

AIR WAR COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

# SENIOR SERVICE COLLEGE: A PILLAR OF CIVILIAN SENIOR LEADER DEVELOPMENT

by

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## **Biography**

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## Introduction

The development of a dynamic civilian senior leadership corps within the Department of Defense (DOD) is a critical yet unrealized item on the strategic agenda. The involvement of this sector of the nation's largest federal employer in supporting a constantly changing, increasingly intensive warfighting mission is vital to the achievement of the Department's unique goals within the homeland defense apparatus. The attendance of DOD civilians at senior service colleges (SSCs) serves as a formidable and necessary link between two diverse cultures that must unite to perform a challenging national security mandate. Unless it concentrates its efforts with a holistic, results-oriented leader development strategy that exposes more civilians to this experience, DOD will continue to minimize a valuable resource and will not fully manifest its potential to develop a well-rounded cadre of senior leaders who can thrive within the Total Force and contribute to fulfilling joint, enterprise, interagency and national security objectives.

DOD supports the National Security Strategy (NSS) of the United States, which identifies "the security of the United States, its citizens, and U.S. allies and partners"<sup>1</sup> as one of America's four enduring national interests. Inherent in achieving this interest, the NSS alludes to the necessity of applying the whole-of-government approach, which incorporates comprehensive use of the diplomatic, informational, military, and economic instruments of power. These national instruments of power are interdependent and their judicious, strategic application underpins a well-executed national security plan.

The NSS asserts, "Collaboration across the government – and with our partners at the state, local, and tribal levels of government, in industry and abroad – must guide our actions."<sup>2</sup> To accomplish this facet of the NSS vision, a fully considered and coordinated whole-of-

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<sup>1</sup> President, *U.S. National Security Strategy*, 17.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, 51.

government approach must be developed, supported, and executed by a knowledgeable and experienced senior leader base. Leadership at the highest levels of government must be able to view and analyze problems using joint, interagency, and multi-national lenses. Hence, senior level development must remain an essential, natural component of DOD's long-term strategy.

## **DOD's Role in National Security**

DOD bears the major burden for successful realization of the NSS' security element. To accomplish this charge effectively, it must activate its members' full intellectual capabilities. This is a gargantuan task for an employer with over three million military and civilian personnel,<sup>3</sup> augmented by a large cadre of contractor personnel. These disparate elements inextricably work together as the Total Force to perform the Department's critical mission of defending the homeland.

The complex composition of the Total Force accentuates DOD's uniqueness among federal agencies and compels the deliberate development of military and civilian senior leaders that possess the diverse skills and required competencies to tackle issues from multiple strategic perspectives. Sustaining DOD's global warfighting dominance demands a continued reliance on its historic partnership between well-prepared and appropriately educated military and civilian leaders.

Military officer professional development is well ensconced within the DOD structure. Joint professional military education (JPME), designed and developed to educate senior military leaders in the art of warfare and leadership, is the premiere component of the military leadership continuum. The National War College (NWC), the Industrial College of the Armed Forces (ICAF), and the SSCs comprise the culminating JPME education programs established by the

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<sup>3</sup> DOD Civilian Personnel Management Service, *Civilian Human Capital Strategic Plan 2006-2010*, A-1.

Goldwater Nichols Reorganization Act (GNRA) as a steppingstone to the pinnacles of military leadership. The GNRA lays the foundation for the joint culture currently embodied within DOD and the Joint Chiefs of Staff Officer Professional Military Education Policy (OPMEP) provides the necessary direction for course content, faculty qualifications, and student requirements.

Within the civilian workforce, senior leader development remains a lingering Departmental challenge. DOD's steady but myopic approach to expand its efforts to formalize an enterprise-wide civilian training program puts the institutional future of the Total Force as an effective, cogent warfighting machine at risk. Since all members of the Total Force are in the warfighting business, DOD must settle for nothing less than a senior leadership corps well versed in concepts and possibilities applicable for the resolution of future dilemmas that have strategic, joint, national security, and whole-of-government nuances. Military leaders are well prepared in this area and an investment of similar sustained energy in civilian development will guarantee that civilian leaders are as well.

