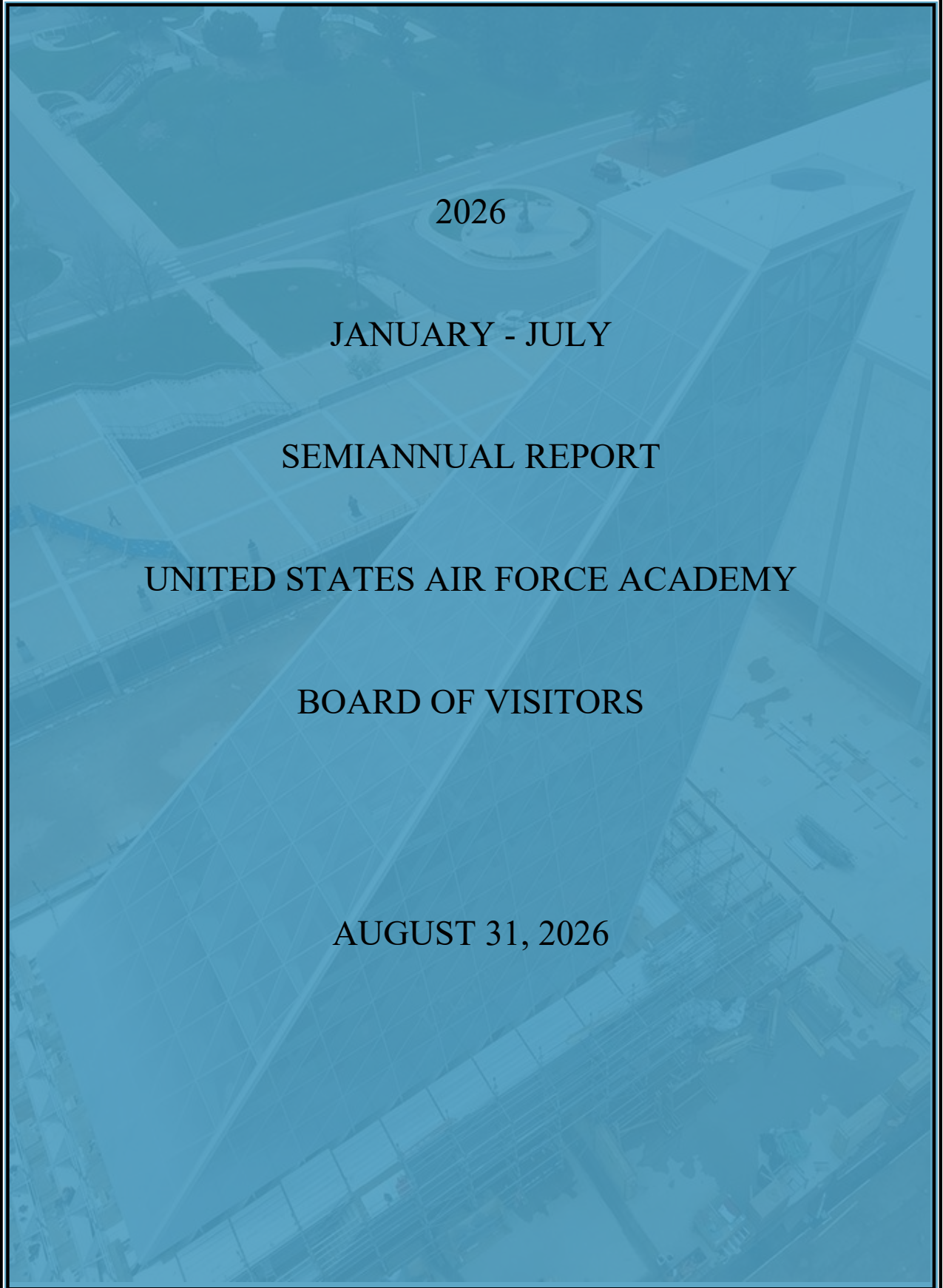




2026

JANUARY - JULY

SEMIANNUAL REPORT

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ACADEMY

BOARD OF VISITORS

AUGUST 31, 2026

2026 JANUARY – JULY SEMIANNUAL REPORT
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ACADEMY BOARD OF VISITORS

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USAFA BOARD OF VISITORS SEMIANNUAL REPORT
ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

January – July 2026

This summary outlines the key recommendations from the USAFA Board of Visitors Semiannual Report. The Board has identified recommendations that require immediate attention and action to ensure USAFA maintains its standing as a premier institution for developing military leaders. The Secretary of the Air Force has the authority to address all of the following recommendations other than the recommendation to Standardize the Military Service Academy Accreditation Agencies.

1. Athletics:

- Consider a USAFA Graduate for the Athletic Director Position: An alumni Athletic Director understands the extreme demands placed on cadet athletes. They inherently grasp how to balance rigorous military training, demanding academics, and Division I athletics without compromising the core mission. We believe that being a USAFA graduate is a key selection criterion for the new Athletic Director.
- Reform AFAAC Structure and Governance: The Air Force Academy Athletic Corporation (AFAAC) must substantially update its foundational bylaws in two critical ways. First, it should eliminate the fragmented and atypical parallel executive structure by consolidating the standalone Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Athletic Director functions under a single Athletic Director accountable to the AFAAC Board. Second, and equally important, the bylaws must elevate the Superintendent from a mere advisory role to having meaningful, approval authority over major AFAAC actions. Additionally, the modernization effort should include consolidating USAFA athletics fundraising under the Air Force Academy Foundation operating under a "cooperative but consolidated" philosophy.
- Study a “One Semester STOP OFF” Program: The Board recommends the USAFA Superintendent conduct an immediate feasibility study on a “One Semester STOP OFF” pilot program modeled after USAFA’s historical 1-year Stop Out program.

2. Accreditation:

- Standardize the Military Service Academy Accreditation Agencies: The Board recommends that the Department of War align all three Military Service Academies under a single accreditation agency.

3. Infrastructure and Resources:

- Preserve a Critical Air Force Reserve Unit Supporting USAFA’s Airfield: The Board strongly advocates for the retention of the 70th Flying Training Squadron (70 FTS) at USAFA and emphasizes the unit's critical, cost-effective role in preventing operational degradation within the 306th Flying Training Group (306 FTG) Airmanship programs, which is critical to instilling air-mindedness into future USAF officers.
- Open the Cadet Chapel in Phases: The Board endorses opening the lower portion of the Cadet Chapel no later than 1 December 2027 as the next Cadet Chapel acceleration milestone necessity to further compensate for the years-long delay and hundreds of millions of dollars in cost overruns.

- Establish a Dedicated FSRM funding line: To overcome decades of systemic infrastructure neglect and restore USAFA to its rightful status as a premier national institution, the Board urgently advocates for the establishment of a dedicated, Facilities Sustainment, Restoration, and Modernization (FSRM) funding line.

