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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Innovation is the key to Airpower. The proposals outlined in this paper address the AETC Commander's (AETC/CC's) critical information requirements regarding the implementation of a wing Innovation Office (IO) for the purpose of tapping into innovation driven by Airmen. Specifically, this paper answers the AETC/CC's call to: (1) provide specific examples of the four barriers to innovation (bureaucracy, grassroots incentives, lack of advertising, and no single point of submission) and any additional barriers; (2) identify a test wing for an IO model, its basic functions, and necessary evaluation metrics; and (3) recommend an efficient manning structure using existing personnel.

Through interviews with senior enlisted students at the Senior Non-Commissioned Officer Academy (SNCOA) and anecdotal accounts from fellow Company Grade Officers (CGO) Squadron Officer School (SOS) 14B Think Tank Group Two (referred to as "Group Two") validated and found examples of each notional innovation barrier and identified two additional barriers; ineffective feedback from innovation programs and risk-averse decision-making.

Applying a deliberate process in its selection of an IO test wing, Group Two recommends the 56th Fighter Wing (56 FW) at Luke AFB, AZ . The 56 FW represents the larger AF because it include an Operations Group, a Maintenance Group, and a Mission Support Group and is able to support the functions identified as the primary IO mission. Group Two recommends the 56 FW IO office be comprised of four personnel, a Chief Innovation Officer (CINO) reassigned from the current Wing Projects office and a full-time staff of three officers and enlisted whose sole function will be to elicit and implement creative ideas across units and the entire rank spectrum.

PART I: INTRODUCTION

Today the United States Air Force faces unprecedented challenges. Currently, one of the greatest barriers to the long-term sustainment of our force as the dominant source of airpower is the simultaneous reduction of our capital and resources while our mission and role continues to expand. While some consider this dilemma a passing phase, today's leadership must realize this paradox is a new constant. In recognition of this reality, we cannot simply continue "business as usual". We must find better ways of doing business – we must innovate. For the purpose of this discussion the definition of innovation is: The process within the Air Force of developing, implementing, and sustaining new technology, tactics, processes, or procedures in order to save money, increase efficiency, or expand capability

Leaders can begin to innovate by taking concrete steps to usher in an atmosphere and climate that promotes and rewards Airmen at every level by leveraging their expertise to maintain the strength and saliency of the nation's Air Force. Leaders must recognize that innovation is not a forced measure but a return to smart business. As our nation's Airmen look to leadership for answers, leadership must facilitate subordinate participation in a new culture that calls upon all Airmen to rise to the challenge of finding ways to do things better, safer, and cheaper. We require a new way of doing business, built on a new foundation – a culture of innovation.

This white paper outlines some of the unique barriers that must be mitigated to transition the force to an effective culture of innovative Airmen and how to mitigate these barriers. It will also examine and operationally conceptualize Group Two's overall plan for implementing an IO at the 56 FW. While innovation may at times challenge our thinking, conventions, standards and

norms, this cutting edge venture will be worthwhile as we transcend static thought. Innovation remains the fuel for what's next. It's time to re-harness the power of human ingenuity – it's time to capture the ideas of the world's greatest Air Force and put them to work for the greater good.

PART II: METHODOLOGY

Group Two set out to refine the ideas proposed by the SOS 14A Think Tank by identifying and providing concrete examples of innovative barriers and proposing an IO model to implement at an AETC wing. To collect examples the group reached out to leadership at home stations, bases with successful innovation stories, Air Force Smart Operations for the 21st Century (AFSO21) offices, the Judge Advocate community, innovators (both participants in the processes and idea submitters), co-workers/networks in the Air Force community, and other students at SOS who come from a variety of backgrounds and locations. Group Two also conducted a focus group with SNCOs at the SNCOA to garner an enlisted perspective of current/future innovation programs and how to best implement a lasting culture change. These SNCOs also came from a variety of backgrounds and locations across the Air Force (Active, Reserve, and Guard). Finally, with the assistance of the Air University staff and advisors, we conducted an electronic survey of 86 CGOs attending SOS in residence at Maxwell AFB.