Because of its flagship role in the achievement of national security goals, the maximization of DOD civilian leadership potential is a non-negotiable organizational imperative. Increased SSC use, a powerful option for DOD senior development, offers a high return on investment for boosting civilian senior leader competence and capability. The JPME institutions provide DOD civilians the opportunity to explore the intricacies of strategy, jointness, leadership, and multi-nationalism alongside their military counterparts; the civilian sector must fully use these professional development opportunities.

### **Definition of Terms**

Three terms used extensively throughout this paper require definition to prevent confusion and to understand the author's intent. The term *senior service college* refers to in-

resident programs of specific JPME institutions identified as the U.S. Army War College (USAWC) in Carlisle, Pennsylvania; the U.S. Naval War College (USNWC) in Newport, Rhode Island; the Air War College (AWC) in Montgomery, Alabama; and the Marine Corps War College (MCWAR) in Quantico, Virginia. The JPME facilities located in Washington, D.C. - the NWC and ICAF - are not the subject of this paper. Hence, the term *senior service college* is used to differentiate from *war college*.

Second, the civilian personnel referenced in this paper are civilian employees of DOD. The term, *civilian*, does not refer to civilians in other federal agencies or the private sector unless specifically noted. DOD civilians include those from the Departments of Army, Navy (including the Marine Corps), and Air Force, as well as various Fourth Estate agencies such as the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Defense Intelligence Agency, and the National Security Agency. This distinction is important because civilians other than DOD civilians may attend SSCs.

Third, all references to “the Department” pertain to the Department of Defense.

### **History of Civilian Attendance at the Senior Service Colleges**

Civilians have played an indispensable role in the accomplishment of DOD’s mission since the organization’s birth in 1947. Comprising a significant portion of the workforce, civilian rolls totaled over 1 million annually from 1951 – 1975 and from 1983 - 1991.<sup>4</sup> In other years, civilian numbers ranged from a high of over 900,000 to 765,000 in 2010.<sup>5</sup> This sector has always shared in agency leadership responsibilities; however, shared responsibility has not related historically to equity in leader development opportunities.

In the mid 1900s, DOD recognized the need to engage with civilians to prevent a recurrence of the missteps of World War I. The Army Industrial College, the precursor to ICAF,

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<sup>4</sup> Defense Data Manpower Center, *DOD Civilian Strength Levels - FY 1950-2001 (Table)*.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, *Report of Federal Civilian Employment* (as of 9/30/10).



was founded in 1924 to improve the relationship between the private and military sectors. The school included private sector civilians in the student body as early as 1944.<sup>6</sup> The Army-Navy Staff College, the precursor to NWC, was created in 1943 to imbed a culture of jointness in unified commands and included Foreign Service Officers from the State Department as its first civilian contingent.<sup>7</sup> DOD civilians routinely became members of the SSC student body in the mid-1960's.<sup>8</sup>

The professional military structure has undergone a number a changes since the early 1900's. The 1986 GNRA prompted inculcation of the concept of jointness throughout the professional military education experience. The NWC and ICAF focus heavily on developing symbiotic relationships between the military, interagency, and private sectors. The USAWC, USNWC, and AWC concentrate on enhancing “joint operational expertise and honing joint warfighting skills”<sup>9</sup> for successful performance in the joint arena,<sup>10</sup> while the MCWAR, the youngest SSC, mirrors the objectives of its counterparts.

The DOD civilian population has remained a substantial force since the 1950's. Its continued support to DOD's success is essential; and, as such, per OPMEP guidance, civilians are invited to attend SSC.<sup>11</sup> Although civilian attendance has continued, it has been with undetermined strategic results.

DOD's size generates a large pool of potential candidates for senior level leadership development in the SSCs. Criteria for admission into a JPME institution requires that DOD

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<sup>6</sup> Yaeger, “The Origins of Joint Professional Military Education,” 75.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 77.

