

New Heights in Education—Army's First Civilian-Only Senior Service College Program Receives Military Accreditation *by Tara Clements*



The Army Acquisition Workforce is likely to see an increase in the number of qualified civilians competing successfully for critical key leader positions, now that students in the Senior Service College Fellowship (SSCF) program are eligible for Military Education Level 1 (MEL 1) credit. The new eligibility is the result of a collaborative effort between the U.S. Army Acquisition Support Center (USAASC), the DAU and the Army War College, and has been 3 years in the making.

LTG James L. Huggins, Jr., Deputy Chief of Staff, G-3/5/7, approved MEL 1-equivalent credit for civilians enrolled in the DAU SSCF program in a March 28, 2012, memorandum. The SSCF is the first civilian-only Army senior service college approved for the credit equivalency.

The SSCF program, established in 2006 by DAU, develops civilian acquisition leaders for critical senior leadership roles at the GS-14/15 level. SSCF provides up to 1 year of training, with leadership as the primary learning objective.

Deputy Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter recently announced that the Defense Department will target individuals with “key leader potential,” including those with executive leadership development training. There are 1,500 key leader positions in the U.S. Army Acquisition Corps (AAC), and only 1 percent of the AAC are SSCF graduates.

“We have 142 people out there who are now moving through the system into leadership positions within the Army acquisition structure,” said **Jim McCullough**, (former) dean, DAU South Region and director of the SSCF program. “They will become the nucleus of the Army senior leadership for civilians in the years to come, especially as the baby boomers retire. These will be the people who step into these jobs, and they will be better prepared because of the experience and tools we hope to provide them with this educational experience.”

An Unmet Need

Leader development has always been a foundation of training for the Army, but the focus has been on those who wear the uniform. For an acquisition workforce of which civilians represent 96 percent, the level of training isn't balanced between military and civilians, according to Scott M. Greene, chief of USAASC Acquisition Education, Training and Experience Branch.

“We didn't believe that Army civilians were getting an equivalent senior-level training package like their military counterparts,” said McCullough.

So when a low number of civilians applied for senior service college in 2006, the Army acquisition community took note.

“We weren't giving our GS-15 and Senior Executive Service civilians the same executive-level training as their military counterparts and didn't have enough seats to train and, even when we did, people were unwilling to leave their homes for a year,” said McCullough.

For most, attending senior service college required a move. Having just two choices of location—the Army War College at Carlisle Barracks, PA, and the Dwight D. Eisenhower School for National Security and Resource Strategy (formerly the Industrial College of the Armed Forces), in Washington, DC—didn't allow much flexibility. In addition, the senior service colleges allocated only six seats per year for civilians.

“We weren't reaching the workforce,” McCullough said. “The objective was, ‘Let's go train the workforce where the workforce is.’ That's really the motivation behind the [SSCF] program.”

A combined effort between DAU and USAASC led to a pilot program to bring the training to the civilians of the Army acquisition workforce. The **Hon. Claude M. Bolton Jr.**, then-Army acquisition executive, and LTG Joseph L. Yakovac Jr., then-director, AAC and military deputy to the assistant secretary

of the Army for acquisition, logistics and technology (ASA[ALT]), approved the pilot SSCF program starting July 2006 in Huntsville, Ala. On the heels of this successful effort, Bolton expanded the program to Warren, Mich., in 2007 and Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md., in 2009.

The results were significant. With the expansion to three additional locations, the SSCF program has produced more Army civilian leaders each year than all other senior service colleges combined, graduating 142 students to date.

“The experience was, in turn, extremely informative, exhilarating and tough,” said Colleen Setili, an SSCF student who graduated in May.

The fellowship programs can now train eight to 10 civilians per year in each location to develop as many as 24 to 30 civilians per year, providing significant leadership growth for the Army acquisition workforce.

One of the tools making this possible at the three added locations is telepresence technology, “giving the in-class feel with instructors from remote locations,” McCullough said. The technology, used in 30 percent of DAU classes, allows instructors to connect with students virtually with sophisticated video conferencing that integrates directly into the classroom. The technology has increased accessibility to instructors without the cost of a traditional in-classroom presence.

However, despite this increased access, the fellowship program wasn't a recognized substitute among the service colleges and did not provide the same credit that those who graduated from the traditional service colleges received.