4. Cadet Development:

- Create the USAFA Board of Visitors American Exceptionalism Award: The Board strongly recommends the establishment of the “*USAFA Board of Visitors, American Exceptionalism Award*” as a permanent part of the formal USAFA graduation awards program. The creation of this annual graduation award is a fundamental responsibility of the Board to pass on its members’ “Service Before Self” commitment by recognizing and awarding the graduating cadet who best exemplifies the unwavering belief in the principles of the American Ideal, along with the commitment to a lifetime of service, and dedicated to inspiring others to do the same.
- Reprioritize Cadet Summer Internships in the Pentagon and on Capitol Hill: The Board recommends that USAFA place at least two cadet interns each Summer in Board members’ Congressional offices. Additionally, the Board similarly recommends the reprioritization of Pentagon internships.
- Increase Emphasis and Funding for Advanced Simulators and Drone Technology: USAFA should accelerate Air, Space, and Cyber-minded training. USAFA must lead the other Service Academies in drone research, Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs), and adaptation for future warfare. The Board recommends USAFA increase investment in drones and also on cutting edge portable aircrew proficiency trainers, and virtual reality training devices.

5. Installation Access:

- Analyze Installation Access Procedures: The Board requests that USAFA leadership consider incorporating base access procedures into upcoming assessments and policy reviews to maintain essential security while easing community admission requirements to USAFA.

6. USAFA Preparatory School:

- Evaluate the USAFA Preparatory School Return on Investment (ROI): The Board received data from USAFA outlining the success rate for an individual who enters the USAFA Preparatory School and ultimately graduates from USAFA. A rigorous audit by DAF and USAFA leadership is required to optimize resource allocation. The Board recommends the SecAF conduct a review of the Prep School model including an analysis of the USAFA graduation rate for prior service cadet candidates and recruited athletes.

7. USAFA Officer Assignments:

- Elevate the Value of USAFA Officer Assignments: The Board emphasizes the critical need to actively promote Air Force and Space Force Officer assignments at USAFA as a career-enhancing duty. The Board recommends the Department conduct an updated review of promotion rates for officers who perform USAFA instructor duty and brief the Board on these collective findings and proposed solutions (if deemed necessary) by 31 December 2026.

UPDATES ON PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of actions taken on the Board's January 13, 2026 Semiannual Report.

Action Item	Authority	Update
Expedite Dean Confirmation	SecAF, SASC	Complete
Strengthen BoV Support	Dept. of the Air Force	This recommendation has not been implemented by the Department of the Air Force. The FY27 House NDAA includes a provision that supports this recommendation.
Increase Cadet End Strength	Dept. of War Dept. of the Air Force	This recommendation has not been implemented by the Department of the Air Force. The SecAF initiated an Officer Production Task Force with an expected final report in August 2026. The Board has not yet been briefed on the results of this review. The FY27 House NDAA includes a provision that supports this recommendation and the draft FY27 Senate NDAA includes a provision that supports this recommendation.
Establish a Military Service Academy Commission	Dept. of War	The FY27 House NDAA includes a provision that supports portions of this recommendation.
Review Disciplinary Procedures	SecAF	This recommendation has been implemented. The USAFA BoV Disciplinary Focus Group is reviewing the USAFA Disciplinary System.
Audit Faculty Manning	Air Force Manpower Analysis Agency	The Board is not aware of this recommendation being implemented by the Department of the Air Force.
Invest in the Military Service Academies	Dept. of War, HASC, SASC	The FY27 House NDAA includes a provision that supports this recommendation.
Revitalize Academy Infrastructure	Dept. of the Air Force HASC, SASC, HAC, SAC	The FY27 House NDAA includes a provision that supports this recommendation.
Fund and Build the Tri-Complex	Dept. of the Air Force HASC, SASC, HAC, SAC, Private Industry	The FY27 House NDAA includes a provision that supports this recommendation.
Fund 2026 BoV Focus Groups	SecAF	This recommendation has been partially implemented.

1. APPOINTMENT AND DUTIES OF THE BOARD. The Board of Visitors (BoV AFA or the Board) of the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA or the Academy) is a non-discretionary federal advisory committee established by 10 U.S.C. § 9455. The Board operates according to the BoV AFA Charter filed by the Secretary of War, pursuant to 10 USC § 9455 and in accordance with Chapter 10 of Title 5, U.S.C. (commonly known as the “Federal Advisory Committee Act” or “FACA”), and 41 C.F.R. § 102-3.50(a).

a. Constitution: The Board of Visitors to the Academy is constituted annually. The Board consists of the following members per 10 USC § 9455:

- (1) Six persons designated by the President;
- (2) The chair of the Committee on Armed Services of the Senate, or their designee;
- (3) The ranking member of the Committee on Armed Services of the Senate, or the designee of the ranking member;
- (4) Two other members of the Senate designated by the Majority Leader of the Senate, one of whom is a member of the Committee on Appropriation of the Senate;
- (5) Two other members of the Senate designated by the Minority Leader of the Senate, one of whom is a member of the Committee on Appropriation of the Senate;
- (6) The chair of the Committee on Armed Services of the House of Representatives, or their designee;
- (7) The ranking member of the Committee on Armed Services of the House of Representative, or the designee of the ranking member;
- (8) Two other members of the House of Representatives designated by the Speaker of the House, one of whom is a member of the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives; and
- (9) Two other members of the House of Representatives designated by the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives.

b. Duties: It is the Board’s duty to inquire into the morale, discipline, curriculum, instruction, physical equipment, fiscal affairs, academic methods, and other matters relating to the Academy in which the Board decides to consider.

2. BOARD MEMBERS (a/o 31 July 2026).

a. Presidential Designees:

- (1) Colonel (retired) Doug “Stoli” Nikolai, – Vice Chair, BoV AFA
- (2) Senator Tommy Tuberville
- (3) Mr. Dan Clark
- (4) Ms. Dina Powell McCormick
- (5) Mr. Jon Hotaling
- (6) Ms. Erika Kirk

b. Speaker of the House Designees:

- (1) Congressman August Pfluger (R-TX) – Chairman, BoV AFA
- (2) Congressman Jeff Crank (R-CO)

c. House Minority Leader:

- (1) Congressman Don Davis (D-NC)
- (2) Vacant

d. Senate Armed Services Committee:

- (1) Senator Ted Budd (R-NC, SASC Chairman Designee)
- (2) Senator John Hickenlooper (D-CO, SASC Ranking Member Designee)

e. House Armed Services Committee:

- (1) Congressman Don Bacon (R-NE, HASC Chairman Designee)
- (2) Congressman Gabe Vasquez (D-NM, HASC Ranking Member Designee)

f. Senate Majority Leader:

- (1) Senator Kevin Cramer (R-ND)
- (2) Senator Mike Rounds (R-SD)

g. Senate Minority Leader:

- (1) Senator Christopher Coons (D-DE)
- (2) Senator Jacky Rosen (D-NV)

3. BOARD OFFICERS. Congressman August Pfluger was reelected as Chairman in December 2025 for Calendar Year 2026 and Mr. Doug “Stoli” Nikolai was reelected as Vice Chairman in December 2025 for Calendar Year 2026.

4. GOVERNMENT OFFICERS (a/o 31 July 2026).

a. Designated Federal Officer (DFO): Dr. Raquel Rimpola, SAF/MRM

b. Alternate DFO: Ms. Blaire Brush, USAFA/DSX

c. Executive Secretary: Captain Daniel Cassidy, AF/A1PT

5. PUBLIC NOTICES. In accordance with FACA (5 U.S.C. § 1009 (a)(2)), committee meetings were open to the public and notices of the meetings were published in the Federal Register. The committee meeting on 20 July 2026 included a closed session.