<sup>8</sup> Air War College, Office of Student Affairs. It is possible that DOD civilians attended earlier; research obtained by the author evidences 1960s.

<sup>9</sup> US House, Ronald Reagan National Defense Authorization Act of 2005, Section 2155 2(b) (1).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, Section 2155, 2b(2)B. Guidance also provides for attendance of interagency civilians. The continued participation of this group is essential for progress in the whole-of-government approach to US national security. Although efforts to improve representation of interagency civilians are warranted, this paper focuses solely on the internal DOD senior leader dynamic.

<sup>11</sup> Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Instruction 1800.01D*, B-1.

employees have “appropriate professional and academic background.”<sup>12</sup> The SSCs generally equate this to employees with a bachelor’s degree who are in the grades of GS14, GS15, YA3, YC3, or equivalent. The total personnel in these grades has remained consistent, averaging approximately 25,500 since 2004.<sup>13</sup> The number of DOD civilians attending SSCs has also remained relatively consistent, comprising between 5 – 7% of the student body,<sup>14</sup> as evidenced by the table below, which shows DOD civilian attendance as a percentage of the student body since academic year 2000.

DOD Civilian Attendance at Senior Service College (AY00-10)				
Academic Year	Army <sup>15</sup>	Navy <sup>16</sup>	Air Force <sup>17</sup>	Marine Corps <sup>18</sup>
2000	25 (7.5%)	Unavailable	17 (6.5%)	0 (0%)
2001	24 (7.2%)	25 (13.5%)	18 (6.8%)	0 (0%)
2002	25 (7.5%)	35 (17.2%)	13 (5.0%)	0 (0%)
2003	24 (7.1%)	38 (17.9%)	13 (5.0%)	0 (0%)
2004	24 (7.2%)	25 (13.2%)	12 (4.7%)	0 (0%)
2005	18 (5.5%)	25 (12.8%)	12 (4.7%)	0 (0%)
2006	10 (2.9%)	16 ( 7.8%)	10 (4.0%)	0 (0%)
2007	21 (6.3%)	20 ( 9.4%)	13 (5.0%)	0 (0%)
2008	25 (7.4%)	26 (11.6%)	12 (4.7%)	0 (0%)
2009	28 (8.3%)	26 (11.8%)	18 (7.5%)	0 (0%)
2010	20 (5.6%)	20 ( 9.7%)	13 (5.5%)	0 (0%)

## **The Current Civilian Senior Leader Development Climate within DOD**

The Department lacks a robust, standardized force development plan for its civilian workforce. Creation of senior leaders equipped with the joint, enterprise, and interagency skills

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> DOD Civilian Personnel Management Service, Defense Civilian Personnel Data System (date provided via author request for information. Data includes on GS and NSPS employees.

<sup>14</sup> The US Naval War College’s numbers include both interagency and DOD civilian personnel; hence the higher percentages.

<sup>15</sup> Army War College, Office of the Registrar, December 4, 2010.

<sup>16</sup> US College of Naval Warfare, Office of the Registrar, January 15, 2011.

<sup>17</sup> Air War College, Office of Student Affairs, December 10, 2010.

<sup>18</sup> Marine Corps War College, Office of the Registrar, November 30, 2010.

needed for oversight of effective organizations is essential to meeting national security objectives. Secretary Gates remarked, “An unconventional era of warfare requires unconventional thinkers.”<sup>19</sup> The ongoing Long War, capacity-building efforts in Iraq, and other burgeoning global issues mandate the existence of capable senior civilian leaders who can effectively participate within the whole-of-government machine.

Civilian leader development, despite persistent efforts, appears to adopt more of a parochial rather than institutional nature. Each component has established its own senior leader development structure, which disadvantages DOD by diluting its senior leader human capital capability potential. It also telegraphs a disjointedness that proliferates development of an uneven quality of senior leaders throughout the Department.

