

Defense Acquisition University Board of Visitors Meeting
DAU Headquarters, Fort Belvoir, VA
May 25, 2016

Welcome: VADM Dave Venlet, USN, Retired, BoV Chair

VADM Venlet opened the session by providing an overview of the topics on the day's agenda and welcomed board member Wally Massenburg who joined remotely.

DAU Update: Jim Woolsey, DAU President

Mr. Woolsey began the DAU Update by notifying the board that member Charlie Williams will be inducted into the DAU Hall of Fame on June 15 at a ceremony to which they are all invited. Also, DAU recently earned second place in the 2016 LearningElite training awards program, an international competition sponsored by Chief Learning Officer (CLO) magazine. He stated that these types of competitions are a great benchmarking opportunity for the DAU team to reflect on their own practices and compare themselves to similar organizations.

Looking ahead, Mr. Woolsey talked about the factors that will create uncertainty and challenges during the next year including leadership, budgets and legislation. He outlined the leadership positions within the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Services which are either vacant or have someone acting in that role, and the impact some of them have on the university and the Defense Acquisition Workforce. He commented that budgets are still down but are leveling out, and as of FY16, the Defense Acquisition Workforce Development Fund (DAWDF) is permanent.

Mr. Woolsey stated that DAU must continue to make decisions about organizational priorities. There are things DAU must do, things that would be good to do, and new things that customers have requested. To take on important new initiatives, DAU will need to make choices about what the organization might have to do less of or do differently.

Mr. Woolsey also discussed the emerging content of the House and Senate Armed Services Committee versions of the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act which could impact DAU. He also updated the board members about accomplishments made in Foundational, Workflow and Performance Learning during the past few months and he talked about the new dau.mil coming this fall and how it will be a significant improvement over the existing site.

Discussion with Functional Leaders

VADM Venlet set the stage by informing the functional leaders of persistent criticisms of the Defense Acquisition Workforce (DAW) which the board has discussed during the previous two meetings – not enough critical thinking, too risk averse, and lack understanding of industry. The board heard from several Program Executive Officer-level customers at the last meeting about their observations, opinions and expectations of their workforce and DAU. This meeting presented an opportunity to hear from the functional leaders and to better understand their perspectives.

Dr. Richard Burke discussed the cost community. He commented that with wider availability of data, cost estimates have become much more reliable because the cost analysts have more data, are using

better tools and there is better communication. However, this already small workforce is getting smaller. Training the workforce to deal with that is going to be challenging.

Mr. Robert Gold described the systems engineering workforce as very large. One of the biggest concerns related to that workforce is retaining them beyond the first five years. This is an area where stronger ties with industry could improve the engineering workforce, perhaps through more permeable barriers between government and industry and improved technical conversations.

Ms. Claire Grady spoke about the contracting workforce. Unlike people in the costing community, people in the contracting community are all members of the Defense Acquisition Workforce (DAW) and tend to be less transient. Like other areas, the workforce is largely made up of baby boomers who will retire soon and millennials who are in rather junior positions. Because the workforce is highly-trained, educated and has a highly sought-after skill set, retaining them past the first few years is a challenge.

Ms. Grady said there is a push to bring new people into contracting career fields and develop the skills for them to be successful. She has noticed that their lack of experience is manifesting itself in risk-averse behavior. Also, when people are over-burdened, they do not tend to spend the time needed to develop the next generation. The middle-range of the career field is pretty hollow. More experiential learning is important—such as Services Acquisition Workshops. Over 50% of acquisitions are not on major programs, but on services. Those people doing the services acquisitions are largely not in the DAW.

In the contracting career field, personnel are being encouraged to take a broader view of contracting than just their current position duties and move toward taking a portfolio perspective. The reality is that there are a large number of regulations which can bog down contracting operations and also result in discouraging companies from doing business with the government.

A board member raised the question of whether the DAWIA certification construct is still the best way to train and certify the workforce in the current environment. Functional leaders agreed that one of the most valuable ways they believe DAU helps their respective workforces is through continuous learning. They also pointed out the need for it to be relevant and helpful and for leadership to support it as necessary professional development. More focus on capability gaps and less on certification could result in more diversity of experience for workforce members. While there is great value in having personnel specialize in certain areas, the reality is that when budgets shrink and organizations downsize, they tend to hold onto the generalists.

In the engineering community, Mr. Gold pointed out that DAU helps new engineers understand other technical areas involved in the acquisition process, what their roles are and how they work together. He noted that updated information was incorporated into the curriculum quickly. A frustration has been with the perceived generalization of the engineering workforce. The highly technical nature of the career field results in specialized areas, but shrinking budgets tend to shrink the career field indiscriminately and signs of shortages in some skill sets are becoming apparent.