6. PROCEDURES. Under the provisions of 5 U.S.C. § 1009 (b), the minutes of each meeting of the Board are certified by the Chair. The minutes of each meeting are published as part of this report. The Board of Visitors’ records are available for public inspection in the Office of the Executive Secretary, Board of Visitors, 1040 Air Force Pentagon, Washington, D.C. 20330-1040. Copies of each of the Reports of the Board are submitted to the Library of

Congress as a matter of public record and are posted on the USAFA website at <https://www.usafa.edu/about/bov/>.

7. **BOARD ACTIVITIES.** In 2026, the Board actively pursued its inquiry and advisory mission by convening two times during this period using an “oversight mentality” as detailed in the recommendations of the September 2003 Report of The Panel to Review Sexual Misconduct Allegations at the U.S. Air Force Academy (known as the “Fowler Panel Report”) (Reference *Attachment 2 – The Fowler Panel and BoV Oversight Mentality*). The winter committee meeting was held in Washington, D.C. on 5 February 2026. The summer committee meeting was held virtually on 20 July 2026. The meeting minutes can be found at <https://www.usafa.edu/about/bov/>.
8. **OBSERVATIONS.** Throughout this period, the Board explored numerous aspects of the Academy to advance its mission. The Board leveraged insight from meetings with USAFA leadership, engagements with cadets and staff, and information provided by both the Academy and the Headquarters of the Department of the Air Force. Board Members visited the Academy during this period and attended the National Character and Leadership Symposium. Additionally, Board Members met with the Department of the Air Force to discuss USAFA Board of Visitors statutory responsibilities and USAFA’s budget request for FY27. The Board developed observations and recommendations for this report. The observations and subsequent recommendations are designed to ensure the Academy continues to excel through positive change in developing leaders for Air and Space Forces.

a. Airmanship Programs:

The Board is encouraged by USAFA’s expansion of its Airmanship programs and its proposal to continue to increase participation in Airmanship programs. USAFA’s “Airmanship for All” plan is outstanding. The Board is also monitoring the transition of the airfield from Air Education and Training Command (AETC) back to USAFA. The Board is specifically focused on the manpower requirements to run the airfield, future growth of powered flight programs, and any oversight activities that previously were executed by any external higher headquarters organizations that are now the responsibility of USAFA.

b. Cadet Chapel:

The Board of Visitors continues to be deeply concerned that the spiritual and character development of an entire generation of future officers is being compromised by the extended renovation timeline of the Cadet Chapel. The announced beneficial occupancy date of April 2028 is highly commendable, but additional action as detailed in this report’s *RECOMMENDATIONS* Section is paramount in keeping this momentum going to offset the forecasted years delay and hundreds of millions of dollars in cost overruns.

c. Center for Character and Leadership Development Manpower Reductions:

The Board is concerned by significant staffing reductions at the Center for Character and Leadership Development (CCLD), a critical asset for shaping Air Force and Space Force leaders. To safeguard this vital mission and ensure the premier National Character and Leadership Symposium continues to inspire honorable living and peak performance, the Board strongly urges USAFA to immediately conduct a manpower assessment to verify required numbers and restore and revitalize required CCLD staffing.

d. USAFA 2050:

Decades of critical underinvestment have severely degraded USAFA's infrastructure, culminating in unacceptable life-health-safety hazards and direct health incidents among the Cadet Wing. One glaring example, vocally noted by graduates attending reunions as well as cadets, is the current state of the Terrazzo. The degradation of the Terrazzo starkly contradicts the prestige of a premier military institution and fails to project the image of a premier Military Service Academy.

We cannot normalize that USAFA's most iconic spaces on campus are permitted to deteriorate and signal to cadets that standards do not matter, while simultaneously undermining the justification for large-scale capital investments.

While the Board has held extensive discussions with SAF/IE and SAF/FM, and strongly supports the USAFA 2050 concept, a strategy without resources is a hollow promise. USAFA 2050 is an *infrastructure* plan, not a *funding* plan. The Board urgently recommends the Department prioritize and dedicate immediate, tangible funding in cooperation with the Board's Congressional members to modernize USAFA's facilities and arrest this institutional decay.

e. FY27 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) Provisions:

The Board extends its sincere appreciation to its Congressional members for their unwavering commitment and instrumental role in driving critical reforms for USAFA. Their leadership has been pivotal in securing substantial legislative progress within the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

Through their direct influence, these members have successfully embedded eight key provisions into the House of Representatives-passed NDAA and another vital provision into the Senate's draft as of July 2026. These efforts represent a significant step toward revitalizing the Academy and address a wide spectrum of needs, including:

- Restoring Cadet Wing end strength to 4,400.
- Transforming public-private investment opportunities for the Military Service Academies.
- Reviewing the future of Military Service Academy athletics.
- Streamlining Congressional communications with the Board.

- Assessing a dedicated funding line for USAFA.
- Preventing the stand down of the 70th Flying Training Squadron.
- Redesignating the Dean of the Faculty to Provost and Dean of the Faculty.
- Directing the Superintendent to submit a report on improving academic outcomes.

The Congressional Board Members' dedication continues as they work with House and Senate leadership to ensure these vital measures are included in the final FY27 NDAA.

f. Advancing USAFA Through Strategic Focus Groups:

To deliver the highest-caliber, detail-rich strategic advice to the Secretary of War, the Board commissioned six dedicated Focus Groups: Artificial Intelligence (AI), Athletics, Infrastructure, Accreditation, Discipline, and Merit-Based Admissions.

The initial contributions of these groups have already proven vital, directly shaping the Board's strategic inputs for the FY27 NDAA. As we pivot into the academic year, the primary objective of these Focus Groups is exhaustive fact-gathering, using an "oversight mentality" to yield deep, actionable insights and precise recommendations.

However, this critical advisory mission cannot succeed in a vacuum. To truly optimize these efforts, the Board requires earnest transparency, a spirit of cooperation, and a willingness to share data from all DAF and USAFA agencies. Fully realizing the potential of these focus groups demands a true "One Team, One Fight" mentality, where open communication and a shared purpose will ensure the Academy remains a premier institution through continuous improvement and positive change.

g. First Merit-based Admissions Process - Class of 2030:

The Class of 2030 was the first to enter USAFA selected by the Secretary of War-directed merit-based admissions process. The Board acknowledges that Department of the Air Force leadership conducted its due diligence by monitoring this transition.

As a means of validation, the Board submitted comprehensive Questions for the Record (QFR) to investigate any instances where candidates with lower Select Composite Scores (SCS) scores were admitted over those with higher scores. The Board will analyze the data upon receipt and share its findings directly with Department of the Air Force and USAFA leadership.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS. The Board provides the following recommendations to the Secretary of War.

a. Consider a USAFA Graduate for the Athletic Director Position:

The Board believes that being a USAFA graduate is a key selection criterion for the new Athletic Director. Institutional alignment with USAFA culture, the unique cadet environment, and the Air Force and Space Force Core Values are all paramount to mission success on and off the field.

