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PEOPLE

Our Most Valuable Asset



One of our greatest challenges is how we approach building great teams of people and improving how we recruit, grow, and mature the systems and software engineering professionals who contribute to the nation's critical defense systems. As we continue to address the Recruit–Train–Retain objectives laid out in the 2008 National Defense Authorization Act, we must identify workforce competencies crucial for executing systems and software engineering functions within acquisition programs. In addition, we must enable realistic workforce development efforts by ensuring that these education, training, and experience requirements are balanced with job demands.

As illustrated in the featured articles, all components of the department must work together to enhance the capability and capacity of the systems and software engineering workforce through training and educational initiatives. For example, the Navy is expanding its training to meet new and evolving needs throughout its Systems Engineering Educational Continuum for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

The Navy's Systems Engineering Stakeholders Group recently conducted a Naval Systems Engineering "lessons learned" conference to develop education materials to be used in the Naval Postgraduate School and U.S. Naval Academy engineering curricula. The Naval Air Systems Command graduated its first two cohorts of the Master of Science and Systems Engineering in partnership with the Naval Postgraduate School. In addition, it established advanced degree and certificate programs in physics, mathematics, and other technical disciplines, including the Joint Executive Systems Engineering Management degree program.

The Air Force established a STEM governance structure at the three-star level and a STEM Advisory Council to address workforce requirements. The Air Force also developed a STEM strategic plan called Bright Horizons. The Air Force's Scientist and Engineer Advisory Council is evaluating the need for an initial skills training course for new Systems Engineering hires. It is investigating various strategic initiatives addressing an Air Force-wide solution for present and future science and engineering workforce capability requirements and the mechanisms for fulfilling them.

The Air Force Institute of Technology developed and implemented the Software Professional Development Program, a series of continuing education courses for the software workforce to improve software management and engineering skills. The Army employs comprehensive Individual Development Plans for all individuals in the Army Acquisition Corps and uses numerous training and educational opportunities for their current and new employees, including developmental assignments.

We cannot overemphasize that our people are our greatest asset. The department with support from Congress has made workforce development, especially in the areas of systems and software engineering and STEM, a top priority. We as individuals working in these areas must do our part to take advantage of these opportunities and encourage our colleagues to do the same. Together we can make a difference and truly improve the outcomes of our crucial acquisition programs.

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