One Challenge of Force Development: Developmental Education and PME

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> *We envision a transition in Total Force development from rigid, '1-size-fits-all,' functionally independent career path pyramids to a flexible, competency-based, deliberate development model that rests on institutional needs and requirements and responds to corporate guidance.*
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> Lt Gen Richard Brown III, USAF/DCSP, March 2003

The United States Air Force is in the midst of revolutionary changes to career development, functional management, and professional military education. Beginning with Gen John Jumper's announcement in a November 2002 CSAF Sight Picture, and continuing with the publication of AFDD 1-1,[1] these changes will affect officers, enlisted, civilians and reserves; but the most significant changes appear to be focused on officers and their careers.[2] Change comes primarily because the Air Force wants to better match institutional requirements to personnel development, including the need to instill core values and deeply develop core competencies. In addition, the Air Expeditionary Force posture significantly alters career environments, creates new pressures on military member's time, and not surprisingly has highlighted the requirement to balance specialization with more broadly oriented leadership.

The Force Development (FD) construct is big, and is stimulating a range of questions from officers. It extends across education, training, and experience or career progression of all our personnel. This article focuses on the impact FD has on officer Developmental Education (DE)—education designed by Developmental Teams comprised of two components, military education and select advanced academic degree programs. Some of the most immediate, and enduring, changes FD is prompting are in the intermediate officer DE, or IDE.

These changes to IDE are giving rise to curiosity and questions. People are excited when the CSAF talks about eradicating "square-filling master degree programs that do little to make you better at your job."[3] They can be curious when they hear "pilots will not require an advanced degree in order to be competitive for promotion to lieutenant colonel."[4] And they are personally involved when they hear the description of Developmental Teams who will address both assignment and education opportunities for every officer, and—working with the officer and his commander—make distinct choices on both to meet the specific needs of the Air Force.[5]

The Air Force is "up front" and is answering these questions as best it can. "Spread the Word" briefings went out in Fall 2003, as directed by the CSAF in his October 2003 Sight Picture. Two different "Frequently Asked Questions" lists have been published, covering at least twenty-four different aspects of the program.[6] Most recently, AFDD 1-1, Leadership and Force Development, was published describing the fundamental tenets and processes of the FD construct. All of these

directly or indirectly addressed *how* FD is affecting IDE, but to fully understand the value of FD to both developmental education and the Air Force, it is worth considering *where* its effects fit in the evolution of PME and *how much* it really changes. As a former squadron commander and currently a professor in Air University, the author has heard mid-career professionals discuss FD and ask questions about its impact in the USAF. Many can be answered by going to the sources such as AFDD1-1, but there are three common questions worthy of further exploration:

> Is this really new? Is IDE, one aspect of FD, more than a management fad or a recycling of buzzwords?
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> What was broken, and even more, how is it fixed by the new IDE approach?
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> Does the Advanced Academic Degree (AAD) option for intermediate PME lock me into a different career track? Is the AF sending me a message if I get selected for AAD?

An Evolution in PME Doctrine

To answer the first question, one needs to appreciate how PME has evolved over the years. The Western concept of professional education for the military extends back to the late 18th century, but begins for the US in the early 19th. PME developed across the years in successive waves, influenced primarily by events—wars and conflicts—but also by changes in society and technology. The first pattern described here is in PME models: the doctrine for PME, or why PME is important and the major goals it is supposed to pursue. Understanding PME models will tell us how new FD really is. A second PME pattern, described later, is in themes: the methods and subjects of PME across the years. That pattern will help us understand what was "broken" in PME.

