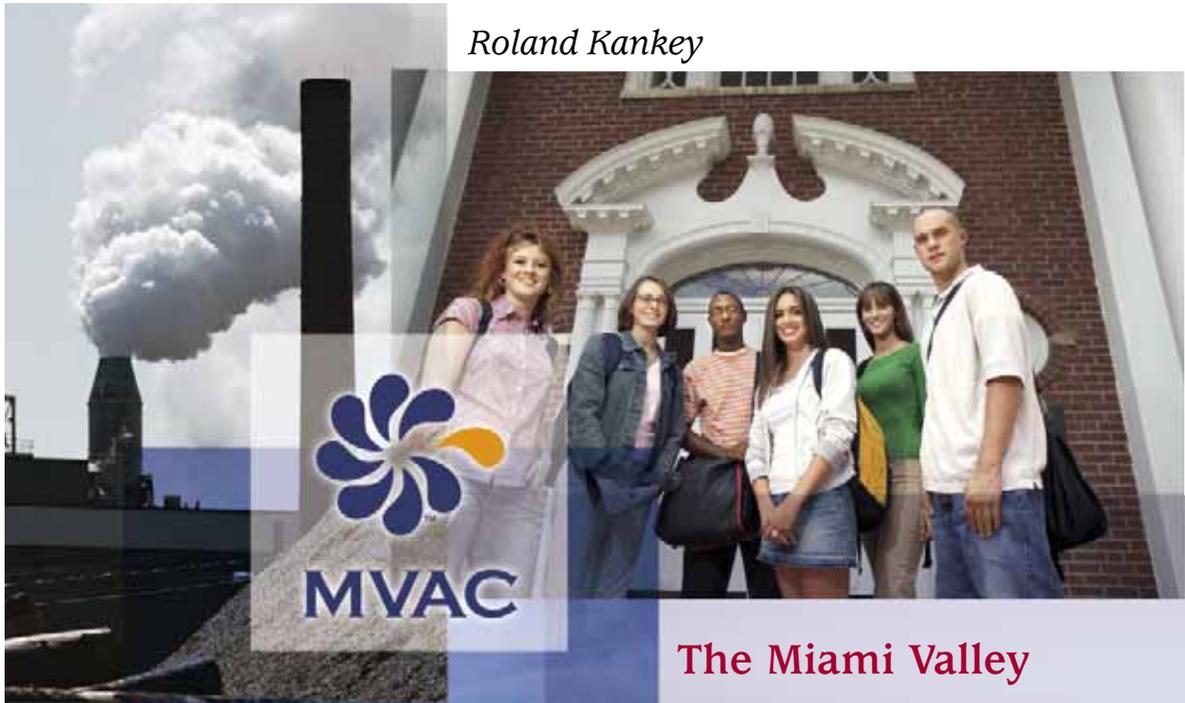


# A Team Approach for Workforce Development

## The Miami Valley Acquisition Consortium

*Roland Kankey*



**The Miami Valley Acquisition Consortium (MVAC) is a joint academic, government, and industry partnership preparing the Miami Valley workforce for the challenges of tomorrow. (MVAC Charter)**

**D**uring the summer and fall of 2002, the dean of the Defense Acquisition University Midwest Region was struggling to fulfill the organization's mission to educate and train the Department of



Defense acquisition workforce. The future of the acquisition workforce impacted both DoD and non-DoD organizations, and recognizing this, the DAU Midwest dean held a Sept. 16, 2002, meeting in which all stakeholders could discuss workforce planning.

In the process of the discussions, those of us participating in the meetings realized we all needed to work together for a solution. The problem? An acquisition workforce that was and still is facing large numbers of professionals

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nearing retirement. How could new employees be trained and developed to replace those who would be leaving the workforce? The problem of the upcoming retirement of many trained professionals wasn't unique to DoD. The acquisition community needed and still needs to strengthen and prepare the future workforce, both for defense positions and for the commercial sector.

Seeking to address that challenge, DAU Midwest hosted follow-up meetings with stakeholders in October, November, and December of 2002. The meetings came to be known as the Miami Valley Acquisition Consortium, and have been held almost every month since January 2003. The MVAC is now approaching its sixth anniversary.

MVAC is a voluntary consortium of the DAU Midwest Region; Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio; universities who provide educational programs on base (Central Michigan University and Embry Riddle Aeronautical University); Miami Valley universities such as the University of Dayton, Wright State University, and Central State University; two Miami Valley community colleges (Clark State Community College and Sinclair Community College), and the Miami Valley Tech Prep Consortium.