Congress has taken notice. A provision within the 2010 National Defense Authorization Act has provided a regulatory baseline for the development of a strong civilian leader cadre. Section 1112 directs the establishment of a DOD Civilian Leadership Program to “develop a new generation of civilian leaders for the Department of Defense.”<sup>20</sup>

Congress has also directed the agency to consider a strategic approach to workforce development. DOD is required to submit to Congress an annual plan that provides a blueprint of its civilian force development initiatives.<sup>21</sup> This plan must also include an inventory of critical skills needed to support DOD in fulfillment of its national security objectives.<sup>22</sup>

The charter to “establish and administer DOD-wide civilian leader development programs needed to ensure a leadership cadre and pipeline with enterprise-wide competencies”<sup>23</sup> lies within the responsibility of the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. The

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<sup>19</sup> Secretary Gates. Speech at Air War College, 2006.

<sup>20</sup> US House. National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010, Section 1112(a)(2)(A).

<sup>21</sup> 10 USC, Subtitle A, Part 1, Chapter 2, Section 115b(a)(1).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, Section 115b(b)(1)(A).

<sup>23</sup> DOD Instruction 1430.16, 7.

strategic plan released by that office articulates a vision for development of a robust, incisive senior leader corps. Sub-goal 1.1.5 necessitates increasing the joint and strategic deployment capabilities of Senior Executive Service (SES) members and a desired flexibility to interchange SES and General Officer assets.<sup>24</sup> Secretary Gates' goal of reducing the number of flag officers and SES members within DOD<sup>25</sup> will change the complexion of this group of leaders and will require civilian-military views on DOD's strategic direction to be contextual and consistent. The challenge lies in the means for accomplishing this task not only for current leaders but also for those in the pipeline.

The creation and publication of the DOD Civilian Leader Development Framework suggest that the Department has given serious thought to the competencies considered relevant for 21<sup>st</sup> century leadership. The competencies mirror the executive core qualifications required by the Office of Personnel Management for entry into the SES. DOD, however, has added an additional competency – that of having an enterprise-wide perspective.<sup>26</sup> To support this model, the Department has also published a DOD Civilian Leader Development Continuum that provides a visualization of the progressive path from lower to senior leadership.<sup>27</sup>

Senior civilian leaders identified the lack of a civilian leadership continuum as a problem in the realm of succession planning. That, along with the perception that federal civilians are less competitive than their retired military competitors when applying for senior level positions,<sup>28</sup> may evidence a possible education or experience vacuum. The Defense Senior Leader Development Program (DLSDP), created in 2008 to succeed the Defense Leadership and Management Program, aims to address this concern. DSLDP directly supports DOD Directive

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<sup>24</sup> Office of Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel & Readiness. *Strategic Plan for FY10-12*, 5.

<sup>25</sup> Secretary of Defense, *Efficiencies – Budget Roll-Out*, January 6, 2010.

<sup>26</sup> Department of Defense Instruction 1430.16, 10.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 15 (Table 1).

<sup>28</sup> DOD Workshop. *Developing 21<sup>st</sup> Century SES Leaders*, 53.

1403.03, which provides a framework for executive leadership and outlines the Lifecycle for SES members. Section 5 of this directive recognizes that SES members should have an enterprise-spanning perspective, strategic vision and thinking, competency in joint matters, global and cultural astuteness, business acumen, leadership proficiency, a results driven focus, and the ability to build partnerships and communicate effectively.<sup>29</sup>

The complexities of the composition of DOD's workforce directly correlate with the massive nature of the mission. Sustainment of the United States as a global hegemony demands continued primacy of the warfighting mission. Strategically, this warrants planning and forecasting contemplative, continuous education and preparation for the senior military constituency. DOD's focus in this area remains dominant and continues to evolve. Although there is an increased reliance on the civilian segment as a partner in direct operational matters and warfighting support, the corollary effort to stimulate a similar enterprise within the civilian community needs to gain traction. National security imperatives mandate a unified Departmental approach to provide the same deliberate, sustained development of the senior civilian workforce.