To evaluate and select potential wings to test an IO, the group considered the requirements set forth by the AETC/CC as well as additional criteria to ensure the wing would be as representative as possible of other Air Force operational wings. Specific selection criteria, outlined in PART IV: BASE SELECTION AND CRITERIA was assessed to identify the optimal wing.

PART III: BARRIERS TO INNOVATION

The group confirmed the existence of four barriers:

1. No single point of entry for idea development
2. Inadequate advertising campaigns for current programs
3. Inconsistent grassroots incentives
4. Bureaucratic complexity

Moreover, while reviewing supporting data and examples of these barriers, we identified two additional barriers:

5. Ineffective response from current idea programs
6. Risk-averse decision-making

In order to gain a better understanding of these six barriers, it is important to take a closer look at their influence on our Airmen.

NO SINGLE POINT OF ENTRY

An essential aspect of facilitating innovation is the establishment of a simple and user-friendly process for obtaining ideas. However, the current system violates this principle with multiple innovation programs and an inherent lack of clarity on which ideas are appropriate for each program. For example, civilian and military members of the Air Force have multiple options for submitting ideas, including the following:

- (1) DoD-level programs: Securing Americans Value and Efficiency (SAVE);
- (2) Air Force-wide programs: Innovative Development through Employee Awareness (IDEA), AFSO21, Productivity Enhancing Capital Investment (PECI), and Airmen Powered by Innovation;

(3) MAJCOM-/Wing-level programs: Air Force Global Strike Command's (AFGSC) Strike Now and local innovation programs.

To further complicate the matter, some programs have been temporarily suspended, replaced, or re-launched after periods of inactivity. This issue, identified by the previous SOS course was validated by our own group as there was internal confusion regarding the current status of the IDEA program; suspended on 30 June 2013 ("IDEA Program Suspended," 2013).

Our research confirmed the existence of multiple points of entry and a lack of understanding about the differences between each program. During our focus session with 11 personnel at SNCOA, none of the members were confident in their knowledge of existing innovation programs or their ability to identify important differences between each program. We believe this observation regarding systemic ambiguities can be extrapolated to the entire force.

Interviews with CGOs at SOS further highlighted this issue. During our interviews, many airmen shared stories of having ideas kicked back or rejected, deemed unsuitable for a particular submission program. In one case, a SNCO working at a medical clinic submitted an idea to refine patient follow-up procedures; this proposal offered the Air Force potential for significant savings. The IDEA program ultimately rejected her proposal because it was not adequately covered by an Air Force Instruction (AFI). The SNCO went on to relate to the focus group that upon receiving this explanation, she became disillusioned and gave up.

INADEQUATE ADVERTISING

An additional barrier is an overall lack of awareness within the Air Force of the various programs due to ineffective advertising. For example, the multitude of programs is coordinated and advertised through different channels at various levels. As identified during 14A's presentation, Air Force-wide initiatives like Every Dollar Counts and IDEA are often advertised

through the AF Portal or service-wide emails. However, advertising for AFSO21 and local initiatives is often the result of wing-wide emails and base publications. The lack of a central office that coordinates advertising for Airmen at lower levels results in disparate advertising campaigns that do not adequately communicate available programs. In fact, these programs highlight a remarkable inefficiency.

Our research confirmed this claim. Members in the SNCOA focus group communicated a lack of knowledge of the innovation programs in existence. This is particularly concerning due to the high level of experience in the Air Force SNCO ranks. In addition, 53 percent of the GCOs surveyed could not immediately name two or more programs available through the USAF or DOD. If SNCOs and CGOs do not have a solid grasp on the innovation programs available to them, it is unlikely that junior enlisted with less time in service are aware of these programs. In addition, the SNCOs noted a lack of meaningful success stories to inspire continued innovation. In other words, stories or examples of successful innovation pertaining to their respective functional areas have been virtually absent during their respective tenures. On the other hand, the high number of ideas submitted to the Every Dollar Counts campaign suggests that low awareness was not an issue. According to a June 2013 letter from Vice Chief of Staff Larry Spencer, Airmen submitted over 10,000 ideas in the first 30 days of the program (“Vice Chief of Staff...”, 2013). Every Dollar Counts’ success demonstrates that future innovation efforts can be successful with the use of a cohesive advertising campaign.

