

Policy Update to Make Civilian Hiring Quicker

AIR FORCE NEWS SERVICE (DEC. 19, 2008)

RANDOLPH AIR FORCE BASE, Texas—To increase the efficiency in filling civilian vacancies, effective Jan. 1, selecting officials will have 45 days instead of 90 to choose the best-qualified candidate.

“We continue to refine the civilian hiring process where we can to speed up the hiring action,” said Maj. Gen. K.C. McClain, Air Force Personnel Center commander. “We understand that mission requirements are hampered when positions remain vacant. Our goal is to fill civilian vacancies in less than 120 days, and with the support of managers Air Force-wide, we can get Air Force jobs filled in a timelier manner.”

Under current policy, managers have 90 days to make a selection once they receive a list of candidates. The 90-day rule was put in place in June 2007 to ease the transition into the National Security Personnel System. A review of policy showed managers were more comfortable with the system and could make the decision in 45 days or less.

Jamie Beattie with the directorate of civilian force integration at AFPC said she doesn’t anticipate managers having any problems keeping within the 45-day window.

“This is not only a very doable requirement, but right now, many of our managers are currently making their decisions in less than 45 days because they are anxious to get their workforce up to full strength” said Beattie. “In those rare cases where an exception is needed, the new rules will allow the wing commander or equivalent to grant a 15-day extension when extenuating circumstances dictate.”

Hiring officials also are encouraged to submit a personnel action as soon as they are aware there will be a vacancy.

“Hiring officials do not have to wait for the position to be vacant before they begin the fill action,” said Beattie. “We need the action in the system so we can begin the hiring process. By working together, we can better deliver capability to commanders.”

AFPC officials continue to work internal process initiatives that reduce hiring time. Specialists at the center are currently working with their counterparts in the office of the secretary of defense on a single system that will streamline the hiring actions by replacing three existing systems.

Air Force officials are scheduled to launch that system in February with all Pacific Air Forces bases; Lackland AFB, Texas; and Randolph AFB, Texas, as the test bases.

For more information, visit AFPC’s “Ask” Web site or call the 24-hour Air Force Contact Center at 800-616-3775.

National Contract Management Association Professional Certification Program

The Certified Professional Contracts Manager, Certified Federal Contracts Manager, and Certified Commercial Contracts Manager are certifications awarded to candidates who meet rigorous standards, including experience, education, training, and knowledge. They are professional designations of distinction, and carry the respect of their peers in the profession. NCMA certifications are competency-based, legally defensible, and are based on sound objective examination of knowledge. The NCMA professional certification program is designed to elevate professional standards, enhance individual performance, and distinguish those who demonstrate knowledge essential to the practice of contract management.

Certifications available are:

- CFCM—Certified Federal Contracts Manager shows that you are knowledgeable about the practice of contracts management in the federal environment.
- CCCM—Certified Commercial Contracts Manager shows that you are knowledgeable about the practice of contracts management in the commercial environment.
- CPCM—Certified Professional Contracts Manager shows that you are knowledgeable about all facets of contracts management, both within the government and the commercial arenas.

Learn more about contracting certification at <www.ncmahq.org>.

A Program to Help Jumpstart Your Career

FEDERAL ACQUISITION INTERN COALITION

The Federal Acquisition Intern Coalition is designed to help you explore a dynamic and stimulating way to find the right job to help jumpstart your career in acquisition. FAIC makes it easy for you to discover everything you need to know about careers in acquisition—from available paid internships and jobs to a variety of career benefits and training opportunities.

In 2007, the Federal Acquisition Institute was tasked with raising the visibility of the acquisition career field, specifically that of the contracting professional, on behalf of the entire federal government. This task ultimately led to the creation

of the FAIC, which pulls together in one location agency acquisition intern and other career development programs. In addition, the FAIC provides access to other valuable career tools to assist job seekers in finding the best place to start their futures in the field of acquisition.

The FAIC encompasses positions at every stage of an acquisition career across multiple federal agencies. Whether you are a graduating college student or an experienced professional looking to change careers, you can find an outstanding and exciting opportunity through FAIC. Learn more at <www.fai.gov/faic/default.asp>.

Army Management Staff College Extends Deadlines for Civilian Courses

ARMY NEWS SERVICE (DEC. 17, 2008)

FORT BELVOIR, Va.—Application deadlines have been extended for 30 days for civilian employees wanting to attend the basic or intermediate courses at the Army Management Staff College.