### State-Sponsored Development

The Miami Valley Tech Prep Consortium is one of 23 consortiums in Ohio that focus on developing high school students' interest in technical careers. Consortiums exist in every U.S. state, and each state independently manages its consortiums using national technical preparation guidelines. The consortiums sponsor technical preparation programs in high schools, seeking to draw students' interest into professions such as biotechnology, business technology, digital design, engineering, environmental engineering, and information technology. Consortiums typically align with business/professional needs in their area.

The Miami Valley Tech Prep Consortium oversaw more than a dozen programs at 58 area high schools, spanning seven counties in Ohio. However, within the area the Miami Valley Tech Prep oversaw, there were about 6,000 professionals who worked in DoD acquisitions, and no technical preparation programs were aimed at developing high school students' interest in that career field. Once the MVAC began its meetings, participants recognized that a technical preparation program needed to be developed to address the acquisition workforce.

### Speaking the Same Language

A primary challenge we found to creating a program that focused on developing an acquisition workforce is

overcoming some of the language difficulties that can make it appear that the needs of DoD and industry are separate. To illustrate that issue, let me relate the following story about when the DAU Midwest, MVAC, and Miami Valley Tech Prep team visited the Ohio Department of Education.

In DoD, *acquisition* is used as an umbrella term for all the 12 career fields covered under the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act. It's commonly understood what acquisition means in DoD. However, non-DoD personnel don't have the same understanding. When the team traveled to Columbus, Ohio, to assist in the development of a high school technical preparation program for acquisition, the team discovered that the Ohio Department of Education did not share the DoD's understanding of what acquisition meant. In the struggle to find a common term, both *marketing* and *logistics* were proposed and found lacking. Eventually the technical preparation program for acquisition was officially titled Procurement, Acquisition, Logistics, and Supply Chain Management (PALS). This was a very complicated title, which itself caused some confusion in the broader education sector. The team recently determined that the bulk of what DoD calls acquisition can be addressed using the civilian term *supply chain management*. The Council of SCM Professionals defines supply chain management as:

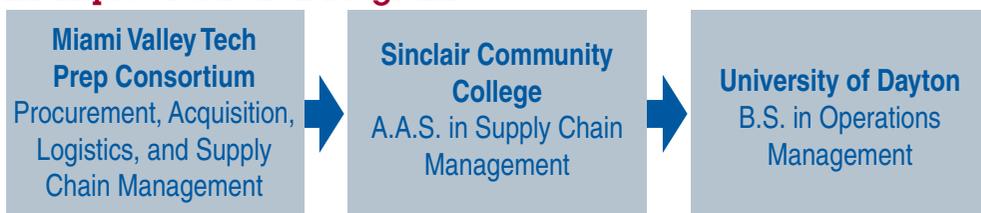
Planning and management of all activities involved in sourcing and procurement, conversion, and all logistics management activities. Includes coordination and collaboration with channel partners (suppliers, intermediaries, third party service providers, customers). Integrates supply and demand management within and across companies.

Both those within and outside DoD are now able to use terms that are understandable to all the stakeholders in the Miami Valley. Once the communication challenges were overcome, MVAC began working to facilitate technical preparation geared toward developing future professionals for the acquisition workforce as well as for public and private sector supply chain management specialists.

### MVAC Accomplishments

So, as a facilitating organization, what has MVAC accomplished?

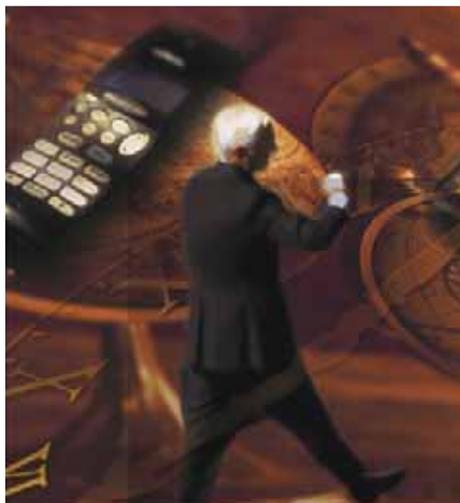
### Example of a 2+2+2 Program



Much improved coordination among local acquisition education sources. While the Miami Valley had a number of excellent independent educational programs that related to and could prepare the workforce for careers in acquisition, they were not well aligned in some ways. For example, a student who completed an associate's degree at a community college might not be able to transfer into a four-year college as a junior. Some course credits would not transfer, and the student might have to take classes similar to which he or she had already taken. Communication and articulations among the educational providers were limited. MVAC's goal has been to increase the communication and the articulations, and to provide smoother transitions for the students moving through the system toward an acquisition career.

Over the past six years, MVAC participants have met and discussed acquisition initiatives and acquisition education in a non-confrontational environment. As a result, the alignment between the programs and the number of articulation agreements has increased.