An alumni Athletic Director understands the extreme demands placed on cadet athletes. They inherently grasp how to balance rigorous military training, demanding academics, and Division I athletics without compromising the core mission. A proven USAFA graduate with exceptional senior executive experience possesses the deep-rooted capacity to quickly master and excel in complex regulatory environments while possessing the leadership to drive positive change and inspire USAFA athletes.

Most importantly, the Board recognizes that to ensure the selection of a candidate who meets these stringent cultural and leadership requirements, a structured and focused selection process is crucial. The responsibility of collecting and vetting applicants falls to the distinguished Air Force Academy Athletic Corporation (AFAAC) Board Members. However, **the Board believes that the final endorsement of the next USAFA Athletic Director should reside with the USAFA Superintendent.**

b. Standardize the Military Service Academy Accreditation Agencies:

As stated in the January 2026 Semiannual Report, **the Board recommends that the Department of War align all three Military Service Academies under a single accreditation agency.** Furthermore, future efforts should include the standardization of the accreditation agency for other Department of War degree granting institutions such as Air University (AU) and National Defense University. Most importantly, the DAF should prioritize the immediate consolidation of USAFA, the Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT), and AU under a single accreditor.

c. Preserve a Critical Air Force Reserve Unit Supporting USAFA's Airfield:

The Board strongly advocates for the retention of the 70th Flying Training Squadron (70 FTS) at USAFA and emphasizes the unit's critical, cost-effective role in preventing operational degradation within the 306th Flying Training Group (306 FTG) Airmanship programs, which is critical to instilling airmindedness into future USAF officers.

For a minimal annual investment, the Air Force preserves a fully manned, highly decorated cadre of combat-proven aviators, avoids mission degradation at the USAFA airfield, and prevents pulling active-duty pilots away from primary warfighting missions to serve as backfills.

d. Open the Cadet Chapel in Phases: Reference *Attachment 3 - Restoring Sacred Ground Position Paper*

As alluded to in the *OBSERVATIONS* Section above, **the Board endorses opening the lower portion of the Cadet Chapel no later than 1 December 2027** as the next Cadet Chapel acceleration milestone necessity to further compensate for the years-long delay and hundreds of millions of dollars in cost overruns.

The Board advocates for an immediate, outcome-based directive to prioritize the restoration of the lower-level Chapel to meet a 1 December 2027 occupancy date in time to celebrate and support worship services.

e. Establish a Dedicated FSRM funding line:

To overcome decades of systemic infrastructure neglect and restore USAFA to its rightful status as a premier national institution, **the Board urgently advocates for the establishment of a dedicated, Facilities Sustainment, Restoration, and Modernization (FSRM) funding line.** By aggressively leveraging the strategic influence of its Congressional Board members during the upcoming NDAA cycle, the DAF must transition USAFA's sustainment from a reactive posture to a guaranteed, long-term, predictable resourcing model.

f. Create the USAFA Board of Visitors American Exceptionalism Award: Reference *Attachment 4 - USAFA Board of Visitors American Exceptionalism Award Position Paper*

The creation of this annual graduation award is a fundamental responsibility of the Board to pass on its members' "Service Before Self" commitment by recognizing and awarding the graduating cadet who best exemplifies the unwavering belief in the principles of the American Ideal, along with the commitment to a lifetime of service, and dedicated to inspiring others to do the same.

USAFA exists to forge leaders of character who are solemnly committed to the service of our nation. Central to this mission is the oath every cadet takes to support and defend the Constitution of the United States. This oath is not a mere formality; it is a sacred pledge that connects them directly to the legacy of our founding fathers and the revolutionary ideals of liberty, sacrifice, and civic virtue

The Board strongly recommends the establishment of the "USAFA Board of Visitors, American Exceptionalism Award" as a permanent part of the formal USAFA graduation awards program, with the goal of codifying the award into USAFA Instruction 36-3526 in conjunction with the nation's Semiquincentennial celebration through a vital recognition of our nation's founding values and to honor future graduating cadets who best personify the ideals of American Exceptionalism.

g. Analyze Installation Access Procedures:

The Board supports the installation's Force Protection mandate and the paramount importance of cadet safety. However, it has received feedback and requests from stakeholders to refine USAFA installation access procedures. Our goal is to encourage the exploration of expanded, digital access solutions that maintain strict security, especially for the Cadet Area, while easing the current friction for general base access for USAFA graduates, community leaders, athletic supporters, and families of deceased loved ones interred at the USAFA cemetery.

The current requirement for single-event passes has created unintended barriers. Community feedback indicates these procedures have inadvertently contributed to a noticeable decline in attendance of all ticketed and non-ticketed sporting events as well as

reduced community leader and USAFA graduate participation in Academy events. Furthermore, the recurring administrative process places a heavy burden on family members attempting to visit deceased loved ones interred at the USAFA cemetery.

The Board believes there is an opportunity to expand the length of installation access passes to achieve high levels of security while increasing community integration.

Therefore, we request that USAFA leadership consider incorporating base access procedures into upcoming assessments and policy reviews to maintain essential security while easing community admission requirements to USAFA.

h. Evaluate the USAFA Preparatory School Pipeline Return on Investment (ROI):

The Board received data from USAFA outlining the success rate for an individual who enters the USAFA Preparatory School and ultimately graduates from USAFA. The information does not indicate a high correlation between attending the Prep School and then graduating from USAFA. The Board is concerned with the resources spent to execute Prep School operations and the suboptimal graduation rate.

The quantitative ROI of the USAFA Preparatory School requires strategic scrutiny due to a weak statistical correlation with actual Academy graduation rates. A rigorous audit by Department of the Air Force and USAFA leadership is required to optimize resource allocation. The Board recommends the SecAF conduct a review of the Prep School model including an analysis of the USAFA graduation rate for prior service cadet candidates and recruited athletes. The review should compare the Prep School graduate rate with direct-entry high school applications and Falcon Foundation Scholars. The review should evaluate the Academic Composite (ACCOMP) score across Preparatory School candidates versus other admission pathways. The review should determine if there exist specific, quantifiable floors on SAT, GPA, and ACCOMP scores below which the likelihood of graduation is so nominal that the Admissions Director should execute a hard administrative refusal rather than extending a Prep School appointment.

i. Elevate the Value of USAFA Officer Assignments:

The Board emphasizes the critical need to actively promote Air Force and Space Force Officer assignments at USAFA as a career-enhancing duty. While the Board fundamentally considers instructing and working at USAFA to be a premier developmental assignment, Career Field Managers (CFM) are often reluctant to promote this duty.

Most positions at USAFA are not career-field-specific and therefore CFMs must "release" officers to perform these duties. Career field management teams frequently view these releases as a "tax" and perceive them negatively, as the individual is temporarily leaving their primary specialty. Officers face a finite timeline to accomplish initial skills training, upgrade training, professional military education, career broadening, and ultimately

compete for squadron leadership. Under current frameworks, CFMs often view a USAFA tour as a divergence from this traditional competitive path. Additionally, current manpower coding (e.g., 81T v. 38F) actively hinders effective advocacy for the prioritization of these essential roles.

