

Air University Outreach
Squadron Officer School Think Tank

Class 15C

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This paper was submitted for proposal to the Commander and President of Air University in response to the request to examine how to enhance outreach and create partnerships between the University, academia, sister services, interagencies, industry, and across international boundaries.

The contents of this paper reflect the research and views of 24 competitively selected Company Grade Officers and are not necessarily endorsed by the Squadron Officer School or the Department of Defense.

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Executive Summary

Lt Gen Steven Kwast challenged Think Tank (SOS class 15-C) to consider ways in which Air University (AU) can build partnerships with sister services, academia and industry while still developing military leaders and building prestige for the institution. In response to this challenge, a marketing focused plan was proposed. Specifically, Think Tank recommended that AU connect its various schools and departments, aggressively push intellectual products out to academia and industry, and actively pull civilian and military experts into the university.

An apparent lack of connection and awareness between students and faculty in various AU schools undermines the institution's image and prestige. Designing meaningful orientations for new students and faculty, connecting AU departments and students using social media will help to bridge the gap. Additionally, establishing an active AU alumni association will facilitate inter-department cooperation on complex research projects, elevate student morale and inform service members Department of Defense wide about important work happening at AU.

With increased internal marketing, morale and a well-designed Internet presence, through a redesigned website and various social media, AU can push its state-of-the art research and scholarship in leadership, strategy and airpower studies, thus raising its prestige. Also important in building recognition and reputation, AU will join the democratization of education by offering Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), podcasts, webinars and other virtual content. This increase in prestige will help AU pull in guest lecturers and researchers from industry, academia, and the military, thus furthering the university's academic rigor, reputation and reach.

Problem Deconstructed

One facet that sets top-tier academic institutions apart from the competition is the ability to reach academia, industry, and even the world to spread their message. The ability to do this

creates prestige, and prestige built through partnerships is a fundamental part of a successful academic institution. AU is a remarkable asset the Air Force has for enhancing outreach, but only if it can be successfully leveraged. AU has the potential to reach across multiple levels of society and push the important things the Air Force is doing. In fact, Lieutenant General Kwast, commander of AU, recently stated that one of his top priorities is to, “enhance outreach within Air University as well as across the Air Force and beyond.” Specifically, he wants to use this outreach to improve relationships with local communities, and to create partnerships within the Department of Defense, with academia, and with industry.

AU produces important and innovative work every day. In any one of the nine schools that comprise AU (Air Force Institute of Technology, Air Force Research Institute, Carl A. Spaatz Center for Officer Education, Curtis E. LeMay Center for Doctrine Development & Education, Ira C. Eaker Center for Professional Development, Jeanne M. Holm Center for Officer Accessions and Citizen Development, Muir S. Fairchild Research Information Center, School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, and Thomas N. Barnes Center for Enlisted Education)¹, smart Airmen are doing great things. People are proud of the work that is being done, but unfortunately this work is not shared throughout the university. Perhaps one reason for this is the fact that many people, even those currently at AU, are not familiar with the nine schools that compose AU! Many instructors do not have sufficient knowledge of AU’s programs, so it is understandable that students do not have awareness either, and it is even more understandable that those outside the university have almost no knowledge of the institution. Outside of AU, many Airmen are unaware of the amazing research facilities AU hosts, or the fact that it has an advanced war-gaming institute. In academia or industry, they likely have no knowledge at all. These are just a few examples which highlight the fact that AU is not currently

¹ The Air University Spotlight. (2015, January 7). Retrieved April 1, 2015, from <http://www.au.af.mil/au/schools.asp>

doing enough to leverage its amazing resources, something it must do if it seeks to improve outreach.

Presently, AU does have some outreach programs, such as fellowships with industry partners, but these programs alone are insufficient to spread the AU message worldwide, as Lt Gen Kwast desires. At any major academic institution, the outreach program is a critical piece of the puzzle. These universities understand that outreach takes marketing, and a true understanding of the technological resources of today's modern world. One issue that AU has to contend with is that marketing AU's "brand" may not be a job for Air Force Public Affairs. Marketing an institution such as AU, or any university, is a specialized task that takes a high level of direct focus from a dedicated marketing team. Other universities already do this well, and AU can learn from them when seeking to implement a successful outreach program.

As Lt Gen Kwast stated, the goal of the outreach program is ultimately to build partnerships with different organizations across the military and civilian sector. Especially from a university perspective, these partnerships are vital to fuel the type of knowledge exchange that makes a university elite. These relationships benefit all involved, but they do not develop spontaneously. AU must seek out partnerships, push our innovation, research and expertise to them, and pull their various experts and leaders into our classrooms and research centers. Without these partnerships, AU will struggle to gain the prestige that it desires, and deserves.