PME in the United States has evolved through three stages or models up to today. The initial establishment of PME can be called the Thayer model, named after Sylvanus Thayer. He was sent by the US Army in 1815 to investigate European methods of military training and education. His particular interest in French military schools led to the establishment of a formal, disciplined, and truly military program at West Point, in addition to a beginning conception of US PME doctrine as *preparation* for a military career.[7]

The second model for PME occurred over a period of years, from the aftermath of the Civil War through the Spanish-American War. It is best called the Root model, after Secretary of War Elihu Root and the significant actions he instituted in 1898. Root capitalized on and further developed ideas brought to the US by Emory Upton in 1875, after his own investigation at the behest of Gen Sherman of the Prussian military system. Upton addressed the shortcomings in officer capabilities that industrialized Civil War had highlighted. He re-instituted Army specialized schools—at the time, artillery, later infantry & cavalry—and the Navy followed his lead by later establishing a Torpedo School. Elihu Root participated in these schools, and extended the concept to address shortcomings in military leadership that the Spanish-American war uncovered. He strengthened *functional education* by re-emphasizing specialized schools and adding mid and top level education for leadership through a Command and General Staff College

and Army War College. In addition, Upton and Root's ideas for developing an officer throughout his career in abilities and leadership—a *progressive* military education system—constitutes a second model for PME and a new basis for PME doctrine.[8]

Models for PME Doctrine	
Thayer	*preparation* for military career
Root	functional *specialization* *leadership* and *command art* *progressive* throughout career
Gerow	*military decision-making* *generalists*, incl. liberal arts and international affairs *pyramidal* structure (tactical, operational, strategic) with selection at each PME stage

The third model of PME occurred after World War II with the implementation of recommendations from the Gerow Board of 1945, chaired by Lt Gen Leonard Gerow, who commanded V Corps and Fourteenth Army in the war. The Gerow model reorients PME doctrine to the progressive production of *military decision-makers* and leaders, officers who understand joint employment of forces and national mobilization characteristic of World War II. That war also highlighted the greater sphere of grand strategy and the need for leaders who are *generalists* capable of dealing with complex relationships. While the Root model had emphasized progressive PME—that an officer required different levels of education throughout his career—the Gerow model foresaw a *pyramidal* structure. That is, there are successively smaller, more selective groups of officers requiring this leadership preparation, rather than all officers needing the same development.[9] Despite the many conflicts in the six decades since, and major political-military influences such as the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986, the Gerow conception of the fundamental purposes of PME is only today facing the possibility of change.

Is This Really New?

The Force Development construct does seem to encourage a new model of PME. The events of the post-Cold War world, particularly of the past five years with Operations Allied Force, Enduring Freedom, and Iraqi Freedom, are a contributing impetus. But no less important for PME are the influences of information technology—network-centric warfare—and the Global War on Terror (GWOT).[10] Together, these factors are at the heart of Department of Defense transformation, and recent Defense Planning Guidance. PME is not untouched in transformation, and each of the services have been directed to consider how to change PME in light of an

expeditionary force, dealing with new forms of warfare, and new technical demands on both leaders and functional specialists.

Although it is not presented in this manner in any AF documents and briefings, a careful review of the FD construct presents three new components to PME doctrine. The first is **modularity**: that military education should be grouped into packages of learning, freeing the system of either sequential or haphazard requirements for delivering PME to those who need it. The additional benefits of modularity are that learning can then be given in *any order*, and possibly in *any combination*—to include focused modules intended only for smaller groups of officers. In terms of transformation requirements, modularity allows the AF to present generic blocks to all who need it, and yet also provide focused blocks that are either more technical, such as Advanced Academic Degrees (AAD) or more functional specialties (space, information operations, acquisition), to selected groups who need that to develop new skills or deepen their specialization.

Modularity supports the second major PME component FD introduces, that of **flexible timing**. One of the greatest challenges of the US expeditionary force is that it is both smaller, generating more requirements on each individual, and more asynchronous with the calendars of the rest of America. Thus, USAF members face particular stresses in trying to get and complete PME in the midst of AEF rotations, off-summer change of assignments, and joint or staff time-on-station requirements. PME has long been held to standard education calendars, where almost all one-year PME schools run from August to June; this simply does not fit well with current demands. Flexible timing means that PME can be started at a variety of times, taken either all-at-once or in 'chunks', and fit into AEF rotations and off-cycle PCSs.

