

BULLET BACKGROUND PAPER
ON
SQUADRON OFFICER SCHOOL 15B THINK TANK QUESTION

PURPOSE

- This paper describes the Group 3 proposal for a Squadron Officer School (SOS) that provides a focused and rigorous experience in order to develop officers' skills in leadership, strategic thinking, and innovation. The curriculum aligns with the SECAF/CSAF 30-year vision for the Air Force, which is predicated upon evolving into an agile force prepared for a volatile global environment.

DISCUSSION

- The revised curriculum focuses on three thrust areas: leadership, strategic thinking, and innovation
- Maintaining a narrow and deep focus on the above areas alone is critical to the success of the program, as doing so will provide the students with a tangible, substantive academic experience
- In order to make efficient use of students' time, SOS will be a "blended learning" experience, consisting of ~2 weeks of distance learning immediately prior to ~5 weeks in-residence
 - Enables accomplishment of "spin-up" material at home station
 - Focuses in-residence attention on discussion, application, research, introspection, etc.
- The curriculum will consist of the following themes and tenets:
 - A "phased schedule" that enables students to focus on one concept at a time
 - Vertical integration with ACSC and AWC to broaden the pool of instructors and facilitators
 - Realistic role playing scenarios utilizing professionals, accomplished jointly with SNCOs
 - Case-study-based learning throughout the course, utilizing a wide variety of case studies
 - Heritage lecture series leveraging experience of individuals involved in key historical events
 - No flight competition - eliminates pressure of "Top-Third Flight" etc.
 - Maintains the diverse, small group structure and allows leaders to emerge naturally
 - Increases time spent on actual, experiential learning

DISTANCE LEARNING MODULE

- Spin-up materials will include readings, recorded lectures, and synchronous learning with flight mates
- Leadership
 - Full Range Leadership Model; Followership; Organizational Communication; Equity Theory; Decision Making; Cognitive Biases; Sociology & Human Interaction

- Strategic Thinking

- Sun Tzu; Clausewitz; National Security Strategy; Joint Doctrine & War Planning; impact of 2nd and 3rd order effects resulting from national-level decisions

- Innovation

- Case studies and examples of innovative solutions in recent conflicts as well as industry and academia; how to reverse inertia in well-established organizations; matching ideas and opportunities; how to build an executable plan; assessing organizational readiness

IN-RESIDENCE MODULE

- Leadership

- Role-playing simulations led by trained professionals intimately familiar with the scenarios
 - Project X to facilitate real time decision-making
 - Case studies on military leadership modeled after the Harvard Business School method
 - Additional case-study discussions accomplished jointly with SNCOs

- Strategic Thinking

- Expansion of students' Air Force knowledge in terms of how their responsibilities impact other career fields and students in the classroom
 - Heritage Lecture Series, followed by extensive group discussion on each topic
 - Examples and case studies of strategic thinking (successes and failures)
 - Extensive introspection and ~2 personal assignments to develop strategic thinking skills
 - Deep-dive into critical warfighting functions

- Innovation

- Think Tanks for each flight on a tangible issue ranging from a long-standing, acute problem facing an Air Force unit to an emerging, national-level issue or threat
 - Current examples and case studies of innovative solutions used in recent conflicts

CONCLUSION

- This paper provides an overview of the Group 3 recommendation for the ideal SOS curriculum

- The curriculum should focus on leadership, strategic thinking, and innovation (utilizing the aforementioned instructional methods) for the following reasons:

- Develop Officers for the 21st Century capable of leading a group of diverse, strategic thinkers, in order to increase the focus on agility, creativity, and flexibility
 - Officers will emerge with a deeper understanding and personal emphasis on leadership, strategic thinking, and innovation, ready to lead Airmen in a volatile global environment