Push

Expanding outreach for AU requires modification and expansion of AU's integration with academic and industry partners. The problem deconstruction highlighted the need to revamp AU's website and marketing to make information readily accessible to internal and external users. This is readily done through increased virtual presence, but restructuring AU's

digital footprint will include increasing its academic offerings. AU must evolve its toolset to make educational products available to a diverse audience (e.g., military, academic, industry, international). AU's academic structure must feature MOOCs, podcasts, webinars and other virtual offerings. Additionally, AU must increase publication in leading academic and industry journals.

MOOCs

MOOCs play an integral role in the democratization of education by making courses at any institution readily available worldwide. They started gaining attention in 2011 and have evolved considerably in the past four years.¹ A MOOC is an academic course posted online and available to anyone with internet access. They range from a short series of modules to teach a specific skill (such as how to plant an herb garden or fix a broken sink) to semester long courses that mirror the rigor of classes at brick and mortar academic institutions. Many courses can be audited free of charge, or taken for a certificate of completion requiring a fee.

There are multiple benefits to offering MOOCs to both Airmen and the general public. For Airmen, MOOCs provide a flexible avenue for continued education on career-relevant topics. When made available to the general public, MOOCs are an excellent outreach tool. Premier academic institutions worldwide now offer an assortment of MOOCs in addition to their in residence and distance learning degree programs. Each MOOC can accommodate tens or hundreds of thousands of students. An audience that size is within AU's grasp. MOOCs often facilitate communication and collaboration between enrolled students. This means that Airmen and civilians taking these courses will work together, sharing ideas and cooperating on projects. This is exactly the type of intellectual exchange that leads to innovation and novel approaches to problem solving as people from diverse backgrounds come together to collaborate.

The key to successfully leveraging the power of MOOCs lies in providing meaningful content. The draw for such classes is not the same as traditional in residence programs. Most people that take MOOCs are adult learners who are primarily interested in gaining the skills or knowledge provided by the course, not just to get a certificate or degree at the end. This means that AU must provide intriguing, provocative content that will draw in motivated students.

AU currently employs Blackboard[®], one of many available delivery systems for MOOCs. One possibility for introducing AU MOOCs to the public is to expand AU's use of Blackboard[®] products. Blackboard[®] advertises that its MOOC interface can “deliver open learning on our free, hosted and scalable online platform.”⁵ Aside from Blackboard learn+[™], the classroom environment that AU currently uses, which is powered by Blackboard[®], offers synchronous learning, an easy-to-use interface, education services, a cloud-based platform and brand extension capabilities to help get the word out for AU's courses. Blackboard[®] already partners in online learning with many recognized universities such as Baylor University and the University of South Florida. With the continued use of Blackboard[®] products, AU has the opportunity to join this prestigious partnership network. This network would allow AU access to other services such as marketing and branding. Pursuing MOOCs through Blackboard[®] allows AU to expand upon an already familiar system, making the transition easy for both the development team and AU's core audience.

AU can also modify current courseware to be delivered in MOOC format using more popular platforms such as: Udacity[®], Khan Academy[®], edX[®], or Coursera[®]. With edX[®], for example, AU can join a network already serving Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Harvard, Australian National University, Cornell, Seoul National University, and other education leaders that share the same passion of “empowering learning in the classroom and around the

globe.”²³ By providing content in this education-delivery format, AU will fulfill its priority of outreach while simultaneously growing thinkers in leadership, air power, and other related fields.

Academic Partnerships

While MOOCs offer an opportunity to connect AU to a worldwide audience, AU can also capitalize on academic partnerships to establish itself in the leadership community. With AU’s technical resources, great minds can turn data and research into shared progress and accomplishment. As we operate in a world of limited resources, educational institutions must bond together to optimize our achievements.

While “pushing” products from AU might require a front-loaded resource investment, the long-term return cannot be undervalued. This effort will result in AU’s rapid ascent as a true center of gravity in subjects such as air power and leadership. This center of gravity will pull new resources to AU that were not previously available.

Some up-front cost may be mitigated by capitalizing on networks already established by AU schools such as AFIT, and by reaching out to the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS). Right now, AFIT has partnerships with Michigan State, Arizona State, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Clemson, and Notre Dame, just to name a few. NPS has connections with Stanford, Johns Hopkins, and Purdue. Each of these schools also have relationships with industry spanning from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration to the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, and beyond. AU could easily reach out to AFIT and use those relationships as a starting point to reach out to other universities, as well as civilian companies, and begin partnerships in leadership and behavioral studies. Again, a lack of information flow

² <https://www.edx.org/schools-partners>

³ <https://www.edx.org/about-us>

⁵ <http://www.blackboard.com>

⁶ <http://weatherhead.case.edu/news/2013/05/08/a-class-1f-75000-aspiring-leaders-look-to-professor-boyatzis-mooc>

inside of AU is hindering its ability to be relevant to organizations outside the United States Air Force (USAF) proper.