Experiential learning is important for developing workforce members into effective leaders. The case studies used in many courses are valuable, but it is important to keep them current and reflect contemporary issues and approaches. There are people doing innovative things right now; the case studies are a great way to illustrate that and talk about these approaches. The leaders in the field should be creating and encouraging a more collaborative environment in the workplace so that everyone involved in a program can really understand it. Focusing on continuous learning supports this.

Workforce members seem to be so focused on their own areas, they are not communicating well with other people involved in the process.

An area for DAU to focus on is software in acquisition programs. This is a growing field with major implications on program costs. The department needs to figure out how to do software development, and cyber better. DAU is already creating information technology-related modules that are incorporated into courses for a variety of career fields.

The functional leads placed more emphasis on competencies and experience and less on certification levels because those levels do not tend to reflect actual abilities. Thus far, time and training have been the main requirements for certification—not actual experience. Some components within the Services have done a better job in addressing the skills gaps and providing professional development opportunities than others. DAU helps by providing the information people need on the job (continuous learning and job support tools) in an accessible and easy-to-use way.

There are young people in the workforce doing meaningful work and program execution with enthusiasm and creative thinking. How do we capitalize on that? Our current certification levels imply people have experience based on their certification level—that is not always true.

Scenario-based Strategic Planning: Joanne Schoonover, Capital and Northeast Region Dean

Ms. Schoonover posed a question to the board members: “What are the disruptive and uncertain factors that could significantly impact our ability to accomplish our mission and achieve our vision?” The board brainstormed ideas both individually, then as a group to formulate the overall categories and specific factors that could significantly impact DAU. The board’s feedback will be used in conjunction with that of other stakeholders to enhance DAU’s long-range strategic planning efforts.

Cybersecurity Curriculum Update: Dave Pearson, Engineering and Technology Center Director

The nature of cybersecurity makes it critical for DAU to integrate it throughout the curriculum and across the ALM. Sensitive information goes well beyond classified information and cybersecurity is recognized as an operational imperative. There is a vast and complex labyrinth of policy and guidance related to cybersecurity. DAU’s job is to take the chaos and turn it into clarity for the acquisition workforce.

Personnel in DAU’s Foundational Learning Directorate work closely with the functional leaders to develop curriculum. There are competing perspectives between the engineers who believe it is important to design in cybersecurity features, and the IT community whose tendency is towards protection. The most demand is coming from the practitioners themselves asking for help.

Mr. Pearson described the learning products DAU has developed or is in the process of developing. Cybersecurity throughout DOD Acquisition (CLE 074) is not a required course, yet more than 6,400 people have taken it during the past year. Mr. Pearson said he is still looking for ways to reduce the cycle time of developing curriculum and learning assets.

Pearson’s team develops modules that can be inserted into various courses to ensure consistency of content throughout the curriculum. Additionally, DAU faculty will be updated about cybersecurity initiatives so they have a working knowledge of the topic and are able to address questions in the

classroom. A major area of concern from the Chief Information Officer (CIO) perspective is informing contracting officers what language needs to be in contracts to ensure IT cybersecurity needs are clearly written into contracts.

A new Cyberspace Workforce (CW) is being established. It is expected that a large percentage of the DAW will also end up being part of the CW. DAU is watching the situation to predict future training demand signal.

Final Thoughts from the Board

Cybersecurity is very important and DAU is proactively taking steps to educate the workforce. This is also the time when DAU should be thinking about transition planning for the next administration. Additional Workflow Learning efforts should start with the workflow itself and end up with curriculum. It is important to recognize that the tools that teach are not the tools that support.

The board discussed which groups of people they would like to hear from next and how they will use the information they gather.

BoV members and candidates present:

VADM David Venlet, USN, Ret.

BGen Michael Brogan, USMC, Ret.

Maj. Gen. Erwin Lessel, USAF, Ret.

VADM Walter Massenburg, USN, Ret.

Mr. Bob Mosher

LTG Bill Phillips, USA, Ret.

Ms. Anne Reed

Dr. Allison Rosset

Mr. Charlie Williams

Functional Leads:

Dr. Richard Burke, Deputy Director, Cost Assessment, Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation

Mr. Robert Gold, Director, Engineering Enterprise, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Systems Engineering

Ms. Claire Grady, Director, Defense Pricing and Acquisition Policy

Minutes prepared by:

Christen Goulding, Designated Federal Officer, Defense Acquisition University Board of Visitors

Minutes approved by:

David Venlet, Chairman, Defense Acquisition University Board of Visitors

Signature David J. Venlet Date 8 June 2016