

## Notes From the AOG Chapter Presidents' Conference, 2-3 September 2021

The night before the conference the Superintendent hosted a reception for Parents' Club and AOG Chapter attendees. If you haven't been there, the Sup has a really nice house. Good food, drink, and a chance to meet a lot of folks. I was impressed by the level of knowledge that the parents' group leaders have of the Academy and its issues. The Cade dance team entertained us with a couple of dances. Didn't have that group when I was there. They are very good.

The conference began at the Polaris Center as a joint session with the Parents' chapter Presidents and the AOG Chapter Presidents. The Superintendent, LGen Clark ('86), opened the conference and was joined by the Commandant, BGen Moga ('95), the Dean, BGen Letendre ('96), Director of Athletics, Mr. Pine, and the Command Chief Master Sergeant, CMSgt Sparks.

- Superintendent's Comments:
  - o Priorities are:
    - Develop leaders of Character
    - Live Honorably
    - Lift others
    - Elevate performance
  - o Defeat COVID
  - o Prepare Leaders to win future conflicts, not prepare for current ones
  - o Create a culture of dignity and respect
- CMSGT Sparks' comments:
  - o USAF is 80% enlisted
  - o Increase and emphasize touchpoints for cadets with enlisted
- Commandant's comments:
  - o Priorities
    - Return to normal from COVID
    - Warfighting prep and training
    - Increase standards, discipline, institutional pride
- Dean's comments:
  - o Develop and increase warfighting focus
  - o Apply knowledge learned to warfighting problems
- Athletic Director's comments:
  - o Create attitude of life-long fitness
  - o Physical testing

### Q&A session:

- Numerous internships now exist with corporations and labs. COVID gave USAFA opportunity to explore new avenues for cadets for summer programs.

- USAFA has world class athletes – Mahala Norris won NCAA championship in 3000 meter steeplechase. Went to Olympic trials. Other cadets excelling at NCAA level in both individual and team sports.
- With UFT backlog, over 200 2021 grads have gone to grad school rather than just sit in casual status for 18 months waiting for UFT slot.
- Over 95% of cadets vaccinated for COVID. Currently voluntary but if DoD or USAF requires it, cadets will have to either comply, get a waiver for health or religious reasons, or face some type of disciplinary action. Decision on that to come soon.
- We asked AOG and Leadership to create a single located system (App, website, etc.) for AOG and parents' chapter to know when cadets, teams, etc., are coming to our area. That will make it easier for us to support them host them, etc.
- Increase in honor system focus. Staff across the board increasing emphasis. Focusing on Fourthclassmen at the beginning on the importance of living honorably recognizing the changes in society. Goal is to engage with the cadets before there's an incident. Emphasizing to all cadets that they own it.
- COVID resulted in a lot of lost opportunities. Some are lost for good (BCT changed significantly for 2024; some summer programs). It also opened doors for others that didn't exist before. Some of those will stay as future opportunities
- Space Force (SF): USAFA is the Place for Space. Implemented SF training and principles into curriculum. Cadets "do space" and conduct active space missions (Satellite design, development, tracking). There is now a Space Force Doctrine Center at USAFA, and they are looking for a place to put a new building to increase SF capabilities.
- Officer Oath Project: Goal is to increase cadet's understanding of the significance of the oath we all took at USAFA and when commissioned.
  - o What does the oath truly mean?
  - o Support and Defend the United States – what does that specifically mean?
  - o Key core classes held throughout the four years
  - o Begin education before 1<sup>st</sup> oath taken in BCT

#### AOG presented a briefing on the Rando Fund

- Cadet Rando died at USAFA in aircraft incident in 1997
- Fund created in his name to support cadets to go to funerals for fellow cadets
- Also provide emergency funds for those cadets who need assistance to attend family funerals. Need is determined by AOC.
- 100% of the money raised goes to the program. Admin costs covered by USAFA Foundation.
- Raised \$500K since the start.
- Need \$25K/yr to sustain program.
- Check it out at [www.randofund.org](http://www.randofund.org)

#### Foundation Briefing:

- Foundation Goals:
  - o 21<sup>st</sup> Century Dominance: Focus across the whole institution for future conflict
  - o Build strength and Agility – renovate Falcon Stadium. Most of the fund will have to come from private sources.
  - o Expand Strategic Advantages
    - Polaris Center
    - Madera Center for Cyber Innovation under construction
  - o Serving with Honor

- Asked for donations: \$1000 or more annually makes one a Saber Society Donor
- Finds and Gifts go to:
  - Capital projects
  - Academic needs
  - Cadet support
- Issue they are working involves private donations being converted to DFAS dollars for MILCON projects. It takes time.

After the joint session we moved into the Doolittle Center for an AOG Chapter Presidents' conference with the AOG staff.

Mike Gould

- AOG has increased focus on instilling Academy Heritage from Day 1.
- AOG now has 2 separate 501(c)3 – one for AOG and one for Foundation. They coordinate when and where they can.
- AOG in good financial shape
- New plan is provide AOG membership to ALL graduates.
  - It will be free. This is what West Point and Annapolis do.
  - Reason is to make ALL graduates become practicing members of Long Blue Line, not have to pay to be part of it. The thinking is that it will increase interest in AOG.
- AOG wants to increase surveys and focus groups to increase communication back and forth to and from grads and AOG.
  - Trying to get a better idea of cadet and graduate expectations.
  - Get the word out on what the AOG does and contributes to the Academy and graduates
- They want to create a chapter mentorship program. Plan is to have grads meet up with new grads to help them transition better from USAFA to the USAF.

Mark Hille, 97 – COO of Foundation

- Campaign Update
  - Need to raise \$270M in 40 months
  - To date -- \$170M
  - Engaging with grads and other entities to raise funds

Commandant (BGen Moga)

- Getting back to normal after last year's COVID lockdown, or whatever the new normal will be.
- Current USAFA mentor program getting a better focus. CCLD is expanding the number of members and working to speak from the same sheet.

We concluded with conversations and discussion among the attendees. Some comments and suggestions for increasing participation

- Tents at airshows
- Volunteering with local charities seems to bring folks in. Start with small group and it seems to increase into a larger one.
- Post activities more on Facebook
- Create class contact leaders who then reach out to their local classmates
- Checked LinkedIn
  - Over 40K grads there
  - There's a USAFA page

- Can search by location to find those who aren't listed as AOG members
- ZoomieLink
  - Young grads seem to favor it
  - Can create a Chapter Group
  - Can also create a chapter presidents' group
- Many chapters, including ours, have problems with transitioning leadership. Can't get folks to take on the positions. Idea was to create a succession plan to bring in folks, teach them what the current leaders do, and show what the workload and requirements are. Once they see what they have to do and learn that time demands aren't a significant as they might think, it may be more amenable to taking on the jobs.

Conference concluded with a cocktail party at a local country club. Again, good food, drink and a chance to get with other attendees in a social setting. Congrats to Karina Ross and Michele Bergeman and the rest of the AOG staff for putting this great conference together.