The third new component of PME most directly derived by FD is **deliberate selection**: determining not only what *kind* of developmental education is needed by each officer, but also what kind of follow-on *assignment* or career path is best supported by that choice. The individualization of developmental education is a twofold response to the requirements of this era. First, the USAF (referred to as "corporate interests" or the "institution" in some dialogues) takes on the responsibility of fine-tuning every officer's career by matching a particular PME combination to upcoming assignments, distinct career development, and the institutional needs of the Air Force through the implementation of Developmental Teams. This benefits the Air Force with having the most appropriate officer, with the most appropriate education, in the right job and at the right time. Second, the individual does not suffer a "one-size-fits-all" approach to their own situation, and is not forced into education which does not impact their career or does not benefit their next assignment. Even more, they do not have to attempt to meet informal requirements for advanced degrees on their own, off-the-job, time in order to have fair treatment in the promotion system.

The three components of modularity, flexible timing, and deliberate selection change PME doctrine—now addressed as a broader concept of Developmental Education—in a fundamental way, and truly constitute a new model of PME. The Gerow model of PME included three primary factors: a joint education, producing generalist military leaders, through a pyramidal and selective process. The new model changes this PME doctrine to a process that emphasizes a joint education with specialized components, flexible enough to meet the timing of an expeditionary

force, and less selective but more deliberate and therefore more applicable to the officer corps as a whole. To answer the question, this is new, and not just a reshuffle of classic PME doctrine.

Force Development Tenets	
Modularity	--PME packaging into non-sequential blocks --Design for functional and enduring competency topics
Flexible Timing	--Varied 'start' times to in-residence PME calendar --Use of modules for AAD, non-residence joint certification --More opportunities for officers
Deliberate Selection	--Assignment-to-PME matching for *skills* and *experiences* --Career tailoring through Developmental Teams

An Evolution in PME Subjects

A second pattern of PME growth tells us something about how "broken" the system may have been. A number of controversies and issues about PME curricula and teaching methods resurface time and again in the history of PME. While some events and experiences contributed to the evolution in PME purpose, another evolutionary theme for PME reforms has been in *pedagogy*—a ten-dollar word describing the methods and subjects of what is taught. Taken altogether, the events and experiences leading to evolution in PME pedagogy are different from those in doctrine, and the Force Development construct addresses several perpetual problems related to pedagogy.

The first rung in the evolution of PME curricula can also be attributed to the reforms of Sylvanus Thayer. Within the doctrinal assumption that PME is preparation for a military career there was also a specific idea that military education was *specialized*. In the case of West Point and army officers, this education was engineering focused; later, as steam propulsion entered the fleet, the Naval Academy also focused on engineering. Branch schools resurrected by Emory Upton and Elihu Root also favored specialization in artillery, cavalry, and other military functions. Throughout the 19th century, the primary theme of military education was *specialists over generalists*, even to the point that liberal arts were not taught or were weakly represented.

The first real change to PME pedagogy came with the establishment of Army and Naval War Colleges and the turn of the century reforms of Elihu Root. In both of these senior officer schools, the idea of *command as an art* was made a centerpiece of PME. Curricula emphasized terminology, command communications, the movement of formations and units, and wargaming. A later refinement, particularly at the Naval War College through Admiral William S. Sims, was the introduction of campaign planning: thinking strategically at the operational level of war. In terms of PME pedagogy through the first World War, the war colleges created a triumvirate of crucial military education topics: 1) a continuing need for specialization in particular warfighting functions; 2) a growing need for generalists who understood the meaning of war, military terminology and campaign coordination of forces; and 3) a recognition of the requirement to teach military command and leadership, including the ability to think strategically.

