

SUMMARY OF 2010 PARENT'S CLUB PRESIDENT'S CONFERENCE  
1-2 SEPTEMBER 2010  
DOOLITTLE HALL, USAFA

On Wednesday evening, September 1, 2010 Ann and I had the honor of attending a reception of parent's club presidents, hosted by Lt. Gen. Mike Gould and his wife Paula, at the Carlton House. The Carlton House is a former ranch house that has been converted to the permanent residence of the USAFA Superintendent. This was a very casual event where we had an opportunity to meet and socialize with club presidents from Indiana, Minnesota, South Dakota and, Georgia. We received a number of good ideas from these discussions that we will be offering for consideration by the WAFAPA Board.

On Thursday morning the conference reconvened in Doolittle Hall, with remarks offered by Lt. Gen Gould and each of his senior staff. General Gould has assembled a staff that, for the first time ever, are all USAFA graduates. It is a diverse group that clearly shares General Gould's passion, enthusiasm, commitment and organic connection to the USAFA. The biographies of each are attached to this email. We have attempted to summarize the high points of the comments offered by each.

**Lieutenant General Michael C. Gould, Superintendent USAFA:** Mike Gould is a '76 graduate of the Academy, and has two sons who have also graduated from USAFA and are currently serving in the Air Force. General Gould's stated goal is to focus all the Academy's resources to make the Cadets successful during their time at USAFA. To that end he has three very basic objectives for the cadets:

1. Build pride through accomplishment of successively greater challenges.
2. Demonstrate respect and dignity for all, regardless of race, color, creed or sexual orientation. "You don't have to like everyone, but you must show respect for everyone".
3. Consistency of the message. The senior staff must consistently and visibly demonstrate the code of conduct and values that USAFA is instilling in the Cadet Wing.

The elements of time and Mother Nature have taken their toll on the main buildings at USAFA, most of which are going on their second 50 years. With the completion of the Arnold Hall remodeling last year, the focus is now on the continuing renovation of Vandenberg Hall, the Field House and Fairchild. Private donations, particularly that of Bart Holoday (class of '65) have allowed construction of the new 92,000 square foot indoor practice facility. This facility will allow the USAFA teams to compete on equal footing with the Army and Navy, and the other major universities in the Mountain West Conference. Site preparations for the indoor practice facility have already begun, and it should be ready for use in the fall of 2011.

But the keystone project that most clearly stirs Mike Gould's passion is the Center for Character and Leadership Development (CCLD). The CCLD building will house the only program of its kind in the United States, and "...if the chapel is the soul of the Academy, the CCLD will be its heart". Character and leadership development will be the core focus of all the academy programs, be it academic, athletic, or airmanship. The CCLD program is currently being developed and deployed throughout USAFA, and the

opening of the iconic structure in the fall of 2012 will be mark the final step in the deployment process. By the time the program moves into the new building, the CCLD will already be deeply engrained in the Academy DNA.

**Brigadier General Richard M. Clark, Commandant of Cadets:** General Clark, an '86 graduated of the Academy was recently assigned to his post at USAFA, and only has been on the job for a couple weeks. His first goal is to recruit the best AOC's available in the Air Force to USAFA, and train them in coaching and mentoring skills consistent with the CCLD program. Upon completion of the next AOC rotation, all the squadron AOCs will have degrees in counseling and/or behavioral science. General Clark participated in the selection process for the new AOCs that will be assuming their posts this academic year, and is very enthused at the quality and leadership skills of the incoming AOCs.

General Clark announced the selection of Colonel Joseph C. Sanders as the head of the CCLD program. Col. Sanders is a recognized expert in the area of ethics, character and leadership development. His acceptance of a permanent staff appointment to the CCLD marks his personal commitment to the program, as he will not be considered for future reassignment to other command opportunities in the Air Force. For a career officer, accepting a permanent appointment is the equivalent of 'moving all in'.