The Quest for Equivalency

“The greatest challenge was determining how to get the fellowship approved” for MEL 1 credit, “since it had never been done before for a civilian program,” said Greene, who was responsible for securing the approval.

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During the past 3 years, USAASC and DAU have worked closely with the Army War College to review and modify the fellowship curriculum to achieve MEL 1 equivalency. The program core areas include:

- Leadership training
- The program manager’s “Critical Thinking Course” (adapted from Harvard University’s Case-Based Business School)
- Mentoring
- Research
- National speakers program
- Tours to meet the warfighter
- National Security seminar
- Graduate classes from accredited academic partner
- Community service

“The curriculum consisted of a combination of global leadership classes, a research project [thesis] and various DAU and other courses to include critical thinking workshops on emotional intelligence, international studies, test and evaluation, contracting for executives, communication, business etiquette, professional image, mentoring and others,” said Setili. “We also read many leadership books, held book reviews, listened to guest speakers on a variety of topics and traveled to the U.S. Army War College and other commands,” she added.

According to Greene, the cost of the class increased approximately 35 percent after it was revamped to meet MEL 1 standards. However, he noted, “We have also trained more civilians than ever before in areas such as strategic thinking, theory and strategy of war, strategic leadership, and national security policy and strategy.”

Despite this increase in upfront training costs, the program has saved significantly in other areas.

“We’ve achieved \$1.56 million in cost avoidance as well as [saved] up to 48-man years, as the new curriculum includes required certifications such as PMT 401 [Program Managers Course] and the opportunity for a master’s degree in this program,” Greene added.

Conclusion

The MEL 1 equivalency will not be retroactive because the curriculum has evolved over the past few years to meet the standards for equivalency. Students graduating this year and in the future will receive the credit.

“If you have had Senior Service College Fellowship on your resume, I believe it will be a significant factor toward a decision in a hiring process,” McCullough said.

For those considering applying, “I would definitely recommend this program for anyone who wants to expand their leadership awareness, training and skills. I wish I had applied to this program earlier in my government career,” said Setili.

For more information on SSCF, visit <http://asc.army.mil> or www.dau.mil/SSCF.

*Editors’ Note: This excerpt was reprinted from the July-September 2013 edition of *Army AL&T Magazine*. View page 132 of *Army AL&T Magazine* for the full article.

Talent Management System: Advancement Qualification Information and End of Year Reviews

Advancement Qualification Information (AQI): Eligible DAU faculty members who want to be considered for advancement to the next pay band should start preparing their AQI forms. If you meet the minimum eligibility requirements (time on board, education, salary position, etc.), then an AQI form has been generated in your Talent Management System (TMS) account. Check TMS to ensure that the information on the form is valid and start gathering applicable information. The AQI process, eligibility and minimum requirements are described in the **Faculty Performance Evaluation System (FPES) Manual**. AQIs will be due to deans/directors approximately Oct. 15. This is a highly competitive process for only a limited number of positions; all who are interested are encouraged to evaluate their potential and contribution to the DAU mission.

End of Year Reviews: All DAU faculty members should have conducted a midyear review with their supervisor for the FY13 Individual Development and Contribution Assessment plans in May.

It is time again to begin the end-of-year phase.

- IDP (faculty and staff): Once the FY13 Individual Development Plan (IDP) midyear review is completed by the supervisor, TMS returns the form to the member for the end-of-year review. Update the form and forward it to your supervisor, allowing enough time so it can be approved by Oct. 11.
- FCAR (faculty only): Once the Faculty Contribution Assessment Plan (FCAp) is approved by faculty supervisors, faculty members need only to execute this plan and gather summary comments to add to the form throughout the remainder of the year. Update the form and forward it to your supervisor with enough time for it to be approved by Oct. 25.

Your supervisor may require you to provide these forms, so plan ahead. View training job aids and other **TMS resources**. You also can find out more about the purpose, responsibilities and process for IDPs in the **Employee Learning and Development Plan**. Points of contact are **Anne Bauman** (Anne.Bauman@dau.mil) and **Dick David** (Richard.David@dau.mil).

TMS Deadlines	
IDP approved by supervisor	Oct. 11
AQI to supervisors	Oct. 15
FCAR forwarded by supervisor	Oct. 25