# PROFESSIONALIZATION OF THE
# U.S. DEFENSE ACQUISITION WORKFORCE:
# PROGRESS, PROBLEMS  AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

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## ABSTRACT

This paper provides a discussion on the professionalization of the U.S. defense acquisition workforce. Recent legislation and its impact on education, training, and experience requirements are first discussed. Problems in professionalizing the workforce are identified, such as accurately defining the workforce, developing and accessing workforce data, and effectively recruiting and retaining the workforce. The current challenges to managing the acquisition workforce include the loss of retirement-eligible personnel, understanding the differences in workforce generations, and the depleting U.S. workforce pool with increasing competition for talent.  Finally, a discussion on the future of the acquisition workforce is provided by looking at the human capital strategy and identifying generational differences in new entrants to the workforce. The paper concludes by proposing that the defense acquisition system will continue to be reformed, and the acquisition workforce will need to continue to reflect the changing knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to manage defense acquisition programs.

## INTRODUCTION

In Fiscal Year 2009, the United States Department of Defense (DoD) procured approximately $370 billion dollars in defense-related systems, supplies, and services and processed over 3 million contract

actions (FPDS, 2010). The responsibility for managing these contract actions belongs to members of the acquisition team. The *Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR)* states that the acquisition team consists of all participants in government acquisition—including not only representatives of the technical, supply, and procurement communities, but also the customers they serve and the contractors who provide the products and services (FAR 1.102). The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the members of this acquisition team, specifically the members that make up the acquisition workforce within the Department of Defense (DoD). This paper will focus on how the Department of Defense professionalizes its acquisition workforce, including workforce management, organization, and training, to ensure it has the right skill mix and competencies to successfully manage the DoD's acquisition projects. The progress to date of professionalizing the acquisition workforce will first be discussed by presenting the background of specific legislative actions that have an impact on defense acquisition workforce education, training, and experience requirements. Problems in managing and professionalizing the acquisition workforce will then be identified, with a specific discussion on defining, recruiting, and retaining the workforce. Finally, a discussion on the future of the defense acquisition workforce will be provided by looking at the DoD Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics (AT&L)'s human capital strategy as well as some future issues in defense acquisition workforce professionalization.

## PROGRESS TOWARDS PROFESSIONALIZATION

Both Department of Defense weapon systems acquisition and contract management have been designated high-risk areas by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) since 1990 and 1992, respectively. DoD weapons systems acquisition was selected for the high risk rating due to defense acquisition programs taking longer to complete, costing more than budgeted, and delivering fewer quantities and capabilities than originally planned. Contract management earned the high risk distinction in the DoD due to the lack of well-defined requirements, use of ill-suited business arrangements, and the lack of an adequate number of trained acquisition and contract oversight personnel (GAO, 2009, January). The *DoD Directive 5000.1*, *The Defense Acquisition System*, states that the Department of Defense shall maintain

a proficient acquisition, technology, and logistics workforce that is flexible and highly skilled across a range of management, technical, and business disciplines. In addition, this directive requires that the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics (USD(AT&L)) shall establish education, training, and experienced standards for each acquisition position based on the level of complexity of the duties carried out in that position (DoD, 2003).

DoD acquisition leaders, along with members of Congress, have recognized the contributions of a competent workforce to defense acquisition effectiveness. In commenting on the cost, schedule, and performance shortfalls of defense weapon system programs, Michigan Senator Carl Levin stated "the root cause of these and other problems in the defense acquisition system is our failure to maintain an acquisition workforce with the resources and skills needed to manage the department's acquisition system" (Schmitt & Thompson, 2007, October 15). In response to these congressional concerns, legislation and policy were implemented, emphasizing the training, education, and experience of members of the defense acquisition workforce.

*Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act*

A major step forward in the professionalization of the DoD acquisition workforce was Public Law 101-510, which enacted the *Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA)* in 1990. In developing the *DAWIA*, Congress, considered the "three distinct elements within DOD's Acquisition System: (1) the policies, procedures, and processes which govern the operation of the acquisition system; (2) the organization of the resources (people, management structure, capital, and facilities) that execute the policies and procedures; and (3) the people within the organization that make the system work" (HASC, 2010). The purpose of the Act was to improve the effectiveness of the personnel who manage and implement defense acquisition programs. In addition, the Act required the establishment of an Acquisition Corps and professionalization of the acquisition workforce through the establishment of education, training, and acquisition-related experience requirements (DAWIA, 1990).