General Clark is supervising the deployment of a peer program within the Cadet Wing focused on helping cadets with personal issues that may not otherwise surface to the USAFA command structure. The peer cadets will receive formal mentorship and guidance training, and will direct at-risk cadets to the appropriate support and assistance. The peer system already paid dividends last week, when a USAFA cadet confided in a peer that a high school friend at another military academy was planning suicide. The peer cadet immediately brought the situation to the attention of the USAFA command, which coordinated with their counterparts at the other academy for a timely and successful intervention. The deployment of this program is but one reflection of the current senior staff's intrinsic understanding of cadet life, and the support systems needed by the cadet wing.

**Brigadier General Dana H. Born, Dean of the Faculty:** General Born is a '83 graduate of the Academy and has served in her current role since 2004. Dr. Born noted USAFA's recent ranking as "Best in the West" by U.S. News and World Report, and Forbes recognition of the Academy's low student: teacher ratio and accessible faculty. After reaffirming the Academy's commitment to maintaining a strong liberal arts core curriculum, she went on to discuss the new focus areas in the USAFA academic program. First, there is a strong emphasis in language and cultural immersion (LCI) programs. Engineering students will be required to complete one year of LCI study, while all other majors must complete two years of LCI curriculum. In addition, this year USAFA provided over 800 opportunities for cultural immersion experience in over 60 different countries. Those numbers will continue to grow until every cadet has at least one such opportunity sometime in their four years at the Academy. This year 96 of the newly minted Second Lieutenant's from the Class of 2010 went on to post-graduate studies in LCI. The Academy hopes to increase those numbers in future years, especially for cadets on casual duty waiting for flight school training slots to open.

The second area of emphasis is research in the classroom. USAFA has received over \$50 million this year for research projects in the areas such as satellite technology, materials science, robotics and computer chip design. This is over five times as much as research funding received by either U.S. Military Academy or the Naval Academy, and is consistent with USAFA's mission as the tech school of the U.S. Military.

The third area of emphasis is in unmanned aircraft vehicles (UAVs). USAFA started this project in July with simulator capacity to train nine cadets on UAV simulators. Since July the capacity has grown to its current level of 90 cadet training slots, and will continue to grow to over 300 cadet opportunities per year. General Born recognizes that the UAV program in the Air Force is not popular within the Cadet Wing, and runs counter to the single-warrior ethos glorified by Tom Wolfe, and deeply engrained in the DNA of the old Air Force. But the reality is that UAVs have become an essential part of the Air Force arsenal, and USAFA must enthusiastically embrace the mission of training cadets in the fundamental operation of these platforms. The senior staff is actively considering how to overcome the distain that the Cadet Wing has displayed towards the UAV program. Undoubtedly the CCLD program will be leveraged by the senior staff to change, or mollify the Cadet Wings' negative attitude towards UAVs.

**Dr. Hans J Mueh, Athletic Director:** Dr. Mueh is a '66 graduate of USAFA, and received his PhD. in chemistry from University of Wisconsin, Madison in '76. Dr. Mueh has served in his current capacity since 2004. Dr. Mueh noted that this year USAFA has approximately 1000 intercollegiate athletics competing in 27 sports. Compare this with Ohio State who has 960 athletes completing in 24 sports and you begin to realize the depth of the Academy's commitment to athletics. Dr. Mueh explained the need for the indoor practice facility in terms of weather disruptions to practice. While Colorado Springs offers a beautiful setting, the athletic department loses 60-70 days per year to weather-related disruptions caused by snow, wind or lightening. The new 92,000 square foot facility will provide enough space for two teams to practice simultaneously, and put USAFA's training facilities on par with those of Army, Navy, and the other major competitors in the Mountain West Conference.

But the achievement that Dr. Mueh spent the most time discussing was the Academy's receipt of the NCAA's Highest Award for Sportsmanship for the second year in a row. In 2010 an Academy fencer was recognized for stopping a match in Paris, France and pointing out to the referee that he had been inappropriately been awarded a point. Apparently this had never been done in the history of this international competition. The young cadet's display of sportsmanship was feted by the European press, and is being rightfully touted by the Academy as an example of outstanding character and honor.