A pathway from the junior/senior years of high school (the PALS program) through community college and/or a four-year college, leading to a career in supply chain management or acquisition. The PALS program was jointly approved as a Career Technical Education/Tech Prep Program in December 2003 by the Ohio Department of Education and the Ohio Board of Regents. Three local high schools from three different counties are currently participating. Each school has adapted a specific curriculum design that reflects the local economic and school/student/community needs and interests. A school may develop a curriculum that supports a two-year career path (associate's degree) or a four-year path (bachelor's degree), or both. For example, the figure on the preceding page reflects a program with two years



**The first question a company asks: "What kind of workforce do you have?"**

**Deborah Norris, Vice President for Workforce Development, Sinclair Community College**

in high school (junior and senior years in technical preparation), two years in community college, and then two years in a four-year university to earn a bachelor's degree. This is called a 2 + 2 + 2 program, and agreements between Ohio educational institutions assure that all the credits from the community college are accepted by the four-year college.

This has been an overwhelmingly successful program. One school has reported they have more applicants for their PALS program than they have slots available for students.

Increased acquisition cooperative education (co-op) opportunities in the local area. Between 2004 and 2006, DAU provided funding for a trial program for acquisition co-ops through the Student Career Experience Program.

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Competition for the slots was intense, with 75 initial applicants from college sophomores, juniors, and seniors in acquisition-relevant degree programs. Fourteen students initially started in the program, and they gained experience working in finance, contracting, logistics, and program management alongside local acquisitions professionals. The results were very positive.

While some students left the program or moved to another area, the vast majority converted to civilian Air Force employees following college graduation. MVAC participants provided organization, management, and coordination between Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, DAU, and local colleges/universities in the selection and funding process.

“Previous students have greatly benefited from the outstanding training opportunities we can offer here,” said Teresa Marsee of the Aeronautical Systems Center Workforce Development Program Management and Logistics Career Programs. “We have had wonderful success with these fine students in the past, and we are interested in bringing another talented student on board if sponsorship/funding is available.”

Funding for this trial program lapsed in 2007, but given these very positive results and Section 852 of the 2008 National Defense Authorization Act, an initiative has started to place 20 new acquisition co-op students at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base—15 with the Air Force and five with the Defense Contract Management Agency. This initiative aligns directly with the objectives of the congressionally directed fund to develop and train the DoD acquisition workforce. Additionally, the State of Ohio has identified \$250 million state-wide to match company funds for co-ops in the private sector.

The existence of co-op positions validates the existence of DoD acquisition job opportunities to college students, and even to students in high school. Having co-op positions in acquisition is a great example of a force multiplier to build a stronger acquisition workforce.

### Benefits of the MVAC

In addition to its accomplishments, the existence of an active MVAC has advanced the development of a future acquisition/supply chain management workforce through the following activities:

- Presented acquisition career field(s) at high school education fairs and Wright-Patterson Air Force Base education fairs.
- Briefed local high school business teachers on the supply chain management career field. High school teachers have a huge influence on students’ selection of career fields. To get acquisition/supply chain man-

agement into the minds of the future workforce, the high school teachers must be aware of the career field and the opportunities.

- Assisted in the development of DoD acquisition courses at a civilian college. These courses cover all the competencies specified for the DAU courses, providing an alternative source for certification courses that is not constrained by membership in the DoD acquisition workforce. These courses are developed to cover all the course competencies. They use DAU course materials as part of the required readings, but they are structured for evening classes scheduled over a college quarter. Those who want DoD credit for the courses for certification purposes will need to complete and submit a fulfillment form.
- Provided a presentation on supply chain management to 80 audience members at the DAU-Wright-Patterson Air Force Base Insight Days, held April 22 to 23.
- Worked with Sinclair Community College to develop a plan for a National Center for Logistics and Supply Chain Management. Sinclair Community College is teaming with Riverside Community College in California.

### Moving Forward

The Miami Valley has a strong position in logistics/supply chain management resulting partially from the presence of the Air Force Material Command Headquarters, Aeronautical Systems Center, and the other military organizations on Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. In addition, the area around the air base has drawn and continues to draw significant commercial activity in both air and ground distribution.

Improving the DoD acquisition workforce for the Miami Valley area requires recognition that the issue is not DoD specific, and that the solution can be best found through a multi-level effort to recruit, educate, and train. The MVAC was the basis for a cooperative partnership between DoD, industry, and local academic institutions, and those stakeholders are taking steps to support this partnership. Between support from Congress through the 2008 National Defense Authorization Act for DoD and the support of the State of Ohio for the commercial sector, a robust workforce development program for acquisition/supply chain management can be built.

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