The *DAWIA* also provided for the establishment of a defense acquisition university structure. Under the approval of the USD(AT&L), the Defense Acquisition University (DAU) develops curricula for each acquisition career field, to include descriptions of the education, experience, and core training required to meet the standards for certification. These education, training, and experience requirements are based on the complexities of the acquisition job and serve as the basis for three levels of certification. DoD civilian and military billets in the acquisition system have acquisition duties that fall into the career fields as shown in Table 1. In 2006, there were 113,605 civilians and 14,976 military in the acquisition workforce (Gates, 2009). Figures 1 and 2 reflect the percentage of DoD civilian and military acquisition workforce by career field, respectively (Gates, 2009). The DAU courses are intended to provide acquisition workforce members unique knowledge for specific acquisition workforce assignments, jobs, or positions. In addition, the DAU courses are developed to help the acquisition workforce maintain proficiency and remain current with DoD acquisition legislation, regulation, and policy. Although all defense agencies follow the DAU curriculum, some civilian agencies (including NASA and the Department of Energy) also follow the DAU curriculum specifically for the contracting and purchasing career fields (GAO, 2002).

**Table 1**

| Acquisition Technology and Logistics Career Fields |
|---|
| SPRDE Systems Engineering |
| SPRDE Science and Technology |
| Contracting |
| Program Management |
| Logistics |
| Production, Quality, Manufacturing |
| Business Financial Management |
| Test and Evaluation |
| IT Management |
| Facility Engineering |
| Auditing |
| Purchasing |
| Property Management |

**Figure 1**

**Civilian Acquisition Workforce Career Field Distribution**
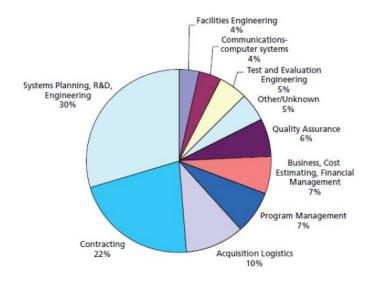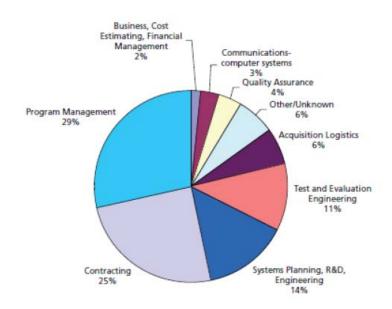
**(Gates, 2009)**

**Figure 2**

**Military Acquisition Workforce Career Field Distribution**

**(Gates, 2009)**



In 2003, Public Law 108-36 enacted changes to the *DAWIA*. These changes were focused on providing greater flexibility in managing the acquisition workforce. Public Law 108-36 also established professional standards for each AT&L career field (DoD, 2007). A summary of the *Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act* and its changes is provided in Table 2**.**

# Table 2

**Summary of DAWIA History**

**(Adapted from DoD, 2006)**

| Date | History |
|---|---|
| November 1990 | Congress enacts the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA, Title 10, USC, Chapter 87) |
| October 2000 | Fiscal Year (FY) 01 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) amends DAWIA, revising the education requirements for 1102s and Contracting Officers with warrants above the simplified acquisition threshold to require a baccalaureate degree and 24 semester hours in specified disciplines. |
| December 2002 | FY02 NDAA amends DAWIA, expands the 1102 education requirements to members of the armed forces in equivalent occupational specialties and provides for limited expectations to include exceptions for the contingency contracting force and for individuals in developmental positions. The law establishes alternative minimum education requirements for the contingency contracting force and provides authority to establish developmental programs. |
| November 2003 | FY04 NDAA amends DAWIA, providing a number of flexibilities to enable DoD to more effectively develop and manage the AT&L Workforce. |
| October 2004 | FY05 NDAA amends DAWIA, changing Acquisition Corps membership requirements and providing flexibility in the designation of Critical Acquisition Positions (CAPs). |
| January 2005 | OSD issues revised DoDD 5000.52. |
| December 2005 | OSD issues DoDI 5000.66 and the DoD Desk Guide for AT&L |
| January 2006 | Workforce Career Management, incorporating statutory changes resulting from FY04 and FY05 NDAA. |

Other DoD Acquisition Training Initiatives

In addition to the Department of Defense's efforts to improve the effectiveness of its acquisition workforce through the establishment of education, training, and experience requirements, there have been many other initiatives and programs also focused on professionalizing the acquisition workforce. These include the various educational institutions, training organizations, and professional associations.