To rectify this career field-centric assignment and promotion barrier, the Board recommends that USAFA formally coordinate with the Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC) to develop systemic solutions that incentivize and reward these tours. Furthermore, this coordination should include a comprehensive comparative analysis of sister-service practices, specifically assessing how the Department of the Army and Department of the Navy manage officer assignments to, and subsequent promotion rates following, instructor tours at the United States Military Academy (USMA) and the United States Naval Academy (USNA).

Finally, the Board recommends the Department conduct an updated review of promotion rates for officers who perform USAFA instructor duty and brief the Board on these collective findings and proposed solutions (if deemed necessary) by 31 December 2026.

j. Reprioritize Cadet Summer Internships in the Pentagon and on Capitol Hill:

The Board is aware of reduced opportunities for Cadet Summer Internships during the Summer 2026 period in the Pentagon and on Capitol Hill due to prioritized support to summer training position requirements at USAFA. Pentagon and Capitol Hill internships are valuable experiences for cadets to learn about the legislative process and engage with senior leaders. The Board's Congressional members are eager to host cadet interns and enabling more familiarity with USAFA and its needs through this exchange. **The Board recommends that USAFA place at least two cadet interns each Summer in Board members' Congressional offices.** Additionally, the Board similarly recommends the reprioritization of Pentagon internships.

k. Increase Emphasis and Funding for Advanced Simulators and Drone Technology:

As stated in the Board's previous Semiannual Report, USAFA should accelerate Air, Space, and Cyber-minded training. USAFA must lead the other Service Academies in drone research, Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs), and adaptation for future warfare. Cadets should have frequent access to drones that they can utilize during their time at USAFA. The Board recommends USAFA maintain drones in sufficient numbers to enable "swarming tactics," the development of counter-drone TTPs, and also the ability to execute offensive distributed, remote AI-enhanced autonomous operations.

Additionally, the Board is aware of portable, distributed, and networked aircrew proficiency trainers along with other virtual reality training devices. These devices enable mission-focused training and experiences. The Board recommends USAFA increase investment in drones and also on cutting edge portable aircrew proficiency trainers, and virtual reality training devices.

l. Study a “One-Semester STOP OFF” Program: Reference *Attachment 5 - STOP OFF Position Paper*

To enhance cadet development and secure competitive equity in Division I athletics, USAFA should study a Fall Semester option via the proposed STOP OFF program.

The STOP OFF program is modeled after USAFA’s historical 1-year Stop Out program (1980–1993). This one-semester stop-off provides cadets on the USAFA Football Team with the necessary 17-week developmental window to match the 5-year eligibility advantage currently held by civilian universities.

The Board recommends the USAFA Superintendent conduct an immediate feasibility study on a “One-Semester STOP OFF” pilot program.

m. Reform AFAAC Structure and Governance:

With the unprecedented and simultaneous changeover of the top three United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) leadership positions, the Superintendent, Dean, and Commandant, and the hiring of a new Athletic Director, it is the perfect time for systemic reform. **This historic leadership transition presents a rare, time-sensitive window to execute a sweeping reorganization of the Air Force Academy Athletic Corporation (AFAAC).** Decisive action taken now by SecAF and SAF/MR will realign the corporation with the Academy's core mission and secure a sustainable, winning future for Falcon Athletics.

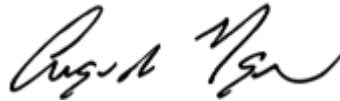
To achieve this modernization, AFAAC must substantially update its foundational bylaws in two critical ways. First, it should eliminate the fragmented and atypical parallel executive structure by consolidating the standalone Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Athletic Director functions under a single Athletic Director accountable to the AFAAC Board. Second, and equally important, the bylaws must elevate the Superintendent from a mere advisory role to having meaningful, approval authority over major AFAAC actions affecting USAFA athletics, including negotiations, budget proposals, and the selection or removal of the Athletic Director. This shift preserves the AFAAC's nonprofit employment structure while mirroring the governance model the Army successfully utilizes for the Army West Point Athletic Association (AWPAA), balancing private enterprise agility with institutional management.

Simultaneously, the modernization effort should consolidate USAFA athletics fundraising under the Air Force Academy Foundation operating under a "cooperative but consolidated" philosophy. This shift will replace the current fragmented funding approach with a coherent, highly coordinated donor strategy. By centralizing charitable solicitation, gift processing, and endowment management within the Foundation, the Academy will establish a revenue stream tailored to directly support the Athletics Department and resolve the inefficient split between separate charitable fundraising functions.

Implementing these modernization efforts requires no legislative action. All these recommendations are within existing authorities. We urge the SecAF to seize this critical inflection point and execute on these recommendations. **Taking this bold action today will equip the Superintendent to oversee the Athletic Department with clear authority and create a modernized, peer-benchmarked organization**, fully prepared to build a financially self-sustaining, character-building, and fiercely competitive future for USAFA cadet-athletes.

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

The Board extends its sincere appreciation to the Secretary of War, Senate and House Committee on Armed Services leadership, Secretary of the Air Force, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, Chief of Space Operations, and the USAFA Superintendent for their dedication, collaboration, and careful consideration of our broad spectrum of observations and recommendations.



HONORABLE AUGUST L. PFLUGER
Chairman, USAFA Board of Visitors

cc:

Chairman, Senate Committee on Armed Services

Chairman, House Committee on Armed Services

Secretary of the Air Force

Chief of Staff of the Air Force

Chief of Space Operations

Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower and Reserve Affairs

Deputy Chief of Staff of the Air Force for Manpower, Personnel and Services

Deputy Chief of Space Operations for Personnel

U.S. Air Force Academy Superintendent

6 Attachments:

1. USAFA BoV Committee Meeting Minutes
2. The Fowler Panel and BoV Oversight Mentality
3. Restoring Sacred Ground: A Case for the Phased Opening of the Cadet Chapel
4. USAFA BoV American Exceptionalism Award
5. "Service-academy Talent Optimization Program – Operation Falcon's Forge" (STOP OFF)
6. Accreditation Transition Initiative

ATTACHMENT 1

USAFA BoV Committee Meeting Minutes

The minutes of each meeting during this period are published on the USAFA website at <https://www.usafa.edu/about/bov/>.

ATTACHMENT 2

The Fowler Panel and USAFA BoV Oversight Mentality

Executive Summary: The Board does not have “oversight authority” over the Academy per the Board’s establishing statute, however, **it holds a clear statutory authority and duty to conduct rigorous inquiries by asking tough questions, inspecting facilities, and demanding complete disclosure (oversight in the broader sense)**. To fulfill its mandate of advising and making recommendations to the Secretary of War through the Secretary of the Air Force, the Board utilizes an "oversight mentality." 10 U.S.C. § 9455, the BoV Charter, and the USAFA BoV Bylaws do not prohibit this critical “broader oversight” function.

The Fowler Panel Context

The Fowler Panel fundamentally redefined how the BoV's responsibilities should be executed following the Academy sexual misconduct scandal.

Origin of the Panel	Congress established the Fowler Panel in 2003 to review sexual misconduct allegations at USAFA.
Criticism of the BoV	The Panel said that the Academy had problems in getting the Board to address issues deemed substantive or important by the Academy and found that the Board meetings often tended to be social gatherings.
SecAF Comments	Secretary of the Air Force James Roche made clear his disappointment in the Board’s oversight and stated his desire that the Board be more akin to a board of directors of a firm.