### **Current Senior Leader Development within the Components**

The components have not abdicated the business of developing their senior civilian workforce to higher echelons within DOD. The Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force have instituted programs with the goal of shaping a force structure that contains leaders who will enable the component to uphold its responsibilities to the enterprise mission; however, the four organizations use divergent methodologies to achieve this end state.

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<sup>29</sup> DOD Directive 1403.3, 1-2.

## Department of the Army

The agency recently established the Army Civilian University (ACU) in order to provide a corporate framework for civilian leader development. The Army's Initiative #5, focusing on accelerated leader development, was the impetus behind the ACU and has been endorsed by both the Secretary of the Army and Chief of Staff of Army. The US Army's Training and Doctrine Command has been charged with using ACU as the vehicle for developing a "common civilian and military culture as a vehicle to improve integration."<sup>30</sup> Although ACU is not a physical structure per se, it provides the governance and oversight for proactively managing and developing Army civilian leaders.

The Civilian Education System (CES) is an additional aid in civilian leader development. This centrally funded program, under the auspices of the Management and Command College, is headquartered at Fort Belvoir, Virginia. It has adopted a progressive approach to leader development consisting of five sequential and three auxiliary courses. The CES advanced course, which follows the foundation, basic, and intermediate offerings, introduces the senior level competency of jointness in support of achieving national security objectives.<sup>31</sup>

The Army Civilian Training, Education, and Development System (ACTEDS) is the repository for many senior civilian leader development opportunities, to include attendance at the Federal Executive Institute (FEI) and civilian academic institutions. The Army uses a central recruitment process for solicitations for the Army War College or ICAF.<sup>32</sup> To achieve the highest possible return on investment, agency leadership has determined placement in a position

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<sup>30</sup> Department of the Army US Combined Arms Center. "Army Implementing Directive, Establish the Army Civilian University", 1.

<sup>31</sup> Army Management Staff College website (Advanced Course Tab).

<sup>32</sup> Department of the Army. ACTEDS Catalog. Chapter 2.

of progressively higher responsibility to be an automatic result of graduation from SSC.<sup>33</sup>

ACTEDS also communicates criteria for Army employee application to DSLDP as another gateway to DOD senior leader opportunities. .

## **Department of the Navy**

The Department of the Navy advocates a customized approach to individual training. The agency's goal is to "ensure its civilian workforce is able to meet current and projected performance requirements essential to military readiness."<sup>34</sup> In both SECNAV Instruction 12410.24 and in Subchapter 410 of the Civilian Human Resources Manual, training needs result directly from performance discussions, individual development plans, and other related organizational documents.<sup>35</sup> The Civilian Leader Development Assessment, the Civilian Workforce Development Application, and the Civilian Leader Improvement Battery are web-based leader self-assessment tools that assist with identification of individual weaknesses and strengths. The agency supports DSLDP, FEI, and other centrally managed opportunities as additional possibilities for senior leader development.

## **The Marine Corps**

The Marine Corps recently announced transfer of oversight of its civilian leadership development program from the Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Manpower and Policy Division to the Training and Education Command, Marine Corps University, Lejeune Leadership Institute. Future program changes, to include a four-phased FY10-15 approach, are underway.<sup>36</sup> The DOD-developed competencies provide the springboard for the new curriculum. In the interim, SECNAV Instruction 12410.24 remains the foundation for leader development of

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<sup>33</sup> Department of the Army, Vice Chief of Staff. "Mandatory Placements for Civilian Graduates ."

<sup>34</sup> Department of Navy, Human Resources Manual, 2.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>36</sup> MARADMIN 006/11, Oversight Transfer of Career Leadership Development and Centrally Managed Programs.

civilian Marines. Mentoring, training, and developmental assignments comprise the three main prongs used by agency leaders to achieve leadership objectives.<sup>37</sup>

## **Department of Air the Force**

The Air Force has DOD's most robust and structured civilian senior leader development program. The issuance of its Civilian Force Development Concept of Operations in January 2006 laid a firm foundation for a corporate, competency-based approach that requires the involvement of the employee, supervisor, and a functional development team. The plan makes a distinction for training at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels. It also allows for flexibility in individual career field competencies but stresses a consistent, Air Force-wide application of the leader template.