The DoD's initiatives involving defense acquisition program management education and training can be traced back to 1964, with the creation of the Defense Weapons System Management Center (DWSMC) at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio. The mission of the DWSMC was to foster improvement in the quality of program management. The DWSMC was disestablished in June 1971 with the creation of the Defense Systems Management School (DSMS), later to be designated as Defense Systems Management College (DSMC) in Fort Belvoir, Virginia (Acker, 1986). Today, the Defense Systems Management College—School for Program Managers, is part of the Defense Acquisition University (DAU).

DoD graduate education schools like the Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT) and the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) have been offering graduate education degree programs in acquisition related areas since the 1950s. In 1954, the 83rd Congress authorized the Commander, Air University, to confer degrees upon graduates from AFIT. The first undergraduate engineering degrees were granted in 1956, and the first graduate degrees in business in 1958 (AFIT, 2007). Additionally, a thesis search in the Naval Postgraduate School library catalog finds the earliest acquisition-related graduate thesis published in 1965. Today, the Naval Postgraduate School offers formal MBA degree programs with specializations in Systems Acquisition Management, as well as Acquisition and Contract Management. The NPS also offers a Master of Science (MS) degree in Program Management as well as in Contract Management. These programs are offered in both in-resident and distance-learning formats.

The *DAWIA* education and training requirements have had a tremendous impact on the number of educational institutions offering formal education programs in support of the defense acquisition workforce.  A quick review of the Defense Acquisition University website reveals that a number of academic courses certified to be equivalent to the mandated *DAWIA* courses are being offered by colleges and universities, government training organizations, as well as private training companies.  There are also many civilian training and consulting firms that offer *DAWIA*-equivalent courses to the DoD acquisition workforce as well as to the defense contractor community.

Since the passing of *DAWIA* and the establishment of the Defense Acquisition University, the DAU has established strategic partnerships with other civilian colleges and universities.  These civilian colleges and universities offer courses that meet education and/or training requirements for many of the DoD career fields.  In addition, these partnering colleges and universities allow acquisition professionals who have earned *DAWIA* certifications to be able to apply those DAU training courses toward graduate degrees from those schools.

Professional associations have also played a significant part in professionalizing the defense acquisition workforce.  These associations provide professional development opportunities—including educational conferences, workshops, and professional certification and credential programs.  There are a variety of professional associations that represent the federal acquisition workforce career fields.   These include the National Contract Management Association (NCMA), National Institute for Government Purchasing, (NIGP), American Society of Military Comptrollers (ASMC), and the Project Management Institute (PMI).

National Defense Authorization Acts

Recent legislative actions are boosting acquisition workforce professionalization, specifically by providing funds for recruitment, training, and retention of acquisition workforce personnel.  One of these actions includes the Defense Acquisition Workforce Development Fund established by the *National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal*

*Year 2008* (Public Law 110-181). These specific funds will support the DoD initiatives of increased hiring of acquisition workforce (HASC, 2010). The FY 2008 *NDAA* also required the Secretary of Defense to develop a plan for the recruiting, training, and career development of government program managers, deputy program managers, chief engineers, systems engineers, and cost estimators. This specific provision supports the government initiative of insourcing these specific governmental functions within the defense acquisition system (HASC, 2010).

As part of the *Fiscal Year 2009 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA)*, the Department of Defense received authority to bypass the standard hiring process and use expedited hiring procedures for filling acquisition workforce positions that have been determined to be critically short. The expedited hiring authority can reduce the hiring process from months to as short as three days (HASC, 2010). Finally, the FY2009 *NDAA* also required the DoD to establish a career path for military personnel assigned to the acquisition field. This requirement also includes establishing a number of acquisition general officer positions within the military departments, thus providing career advancement opportunities for the military acquisition workforce (HASC, 2010).

## PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES

Even with the *DAWIA* enacted in 1990, the various DoD-initiated acquisition training initiatives, and the recent National Defense Authorization Acts, the DoD is still facing significant problems and challenges in managing its acquisition workforce. These problems and challenges include accurately defining the workforce, appropriately developing and accessing workforce data, and effectively recruiting and retaining the acquisition workforce.

Defining the Workforce

One of the main problems in maintaining a proficient acquisition workforce is accurately defining what makes up this workforce. As the

DoD increases its outsourcing and contracting-out of supplies and services, the nature of defense acquisition is changing to reflect more complex procurements—such as system-of-systems acquisitions, performance-based services acquisition, and consolidated base operations support services (BOSS) contracts. As the nature of defense acquisition becomes more complex, the composition of the acquisition teams also begins to change. An example would be base operations support services contracts, which typically include civil engineering, supply, transportation, fuels, and aircraft/engine maintenance. Many of the career fields supporting these functional areas are not currently considered part of the defense acquisition workforce.

The Department of Defense uses a multi-disciplinary, multi-functional definition of its acquisition workforce (GAO, 2002). It should be noted that the DoD officially refers to its acquisition workforce as the acquisition, technology, and logistics (AT&L) workforce. The DoD defines the AT&L workforce as "The personnel component of the acquisition system. The acquisition workforce includes permanent civilian employees and military members who occupy acquisition positions, who are members of an Acquisition Corps, or who are in acquisition development programs" (DoD, 1991, p. 20). It is interesting to note that the DoD defines its acquisition workforce differently than federal government civilian agencies. The DoD includes all of the career fields identified in Figure 3, whereas civilian agencies typically only include contracting officers and contracting officer representatives in their definitions of their acquisition workforce (GAO, 2002).

According to *DoD Instruction 5000.55*, the key policy document issued after *DAWIA*, the acquisition position categories include program management; program management oversight; communications-computer systems; contracting (to include contracting for construction); purchasing (to include procurement assistant); industrial property management; business, cost estimating & financial management; auditing; quality assurance; manufacturing & production; acquisition logistics; systems planning, research, development & engineering; test & evaluation engineering; education, training & career development (DoD, 1991).

As reflected in Figure 3, seven career fields represent approximately 87% of the total DoD AT&L workforce. These career fields include Systems Planning, Research, Development, and Engineering (SPRDE); Contracting; Program Management; Lifecycle Logistics; Production, Quality and Manufacturing; Business, Cost Estimating and Financial Management; and Test and Evaluation (DoD, 2007).

It is important to note that the acquisition position categories identified in the *DoD Instruction 5000.55* are different from the career fields listed in Figure 3, as referenced in the DoD *AT&L Human Capital Strategic Plan*, which will be discussed later.

**Figure 3**

(Adapted from DoD, 2007))



AT&L Workforce Count by Career Field
(as of September 2006)

| Career Field | Count |
|---|---|
| SPRDE Systems Engineering | 35,142 |
| Contracting | 27,242 |
| Program Management | 12,775 |
| Logistics | 12,331 |
| Production, Quality, Manufacturing | 8,966 |
| Business Financial Management | 7,608 |
| Test & Evaluation | 7,280 |
| IT Management | 4,842 |
| Facility Engineering | 3,927 |
| Auditing | 3,486 |
| Purchasing | 1,677 |
| Unknown | 1,645 |
| Property management | 530 |
| SPRDE Science & Technology | 291 |

In 2006, there were 128,242 members in the defense acquisition workforce. 88% were civilian, and 12% were military (DoD, 2007). Compared to civilian agencies, the DoD workforce is highly educated, experienced, and well-trained. Over 72% of DoD civilian acquisition personnel have a bachelor's degree or higher, and 23% have advanced

degrees. By comparison, less than half of the current federal civilian workforce holds college degrees (CBO, 2007, March, p. 3).

A cursory review of the *DAWIA* career fields exposes an interesting finding: the *DAWIA* career fields represent every aspect of the defense acquisition environment—except one. There are three major decision-making support systems that impact the management of defense acquisition projects. These are as follows: requirements (Do we have a valid requirement?), acquisition strategy (Do we have a strategy for acquiring the requirement?), and resources (Do we have adequate resources to execute the strategy for acquiring the requirement?). These three areas are collectively known as the Big Acquisition or "Big A." The requirements management area is one of the most troublesome aspects of defense acquisition projects. Recent GAO reports have identified requirements management, specifically requirements and funding instability, as the biggest obstacle to project success (GAO, 2009, January). The requirements management process is represented by the community of end-users and operators of the major weapon systems acquired by the DoD. These end-users and operators are responsible for determining the weapon system requirements for executing the DoD mission.