The interwar years brought further expansion to the conceptual list of topics military officers needed. Prior to WW I, military leaders generally expected that their sphere of accountability only included military operations, and even more specifically, the responsibility for *their* service's forces and functions. After that global war, both military and civilian leaders demanded that officers be more aware of national mobilization, logistics for industrialized military forces, and cooperation between service elements. Compared to the previous evolutionary step, PME pedagogy now emphasized generalists and command preparation more than specialization, and included a breadth of subjects from appreciating international affairs to defense planning and the execution of grand strategy rather than just campaign strategy.

World War II brought even greater demands to PME curricula and methods and constitutes a fourth wave of reforms. In the midst of numerous review commissions and boards following the second global war, there were strong recommendations for improving education in *joint and combined warfare*. This was not merely a change or addition to subjects at the schools, it was also a call for interservice student bodies, new joint schools, and even an informal (if not formal) demand that the most senior officers be graduates of these joint-strengthened institutions. The Army-Navy Staff College and National War College were but two products of this stage in PME pedagogy. All PME schools, but most significantly the senior schools, were beginning to suffer a new phenomenon of *depth versus breadth*: there were so many subjects required in PME that some leaders began to accuse schools of teaching "a mile wide and an inch deep."[11]

Seven waves of PME Pedagogy	
Thayer	--Military focus and specialization
Root/Luce	--Command & Staff Art Leadership generalists
Interwar	--National mobilization & logistics
Post WWII	-- Joint/combined

	warfare Breadth > depth
Cold War	--Systems analysis & defense planning
Skelton	--Institutional Joint PME & acade mic rigor
Owens/Cebrowski	--Information Operations and network-centric warfare

Thus, by the middle of the Cold War PME pedagogy included four poles which pushed and pulled on curricula, faculty, and the structure of the US PME system. These poles of contention were specialists versus generalists, command art, joint/combined warfare, and breadth versus depth. Before the end of the 20th century, three more major reforms would occur, each expanding upon the original four columns. In the mid-70's, Adm. Elmo Zumwalt at the Naval War College was rapidly followed by other institutions in incorporating systems analysis and national security decision making as a key part of middle and senior PME. Then in the '80s, the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 and the Skelton Panel reviews of military PME re-emphasized not only joint education, but also the need for rigor in PME process and more teaching of "timeless principles" of war and military history. Finally, in the post-Cold War world VADM's William Owens and Arthur Cebrowski raised the notions of network-centric warfare, and along with others cited the need for more technical education in the areas of information technology and security.

What was broken, and how is it fixed?

The evolution in PME subjects points to the first thing that was broken in PME—attempting to teach *too many things* to *everyone* who was tapped for school. As a first step, FD is encouraging a brand new fix to the challenges of making *specialists vs. generalists* and teaching *PME as command art*. Modularity and flexible timing enable a system whereby PME can produce both specialists and generalists—the Gerow model pyramid is expanded to include more of the officer force. Deliberate selection—the use of Developmental Teams to manage combinations of developmental education and officer assignments—enables a system that can be provided to more than just command-oriented officers; this means PME can still develop the service's future leaders, but now can also give more in-residence opportunities because some PME will also develop the service's specialized experts.

To fully understand why this is important, we can read the original CSAF Sight Picture, where Gen Jumper states that:

> I know that a lot of you feel there are many reasons to be discouraged or dissatisfied with our current system—limited PME in-residence slots, limited advanced degree opportunities, or worse, square-filling master degree programs that do little to make you better at your job or get you closer to your goals.[12]

Each of these dissatisfactions is related to the past evolution of PME. Limited in-residence slots are a fact not only because of cost, but also because doctrinally PME has been pyramidal—it applies to fewer officers the more senior they become—and pedagogically it focuses on command art—and the requirement for leaders is always less than the whole group. Limited advanced degree opportunities exist because the service has been historically unable to separate its general PME requirements from its specific needs for specialization. Meaning, the AF could not send officers to both improve their technical abilities with an advanced degree and build on their professional abilities by also attending in-residence PME; the time imposition on AF operations made getting both rare for all but a minority. Lastly, "square-filling master degree" requirements were informally imposed on the officer force because—in the absence of everyone getting in-residence PME—senior AF leaders still desired well-educated officers who could think, speak and write (a *generalist* emphasis), and therefore rewarded those with master's degrees with increased promotion rates.