Pull

Despite its intrinsically altruistic nature, outreach must also benefit those extending their proverbial hands. There must be some manner of “pull” into the organization, otherwise there emerges a one sided relationship where one institution continually gives without receiving its share of benefit. AU needs to use its newfound marketing prowess and resulting prestige to bring in leaders from a myriad assortment of organizations.

AU should be pulling in respected experts from other major universities. Fellowships with universities like Harvard, Yale, Oxford and MIT will prove invaluable to the growing sphere of AU outreach. Programs allowing AU faculty to train and learn from the finest academic minds in the world should be more than encouraged; they should be rigorously pursued. Not only will AU’s educational capabilities increase by several orders of magnitude, but Airmen selected to learn at these educational bastions will also influence leadership at these institutions. Interaction with deans, department heads, and specialists in an array of fields from a variety of institutions can only strengthen AU.

Of course, education without practical application (or an avenue to practically apply it) is of little use to the military. Industry is, in many cases, where education and innovation collide. Companies like Google[®] and Apple[®] are revolutionizing not only their fields, but the entire world. The iPhone[®] exemplifies this revolution. A decade ago few owned a smart phone. Now the masses have them. Creativity is part of the organizational culture of these companies and they use it to reach a global audience. AU can learn much from these industry titans, especially in a world where technological advancements are made at a previously unfathomable pace.

Cyberspace is the new major battlefield and it would behoove the USAF to recognize the need for education, innovation and creativity from industry leaders in the field.

General Hap Arnold, the father of the modern USAF, frequently visited the titans of industry in his day. He was determined to create the greatest air power in world history, and to do this he knew he needed the support of the greatest industrial powers in the world.⁴⁵ The Twenty-first Century is following that same path. Industry support is vital to the growth of the USAF and their leaders can offer AU students' unique perspectives on leadership and success.

There is one market that directly correlates with industry and academia that AU has not examined as thoroughly as it should: veterans and AU graduates. Many people, after enjoying successful military careers have had equally successful careers in academia and in industry. These men and women could act as a focal point for breaking into the larger educational and industrial worlds. Quite possibly, they could act as ambassadors and usher AU toward untold riches of the intellectual and physical landscape. Furthermore, AU could recruit them as guest speakers, lecturers, and researchers.

Media Engagement

AU currently has a very limited social media presence. AU does not currently have a single, effective social media campaign, but there is social media presence for some of the individual elements within AU. The Facebook[®] page for Air War College (AWC) has 1,693 “likes” and averages one or two new “likes” per week. The AWC Twitter[®] page has 959 followers and has issued a total of 594 tweets in 3 years. The AWC also has a YouTube[®] page

⁴ Factsheets : Gen. Henry H. "Hap" Arnold. (2015, February 18). Retrieved April 1, 2015, from <http://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/factsheets/factsheet.asp?id=8526>

⁵ England: 31 August-8 September 1943. (2002). In J. Huston (Ed.), *American Airpower Comes of Age: General Henry H. "Hap" Arnold's World War II Diaries. Volume 2* (Vol. 2, p. 27). Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama: Defense Technical Information Center.

with videos receiving an average of 300 views per video and a link to a no longer active LinkedIn[®] professional networking page.

Compare these numbers to several civilian academic institutions. The University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill (UNCCH) has 227,784 likes on Facebook^{®6} and 38.7K followers on Twitter^{®.7} UNCCH has issued 9,610 tweets since 2009 and they are following 812 other organizations.⁸ Alabama State University has 42,361 Facebook[®] likes⁹ and averages 125 new likes per week. AWC and ASU both began their Twitter[®] presence in 2012; ASU has over 1,000 Twitter[®] followers¹⁰ which is comparable to AWC¹¹ however, they have issued almost twice as many tweets in that time period. It is also important to note that ASU is following 635¹² other Twitter[®] users while AWC follows just 13.¹³ It is clear that AWC and ASU are using their Twitter[®] page in very different ways.

What this research indicates is that civilian academic institutions value social media as one method of keeping in touch with their target audiences. It also shows that social media presence is utilized as a two-way means of communication, as evidenced by the high numbers of “likes” of other pages. According to David Muha, Associate Vice President for Communications, Marketing and Brand Management at The College of New Jersey (TCNJ), Facebook[®] is used mostly for alumni and for maintaining connections in an unobtrusive way. He noted that Facebook[®] appeals more to alumni because it is already “getting old” and younger students are more active on other social media. Facebook[®] engages alumni in a way that is

⁶ The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. (n.d.). Retrieved April 1, 2015, from <https://www.facebook.com/uncchapelhill>

⁷ UNC-Chapel Hill. (n.d.). Retrieved April 1, 2015, from <https://twitter.com/unc>