Although requirements management is critical in the DoD acquisition process, it is noticeably absent from the list of *DAWIA* acquisition career fields; it is also not included in the professional associations that support the acquisition workforce. However, it should be noted that Section 801 of the *National Defense Authorization Act of FY 2007* requires the USD (AT&L) to establish competency requirements and a training program to certify DoD military and civilian personnel with responsibility for generating requirements for major defense acquisition programs (MDAPs). On September 2, 2008, the USD (AT&L) issued a memorandum on Requirements Management Certification Training Program Policy, outlining certification training requirements for military and civilian personnel with responsibility for generating requirements for MDAPs (USD (AT&L), 2008, September 2). It is this author's opinion that requirements management will continue to be an obstacle to DoD acquisition success until the DoD requirements community is included in the *DAWIA* education, training, and experience standards, or unless it develops its own standards of professionalism.

In defining the acquisition workforce, the Congressionally-

chartered Acquisition Advisory Panel offered the following definition:

Personnel responsible for:

• Determining and defining agency requirements for goods and services

• Gaining intimate familiarity with the markets in which the agency will seek goods and services to meet agency needs

• Monitoring and measuring contract performance, including testing of goods, auditing, contract administration, and evaluation of contractor performance

• Managing the programs in which the goods and services acquired are employed. (Acquisition Advisory Panel, 2007, p. 344)

This push to broaden the acquisition workforce to include requirements management and resources is also reflected in a Business Executives for National Security (BENS) Task Force report. The BENS report proposed that the acquisition workforce should be defined to reflect the "Big A" acquisition areas of requirements, resourcing, and the acquisition system (Task Force, 2009).

Lack of Workforce Management Data

A second problem that is challenging the DoD in managing its acquisition workforce is the lack of critical information. The information available concerning "workforce size, mix, and quality are insufficient to assess whether more workers, more highly skilled workers, or a different mix of workers would improve acquisition outcomes" (Gates, 2009, p. 1). For example, although the DoD relies on contractors to perform mission-critical acquisition services, it does not collect or track information on contractor personnel (GAO, 2009). The DoD lacks a developed department-wide strategy for determining when to use contractor versus in-house acquisition personnel. The DoD also lacks complete information on the current acquisition skill sets and needed skills sets for both contractor and government acquisition personnel. This lack of information may result in the DoD's inability to determine whether the

current defense acquisition workforce, both government and contractor, have the competencies needed to perform the mission as well as result in limiting the DoD's efforts in managing its acquisition workforce. The DoD is currently taking initiatives for collecting the needed information. For example, in January 2009, the DoD established the Defense Acquisition Workforce Joint Assessment Team (JAT) to develop recommendations for collecting the necessary data on the acquisition workforce, to include contractor support (GAO, 2009). .

Recruitment and Retention

Major defense weapon systems continue to experience cost overruns, schedule delays, and performance problems. The number of contractor protests has increased within the past number of years. Additionally, the number of defense contracts (for both services and systems) continues to increase, without a corresponding increase in the defense acquisition workforce. The DoD will find it difficult to manage the future AT&L workforce. The current challenges to planning, shaping, and managing the defense acquisition workforce as identified by the DoD include the potential loss of retirement-eligible personnel and their knowledge, understanding the differences in workforce generations, and the depleting U.S. workforce pool with increasing competition for talent.

The first challenge, the potential loss of retirement-eligible personnel and their knowledge, will require the DoD to focus on both recruiting and retaining acquisition workforce members and on maintaining organizational competency and process capability in acquisition management. As the retirement-eligible personnel (and their knowledge) retire and walk out the doors of AT&L acquisition organizations, most of the tacit knowledge needed for managing defense acquisition projects will also exit the organization with them. In order to maintain organizational competency and process capability in acquisition management, the AT&L acquisition organizations must try to transfer and share the knowledge of the experienced, yet retiring personnel, to the more junior personnel. More importantly, the organizations must also try to implant this knowledge into the organization's acquisition management processes.