So far, this all sounds positive: FD impacts developmental education by making progress against the classic controversies of specialization and the need for education in the wide area of command art in tailoring the system to do both. But what about joint education and the breadth versus depth issue? In these two challenges of PME pedagogy, modularity and deliberate selection are implementing a distinctly new answer—particularly on the breadth vs. depth problem. Joint education is preserved and sustained in PME modules that will be "common core"—i.e., every officer's PME will include the mandatory elements of joint military education.[13] More strikingly, the breadth vs. depth issue seems to be decided in favor of "paired" depth, where the notion that a leader needs a little bit of everything is definitively denied.

"Pairing" is an important 'fix' for PME, and it deals with officers having both *skill sets* and *experiences* to provide a different kind of breadth in the profession of arms. [italics added to below quotes]

> One aspect of FD is designed to create senior leaders with a *deliberate pairing of skills*.[14]
>
> Occupational skill sets are driven by position requirements and promoted by systematic, deliberate development. Force development programs specify how the Air Force leverages its investment in its people. The Air Force has determined there are clearly identifiable skill requirements for Airmen who have experiences in *more than one connected career area*.[15]
>
> Rather than broaden our force simply for different experiences, *skill sets* must be driven by requirements and promoted by systematic, deliberate development and grounded in enduring competencies. The Air Force has determined that there are clearly identifiable requirements for people who have *experience in more than one career area* … FD quite simply defines what the necessary combinations are and then facilitates the education and assignment process … People may pick up a *complementary skill*, and the focus should be on understanding the broader Air Force perspective.[16]

> Your assignments will be *tailored to offer you that breadth* once you have proven your depth of experience … part of your education will include adequate preparation for that … assignment … The leverage we will gain by breaking the old molds for training, education, and experience will be a tremendous asset to the Air Force and will also better enable you to grow and succeed professionally.[17]
>
> Modularization will allow more people to participate in enduring competencies training … It will also provide the *focused education and training* most useful to our people … To be optimized as an expeditionary force—employing our military members to be in direct support of operations—we need to encourage *specialized skill sets* and promote those needed skills.[18]

The authoritative guidance for FD from the CSAF, SECAF, and USAF/DP emphasizes that the old concept of "breadth"—where everyone is educated on as wide a list of topics as possible—is rejected in favor of a new concept. This new concept is created by giving officers a minimum of two skill sets with appropriate deep education (PME) and experience (tailored assignments through Developmental Team action). Breadth is now the ability to appreciate the "big picture" and interact with other, similarly experienced AF leaders who are not stove piped into single career areas. A balanced force is not created by making all leaders the same, but by making the pool of all officers appropriately mixed with people who have expertise in more than one AF competency.

Thus, the answer to our second question—what was broken, and how is it fixed—has several aspects (or broken parts). But all the parts are related to one obsolete idea: that all officers had to have a generic master's degree (by informal requirement), and a too-broad curriculum in PME, because all we wanted to produce were generalists. There are a number of critiques that say instead that our old system ended up producing specialists—stovepiped into their career areas—with inadequately designed military education. Force Development's impact on old PME is Developmental Education: eliminating cookie-cutter production, and instead insuring advanced degrees are targeted to benefit the force and the individual, and "broadening" officers by gaining a minimum of a second skill set.

Does the AAD Option Lock Me Into a Different Career Track?

