



VIGILANT VECTOR VI

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Space Professional Technical Competence

Air Force Space Command plays a key role in maintaining the United States' decisive advantage in space. To succeed, we must be the acknowledged experts in fielding, launching and employing space power for the 21st Century. Our leadership in space demands continual enhancement of our abilities to provide maximum space effects to Combatant Commanders. The Space Professional Development Program (SPDP) is an invaluable framework to produce the space experts our Nation and its warfighters need, but it must be dynamic and adaptable to match the ever-changing space mission. With this in mind, we have instituted several initiatives and made changes to enhance SPDP.

The Space Commission emphasized the need for highly skilled, technologically sound space professionals, and underscored the importance of career-long education. Secretary Wynne and General Moseley called for "knowledge-enabled Airmen" who supplement warfighting skills with viable, relevant education. We are off to a good start with Space 100, 200 and 300 as educational milestones for SPDP certification. The National Security Space Institute's Advanced Courses are another part of this effort, providing concentrated depth in specific mission areas and systems. Finally, we are conducting an end-to-end review of space education and training to make sure all the pieces are integrated to produce optimum results. Our initial analysis of the Space Professional Community reflects a need for people with a solid basis of technical academic coursework and more Space Professionals with technical degrees. We are taking several steps to address this issue.

A logical first step is to increase the technical requirements for officers assessed into the Space Operations (13S) specialty. We are working with HQ AF/A3S to establish technical entry requirements for new 13S personnel. This requirement translates into technical credit hours/courses rather than degrees, similar to the mathematics baseline requirement under the original 20XX space operations AFSC. Presently, we are proposing 15 hours of undergraduate courses in mathematics, physics and engineering, chemistry or computer science.

To encourage 13S officer accessions with technical degrees to choose space as a career, we propose focused personnel practices that will make immediate use of academic credentials in a space operations setting. In many cases, a technical background is more advantageous for the complexity and technical nature of space systems. This becomes even more important as new systems are introduced and we respond to dynamic, technological challenges in the space medium. We will also work hard to ensure our people with technical degrees are offered jobs that take advantage of and develop their skills throughout their careers.

We are also emphasizing opportunities for advanced technical certificates and degrees through the Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT), Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) and the Space Education Consortium (SEC).

- **Space Certificate Program.** The University of Colorado at Colorado Springs (UCCS), the SEC lead university, began an AFSPC-funded pilot space certificate program in

January 2007 for 20 Space Professionals stationed at Peterson, Buckley, F.E. Warren and Schriever AFBs. We chose the Front Range units to limit the scope of this trial program. The certificate will provide a “space core” of five courses that will count toward master’s degrees available through UCCS. The pilot program is a test case for expanding this command-funded opportunity to selected individuals throughout the Space Professional Community and to further develop the program within the SEC.

- **AFIT and NPS Programs.** We are working with AFIT and NPS to maximize the number of Space Professionals who take advantage of their programs. Each institution offers a variety of certificate and graduate programs, in-residence and distance learning, which provide top-quality education in key space disciplines. If you are qualified, actively seek a class seat in one of these excellent institutions. If you are interested but short of full qualification, there are several avenues to enhance your eligibility for AFIT and NPS--see your Base Education Office or contact the Space Professional Management Office.
- **Transfer of Course Credit.** We are also encouraging increased cooperation among AFIT, NPS and the SEC to make it easier for Space Professionals to consolidate course credits from a variety of sources and to complete master’s degrees. This is a challenge for the academic community, but we are confident a workable solution is possible.
- **Test Pilot School.** This program is an excellent way to hone technical skills and is on the cutting edge of air and space power. This program is highly competitive and managed through an AFPC board. Look for the annual announcement message (usually in May.) I encourage qualified Space Professionals to seriously consider this worthwhile program.
- **USAF Weapons School.** This is another selective and highly beneficial opportunity, which provides intensive graduate-level education to space operators on employment of national and DoD space systems. Graduates are experts in space-related Combat Air Forces operations planning as well as employment tactics, techniques, and procedures.
- **Education Information.** The Space Professional Management Office has posted a variety of education information on the Space Professional Development website available via the AF Portal through the “AFSPC/A1” link in the “Org A-Z Listings.” This site gives details and hyperlinks to AFIT, NPS and SEC programs, eligibility, content, cost and points of contact. In addition, the website has a link to the Virginia Tech program available through the National Reconnaissance Office. The SEC link will be added soon.
- **Scholarship Opportunities.** Your Education Offices can help you research means to help offset the cost of advanced education. Two valuable references are www.fastweb.com and <http://aid.military.com/scholarship>. Links to both are available via the Space Professional Development website.
- **Enlisted Education.** The new Air University Associate-to-Baccalaureate Cooperative program offers a great opportunity for our enlisted Space Professionals to apply CCAF course credit toward a bachelor’s degree. Of particular interest is the BS in Space Studies available through the American Military University. Information is available via the Air Force Virtual Education Center on the AF Portal.

Finally, a new SPDP Continuing Education (CE) Self Development Construct program should be in place in 2008. In the meantime, I encourage each of you to pursue an active program of self improvement to expand your knowledge and keep abreast of recent developments in space.

Conclusion

Mission success begins and ends with people. Ensuring Space Professionals have a sound technical foundation integrated with SPDP's space-focused education, training and experience will help us realize the full potential of our people and give our Nation a healthy inventory of high-quality space experts.

Footnote: We recently decided to expand the Space Professional Community to include Intelligence and Communications personnel who directly impact the space mission. Efforts are underway to modify the SPDP to incorporate these valuable community members into the Certification construct. We are also evaluating other specialties for inclusion in the Community. Welcome them to the elite group of space warfighters!