All basic and intermediate courses for 2009 will allow 30 extra days for employees to apply, AMSC officials said, until further notice. Applications will close 60 days before the start of a class, instead of 90 days out as in the past.

These courses are centrally funded and seats are available, said Jim Warner, president of the new Army Civilian University, which began assuming oversight of AMSC this month. Warner emphasized that AMSC courses are funded through Department of the Army headquarters at no cost to commands.

Last year, AMSC began shifting from what Warner called “the old paradigm” of one 16-week course to offering four new shorter courses. The idea, he said, is to provide leader development at different levels along an employee’s career path.

Foundation Course

A “Foundation” Course was established for new employees. This is strictly a distance-learning course taken online. It is designed to give students an orientation to the Army and begin their professional development. The course is required for interns, team leaders, supervisors, and managers hired after Sept. 30, 2006.

Basic Course

The Basic Course is designed to educate direct-level supervisors or team leaders on the foundations of leadership and

management skills to facilitate mission accomplishment. This course is a combination of distance learning and two weeks of resident instruction at the AMSC Fort Leavenworth campus.

Intermediate Course

The Intermediate Course is designed for leaders who exercise direct and indirect supervision. Students should enhance their leadership abilities and develop skills to manage human and financial resources. The course is a combination of distance learning and two weeks of resident instruction at either Fort Leavenworth or Fort Belvoir.

Advanced Course

The Advanced Course is designed for civilian leaders, GS-13 and above or within an equivalent pay band, who exercise predominately indirect supervision. This course is a combination of distance learning and four weeks of resident instruction at Fort Belvoir.

It’s especially hard for an employee to transition when first promoted to a supervisory position, Warner said.

“I need to build a bridge to get [the employee] from subordinate to supervisor,” Warner said. “It’s a huge jump.”

It’s also hard for employees to make the jump from senior civilian to SES, Warner said. So AMSC offers Continuing Education for Senior Leaders.

CESL provides a participatory environment where senior leaders, GS-14 and above, discuss current issues and challenges facing civilian and military leaders. It prepares students for transition to senior-level leadership positions requiring strategic-level decision-making skills. This course is a combination of 40 hours of distance learning and one week of resident instruction at Fort Belvoir.

Other courses AMSC offers include an Action Officer Development Course, a Supervisor Development Course, and a Manager Development Course. All these courses together make up the Civilian Education System.

For class schedules and registration information, visit the AMSC Web site at <www.amsc.belvoir.army.mil>.

To apply for any of the courses, use the Civilian Human Resource Training Application System at <www.atrrs.army.mil/channels/chrtas>.

Army Launches First Executive Mentorship Program

Jill Mueller

ARMY NEWS SERVICE (DEC. 17, 2008)

ARLINGTON, Va.—The Army paired up 38 senior executives Dec. 15 to begin the first formal mentoring initiative of its kind.

The mentorships are designed to be a primary tier of the Army Senior Fellows program. This program was established to sharpen the executive skills of select senior civilians through leadership opportunities and education.

At a half-day seminar outlining the formal structure of the mentorship program, 19 leaders from the Senior Executive Service Corps were introduced to their mentees, one of 19 Army Senior Fellows, immediately starting them on the pathway for future meetings and discussions.

“Mentorship means many different things within and outside the Army; and there are various degrees of mentoring going on,” said Karen Nolan, executive director, Army Senior Fellows. “But this one is unique because it structures and solidifies that partnership.”

The success of the partnerships depends on starting out with a good match, Nolan said. So much preparation went into laying down the groundwork.

Nolan hired Pathbuilders Inc., to create a mentorship program for the Army Senior Fellows. Consultants began the process with initiating hour-long interviews with senior fellows and senior executives who volunteered for the program, to assess their values, goals, and career paths.

The glue that holds the partnerships together is regularly scheduled meetings every month, goal-setting, and follow-up discussion. Partners will actively share information and experiences, successes, and failures, said Pathbuilders President Helene Lollis.

The benefits of the partnership are not one-sided, Lollis said. Through the exchange, “both participants will increase their knowledge, develop skills, and grow.”