The Air Force acknowledges the significance of the Total Force concept in its training outcomes and structures its program to align closely with officer development. The agency integrates the educational experiences of military and civilian personnel at early levels of development for both. A centralized development team competitively slates civilians to attend Officer Basic School, the intermediate level Air Command and Staff College, and the senior level Air War College. This team also selects candidates for FEI and other premiere training programs. Placement decisions for senior level graduates are made at the corporate level.

A web based tool inventories employee skills, training, and experience. Supervisors and development team members review the information entered into this database to provide recommendations to employees, as needed, and to assess qualifications against Air Force strategic requirements.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Headquarters, USMC MCO 12410.24, 1, *Civilian Leadership Development*.

<sup>38</sup> Webb, "Air Force Civilian Senior Leadership Development Challenges," 12.



## **Making the Case for Civilians at Senior Service Colleges**

The SSCs have been a bastion of learning for the world's best and brightest officer corps. Since the GNRA's passage in 1986, continuous reevaluation of JPME has occurred to ensure that curricula evolve to anticipate future challenges in a rapidly changing global environment. Although the latest House Armed Services Committee's Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations recommended additional JPME reforms,<sup>39</sup> the senior service institutions still represent the DOD community's premiere educational centerpiece.

Senior leader development in the nation's largest and, arguably, most critical federal agency requires an integrated, coordinated plan of action. The intensive process for developing the next generation of senior civilian leaders within the Total Force construct necessitates a thoughtful, consistent course of action. Nevertheless, the Department should consider maximizing, with institutional and enterprise purpose, the capability of the already established SSCs as an available vehicle for growing a joint, strategic-minded cadre of partners for DOD's military leaders.

## **Maximizing the Benefits of the Department's Unique Culture**

DOD's unique culture engenders an intellectual diversity that distinguishes it from other federal agencies. The post-Vietnam vision of Defense Secretary Melvin Laird and Army Chief of Staff, Creighton Abrams, originated from their determination to maintain a permanent linkage between active and reserve forces.<sup>40</sup> The Total Force concept has evolved to include all of the Department's employee stakeholder groups, including its sizable civilian workforce. The Total

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<sup>39</sup> US House, Committee on Armed Services, "Another Crossroads?", xii-xv.

<sup>40</sup> Carafano, "Total Force Policy and the Abrams Doctrine," Section 1.

Force integration espoused by DOD leadership makes JPME a relevant, logical component of the senior civilian experience.

The optimal Total Force blends the differing perspectives of military and civilian personnel and fuses the overall strengths of senior DOD leadership. In an organization as large as DOD, an understanding of the various nuances of culture within the Department, the components, and organizations is important to maintaining a seamless operation and sustaining a global competitive advantage. Strategic, organizational, and social culture clashes inhibit the organizational stability and effectiveness essential to successful interoperability at higher level decision-making.

The civilian workforce is immensely talented, contains a wide range of expertise, and has much to contribute to senior level conversations. The dialogue and networking between senior military and civilians that inevitably occur at the SSCs result in permanent relationships that will serve both the Department and individuals. The partnership, camaraderie, and bonding initiated and nurtured during the 10-month experience underlie lifelong connections and readymade channels for positive collaboration and immediate results. Understanding how *the other half* lives, thinks, and operates alleviates the culture divide and is critical to the efficacious contribution of DOD to both enterprise and whole of government approach responsibilities.