We suggest a focus on advertising initiatives that inspire buy-in at the core level. By implementing campaigns such as “Every Airman an Innovator”, all Airmen would begin to recognize that they are expected to be part of the solution. However, without leadership driving the vision behind these efforts and providing salient inputs along the way, it will fall short of

expectations. Consequently, leadership's commitment to advertising must be continuous, comprehensive, and focused.

INCONSISTENT GRASSROOTS INCENTIVES

A key to promoting innovation within an organization is the incentivizing of innovative behavior. A lack of recognition in today's Air Force for innovative thought discourages continued attempts at thinking outside the box. At the very least, as is the objective with the Air Force awards program, public recognition would encourage more Airmen to seek innovation. We recommend targeted recognition programs and flexible work options as rewards for innovation.

Recognition programs in the Air Force play a significant role in encouraging or discouraging innovative behavior. In many cases, from performance reports to widely known award programs, identifying and celebrating innovative behaviors is limited in the force. Rather than viewing this gap as a barrier to innovation, it is more effective to view this as an area of immense opportunity. More widely celebrating effective innovation is an easy first step in this direction with the expansion of an innovation award program.

During the SNCO focus group, a recurring issue was a lack of formal recognition from leadership for successful innovation efforts. Nearly all SNCOs agreed the absence of communication from leadership on previously successful examples resulted in a lack of awareness of what exactly innovation meant and what leadership wanted Airmen to focus on in this area. Just as important, it is essential that innovative behaviors be effectively captured in personnel files and linked to career progression. All the SNCOs agreed Airmen would be more willing to take time to innovate and look for solutions if they had greater incentives. A secondary benefit of award incentives is the word of mouth it generates.

In terms of flexible work options, some of our nation's most innovative corporations, such as Google, understand the value of giving productive workers and creative thinkers the space and time to both think and collaborate. In the spirit of this concept, successful Air Force innovators should be considered for time off, passes, the ability to work from home (if practicable) and other flexible options as an added incentive. Irrespective of the methods devised, the bottom line is that innovators must be positively recognized and rewarded.

BUREAUCRATIC COMPLEXITY

Bureaucratic complexity is another barrier to innovation. Specifically, rigid Air Force instructions make it difficult to implement innovative processes. Of course, we recognize the need to maintain order and discipline – and safety – through compliance with instructions. However, not every situation will fit within the neat box of an AFI and in those cases common sense should prevail. Today, a member could suggest a breakthrough innovative idea with the potential to maximize efficiency, costs, and improve morale. However, if the process is contrary to an AFI or falls within a “gray area,” it may not be adopted. Members of the SNCO focus group cited several examples where innovative ideas were submitted by them for approval through the IDEA program, but later were rejected because the AFI did not provide clear guidance on the particular proposal.

If Air Force decision-making continues to be reliant on a strict adherence to instructions, then the Air Force must expedite the opportunity to modify instructions to allow for innovative processes. Air Force Instruction 33-360, *Publications and Forms Management*, provides two arduous options for members seeking action contrary to an instruction: a waiver or instruction modification. A waiver is the faster of the two options. Waivers are only available in specific circumstances where cost of compliance creates unacceptable risk to a higher priority task, the

expected cost of compliance outweighs the benefit, or personnel cannot comply due to a lack of resources (AFI 33-360, p. 1.9.1). In all cases, a commander who approves a waiver accepts the risks of non-compliance (AFI 33-360, p. 1.9.2); thus, assuming the risk for possible disciplinary action for failing to adhere to the AFI.