In terms of maintaining organizational competency, the DoD has recently implemented a competency initiative for its contracting workforce. The purpose of this initiative is to establish a baseline of workforce contracting capability. Specifically, the Contracting Competency Assessment will provide the DoD with a complete inventory of competencies that exist in the contracting workforce, identify current and projected competency gaps, and support workforce development based on results of the competency assessment (USD (AT&L), 2008, February 5). Additionally, some DoD organizations as well as defense contractors have conducted organizational process assessments to assess the capability of their contract management processes (Rendon, 2008).

The DoD's success in meeting the second and third challenges, understanding the differences in workforce generations, and the depleting U.S. workforce pool with increasing competition for talent, will determine if the Department can successfully respond to the first challenge. Figure 4 provides an excellent illustration of the generational differences in the U.S. workforce. As the DoD tries to entice the Generation X and Generation Y workforce to join AT&L acquisition organizations, the Department will need to consider and cater to the preferred work environment and motivations of these generations.

In summarizing the problems and challenges of professionalizing the defense acquisition workforce, the following could be considered the predominant claims of the DoD: the current workforce is too small compared to the current workload, the current mix of the acquisition workforce includes too many defense contractors performing acquisition functions, and the workforce lacks the skills to accomplish the workload (Gates, 2009). In addition, we have seen that the current definition of the acquisition workforce may not include the appropriate functional areas such as requirement and resources management. The current acquisition workforce initiatives of increasing and broadly defining the acquisition workforce, in-sourcing the majority of acquisition functions currently being contracted out, and implementing organizational assessments as well as individual competency-based assessments and training, may effectively address these areas.

**Figure 4**

**Generational Differences in U.S. Workforce**

(Adapted from DoD, 2007)

| | Silent | Baby Boomer | Generation X | Generation Y |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |
| | • Promotions comes with seniority | • Love to have meetings | • Fun environment | • Fun environment |
| | | • Job security | • Use technology | • Assume technology |
| Preferred Work Environment | • Younger workers should pay their dues | • Learn technology | • Internal mobility | • Internal mobility |
| | | • Position = respect | • Flexible schedules | • Flexible schedules |
| | • Value sacrifice, conformity, and patience | • Younger workers should pay their dues | • Peers does not equal family | • Peers = family |
| | | | • Changing challenges and responsibilities | • Expect bosses to assist and mentor |
| | | • Value "face time" | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| Motivated by ... | • Satisfaction is a job well done | • Advancement | • Freedom | • Meaningful work |
| | | • Title recognition | • Removal of rules | • Working with bright people |
| | • Being respected | • Being valued and needed | • Continuous learning | • Increased responsibility |
| | | • Money | • Time off | • Time off |
| | | | • Money | • Money |

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

In 1990, the *DAWIA* was enacted. That same year, the General Accounting Office (now the Government Accountability Office) designated DoD weapon systems acquisition as a high-risk area. DoD Contract Management was placed on the GAO High Risk List two years later (GAO, 2009, January). In 2010, the defense acquisition workforce will be celebrating 20 years of high risk status for defense weapon systems acquisition under *DAWIA* governance.

In 2005, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) published its *Framework for Assessing the Acquisition Function at Federal Agencies*. The GAO's framework identified four cornerstones that have shown to promote an efficient, effective, and accountable acquisition function. One of these cornerstones is human capital. In this area, the GAO states the following:

> Successfully acquiring goods and services and executing and monitoring contracts to help the agency meet its mission requires valuing and investing in the acquisition workforce. Agencies must think strategically about attracting, developing, and retaining talent, and creating a results-oriented culture within the acquisition workforce. (GAO, 2005)

The Department of Defense has continued this emphasis on the human capital cornerstone by developing the *AT&L Human Capital Strategic Plan*. The purpose of the *AT&L Human Capital Strategic Plan* is to focus on achieving the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics' goal of a "high performing, agile, and ethical workforce" (DoD, 2007). Table 3 below lists the *AT&L Human Capital Strategic Plan* Goals.

**Table 3**

AT&L HCSP v 3.0 Goals

Goal 1 — Align and fully integrate with overarching DoD human capital initiatives.

Goal 2 — Maintain a decentralized execution strategy that recognizes the Components' lead role and responsibility for force planning and workforce management.

Goal 3 — Establish a comprehensive, data driven workforce analysis and decision-making capability.