## **Enhancing the Department's Strategic Capabilities**

In a dynamic environment in which the NSS demands the synchronization of all elements of national power, DOD's civilian workforce cannot remain on the fringes. Attending SSC with the nation's top military leaders allows for participation in learning experiences that expose civilians to global and Departmental issues and initiatives that expand awareness as well as assist in cultivating a strategic mindset. The academic discourse that delves into past, present, and

future challenges related to the difficult choices associated with resolving the ways, means, and ends conundrum, especially in light of the current budgetary shortfalls facing the Department, can only galvanize and invigorate DOD strategic decision-making capabilities. It is crucial that the Department provide career, federal civilians, especially those with little or no military background, with knowledge that lends to providing the appropriate context for making critical decisions that have wide-ranging effects.

Increased senior civilian attendance at SSCs will enhance the Department's strategic capabilities. DOD's posture as the most powerful military on the globe compels leaders within each sector of the Total Force to think strategically. There is little argument that the volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity in the global environment require an able, adaptive, and competitive Total Force senior leader corps.

### **Fostering Enterprise Senior Leader Development and Succession Planning**

Increasing civilian attendance at the SSCs may mitigate, not resolve, the disparate path the Department is currently pursuing to senior leader development. The solution to this problem warrants enterprise-wide involvement. If the goal is to produce an agile, adaptable senior cadre, DOD must devise a plan for the appropriate disposition of its valuable human resource talent, to include a clear roadmap for the often discussed yet often neglected task of succession planning.

An incentivized, placement-upon-completion requirement supported by leaders at the highest levels of the organization, similar to that used by the Army and Air Force, may serve to not only provide an integrative bridge between military and civilian leader education but also foster a cohesive thread for civilian development DOD-wide. SSC completion for DOD civilians, as for their military counterparts, should lead to pre-defined, sequential steppingstones to future assignments of greater rank and responsibility. DOD should intensify the effort to ensure that

SSC attendance is not only a mandatory part of senior leader development programs but also a Departmental return on investment that feeds into a pre-determined succession plan.

## **Recommendations**

DOD must examine senior leader development with an enterprise lens to support its diverse, complex, 21<sup>st</sup> century global role. The components have a responsibility to their constituents; and, as a result, they must implement civilian development programs that meet specific agency needs. However, any successful DOD blueprint will include an analysis of how to establish goals, pool resources, and determine the way ahead to avoid redundancies. This suggests a unified, less parochial approach taken by each of the services in coordination with the highest levels of the Department to ensure that strategies and resources are synthesized to produce the best possible results for the agency. My recommendations follow.

### **Conduct Enterprise-wide Assessment of Civilian Resources for JPME**

The Department should take a closer look at how it forecasts civilian resources for JPME attendance. The SSCs report used seats within their allotted quota for DOD civilians.<sup>41</sup> With a large pool of candidates in the senior leader pipeline, DOD must be more proactive in civilian selection so this valuable resource will not be wasted.

Currently, less than 100 DOD civilians annually attend SSCs.<sup>42</sup> At a minimum, civilians should occupy 10% of the available billets per school. DOD should conduct an inquiry to discern reasons for the difficulty in filling these seats and follow-up with an immediate corrective action plan. Considerations should be given to program awareness, marketing, follow-up assignments, and future return on investment. If properly administered and used, the civilian

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<sup>41</sup> Air War College Office of Student Affairs; Army War College Registrar; MC War College Registrar

<sup>42</sup> See Table - *DOD Civilian Attendance at Senior service colleges (AY00 – 10)*.

JPME experience promises enormous potential for the agency and can greatly contribute to the enhancement of the knowledge base needed by senior leadership to function in this challenging environment.

Oversight of the return on investment engendered by civilian attendance at SSCs should be a compulsory element in any evaluation of the effects of civilian inclusion in JPME. The establishment of a DOD office or body that monitors selection and placement of all civilians, regardless of component, who have graduated from the senior service colleges, may serve this purpose. DOD should be able to analyze strides made in this area from an enterprise vantage point. Graduates should be considered assets of the Department first and of their components next. Enterprise joint, non-joint, and component positions should be targeted and allocated for graduates. Identifiers indicating SSC completion should be incorporated as part of the graduate's personnel records and placement should be contingent on the graduate's background coupled with the Department's needs.