The second option is instruction modification which involves a lengthy four-step process: (1) draft and collaborate, (2) coordinate, (3) certify and approve, and (4) publish (AFI 33-360, p. 1.9.2). In today's Air Force, modifying an instruction is a monumental task that threatens to outlive the interest, stamina, and tenure of Airmen seeking innovative change. Without change, we risk our creative thinkers throwing their hands up in frustration and resorting to the status quo. Thus, Group Two supports the recommendation of the 14A Think Tank to create a "Flash Re-write" process for publications and AFIs or the implementation of a waiver or reprieve period lasting from 90-120 days for the AFI in question while leadership-approved ideas are tested and/or implemented at the wing level.

INEFFECTIVE RESPONSE FROM IDEA PROGRAMS

In addition to the barriers identified by the 14A Think Tank, Group Two identified the lack of effective responses as an additional barrier to innovation. The issue of poor feedback surfaced in almost every discussion with SNCOs and CGOs who had submitted ideas to an Air Force-level program. Due to their negative experiences, members expressed significant frustration and an overall unwillingness to submit additional ideas.

Two examples highlight this issue. In one instance, a junior officer recommended a process through which the Air Force could self-insure against the need to cancel or change airline tickets after initial purchase. The self-insurance payouts would be far lower than the aggregated price difference for refundable tickets paid to air carriers for contract tickets. This

idea was submitted for consideration and rejected without clear explanation, frustrating the officer (Stuckenberg, 2013). In this case, the officer persisted by re-submitting his idea to the Air Force Inspector General (IG). The IG indicated an acceptance of the idea but never followed up. Consequently, the officer felt discouraged from exploring other resource-saving possibilities (Stuckenberg, 2013); it was just not worth the time and effort.

Another officer encountered a similar experience. To save capital expended on procurement of UAV flying simulators, the CGO proposed simulators for remotely-piloted aircraft could be created by simply adding a computer server that generates a scenario and pushes the artificial environment to the existing stand-alone Ground Control Station (GCS) rather than purchasing stand-alone simulators which replicate the GCS. The Enterprise Idea Submission System rejected the idea without an explanation (Will, 2013). This officer is not willing to continue to suggest innovative ideas as a result. Negative feelings towards existing programs and the lack of a desire for future submissions were also recurring issues in our focus group and other interviews. These feelings were also generated by negative experiences with innovation programs.

RISK-AVERSE DECISION-MAKING

The second additional barrier is risk-averse decision-making. This is an especially important barrier due to the fiscally constrained environment and the primary focus on discrepancies when measuring unit effectiveness. Innovation relies on an Air Force culture which empowers Airmen to make calculated, and sometimes risky, decisions. However, consensus suggests the fear of making the wrong, even good-faith, decision discourages bold, innovative decision-making. Before innovation can become ingrained in Air Force culture, all

these barriers to innovation must be addressed and overcome. This will be one of the primary functions of the proposed wing IO.

PART IV: BASE SELECTION AND CRITERIA

The first step to testing a wing IO concept is the selection of a location that will allow the office the best chance of success, both at that location and Air Force wide. The AETC/CC set forth specific criteria to select an AETC Wing that represents a “good cross section” of the Air Force: a wing where there is a good mix of Active Duty, Reserve, Guard, civilian, officer, and enlisted personnel. Since the wing IO needs to ultimately be relevant to non-AETC bases, and because 85 percent of Air Force bases (51 of 62 permanent stations) host flying wings, the group immediately filtered out non-flying AETC Wings. In addition, Air Force installations that support flight operations and the mix of collateral units they require for support creates a ready opportunity for innovation. Next, the group filtered out AETC Wings that primarily conduct Undergraduate Pilot Training (UPT). UPT bases were not considered since these units do not represent a realistic cross section of the operational Air Force as they are primarily focused upon timely syllabus completion, often rely on contract maintainers, and have a disproportionate mix of officer-to-enlisted. In other words, these organizations did not contain a balanced mix of functions typically seen across the broader Air Force.