⁸ UNC-Chapel Hill. (n.d.). Retrieved April 1, 2015, from <https://twitter.com/unc>

⁹ Alabama State University. (n.d.). Retrieved April 1, 2015, from <https://www.facebook.com/asu>

¹⁰ Alabama State. (n.d.). Retrieved April 1, 2015, from <https://twitter.com/asuhornetnation>

¹¹ USAF Air War College. (n.d.). Retrieved April 1, 2015, from <https://twitter.com/AirWarCollege>

¹² Alabama State. (n.d.). Retrieved April 1, 2015, from <https://twitter.com/asuhornetnation>

¹³ USAF Air War College. (n.d.). Retrieved April 1, 2015, from <https://twitter.com/AirWarCollege>

targeted to the specific interest of alumni. For example, older pictures from campus for “Throw Back Thursday”, articles from major news outlets, and sports and arts news. If something is relevant, alumni will often share it on their own walls, extending the university’s reach. This social media strategy enables the user to measure success by levels of engagement (i.e., likes, shares, comments) on each post and indicates not only how much engagement, but specifically by whom. Few other marketing approaches offer such rich data, much less free of charge. While Facebook® is used to target alumni, TCNJ uses Instagram to target younger audiences and current students. For example, TCNJ uses a “Share Your Sunday” pictures technique in which students share pictures showing life on campus outside of class and TCNJ encourages students to “Instagram what you love about TCNJ”. This is seen as more authentic to prospective students than “professional” marketing materials made by the school because the pictures are taken by real, current students. This type of social media approach is not only aimed at reaching targeted audiences, but also toward gathering important information from these audiences. Tools like Google Analytics™ enable social media hosts to track how long visitors continue to view each page and track which content elements gain the most attention from visitors. This also enables users to identify what kinds of content seem to be of little interest to visitors.

AU in its current form has a staggering lack of presence online. A search for “Air University admissions” on the top three search engines in the United States¹⁴ on 28 March 2015 yielded minimal results. Each search engine, Google®, Yahoo®, and Bing®, have unique algorithms for determining search results but provide a strong cross section of what the Internet as a whole believes are the validity and relevance of the given search terms.

The first page of search results from Google® began with an advertisement to a local Montgomery, Alabama college (not AU). This search was performed from the Montgomery

¹⁴ Top Sites. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2015, from <http://www.alexacom/topsites>

area, therefore, the search engine algorithm does not equate “Air University admissions” with Montgomery; it is merely recognizing the internet protocol address of the searching computer. The top two search results for “Air University” were a public sector college in Islamabad, Pakistan.¹⁵¹⁶ It is not until the third result that any information about the USAF’s “Air University” is provided. Instead of linking to an AU website, it is a two-page PDF document that provides facts and embedded links to several AU websites as well as contact information for the Registrar.¹⁷ The rest of the links on the first page alternate between the USAF Air University and Pakistan’s Air University, though it is worth noting that the USAF AU homepage does not appear until the fifth result, and as of 28 March 2015 the word “admission” was not on that page.¹⁸

Searching the second most popular search engine, Yahoo[®], yields even worse results for someone interested in AU. Again, searching for “Air University admissions” shows the first five links are all sponsored advertisements for “for profit” online schools. Yahoo[®] provides actual search results per page and not a single one of the non-advertisement results are for the USAF Air University. In fact, it is not until the second page of results that an AU affiliate appears: the Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT). It is another three links before the main AU homepage is shown as a search result – buried after 15 ads and 13 other webpages on the second page of search results. The number of advertisements and the placement on the second page is of great importance, which will be discussed later.

¹⁵ Home-Air University. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2015, from <http://www.au.edu.pk/>

¹⁶ Air University - Online Admission Spring 2015. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2015, from <http://portals.au.edu.pk/admissions/>

¹⁷ Admissions US Personnel. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2015, from http://www.au.af.mil/au/cf/auregistrar/cfr/admissions_us_personnel.pdf

¹⁸ The Air University. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2015, from <http://www.au.af.mil/au/>

The third most popular search engine in the United States is Bing[®]. Searching Bing[®] on 28 March 2015 for “Air University admissions” yields a single page of search results – only one of which, the eighth, is related to the USAF. Every other link is an .edu page related to the Islamabad College or to a Pakistani .com page that is highlighting the Islamabad College. After 11 total search results, a disclaimer on the bottom of the page informs the searcher that: “We think these are the most relevant results for your search. We've omitted some lower-quality results.”¹⁹ It is worth noting that repeated searches, clicks on results, and browser history play into search engine results. On popular websites, repeated searching by a small group is offset by the volume of traffic, however in this limited example a handful of searches by individuals could drastically change the results. Even during research, the initial response showed only seven results, none of which were USAF related, however after repeated searches for different websites, the results now show 11 websites before giving the “relevant results” feedback at the end of the search results.