### **Consider a DOD-Component Hybrid Approach**

DOD may consider a hybrid approach to senior leader development with SSC attendance as the pinnacle. The curricula of SSCs are rigorous and, for maximum return on investment, those who attend should be well prepared. The existing component leadership programs can be effective links to JPME by serving as a preparatory ground for future civilian service school attendees.

Using this approach, the components would manage employee development through the middle management grades with DOD fully taking the lead in senior leader development. A properly resourced corporate entity would be required; but, ultimately, DOD's senior leaders would have an enterprise fingerprint and would not only be armed with the competencies

highlighted in the DOD Leadership Continuum but would also share cross-component experiences that would broaden development. Coupled with civilian SSC attendance, this option would advantage DOD by molding senior leaders who could perform seamlessly across the enterprise. A Departmental employee selection and post-placement apparatus would be established for SSC graduates who would be placed into positions pre-identified by the Department with the collaboration of the components.

### **Consider a Variant of the Air Force Civilian Development Model**

DOD should take a closer look at the Air Force model of civilian development. Its intentional correlation with officer training makes it formidably suitable to actualizing the Total Force concept and cultivating a shared strategic DOD perspective. Considering the indelible impact of DOD's dual cultures, this model aligns with the direction that would have the most permanent and profound effects. Early joint military-civilian training and central human resource management are attractive core components of this approach.

### **Establish a Civilian Senior Service College**

As an alternative or supplement to civilian JPME attendance, the Department might consider establishing a senior civilian college, similar to a JPME institution, that accentuates civilian leadership issues in joint and interagency environments. Unlike the SSCs, this forum would focus on joint and interagency matters and their strategic impact in the functional support areas of logistics, human resources, contracting, et al. A seminar format like that used in the SSCs is optimal; the student body should consist of a preponderance of DOD civilians performing in various disciplines intermixed with a smaller ratio of military counterparts and interagency civilians.

## **Conclusion**

As a part of the Total Force, DOD's 760,000 civilians will continue to participate fully in crafting innovative solutions to perplexing problems. The SSCs offer civilians a first-class, well-rounded education experience that provides the opportunity to discuss and debate current global issues with the members of the world's finest military. Civilians not only gain from attending SSCs but also have much to contribute. The shared complementary perspectives serve as a force multiplier that reinforces the effectiveness and decision-making capabilities of Total Force leadership.

As military leaders continue to place a priority on senior officer education, civilians must edify their program with similar urgency, to include providing the appropriate financial and human resources for execution and oversight. Although SSC attendance is only one pillar of senior leader development, its potential has not been optimized. DOD should not take a pedantic approach to making headway in this area but, instead, should actively engage its experts. The recommendation to conduct an enterprise-wide assessment to determine the employment and disposition of civilians for JPME should not be ignored. DOD must recalibrate and devise a coordinated plan for the use of its senior civilian force for the greatest good of the enterprise, effective support of component missions, and maximization of scarce budget dollars. The optimal outcome is a civilian leader cadre having the breadth of knowledge and experience to integrate fully with other Total Force sectors and with interagency partners. DOD must not bifurcate the military-civilian partnership or the enterprise-component training relationship.

To continue on its path of sustained excellence and competitiveness, DOD must use, with intention, the transformative power of its civilian workforce. Since leader development is a gradual process, it is tempting to implement a stop-and-start approach. By bolstering the impact

of SSC college attendance, DOD's highest-level leadership can stay the course to magnify this braintrust. SSC benefits, such as increasing intellectual share, bridging the culture divide, forging synergy and teamwork, and developing lifelong personal and professional relations are undeniable. The challenges of the Long War, other developing global hotspots, and budget constraints precipitate an enterprise program reexamination to obtain the best Departmental return and guarantee maximum Total Force participation in this new strategic environment fraught with unrelenting change.





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