The AAD option for IDE fixes some real problems in our professional force. But, many officers selected for this option are asking whether it puts them on a different career track from their peers who go to 'normal' PME. It seems straightforward that linking PME and AAD opportunities for a portion of the officer force will allow a degree of specialization that the USAF has heretofore been unable to attain.[19] It may also allow the USAF to more fully utilize the Air Force Institute of Technology, which for the past decade has been unable to operate at its full capacity in producing officers with graduate education in several fields.[20] But, even beyond these advantages, the linkage of PME and AAD can also serve to meet documented requirements for specialists in information-intensive fields[21] and Airmen who have "sufficient capability and depth in foreign area expertise and language skills."[22] Since nearly all of the increased IDE opportunities for officers in FD come from the combined AAD/PME option,[23] the implication is

that the USAF is meeting the call for an increase in a variety of specialists not by eliminating generalists (the "normal" PME or in-residence military colleges) but by "grafting on" specialist opportunities.

If the AAD option is linked to specialization, it creates at least the appearance that officers selected for it are on some sort of different path. For instance, Secretary Roche states:

> The Air Force needs leaders who can lead across disciplines and it needs leaders with the specialized knowledge to provide the capabilities that help us maintain our dominance. These two types of leadership are not necessarily mutually exclusive…[24]

But how can they not be mutually exclusive at some point? Are these officers not developed through *different* PME and assignment paths? Gen Jumper says that:

> In all career fields, *to be competitive for command or program leadership, you should attend a resident-level PME program* and earn the associated advanced degree. Any resident program should make you highly competitive to command … We must recognize that the experience of command is as unique as each profession in our Air Force—*potential commanders have different education and training requirements*. At the same time, we will make sure that *qualified people who do not pursue the command path will not be denied advanced professional development* and a rewarding career to retirement. [italics added for emphasis]

Both the SECAF and CSAF statements can actually be read to either promote career tracks (at some career point, an officer is either functional or command oriented) or describe a conception of leadership and command that has tailored education and experiences for particular positions. Although the FD construct intends to do the latter, at least three other official statements seem to imply that career tracks are a *possible* future direction:

> Q23. **What is the intent of giving someone an AFIT slot instead of sending him/her to PME?** A23. This is a new way of thinking about officer development and it follows a simple doctrine. At the intermediate level, developmental education is one method to deliberately transition officers from the tactical to the operational level. For some officers this educational transition will be an Advanced Academic Degree; for others it may be a fellowship or education with industry; *for others it may be an education program focused on leadership or the art of war*. Regardless, the education needs to be tailored to better match individuals with the needs of the Air Force.[25]

> Q22. **It sounds like the new "Force Development" concept is designed to create senior leaders with a broad range of skills. How is the Air Force going to select the people that remain technical experts and those that career broaden into senior leadership positions? *If I want to remain a technical expert, can I volunteer for that career path*?** A22. One aspect of FD is designed to create senior leaders with a deliberate pairing of skills. However, in meeting

> this goal, we must be careful to not dilute the expertise within career fields. Those that wish to remain technical experts, or stay in the PAFSC will be able to indicate that on their Developmental Plan (enhanced PW.)[26]
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> **Force Development Strategic Plan Task 6.1**: Promotions (OPR: AF/DP). Evaluate changing the promotion process towards one based on institutional requirements (to include: examining competitive categories) by May 2003.[27]

While it may not be intentional, the appearance given by these and other statements is that, sometime near the mid-career or Intermediate Developmental Education (IDE) point, officers may choose or be directed by Developmental Teams towards tactical specialty (the rated officer who does not need an advanced degree to be competitive for promotion to O-5), technical specialty (those who wish to remain technical experts and receive the appropriate AAD), or leadership (a "resident-level" PME program that makes them competitive for command or program leadership.)[28] Even more, the examination of the promotion system and the idea of competitive categories could, on the face of it, provide a means for promotion competition within, rather than between, different career track pools—tactical, technical, and leadership.