Chitika[®], an online advertisement networking organization, has researched the need for businesses and organizations to optimize their search results due to the degradation in interest for webpages that are not in the top-tier search results.²⁰ Results on the second page of a Google[®] search do even more poorly. Research shows a fall from a 2.4% chance of being clicked as the tenth result (bottom of page one) to a 1% chance of being clicked as the eleventh result (top of page two) – a 140% drop.²¹ Being on the second page at all generates 95% less web traffic than being on the first page.

¹⁹ Bing. (2015, March 28). Retrieved March 28, 2015, from [http://www.bing.com/search?q=air university admissions&qsn&form=QBRE&pq=air university admissions&sc=5-19&sp=-1&sk=&cvid=767597e294c24b4b8b3c0f5b23f8b776](http://www.bing.com/search?q=air+university+admissions&qsn&form=QBRE&pq=air+university+admissions&sc=5-19&sp=-1&sk=&cvid=767597e294c24b4b8b3c0f5b23f8b776)

²⁰ Lee, J. (2013, June 20). No. 1 Position in Google Gets 33% of Search Traffic [Study]. Retrieved March 28, 2015, from <http://searchenginewatch.com/sew/study/2276184/no-1-position-in-google-gets-33-of-search-traffic-study>

²¹ The Value of Google Result Positioning. (2013, June 7). Retrieved March 28, 2015, from <https://chitika.com/google-positioning-value>

The Air Force's sister services fair better in similar searches. "Army War College admissions" generates no advertisements on its first page of Google[®] results and the top five websites presented are: Eligibility – Department of Distance Education, US Army War College Department of Distance Education, US Army War College's homepage, the US Naval War College's civilian admission requirements, and the Army War College's Wikipedia[®] page.²² Identical searches on Yahoo[®] and Bing[®] yielded similar results, no distracting advertisements at the top of the page and instant access to the Army War College's distance learning page, its homepage, and its Wikipedia[®] page.

Naval War College's results are similar to the Army War College's search results on each of the three search engines with the notable exception of the number one result on Yahoo[®]. On Yahoo[®], a secondary search bar appears under the Naval War College Graduate Degree result that allows for the user to search the Naval War College's degree programs from Yahoo[®]. The user can then search the Naval War College's website via Yahoo[®].²³

While search engine optimization is not a talent or skill set with which the Air Force needs to concern itself, connecting with the community at large is. The Air Force and AU are woefully underrepresented on all social media, the primary means of communication in our increasingly interconnected world. A search online for "Air Force outreach" provides a top hit that connects to a conveniently named program called "Air Force Outreach". This website states that: "Air Force Outreach works to put you, the community, in touch with your United States Air Force. The Air Force has assembled a comprehensive network of resources, designed especially

²² Google. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2015, from [https://www.google.com/?gws_rd=ssl#q=army war college admissions](https://www.google.com/?gws_rd=ssl#q=army+war+college+admissions)

²³ Yahoo Web Search. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2015, from [https://search.yahoo.com/search;_ylt=AwrBT4dxrxZVz4AAGqXNyoA;_ylc=X1MDMjc2NjY3OQRfcgMyBGZyA3lmcC10LTQ1NQRncHJpZANqcGZ5VGp1cVJRMnNtOFZVcEkuamFBBG5fcnNsdAMwBG5fc3VnZwMxBG9yaWdpbgNzZWZyY2gueWFob28uY29tBHBvcwMwBHBxc3RyAwRwcXN0cmwDBHFzdHJsAzI4BHF1ZXJ5A25hdmFsIHdhciBjb2xsZWdlIGFkbWlzc2lvdnMEdF9zdG1wAze0Mjc1NTAxNTI-?p=naval war college admissions&fr2=sb-top-search&fr=yfp-t-455&fp=1](https://search.yahoo.com/search;_ylt=AwrBT4dxrxZVz4AAGqXNyoA;_ylc=X1MDMjc2NjY3OQRfcgMyBGZyA3lmcC10LTQ1NQRncHJpZANqcGZ5VGp1cVJRMnNtOFZVcEkuamFBBG5fcnNsdAMwBG5fc3VnZwMxBG9yaWdpbgNzZWZyY2gueWFob28uY29tBHBvcwMwBHBxc3RyAwRwcXN0cmwDBHFzdHJsAzI4BHF1ZXJ5A25hdmFsIHdhciBjb2xsZWdlIGFkbWlzc2lvdnMEdF9zdG1wAze0Mjc1NTAxNTI-?p=naval+war+college+admissions&fr2=sb-top-search&fr=yfp-t-455&fp=1)

for the American people, to bring the U.S. Air Force to your front door. From speakers to motion picture premieres to flyovers by our world-renowned Thunderbirds, the Air Force is here for you. Bring *the Blue* to your town.”²⁴ The website has not been updated since 2008 as evidenced by the captions on the various pictures that cycle through on the main page.