**Colonel Rick J. LoCastro, Commander of the 10<sup>th</sup> Air Base Wing.** Col. LaCastro is an '88 graduate of the Academy, and perhaps the most energetic and personable officers we have encountered at USAFA. We had an opportunity to chat with Rick on Wednesday night, and were thoroughly entertained about his story of a New Yorker from Queens adapting to the 'wilds of Colorado'. In his capacity of Wing Commander, Col LoCastro is essentially the 'Mayor of USAFA'. His pet project is the development of a 5-6 Mw solar energy plant on the base. This \$20 million project is under construction and should be completed in the summer of 2011. Improving base security continues to be an on-going focus for the base command. Last but not least, Col. LoCastro is relocating all essential service that the cadets need

to the hill. As an example, the cadets will no longer have to go to the base PX to replace their ID cards, obtain parking permits, or tend to other administrative matters. Once again, the senior staff is cognizant of the value of the cadet's time, and is refocusing the mission of the Base to help the cadet's succeed in all aspects of their growth and development.

**Colonel Bart Weiss, Commander U.S. Air Force Academy Preparatory School:** Colonel Weiss provided a brief status of the Prep School. There are currently 240 students enrolled at the Prep School, including 60 prior enlisted service men and women. They are supported by 70 faculty and staff. And currently 170 are participating in a fall sport. In 2010, approximately 80% of the Prep school graduates went on to enter the Academy.

**Lieutenant Colonel Greg Johnson- Acting Director of the Air Education and Training Command:** Colonel Johnson is directing the USAFA airmanship programs while Colonel Christopher Plamp is attending the Air Force Air War College. Both Colonels Plamp and Johnson are Academy graduates. Colonel Johnson spoke at length about the plans to upgrade the existing glider, jump planes and powered aircraft fleet over the next 2-3 years. More importantly, USAFA is working to create a professional atmosphere on the airfield flight line that will be analogous to the decorum that the cadets will encounter after they leave the Academy and move on to their deployments. This is yet another example of how all aspects of the Academy are being impacted by the CCLD initiative.

**Colonel Carolyn A.M. Benyshek, Director of Admissions:** Colonel Benyshek is an '87 graduate of the Academy and responsible for a staff of 70 at USAFA, and approximately 1600 recruiters throughout the country. Colonel Benyshek has direct responsibility for the Admission Liaison Officers (ALO) and the ALO coordinators. The Academy is adapting to the new social networking systems in order to communicate to the future cadet recruits. They are starting to recruit potential appointees as early as the sixth grade, and are customizing age-specific promotional materials to support that initiative.

For the Class of 2014 there were 11600 applicants, which was an increase of approximately 20%. And this year the pace of applications for the Class of 2015 appointments is running about 1000 ahead of last year. Colonel Benyshek's staff is conducting evaluations to determine if the renewed interest is attributable to the economic conditions, the use of social networking tools, or possibly the Shullenberger effect. The Admissions Office has promoted the professionalism and courage of Captain Sullenberger extensively in their recruiting program, and readily acknowledges his value to improving the quality of the incoming USAFA cadets.

General Gould closed the session by noting qualifications of the Class of 2014, and commented that few, if any of the current senior USAFA staff would have received appointments if they had to compete against the current incoming appointees.

## **Rando Fund Presentation**

Jack Bernazzani, of the Massachusetts Parents Club presented a check to General Gould in the amount of \$25,000 for the Rando Fund. This amount was raised from contributions from the various clubs and raffle of the Rando Fund blanket. Jack noted that thankfully there has not been a heavy demand in the last few years for emergency travel by cadets. In the 2009 school year there were 19 requests for travel and support, and a total of \$20,000 was issued. Cadets that are financially strapped can request money from the Rando Fund to return home for final visits with sick relatives, or to attend funerals of friends and family members. In the case of a death of a cadet, friends and squadron mates can also apply for funds to travel to the funeral and internment of the lost mate. Thankfully there have not been any cadet deaths in the last couple years, so the Fund has a healthy balance for the first time since it was established in 1997. Hopefully the demands on the fund will continue to be light and infrequent.