Defining the BoV Oversight Mentality

The Fowler Panel highlighted key recommendations to strengthen the Board of Visitors and establish effective oversight of the Academy.

<u>Recommendation</u>	<u>Summary</u>
Oversight Authority	The Panel recommended that the DAF prepare a legislative proposal to “[Provide] clear oversight authority of the Board over the Academy....”
Board of Directors Approach	The Panel recommended that the Board “Operate more like a corporate board of directors with regularly organized committees charged with distinctive responsibilities (e.g., academic affairs, student life, athletics, etc.).”

Disclosure The Panel recommended that the Board “Receive candid and complete disclosure by the Secretary of the Air Force and the Academy Superintendent of all institutional problems....”

Statutory Mandate & The "Oversight Mentality"

The statutory framework governing the BoV is designed to enable “broad oversight,” not restrict it.

<u>Area</u>	<u>Application</u>
Statutory Permissions	10 U.S.C. § 9455, the BoV Charter, and the USAFA BoV Bylaws do not prohibit this critical “broader oversight” function. To the contrary, all authorize and expect deep inquiries into Academy conditions.
Advisory Role vs. “Oversight Posture”	Although primarily an advisory and investigative body, the BoV must deliberately adopt an oversight mentality to be effective. Passive observation and mere receipt of briefings are insufficient.
The Ultimate Function	This posture is strictly necessary for the BoV to successfully perform its function of making recommendations to the Secretary of War through the Secretary of the Air Force.

Key Takeaway

The Fowler Panel’s central criticism was not that the BoV lacked the legal mandate to oversee USAFA, but that it failed to vigorously exercise the investigative powers it already held. **Effective governance requires the BoV to continuously assert its oversight mentality** to identify and elevate systemic issues before they become institutional crises

ATTACHMENT 3

Restoring Sacred Ground: A Case for the Phased Opening of the Cadet Chapel

1. Executive Summary

The delayed renovation of the USAFA Cadet Wing Chapel has created a significant gap in the spiritual and character development of USAF future officers. **This paper advocates for an immediate, outcome-based directive to prioritize the restoration of the lower-level Chapels to meet a 1 December 2027 beneficial occupancy date in time to celebrate and support worship services.**

By challenging our contractors to deliver safe, code-compliant partial beneficial occupancy in conjunction with the **removal of the environmental protective enclosure by 30 November 2027**, we can address a mission-critical imperative to support the moral and spiritual readiness of our cadets. Furthermore, by time-sharing these accessible lower spaces, they will serve as a vital multi-faith hub for all denominations until the upper Protestant Chapel is fully completed and beneficial occupancy is granted on 28 April 2028.

2. Background

The USAFA Cadet Chapel is the heart of spiritual life at the Academy. The ongoing, extended renovation has deprived cadets of a dedicated and sacred space for worship and reflection. Following Secretary Meink's acceleration memo, the United States Government issued the prime contractor, JE Dunn, a unilateral modification on 23 December 2025 to accelerate performance.

This modification advanced the previous contract completion date from Spring 2029 to 2028, solidifying three key milestones:

- Deconstruction of the Protective Enclosure begins around August 2027 with completion around January 2028.
- 28 April 2028 Beneficial Occupancy Date: Turns the Chapel over to USAFA, enabling the Chaplains to return religious artifacts and prepare for services.
- 4 August 2028 Contract Completion Date: Facilitates punch list items (issues identified during final inspection and acceptance) and contract documents.

Crucially, the protective enclosure covering the Chapel will begin deconstruction around August 2027, with completion expected around January 2028. **The removal of the protective structure presents a strategic opportunity to restore cadet access to the lower chapel months ahead of full Beneficial Occupancy of the entire chapel.**

Most importantly, while the upper Protestant Chapel undergoes final work through April 2028, the opened lower Catholic and Jewish Chapels can be dynamically time-shared. This flexible use will provide an immediate, centralized home for worship for *all* faith groups across the cadet wing.

3. The Path to "Yes": Defining the "What," Leveraging Contractor Ingenuity

A "yes" to opening the lower chapels by 1 December 2027 is achievable by shifting our approach from prescribing *how* the work is done to dictating *what* must be accomplished. We must empower the contractor to utilize their engineering expertise and continue to leverage the SecAF Chapel Acceleration Memo to meet the following non-negotiable outcomes:

- **Accelerate “White Box” Removal by One Month:** Ensure the deconstruction of the protective enclosure is finished no later than 30 November 2027.
- **Prioritized Lower-Level Restoration:** Direct the contractor to front-load all restoration work for the lower Catholic and Jewish portions of the Chapel. This includes establishing strict sequencing for subcontractors, such as directing the Wisconsin-based company refurbishing the pews to finish and deliver the Catholic pews first, and prioritizing the installation of lower-level, stained glass, HVAC, and electrical systems.
- **Safe and Isolated Access:** Create a secure, code-compliant ingress and egress solution that entirely isolates chapel attendees from any ongoing construction on the upper level.
- **Liability and Administrative Assurance:** Ensure all legal and indemnification frameworks are updated to support this phased occupancy model without dictating the exact physical mechanisms of separation.

4. Addressing Construction Impediments

This proposal minimizes the burden on the overall project by setting clear, prioritized targets rather than micromanaging methods. By explicitly establishing 1 December 2027 as the target for lower-level access, the USG sets the strategic vision and allows JE Dunn to sequence their logistics innovatively. Designing physical separations and scheduling disruptive overhead work to accommodate worship hours are challenges the contractor is well-equipped to solve if given clear mission priorities. Let them surprise us with their ingenuity.

5. Recommendation and Call to Action

The spiritual well-being of USAFA cadets is not a secondary concern; it is a foundational component of their development as leaders of character. The continued lack of dedicated sacred spaces has a tangible and detrimental impact on morale and readiness.

It is imperative to immediately issue a directive to AFCEC and the prime contractor to prioritize the lower-level completion—specifically pews, stained glass, HVAC, electrical, and safe access, to achieve a phased opening of the Catholic and Jewish chapels by 1 December 2028 in time for worship services. This is a solvable problem that requires leadership, will, and a commitment to our cadets' spiritual fitness. By acting now, we can establish a time-shared spiritual hub for all

faiths, challenging our industry partners to rise to the occasion and restore these vital spaces to our future leaders as soon as the protective enclosure is removed no later than 30 November 2027.

ATTACHMENT 4

USAFA Board of Visitors American Exceptionalism Award

Exemplifies the Unwavering Belief in the Principles of the American Ideal

Executive Summary

As the United States celebrates its 250th Anniversary in 2026, a seminal moment for national reflection, this position paper strongly endorses the USAFA Superintendent and the SecAF to implement the recommendation of USAFA Board of Visitors (BoV) in establishing the annual *“USAFA BoV, American Exceptionalism Award.”*

The Board believes this prestigious honor, founded upon the dedicated service of all BoV members, is perfectly timed to celebrate the timeless values that are the bedrock of our nation. The Semiquincentennial and associated “Freedom 250” USAFA celebration events provide a historic opportunity to remind every cadet at graduation of the sacred responsibility of embodying the ideals of our founding fathers as they become the next generation of military leaders.