AU is also underrepresented in its online presence. The top four AU-connected organizations on the popular social networking website Twitter[®] are: Air and Space Power Journal (ASPJ), AU Press, AWC, and the AU Commander. If other organizations within AU have Twitter[®], they were not popular nor well named enough to appear in any combination of searches – or at least not well enough to draw the 95% of the attention to be on the first page or search results.

ASPJ has 125 followers and 42 total tweets from a period of August 2009 to February 2015.²⁵ Statistically, that means ASPJ has provided just 0.63 tweets per month and just 0.34 tweets per follower. For comparison, Harvard Business Review has 29,300 tweets to 1.98 million followers starting in May 2008, 357 tweets per month (nearly 12 tweets per day) and 67.5 tweets per follower.²⁶

AU Press is also on Twitter[®] and has a more respectable 408 followers, however it still only has 160 tweets – which includes a period between 23 July 2011 and 2 June 2014 when it did not post a single message to its followers.²⁷ AWC’s Twitter[®] has 594 tweets and 957 followers, though most of its recent tweets have simply been links to the AWC Facebook[®] page, which in

²⁴ Air Force Outreach - Home. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2015, from <http://www.afoutreach.af.mil/>

²⁵ ASPJ English. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2015, from <https://twitter.com/ASPJEnglish>

²⁶ Harvard Biz Review. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2015, from <https://twitter.com/HarvardBiz>

²⁷ Air University Press. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2015, from <https://twitter.com/aupress>

turn mostly shares the status updates of the Air Force and Maxwell Air Force Base (AFB) Facebook[®] pages – producing no new (or unique) content.²⁸

Civilian academic institutions provide a much higher rate of interaction with their followers and often tie their posts in with other organizational partners, highlight their own accomplishments, and provide a level of interaction with followers by “refollowing” them, “retweeting” (a repost of what the other user said and a sign of respect and appreciation among Internet users), and “liking” or “favoriting” their posts as a compliment. Princeton University has 19,000 tweets and 144,000 followers; in the last 24 hours, they have posted 19 times. Those 19 posts alone have included two retweets, four pictures, 12 references to other Twitter[®] users, a unique hashtag to highlight an ongoing discussion panel at the University, and multiple references to their ongoing sexual misconduct survey. Princeton also advertises on their main page that they have a hashtag that they use to enable students, alumni, and fans to more easily discover other Princeton content #PrincetonU. A cursory scroll through the past week of content reveals multiple videos of professors giving speeches, pictures of students performing community outreach, and links to academic articles published by Princeton students and faculty.²⁹ All civilian academic organizations follow the same basic model, though depending on their size and the products they have to present, vary the percentage of each to present the image they want to cultivate.

Military academies are no different than the civilian academic institutions when it comes to outreach and social media. Each of the three main service academies, United States Military Academy, United States Naval Academy and United States Air Force Academy, have thousands of messages online and over 10,000 followers each. Additionally, they have smaller social

²⁸ USAF Air War College. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2015, from <https://twitter.com/airwarcollege>

²⁹ Princeton University. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2015, from <https://twitter.com/Princeton>

media organizations that handle admissions, alumni, parent and community outreach, and their sports teams – a web of integrated social media to connect with as broad of an audience as possible.

ASPJ, AU Press, and AWC have all been updated in the past few months, but the fourth social media account that is linked to AU has not been updated in years. According to the official USAF page on social media, the AU Commander has a Twitter[®] feed, “AirUnivBoss”.³⁰ As of 28 March 2015, the “Commander and President, Air University, Maxwell AFB, AL” is listed as Lt Gen David Fadok. It is clear from the past messages that the “AirUnivBoss” handle has changed hands, as the commander before Lt Gen Fadok posted a farewell on 12 August 2011³¹ and Lt Gen Fadok posted his first remarks on 28 August 2011.³² The final message in August 2013 does not give any indication that a change of command might have taken place. Additionally, the official Air Force biography of Lt Gen Fadok, is still shown as the commander of AU, even though the same biography acknowledges that he retired 1 January 2015.³³ While limited in its number and frequency of messages, this account shows an excellent example of what a military and academic leader should do with their social media presence.