The possibility of career tracks, however, is not currently a part of any of the options for PME an officer may have. Even though the new system could in theory support career tracks, IDE attendance of any kind still allows all officers command, technical and even tactical options in their future. The FD doctrine (AFDD 1-1), AFI 36-2640 vol.1, FAQs, and "Spread the Word" briefings reiterate the message that all types of IDE should be treated equally by promotion boards, and that they prepare an officer for *future* opportunities.

> Some forms of in-residence professional military education enjoy more prestige with promotion boards than do residence programs at the Air Force Institute of Technology … The revised IDE program goes a long way towards resolving that particular discrepancy. In our graduate education, if advanced education is a key component to success on par with professional military education, as our promotion boards have indicated through their selections, *we should officially recognize it as such*.[29]
>
> **How are you going to ensure officers that go to AFIT instead of PME will not be hurt in the promotion process**? In the past, attendance at in-residence professional military education was one of many possible discriminators promotion boards could consider. *That will now change* as we're expanding the types of developmental activities available to our airmen. Starting next year, *promotion boards will consider these programs as equally prestigious and valuable*.[30]
>
> **Will the Air Force still view in-residence developmental education above non-residence avenues**? The intent for the future is to *view all methods of education equally*, but a final determination has not yet been made.[31]

> **If someone goes to in-residence AFIT and takes the modules for ISS, will they get credit for both? Isn't this unfair to the people who get selected for in-residence ISS, since they only get credit for ISS and not the AAD**? This is a mindset change that we all need to make. If the AFIT assignment is the person's Developmental Education assignment then it will be *regarded as the same for promotion* as if he or she went to ISS in residence.[32]
>
> In all career fields, to be competitive for command or program leadership, you should attend a resident-level PME program and earn the associated advanced degree.[33]

The bottom line answer for officers who wonder if the AAD option locks them into a different career track is "No." Any IDE opportunity is of great benefit to the officer and to the AF, and the AAD/PME option builds a better warfighting institution by investing the AF with appropriately educated—and distributed—specialists. The AAD is the most obvious investment in specialties, but the fact is that even 'normal' PME at the service schools is also targeting some specialized education for the force. The new curriculum at ACSC, for instance, includes a module in which an officer learns about a new specialty—deliberately selected by their own Developmental Team—with the intent of future assignments in that area. Education With Industry (EWI) and many of the fellowship opportunities are also specialized PME—their graduates often go on to acquisition or allied staff and attaché positions. Those who are selected for the AAD option are being developed *differently* than their peers, but all share the *same* broad future opportunities.

Conclusion: Talking about IDE

The Force Development construct ambitiously changes USAF officer career management and progression, particularly in a number of distinct improvements over PME doctrine and pedagogy of the past. IDE appears to be well-designed to accomplish many of the tasks originally outlined by Gen Jumper in his initial Sight Picture on this subject in November 2002: eliminating square-filling master's degrees, improving the opportunities for officers to both advance and be specialists, and moreover providing a new type of "breadth" in senior officers, leaders, and commanders. It can do this while providing more reasonable operational tempo in PME schedules and better-qualified officers in a world of GWOT, information technology, and network-centric warfare.

The challenge for leaders is to explain this part of FD (in addition to the whole) to our Airmen so that they understand the many things it will accomplish. This author could not fully answer three common questions about IDE prior to taking a closer look at the program and the history of PME. Now, we can all understand that:

> Yes, IDE really is a new way of looking at PME, not just a reshuffling or a management fad. It brings modularity, flexible timing, and deliberate selection into professional military education.
>
> PME was indeed broken, primarily because our officer force was pressured to get generic master's degrees and attend PME that tried to teach too much to everyone.

FD creates IDE, which brings on specialization, pairing of skills, and deliberate development of the AF as a warfighting institution.

> No, the Advanced Academic Degree option does not lock an officer into a particular career track. It does provide a specialized education, and potentially aids building new skill sets or deepening particular specialties. But all officers who attend IDE will receive specialization in some manner, and all IDE leads to the same greater, broad opportunities for future service.