, such as Naval Facilities Engineering Command.

Thanks so much for letting me share some of our efforts. Would you allow me one last commercial?

Please visit our Web site at <www.acquisition.navy.mil> and click on "acquisition career management" on the menu on the left. We recently joined Web sites with some of my ASN(RD&A) colleagues to provide the ASN(RD&A) Acquisition One Source. We're trying to provide one-stop shopping for our AWF members. I hope you'll visit us!