The AETC Wings not responsible for UPT were then screened against the standard operational wing construct. Each wing was broken down into Groups to see if it contained, at a minimum, an Operations Group, Maintenance Group, and a Mission Support Group. Other groups, such as a Medical Group, were noted as discriminators in the event that several wings fit

the group’s restricted criteria. Next we confirmed whether or not the base contained Guard and/or Reserve units (outside of the AETC Wing). After applying the screening criteria, the 56 FW was the only AETC Wing that met both General Rand’s stated criteria and our understanding of his “good cross section” requirements (Table 1.0). Therefore, Group Two asserts that the 56 FW at Luke AFB, AZ, has the greatest potential as a wing IO test-bed location.

Table 1.0 Wing Selection Matrix

Base	Wing	UPT Base	OG	MXG	MSG	MDG	Other	Guard	Reserve
Luke AFB	56 FW	No	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Altus AFB	97 AMW	No	X	X	X	X	X		
Kirtland AFB	58 SOW	No	X	X			X	X	
Eglin AFB	33 FW	No	X	X			X		X
Little Rock AFB	314 AW	No	X	X				X	X

Note 1: Guard and Reserve units fall outside of AETC Wings, but are located on base.
 Screened UPT bases: Columbus, Joint Base San Antonio, Laughlin, Sheppard, and Vance, AFB

In addition to the wing’s broad representation of the AF, the 56th Fighter Wing is in line to receive the F-35 which will potentially create an array of opportunities to innovate as new operations stand up at the 56 FW. Some of these new areas could include goals to stand up the most efficient maintenance wing in the Air Force, revolutionizing the weapons loading processes to shorten aircraft turn around, or the best civil aviation outreach program in the nation (such programs would inform the community of the new hazards presented by the F-35).

In short, the 56 FW not only meets General Rand’s criteria, it exceeds it by providing an environment rich with opportunity, the requisite mix of organizations, and the right leadership to see it through.

PART V: FUNCTIONS OF AN INNOVATION OFFICE

Existing literature supports the notion that to incorporate creativity and innovation into the culture of an organization, senior leadership must constantly nurture its development (Zairi & Al-Masheri, 2005), create policies and structures that foster an environment conducive to creative thinking (Sims, 2000), and reward associated behaviors (Ahmed, 1998). Martins and Terblanche (2003) highlight five determinants of culture that support this creativity and innovation: strategy, structure, support mechanisms, encouraging behaviors, and communication.

- Leaders must incorporate innovation into the strategy of their organizations through the establishment of supportive mission, vision, goals, and objectives.
- Creativity favors organizations that are relatively flat or autonomous with cooperative teamwork and speedy decision-making across its divisions.
- Support mechanisms include rewards, recognition, and resources (especially time designated for creative thinking and collaboration).
- Tolerance of mistakes, fair evaluation of ideas, continuous learning, sharing of information, and constructive handling of interagency conflict constitute encouraging behaviors.
- Communication that is open, honest, trustworthy, and transparent ultimately fosters idea creation and submission (Martins & Terblanche, 2003).

The Air Force can foster a creative and innovative culture and combat stagnation through the sustained execution and improvement of its existing innovation programs at the user level. An IO at the installation level putting forth a concerted effort along the five determinants listed above can make that happen. The 14A Think Tank offered four major functions of the IO.

These functions included leading innovation councils, market and industry coordination, managing an innovation database, and offering a sabbatical program. For the purposes of a short-term test of the wing IO, the following functions are recommended with some variations of 14A’s submissions along the five determinants of culture outlined above.

STRATEGY

The office must establish and publish performance targets to secure commitment to a core strategy (Fitz-enz, 2005). For example, the Air Force Sustainment Center outlined a goal for its subordinate bases to “save a billion” dollars from its combined annual budget (AFSC, 2013). A similar goal will seek to inspire the entire wing in the direction of continuous process improvement to achieve success. These benchmarks will be established through collaborative consultation between the IO and Wg/CC. In addition, these measurements will be useful for helping elicit Wing Commander savings priorities. This model has already enjoyed a measure of success at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst in conjunction with the AFSO21 office. Finally, we recommend that each functional area be measured against a solid metric to validate the IO model and determine success (see Table 2.0).