“AirUnivBoss” frequently cites promotions and retirement of AU members, which connects the internal members of AU to the social media. Additionally, “AirUnivBoss” will mention speakers from AU events in his posts, though he rarely includes links or direct comments (on Twitter[®], using the “@” symbol) to connect his social media account to theirs. This allows him to connect his presence, AU’s broader presence online, and the speakers’

³⁰ U.S. Air Force. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2015, from <http://www.af.mil/AFSites/SocialMediaSites.aspx>

³¹ Lt Gen David Fadok. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2015, from <https://twitter.com/AirUnivBoss/status/101977935921168384>

³² Lt Gen David Fadok. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2015, from <https://twitter.com/AirUnivBoss/status/107936044636319744>

³³ U.S. Air Force. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2015, from <http://www.af.mil/AboutUs/Biographies/Display/tabid/225/Article/108002/lieutenant-general-david-s-fadok.aspx>

audience into one large group which dramatically increases the awareness of AU events. There is intermittent use of Air Force approved hashtags, primarily #AF, and occasional retweeting of other Air Force units' postings. Again, these actions allow connections between the various accounts to increase and enable the user, to increase their overall presence by riding the increased notoriety of popular trends, better connected user accounts, and increasing the likelihood of retweets and being quoted by other users.

AU's two largest and easiest to disseminate products currently are its publications – primarily through AU Press – and its constant stream of world-class speakers from the military, political sector, and industry. Both of these products are simple and easy to distribute through social media and to connect to AU's various websites or traditional media outlets.

Understanding the basic statistics of social media can pay dividends for AU's outreach both internally and externally.

AU speakers that speak at any of the schools or centers can be contacted ahead of time to coordinate a social media push. Such high profile speakers as General McDew the AMC/CC³⁴, General Welsh the Air Force Chief of Staff³⁵³⁶, and Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Cody³⁷³⁸ all have a social media presence – as do their respective commands and installations – which can help spread the AU message. As an example of how AU has failed to capitalize on the social media presence of its speakers, Gen McDew spoke to several groups at AU and on 17 March he tweeted about his experience.³⁹ Due to AU's lack of social media presence, he was

³⁴ General Darren McDew. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2015

³⁵ Gen. Mark A. Welsh III. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2015

³⁶ Mark A Welsh III. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2015

³⁷ CMSAF James A. Cody. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2015

³⁸ James A. Cody. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2015 General Darren McDew. (n.d.).

³⁹ Retrieved March 28, 2015

unable to directly link to AU's pages and instead cited @MaxwellAFB (the official page of AU's host base), @usairforce (the official page of the USAF), and used the hashtag "#leader" instead of a unique hashtag that AU could embrace. Gen McDew has more than 1700 followers who saw that tweet and it was shared by several of them, further increasing its audience, but giving no further benefit to AU as an institution.

Beyond simply being mentioned in other people's posts, AU could post pictures, short video clips, or quotations from speakers to their social media to expand outreach. Analytics of social media have suggested that something as simple as adding a picture to a post doubles user engagement in terms of reposts, comments, and sharing.⁴⁰ According to Twitter®'s own statistics, overall interaction with followers increases by 16% by including hashtags, 19% by quoting individuals, 28% for including a video, and 35% for including photos. Those numbers shift dramatically when accounting for strictly "Government and Politics" tweets: 14% video, 14% quotation, 30% hashtag, and a large jump to 62% for including photographs.⁴¹ Without a social media presence, AU is losing out on interacting with the world on a free to use, massively open sourced network. These social networks are becoming increasingly necessary for sharing an organization's identity with individuals both internal and external to the organization, public outreach, and communication in general.

Another important, but largely overlooked outreach resource is a true AU alumni organization. While individual schools have alumni groups, notably AFIT⁴², there is no mechanism for graduates of AU's various institutions to connect with one another – either as Air

⁴⁰ Cooper, B. (2013, December 6). 10 Surprising New Twitter Stats to Help You Reach More Followers. Retrieved March 28, 2015, from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/belle-beth-cooper/10-surprising-new-twitter_b_4387476.html

⁴¹ Rogers, S. (2014, March 10). What fuels a Tweet's engagement? Retrieved March 28, 2015, from <https://blog.twitter.com/2014/what-fuels-a-tweets-engagement>

⁴² Office of Alumni Affairs. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2015, from <http://www.afit.edu/ALUMNI/index.cfm>

Force members or after separating from the Air Force. Once again, social media can provide a free source of networking by borrowing heavily from civilian academic alumni association models. The professional networking site, LinkedIn[®], is already in high use by current and former members of the USAF – the vast majority of whom have graduated from an AU program. As of 28 March 2015 there are 688,964 search results for “Air Force” in the profiles of individuals living in the United States, 139,657 of whom specifically cite “United States Air Force” as their current employer.⁴³ Building a robust alumni network will allow AU to leverage connections, build and maintain relationships, and form a vast network of business leaders, educators, and other human resources in the future.