The Army Senior Fellows Program mission is to identify high-potential civilian leaders and provide them developmental opportunities to strengthen their executive competencies,



Army Senior Fellow Lynne Caroe connects with newly assigned mentor Jerry Hansen, deputy assistant secretary of the Army, Strategic Infrastructure. The Army's first formal mentorship program initiated 19 partnerships between Senior Executive Service leaders and Army Senior Fellows at a half-day seminar Dec. 15. Photo by Jill Mueller

equipping the Fellows to function as dynamic leaders who are experts in the business of running the Army.

The program is now seeking GS-15/YC-3 applicants who are high-potential future civilian leaders. Applicants should demonstrate:

- Commitment to the Army, its soldiers, Army families, and civilian employees
- Competency to lead, direct, and evaluate programs and activities
- Strong written and verbal communication skills
- Diverse background
- Interest in lifelong learning and challenging self-development through education, experience, and learning opportunities.

Application instructions are found in the Army Civilian Training, Education, and Development System, or ACTEDS catalog, located at <http://cpol.army.mil/library/train/catalog/ch04asfp.html>.

New University to Take Lead in Educating Army Civilians

Gary Sheftick

ARMY NEWS SERVICE (DEC. 15, 2008)

ARLINGTON, Va.—The new Army Civilian University is taking its first major step by assuming oversight of the Army Management Staff College at Fort Belvoir, Va. AMSC has been the Army's premier school for civilian leader education for more than two decades, and its transfer to ACU will take place over a 60-day period from Dec. 1 until Jan. 30.

The Army Civilian University was established last year by Secretary of the Army Pete Geren and Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. George Casey Jr. as a direct answer to several studies recommending greater access to education for the Civilian Corps. When they signed a memorandum approving Army Initiative 5 to "accelerate leader development," they created Army Civilian University.

For Army civilians—and for the Army as a whole—this is very good news, said ACU President Jim Warner, who has a master's degree in business administration from Harvard. He also served as deputy commandant of the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., before retiring from the Army as a brigadier general.

"We want to provide a system that enables all civilian employees to reach their aspirations and their potential," Warner said about Army Civilian University.

This will be done by fostering collaboration, he said. The new university will have the ability to look across a broad spectrum of activities, he said, and it will work to establish more effective and efficient leadership development.

One thing ACU won't do, however, is dictate curriculum, Warner said. He said universities typically do two things:

- Take the administration burden off schools
- Advance modern education methodologies.

"Mathematicians and poets are not studying learning methods," Warner said, emphasizing that they focus on subject-matter expertise. "They'd still be sitting in wooden chairs and scratching on blackboards" if left to their own devices, Warner said.

The Army Civilian University will not be a bricks and mortar institution at Fort Belvoir, Warner said, although he and his staff are currently moving there to Building 1466 on Gunston Road. The new university is a "governance construct," Warner said. It will connect the institutions that focus on educating Army civilians, he said. Right now, that's AMSC,

but Warner said he will over time look at other schools that Army civilians attend, adding there are 17 schools currently associated with civilian career programs.

In the past, the Army relied strictly on career programs to chart the training path of civilian employees, Warner said. "It turns out, about half of the civilian workforce is not in a career field," Warner said. "We need to do some catch-up."

So some changes are being made. The proponent for civilian leader development used to be in G-1, but the proponent for military leader-development was the G-3. Now the G-3 will be over both civilian and military education, and that will be implemented through the Army Training and Doctrine Command.

TRADOC's Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth already has oversight of AMSC, and in fact has a campus there teaching AMSC courses. A CAC fragmentary order, dated Nov. 26, transferred AMSC to the Army Civilian University.

Warner said he will be looking across the Army for where civilian education can be executed more efficiently.

"My assessment of what we have in the Army: We probably have the best of everything—somewhere," Warner said. "But not everybody's that good," he said. Not all schools have state-of-the-art facilities and technologies available. That's why the ACU will gather the best ideas and technologies and share them, he said. It will also assist in the creation of career-development pathways from federal service recruitment to senior executive service.

It's especially hard for an employee to transition when first promoted to a supervisory position, Warner said. "I need to build a bridge to get [the employee] from subordinate to supervisor," Warner said. "It's a huge jump. This is the training gap that we have to fill."

It's also hard for employees to make the jump from senior civilian to SES, Warner said. That's why the Army Senior Fellows program was established, he said.

"However, front and center, Army Civilian University's mission is about enhancing our Army's ability to accomplish its diverse and demanding missions ..." Warner said. "The Army can't do this without a trained and ready civilian workforce."

A news release from the U.S. Army Civilian Senior Leader Development Office contributed to this article.