Table 2.0 Function Metrics

Functions	Metrics for Success
Develop the Wing	Contact with Units, Climate Assessment, and Information Sharing (with other Air Force Innovation Programs)
Manage Wing Ideas	Numbers of Accepted Submissions and Response Rates
Special Projects	Tangible Benefits Per Project (in Dollars)
Wing Marketing	Awards, Recognition, and News Coverage
External Coordination	Interaction with Outside Entities (Including Tours, Lectures, or Symposiums of/on Innovative Companies, Guest Speakers, and Education with Industry Opportunities Facilitated.

STRUCTURE AND TRAINING

The first step in establishing a culture of innovation should be the establishment of an IO at the wing level. The IO will serve as a hub for creativity, new thought, forward thinking, and the cultivation of best practices force-wide. In recognition of the need to depart from business as usual, the IO must cultivate and instill a holistic climate of innovation across all wing operations, organizations, and functions.

The wing IO will break down the hierarchical structure typical of military organizations by being the Wing Commander's voice. This office will be knowledgeable in existing Air Force innovation programs (including AFSO21) and have an "open door policy" to empower Airmen at all levels to submit or develop creative ideas. An electronic submission system or group email mailbox should be available wing-wide. Hill AFB, UT, offers a good example of such an electronic submission system. Each network user has an icon for an innovation program on the desktop of his/her computer user profile. If a user submits an idea for consideration for the program, the Vice Commander can review it and is required to assign a project officer to determine the feasibility of implementing the idea. The idea has worked and AETC should follow.

The IO permanently-assigned group-level representatives will be trained as AFSO21 Black Belts and will train at least one representative from each squadron in the wing as AFSO21 Green Belts. These squadron representatives will also have an additional duty to foster idea development and process improvement within their units. Squadron representatives should also provide AFSO21 familiarization training to their squadron members.

It is suggested that the wing IO include, where feasible, finance and manpower experts to help estimate the viability of idea implementation or assist in determining reasonable work-

around. Manpower personnel assigned to the office should also assist in updating job descriptions for civilian employees to allow more flexibility and responsiveness in task responsibilities. The wing IO will also facilitate and schedule a job rotation program among junior officers and enlisted personnel. This will greatly increase cross-functional awareness and break down barriers to collaboration and job stovepipes.

SUPPORT MECHANISMS

The IO must also actively seek out ideas from both within and outside the Air Force. The wing-level office should develop positive relationships with local businesses and governments to dovetail Air Force interests with those of the private and local public sector agencies (14A Think Tank). It can establish internal support mechanisms through the creation of local “Think Teams.” Regularly scheduled, though occasional, meetings of subject matter experts (SMEs) can brainstorm issues within their respective organizations to identify unique solutions. Separate annual award programs and on-the-spot recognition awards for process improvements and idea submission can help foster creativity from the rank-and-file.

ENCOURAGING BEHAVIOR AND COMMUNICATION

The office must also provide substantive responses to ideas submitted, including suggestions to overcome potential barriers to an idea’s practicality. Other methods can be used to encourage critical thinking of key processes.

The wing IO would review existing innovation databases, such as those found on the AFSO21 website, and share them with the local wing. These can be shared across the installation via a monthly one-page electronic newsletter, while also recognizing Airmen within the wings that have had a positive influence. The office must advertise the office’s true, net progress toward the wing’s performance targets, the number and examples of ideas submitted,

and present awards through quarterly Wing Commander's Calls. Communications acknowledging successes and failures show program transparency, demonstrate top-cover, and foster trust in the system while demonstrating commitment from leadership.