The creation of this annual graduation award is a fundamental responsibility of the USAFA BoV to pass on its members’ “Service Before Self” commitment by recognizing and awarding the graduating cadet who best exemplifies the character, commitment to a lifetime of excellence, and unwavering belief in the principles of the American Ideal, and who is dedicated to inspiring all others to do the same.

1. Background and Purpose: A Return to First Principles

USAFA exists to forge leaders of character who are solemnly committed to the service of our nation. Central to this mission is the oath every cadet takes to support and defend the Constitution of the United States. This oath is not a mere formality; it is a sacred pledge that connects them directly to the legacy of our founding fathers and the revolutionary ideals of liberty, sacrifice, and civic virtue that define the great American experiment.

The 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence and USAFA’s parallel “Freedom 250” celebratory events offer a powerful opportunity to bring these foundational principles to the forefront of the cadet experience.

As the nation celebrates this historic milestone, this award directly celebrates the unique principles that make our American Constitutional Republic a beacon of freedom for the world and an opportunity for every citizen. It encourages cadets to study and emulate the ideals, values, and virtues of our founding fathers, humility, loyalty, integrity, courage, and a profound sense of duty, honor, and commitment to excellence in all they do, reminding them that the high cost of liberty may cause them to “give their last full measure of devotion” to their country.

2. Rationale for the Award

- **A Timely and Historic Initiative:** Establishing this award to coincide with America's 250th Anniversary and in conjunction with USAFA's "Freedom 250" major events in 2026 provides a powerful and historic context. It allows USAFA to align a core institutional award with a moment of significant national commemoration, reinforcing the enduring relevance of our founding ideals for a new generation of leaders.
- **Celebrating American Exceptionalism and Founding Virtues:** This award is a combination of academic and leadership excellence, celebrating the understanding and comprehension of the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and associated ideals cadets are inspired to defend.
- **Reinforcing the Sanctity of the Constitutional Oath:** By highlighting a cadet who understands the depth of their commitment to the Constitution, this award reinforces that their service is grounded not in loyalty to an individual, but to the enduring principles of the Republic itself. It elevates the oath as the moral and ethical core of their commission, connecting them to the spirit of 1776.
- **Increase Public Awareness of the BoV:** A BoV award amplifies awareness in the Cadet Wing about the BoV. It also increases the prestige and visibility of the BoV to parents, alumni, and other supporters of the Academy, leading to greater transparency, respect, and broader input and engagement. The contributions of the BoV members represent a profound commitment to public service and civic virtue, demonstrating the vital importance of civilian mentorship in shaping future military leaders who respect and uphold our nation's values.
- **Inspiring Future Generations of Officers:** Awards shape institutional culture. A formal recognition of American Exceptionalism, grounded in character and duty, sends a clear message to all cadets: the Academy seeks to forge leaders who are patriots, and grounded in the foundational principles of our nation.

3. Duty and Responsibility of the Board of Visitors

The establishment of this award falls squarely within the statutory responsibilities of the USAFA Board of Visitors, especially in a time of national historical significance. It directly supports the Board's mandate to inquire into the morale, discipline, and character development programs. By championing an award focused on the core tenets of American Exceptionalism, the BoV actively promotes the cultural development of character, strengthens our national heritage within the institution, and ensures USAFA produces leaders aligned with the highest ideals of our nation as we honor its 250-year history.

4. Recommendation

The USAFA Board of Visitors recommends to the USAFA Superintendent and SecAF the establishment of the *"USAFA Board of Visitors, American Exceptionalism Award"* as a

permanent part of the formal USAFA graduation awards program, with the goal of codifying the award into USAFA Instruction 36-3526 in conjunction with the nation's Semiquincentennial celebration through a vital recognition of our nation's founding values and to honor future graduating cadets who best personify the ideals of American Exceptionalism.

5. Conclusion

The principles of service, character, and American Exceptionalism are central to developing our nation's future military leaders. By establishing this award now, as the nation celebrates its 250th anniversary, the Academy sends a powerful message. It will do more than honor the contributions of the BoV; **it will reinforce the Academy's most fundamental values, deepen the cadets' reverence for their constitutional oath, and inspire a new generation of graduates to proudly embrace their responsibilities as officers in the United States Air Force and Space Force.** This award aligns the institution's values with a pivotal moment in American history, ensuring that the spirit of 1776 continues to inspire future Air and Space Force officers of the 21st century.

ATTACHMENT 5

"Service-academy Talent Optimization Program – Operation Falcon’s Forge" (STOP OFF)

A One Semester USAFA Stop Out Program

Operation Falcon’s Forge: Refining Commitment, Ensuring Excellence

Executive Summary

USAFA is the premier institution for developing leaders of character for our Air Force and Space Force. To maintain this standard of excellence and to adapt to the evolving landscape of collegiate athletics and generational expectations, we propose the establishment of STOP OFF, a one-semester “Stop Out” program. This program would offer cadets a voluntary semester sabbatical anytime during a cadet’s 1-Degree, 2-Degree, or 3-Degree year.

Comparable to USAFA’s past 1-year Stop Out program that existed from 1980-1993 to control attrition, STOP OFF’s strategic pause will provide cadets with a crucial period for reflection and personal growth, reinforcing their commitment to a lifetime of service. By making this available to all cadets, it accommodates a variety of critical life events and developmental opportunities. Differentially and most importantly, it delivers strategic leveling for USAFA’s first-semester athletic programs, particularly football, placing them on a more equal footing with other NCAA Division I institutions by providing athletes with a fifth season of competition.

Enhancing Commitment and Personal Resolve

The journey from cadet to commissioned officer is demanding. STOP OFF offers a unique opportunity for these young men and women to step away from the rigors of Academy life.

<u>Benefit Area</u>	<u>Program Impact</u>
Reinforce the "Why"	Cadets gain valuable perspective and return with a self-affirmed dedication to serving our great nation. This pause allows them to gain more flying hours, help a parent, work a job, study for a semester at another university, or go on a 3–6-month religious sabbatical.
Mature and Motivate	The sabbatical allows for personal growth outside the structured military environment, fostering resilience and stronger intrinsic motivation.
Historical Precedent	Former Chief of Staff of the Air Force, General (retired) David Goldfein, Class of 1983, participated in the historical program after his second year. The program was established for cadets to re-evaluate their future and focus their resolve.

Combat Leadership and the Athletic Experience

The correlation between gridiron intensity and combat readiness is undeniable. Testimonials from former players currently involved in Operation Epic Fury overwhelmingly cite football as their greatest leadership experience preparing them for flying and combat missions. They attest that game day at Falcon Stadium gave them a greater appreciation for the intensity and details of a fast-moving, violent arena.

Leveling the Playing Field in NCAA Athletics

The current landscape of NCAA Division I athletics presents significant challenges for USAFA. Civilian universities possess distinct advantages that are unavailable to USAFA.

<u>Competitive Disadvantage</u>	<u>Civilian University Advantage</u>
NIL Money	Top athletes are often lured to other programs with substantial financial incentives.
Transfer Portal	Teams can instantly fill gaps and acquire experienced talent from other universities.
Year-Round Training	Teams lift, meet, and practice throughout the entire calendar year, including June and July.
Health and Safety	USAFA 19-year-old 3-Degrees face summer atrophy from survival training, lacking the power/mass to face 23-24-year-old opponents. This leads to increased injuries (ACLs, fractures) on an unequal playing field.