Goal 4 — Provide learning assets at the point of need to support missionresponsive human capital development.

Goal 5 — Execute DoD AT&L Workforce Communication Plan that is owned by all DoD AT&L senior leaders (One Team, One Vision, A Common Message, and Integrated Strategies).

Goal 6 — Recruit, develop, and retain a mission-ready DoD AT&L workforce through comprehensive talent management.

The initial version of the *AT&L Human Capital Strategic Plan* was issued in June 2006, and Version 3.0 was issued in 2007. It is expected that future revisions to the *Plan* will be published as progress is made toward the above goals and as the expected changes in the acquisition workforce continue to materialize.

In addition to the implementation of the DoD *AT&L Human Capital Strategic Plan* for the management of the acquisition workforce, future initiatives will continue to reflect increased funding for recruiting, training, and retaining acquisition personnel. The United States Air Force has initiated cash bonuses as a way of retaining experienced military contracting officers in the Air Force. Bonuses of $20,000 paid annually for four years are being offered to Air Force contracting officers having 6 to 14 years of experience. Earlier last year, the Air Force offered bonuses to enlisted personnel with these critical skills (Peters, 2009, August 27).

In addition, partnerships between the DoD, civilian agencies, professional associations, and colleges and universities are also being developed. One initiative taken by the federal government to recruit new entrants to the contracting career field is the Strategic Partnership on Acquisition Recruitment Coalition (SPARC). The SPARC initiative is comprised of representatives of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Office of Federal Procurement Policy, the Chief Acquisition Officer's Council, Federal Acquisition Institute, Defense Acquisition University, and the National Contract Management Association. The purpose of SPARC is to generate awareness of the contract management profession in colleges and universities, convince these schools to develop acquisition and contract management courses and degree programs, and then to convince students to consider careers in federal acquisition management (Brodsky, 2009).

Another similar program is the Partnership for Public Service and the *Call to Serve* initiative. This initiative is designed to bridge the knowledge gap for students and their academic advisors. *Call to Serve* is a joint effort of the Partnership for Public Service and the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM). The purpose of *Call to Serve* is to educate a new generation about the importance of a strong civil service, help re-establish links between federal agencies and college campuses, and provide students with information about federal jobs. The *Call to Serve* network consists of more than 700 schools and more than 75 federal agencies including the Department of Defense, Defense Contract Management Agency, Defense Contract Audit Agency, and the military departments (Partnership for Public Service, 2010).

Finally, at the agency level, enhanced and accelerated training for new contract management interns are being developed and implemented. For example, the Directorate of Contracting at Wright-Patterson AFB in Dayton, Ohio, has implemented a 12-week Jump Start Training program for its approximate 170 recently hired contract specialists.

The future directions for professionalizing the DoD acquisition workforce will no doubt need to incorporate the learning styles of the younger Generation X and Generation Y workforce (Brown, Harris, Paustian, Scibona, & Sullo, 2008). Currently, over 77% of all Defense

Acquisition University (DAU) students are now using web-based learning to some extent. In fact, web-based learning has been shown to support many of the challenges of the defense acquisition workforce to include recruiting and retention, employee training and development, and organizational learning and knowledge management (Gluckman, 2010).


# CONCLUSION


The professionalization of the acquisition workforce will most likely continue to parallel the transformation of the defense acquisition system. But the jury is still out on the effectiveness of this professionalization process or on the future direction of defense acquisition workforce professionalization initiatives. It has been suggested that the result of professionalization of the acquisition workforce in general, and of *DAWIA* in specific, is leading to an acquisition workforce that is expert and specialized, yet insular and careerist (Snider, 1996). Other suggestions on improving the acquisition workforce, specifically the recruitment process, include implementing a Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program that would train cadet officers in defense acquisition in addition to the regular college curriculum (Gill, 2001). An even more radical approach to recruiting a professionalized acquisition workforce includes creating a business management development program within the military academies that would train acquisition cadets and graduate acquisition professionals (Gill, 2001).


No one knows what lies ahead in terms of professionalizing the acquisition workforce. However, it remains clear that as defense acquisition management continues to encounter problems in meeting cost, schedule, and performance objectives, the defense acquisition system will continue to be reformed, and the defense acquisition workforce will need to continue to reflect the changing knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to manage defense acquisition programs.

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