Existing Air Force process improvement and idea submission programs have considerable merit. However, their true capacity to inspire innovation and accrue the greatest potential savings will come from a more comprehensive implementation and sustainment strategy (Pande, Neuman, & Cavanagh, 2000). Senior leaders at enterprise Air Force and installation levels must demonstrate commitment and value in these programs. They can do this without considerable allocation of new resources through the wing IO. The office can be most effective in reinvigorating an Air Force culture of creativity and innovation by aligning its functions with the five determinants of a supportive culture (Martins & Terblanche, 2003). Strategy, structure, support mechanisms, encouraging behavior, and open, consistent communication are the necessary methods to accomplish this and ensure American dominance in air, space, and cyberspace in a resource constrained environment.

PART VI: INNOVATION OFFICE MANNING

The IO office will be led and directed by the CINO, an O-4 or above who will report directly to the Wing Commander. The direct line to the Wing Commander clarifies the importance of the CINO position and IO functions within the organizational chain of command. Since the current Air Force resources dictate a zero based manning construct, the CINO will be re-tasked from the Wing Projects Office and the existing AFSO21 office. For the purpose of continuity, we recommend at least one civilian help staff to spin-up and to maintain processes during turnover. Consequently, the total staff should be comprised of at least four personnel: the CINO, two NCOs (including at least one SNCO), and a civilian GS-11 or 12.

If the aggregate manning of these two offices is inadequate, manning may also be pulled from group or squadron-level officers and enlisted personnel who can be tasked to the IO via operational control (OPCON), while administrative control (ADCON) remains with their respective organization. This construct is similar to how AFGSC's 509th Bomb Wing Medical Group at Whiteman, AFB, MO, attaches Flight Surgeons to the various bomber squadrons (in reverse). Additionally, because innovation and new projects go hand-in-hand, the merger of these functional areas is both practical and efficient, representing, in and of itself, innovation at work.

Finally, the IO will be, by nature, a non-bureaucratic element to the wing. While this idea seems ambitious in nature, it must be recognized that bureaucracy cannot be used to overcome the barriers that bureaucracy itself helps generate. Consequently, the IO, under the direction of the CINO, will have a high degree of both autonomy and discretion to seek out, implement, and approve (with leadership conference) innovative ideas wing-wide.

PART VII: CONCLUSION

As the United States Air Force aspires to maintain a dominant edge on the battlefield of the future, one thing is firm: innovation will be the force that propels us there. The future is casting its silhouette now and our Air Force must work relentlessly to reshape and ready itself to meet these opportunities and challenges. While the temptation exists to wait through present fiscal limitations or for the political winds to change, our national leaders and our nation expect that we continue to meet both our existing obligations and prepare for those yet to emerge.

In order to meet this obligation, Air Force leadership must act deliberately to establish the Air Force as a world-wide force of innovators. History is replete with the names and legends

that have helped make our force the most dominant in the world. However, we can't forever stand on the shoulders of greats without stagnating. Instead, we must cast a wide net and tap into the most prized resource on the globe – the men and women of the United States Air Force.

In the previous chapters, the findings and discussion addressed obstacles which must be tended to in order transition us into a force that empowers and inspires a new culture of “every Airman an Innovator.” Leadership must drive the vision, articulate the need, educate personnel, establish facilitators, and provide accountability and feedback to those who entrust the Air Force with their inspirations and ideas. To establish this model, Luke AFB's 56 FW provides the greatest promise as it represents a cross section of the Air Force, is transitioning to fly and support one of the most cutting edge aircraft ever produced, and will likely have the right mix of leadership and support. While many programs and ideas have been implemented to bring about the innovation sought, this new model differs in that it wraps all innovation functions and programs into a single, non-bureaucratic focal point of an IO built on a zero-based manning construct. Based on overcoming the four barriers, a four man IO dedicated to innovation can help leverage the collective intelligence and experience to meet AF needs as we adapt to future operating requirements. Once measured and tested, this idea should be considered for implementation Air Force-wide, paving the way for a transformation in the way we do business. Let's do what makes sense, let's make “every Airman an Innovator.”

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