The STOP OFF Advantage for Athletics

The USAFA One Semester STOP OFF directly counters these disadvantages by enabling a fifth year of eligibility for athletes to participate in fall sports, such as football.

<u>Strategic Impact</u>	<u>Resulting Enhancement</u>
Maturity & Internal Leadership	Retaining experienced contributors preserves program toughness and consistency. 5th-year players positively mentor the locker room culture.
Athlete Development	Allows cadet-athletes to gain experience and mature physically.
Strategic Advantage	Offsets civilian program advantages, fostering a winning culture that reflects USAFA's "Excellence in All We Do."

Secondary and Tertiary Benefits: A Win/Win Proposition

A more successful athletic program, particularly a winning football team, has far-reaching positive effects that will strengthen the Academy as a whole:

<u>Institutional Benefit</u>	<u>Description</u>
Increased Applications	National attention from successful athletic programs dramatically increases the number of quality candidates applying to USAFA.
Attraction of Top Talent	A winning program becomes a beacon for high-caliber athletes who also possess a desire to serve.
Elevated Overall Quality	A higher number of applicants raises the overall talent level of the cadet wing, ensuring we commission the absolute best.
UPT Accessions Mitigation	Eases the USAFA graduation wave by producing a second influx of graduates in the January timeframe.

Conclusion

The USAFA One Semester STOP OFF is a forward-thinking and decisive initiative with a wide array of benefits. It addresses the personal development needs of our cadets while simultaneously providing a critical strategic tool to ensure increased safety, competitiveness, and success of our first-semester athletic programs. By implementing STOP OFF, USAFA will produce more committed officers, achieve greater success on the field of play, and attract the next generation of America's finest.

ATTACHMENT 6

POSITION PAPER ON ACCREDITATION TRANSFORMATION INITIATIVE

1. PURPOSE

Briefly review the changing landscape of higher education accreditation in the United States and provide actionable options for USAFA to transition to a new accreditation partner.

2. POSITION

USAFA must act now to formally change its primary accreditation relationship from the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) to the newly formed Commission for Public Higher Education (CPHE).

Crucially, USAFA does not need to wait for an official, downward-directed tasking from the Department of War (DoW). As the academic vanguard of the Air and Space Forces, USAFA is uniquely positioned to take the literal perspective high ground and lead this transition. HAF should consolidate USAFA, the Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT), and Air University (AU) under a single accreditor. USAFA must act immediately to secure our position before CPHE membership caps are reached.

3. KEY POINTS

b. Exclusive Window of Opportunity: CPHE is capping its total membership at exactly 120 elite institutions. Interest is exceptionally high. Moving first guarantees USAFA and the broader Air Force educational enterprise a foundational seat.

c. DoW-Specific Standards: CPHE is fully supportive of "differentiated standards" exclusively tailored for SAs, DoW STEM institutions like AFIT, and schools delivering Professional Military Education, protecting the military's mandate for apolitical education and locking in curriculum requirements relevant to educating and developing joint warfighters.

d. Preservation of Programmatic Prestige: This initiative replaces only *primary* institutional accreditors (HLC for USAFA). USAFA will maintain all specific programmatic accreditations (e.g., ABET for STEM).

4. DISCUSSION

a. The Changing Landscape: Historically, regional accreditors held significant power over institutional curriculum and could effectively "force" curriculum and programmatic requirements on schools within their region. The lifting of regional requirements allows SAs to seek partners in *any* region that truly align with their military mission, escaping legacy systems that no longer reflect the apolitical mandate of the SAs.

b. Tasking Timeline: Waiting for a formal directive from DoW risks losing momentum and potentially being too late for inclusion in the 120-school membership cap. USAFA acting now as the pathfinder mitigates this risk. CPHE anticipates full Department of Education acceptance in early 2028, aligning perfectly with USAFA's AY29 renewal schedule.

c. Cost Neutrality: The anticipated cost to affiliate with CPHE is consistent with current legacy relationships (~\$10K).

d. AU and AFIT Integration: An additional line of effort with CPHE includes Air University, which includes AFIT. USAFA leading this charge perfectly aligns with a commonsense vision of placing all Air Force educational entities under one accreditor. This will drastically streamline institutional oversight and will ensure full USAF educational enterprise alignment with an accreditor sensitive to the unique characteristics of military education

5. ALTERNATIVE VIEWPOINTS & SENSITIVITIES

a. Graduate School Transferability: Concern that prestigious graduate programs might devalue SA degrees and credits.

Mitigation: Affiliating alongside top-tier research universities like Texas A&M and Georgia Tech within CPHE will elevate, rather than diminish, the prestige and transferability of USAFA degrees.

b. Timing and Bureaucracy: Waiting for formal DoW tasking ensures top-cover but stalls progress by months.

c. Status Quo: USAFA faculty may prefer avoiding the administrative transition associated with leaving HLC.

Mitigation: The temporary administrative effort to transition is far outweighed by the permanent protection of our core curriculum. Additionally, the administrative burden of the HLC 2029 re-accreditation effort is similar in scope to the work required to join CPHE. The work will be done regardless.

6. REBUTTAL

a. USAFA Seizing the High Ground: We do not need to wait for the bureaucratic machinery of a formal DoW tasking, which is months away. We set the standard, shape the "differentiated standards" in our image, and allow USMA and USNA to leverage our groundwork to satisfy their own leadership's concerns.

b. A Historic Unifying Achievement: Frame this as a historic first: *Never before have the military educational enterprises been able to use a single, unified accreditor.*

c. Elevating Prestige: Transitioning to CPHE will *elevate* degree value. CPHE is actively recruiting elite, DoW-connected institutions (e.g., Texas A&M, Georgia Tech, and the University of North Carolina System). Affiliating alongside these top-tier research universities guarantees that SA credits will be highly respected. CPHE guarantees an apolitical baseline and alignment with requirements specific to the military education system.

7. WAY AHEAD / RECOMMENDED ACTION

Recommend USAFA BoV endorse and recommend with urgency the immediate pursuit of CPHE as the primary accreditation agency. Execution must incorporate early and clear messaging, utilizing USAFA's position to lead a Tri-Service Academy effort.

Action Plan:

Phase	Milestone / Action
Phase 1: USAFA Pathfinder	USAFA takes immediate lead. Build self-studies, secure USAFA/DoW representation on the CPHE governing board and begin drafting the "differentiated standards" for military academies before the 120-school cap is reached.
Phase 2: Tri-Service Integration	USMA and USNA leverage USAFA's established framework to transition to CPHE, fulfilling the Tri-Service consolidation goal supported by DoW.
Phase 3: Expanded Military Cohort	Incorporate the US Coast Guard Academy and US Merchant Marine Academy into the CPHE military framework.
Phase 4: PME Consolidation	Integrate the Professional Military Education (PME) systems, finalizing HAF's goal for AU and AFIT, including the War College System. (NOTE: Recent efforts by Air University may move Phase 4 to run concurrently with Phase 1).

USAFA BoV Accreditation Transformation

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