The Colorado Parents Club recognized the efforts of Jack Bernazzani for organizing and maintaining the Rando Fund and presented him with a specially made Rando quilt. It was a nice presentation, and well played.

## **Strategic Communications**

**Mr. David Cannon, USAFA Director of Communications:** USAFA, like the other service academies has created the position of Director of Communications, and staffed the position with a professional media communications expert. David "Loose" Cannon arrived at USAFA at approximately the same time as General Gould, and has been focused on several key initiatives, including:

1. Branding USAFA to become synonymous with Colorado Springs. Most people associate West Point, New York with the U.S. Military Academy, and many know that Annapolis, Maryland is the home of the Naval Academy. But a recent survey revealed that a very small percentage of U.S. citizens know that the Air Force Academy is located in Colorado Springs. Apparently the profile and visibility of the Academy would be improved if it is identified with the host city.
2. Utilize the enthusiasm and communication skills of General Gould to increase the visibility of the Academy, and the uniqueness of the CCLD program. General Gould is being put in front of non-aligned and non-traditional audiences to spread the word about the academy outside military and aviation savvy audiences. His appearance on the National Public Radio program received great reviews and was one of the most frequently activated links on the USAFA.com website. The Academy expects that the "Don't ask, don't tell policy" will be revoked, either by the courts or by legislation, and the Academy wants to get out in front with its 'Respect for All' message of diversity and inclusivity. [NOTE: The Ninth Circuit Court found the 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' policy to be unconstitutional in a ruling announced on 8 September 2010].
3. Expanding the use and Academy's profile on social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Although the Tick-Tock video that appeared on YouTube was not necessarily complementary of the Academy, nor appreciated by all the alumni, it received over 5 million hits. And the adage in the advertising industry is that the only bad publicity is no publicity at all. The potential cadets that the Academy wants to recruit are conversant with these social

networks, so USAFA has to increase its profile on these networks in order to connect with these potential appointees.

4. Production of documentaries featuring the Academy, cadet life and the progressiveness of the CCLD program, and the 'Respect for All' initiatives. Two documentaries are in production, including one by the Colorado NPR station. The Academy will have some editorial control to assure the accuracy of these productions. David Cannon noted that the recently published book titled 'Skies to Conquer' by Diana Jean Schemo has numerous inaccuracies, misrepresentations, and exaggerations, most prominent of which is that the author spent a full year at USAFA. She spent several days over the course of a year, and the validity of her book reflects the shallowness of her 'firsthand' experience. That notwithstanding, the Academy is not going to get into a spat with the author by pointing out the inaccuracies and misrepresentations. Instead they recommend that cadet parents check the book out from your local library, and thereby deprive Ms. Schemo of the book royalties so richly undeserved.
5. Leveraging the publicity associated with the feat of Captain Sullenberger to the benefit of the Academy. Sully has been very cooperative and generous with his time in making promotional appearances, and taping recruiting video clips. Expect him to be prominently featured in the upcoming documentaries.

### **Association of Graduates**

**Mr. William T. Thompson, Class of '73, President and CEO of AOG:** T Thompson spoke of the progress being made in the area of fund raising now that AOG and the USAFA Endowment have combined forces. He expects that, through the combined efforts of AOG and USAFA, additional gifts such as the one provided by Bart Holoday and his wife will fund additional improvements at the Academy. Just as the CCLD will increase the visibility and image of the Academy, it will also become a centerpiece of the fund raising effort for AOG. He urged all parents to consider purchasing a lifetime AOG membership for their cadet as a graduation gift. The AOG is actively trying to re-engage former USAFA grads that have left the military and drifted away from the Academy. They are building a speakers bureau of former graduates that would be available for Parents' Clubs events. Because of privacy laws they cannot disclose the names and addresses of former graduates, but they can serve as a clearinghouse to connect Parents Clubs to the graduates in their states.

The Web Guy is an AOG employee, and continues to work to improve coverage and access to video footage of cadet basic training. Look for future Web Guy offerings to including Facebook and Twitter pages for each squadron, as they continue to strive to improve that service.