Existing organizations with military ties that already have established alumni networks are the service academies. Each of the academies has a non-profit organization with unique missions that serve the greater purpose of the institutions they are connected to. The United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) Association of Graduates (AOG) “strive(s) to reconnect graduates to their institution and each other, tell the Academy story, educate grads, parents and friends of the Academy on the need for fund raising and to instill a sense of pride in being a part of the Long Blue Line.”⁴⁴ While the United States Naval Academy (USNA) Alumni Association and Foundation aims to be “the primary source for the community of Naval Academy alumni, family and friends worldwide to maintain active lifetime links and be engaged with each other and the Naval Academy and its traditions.”⁴⁵ These groups are ultimately trying to keep graduates connected to one another through “social events and business networking... outreach

⁴³ Air Force search results. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2015, from https://www.linkedin.com/vsearch/p?type=people&keywords=airforce&orig=FCTD&rsid=1778570271427594561370&pageKey=voltron_people_search_internal_jsp&search=Search&openFacets=N.G.CC&f_G=us:0

⁴⁴ Association of Graduates - U.S. Air Force Academy. (n.d.). Retrieved April 1, 2015, from <https://www.linkedin.com/company/association-of-graduates---u.s.-air-force-academy>

⁴⁵ About Us - Alumni Association. (n.d.). Retrieved April 1, 2015, from <http://www.usna.com/page.aspx?pid=208>

to Grads on active duty, [and] community projects.”⁴⁶ A similarly structured AU Alumni Association could be tasked with building an informal network of graduates from various AU schools and centers in an easy to track format, either by year or by individual class. LinkedIn[®] allows for the creation of subgroups within a larger group, which would enable AU to create an overarching group to unite all of its schools, then break down the organization however is deemed most appropriate. This free to join network would enable AU graduates to remain connected for an extended period and build a sense of pride as they see their classmates and peers continue to excel at their careers both within and outside of the Air Force.

Currently each of the service academies’ alumni associations connect with social media in different ways. USAFA’s AOG has a presence on LinkedIn[®] (5,954 followers)⁴⁷, Facebook[®] (24,828 likes)⁴⁸, and Twitter[®] (3897 followers)⁴⁹, however it has gone the added step on Twitter[®] of building a voluntary “Public Feed”.⁵⁰ This feed enables graduates to sign up and be part of a “Long Blue Line” of tweets that are then visible to anyone who is interested in what the broader alumni community of USAFA is doing. The United States Military Academy (USMA) AOG has gone the additional step of creating a YouTube[®] channel that highlights current students, graduates, distinguished speakers, and provides video tours of the campus.⁵¹ This approach has the multiple benefits including: connecting with graduates to show that the traditions and rigor of their beloved institution have withstood the test of time, demonstrating to potential students the challenges and experiences they have in store, and lifting the veil on a potentially confusing

⁴⁶ Reconnect with Grads. (n.d.). Retrieved April 1, 2015, from <http://www.westpointaog.org/reconnectwithgrads>

⁴⁷ U.S. Air Force Academy Association of Graduates. (n.d.). Retrieved April 1, 2015, from https://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=75507&trk=hb_side_g

⁴⁸ US Air Force Academy Association of Graduates. (n.d.). Retrieved April 1, 2015, from <https://www.facebook.com/AirForceGrads>

⁴⁹ USAFA AOG. (n.d.). Retrieved April 1, 2015, from <https://twitter.com/AirForceGrads>

⁵⁰ USAFA Grads – A public list by USAFA AOG. (n.d.). Retrieved April 1, 2015, from <https://twitter.com/AirForceGrads/lists/usafa-grads>

⁵¹ WPAOG. (n.d.). Retrieved April 1, 2015, from <https://www.youtube.com/user/WPAOG>

organization to any interested members of the public. Combined, the USMAAOG's videos have accumulated a combined 596,000 views – giving insight to over half a million otherwise uncontacted individuals.⁵²

By developing a presence on LinkedIn[®], AU can further refine its narrative as the nation's leading leadership and air power institute. Features on the site allow individuals to claim attendance at a given institution, in this case AU, and then proceed to search for fellow alumni of that school by their current location, place of work, year of graduation or attendance, type of work, and discover how they are connected to one another.

Many civilian organizations have specific LinkedIn[®] groups dedicated to connecting their alumni. MIT has a group that is more than 28,000 strong with 11 subgroups.⁵³ They offer MIT alumni the chance to offer career advice, connect with other alumni for jobs, and update the whole group about upcoming events at MIT – ultimately trying to bond the simple network they developed through four years of studies into a lifelong web of interaction. The California Institute of Technology (Caltech) has a similar function on LinkedIn[®], joining more than 6,500 individuals in 12 subgroups.⁵⁴ Caltech Alumni Association's stated goal is to "help you access the full potential of this unparalleled network", whose 6,500 members pale in comparison to the thousands of highly trained, motivated, and dedicated individuals that the US Air Force honorably separates and retires every year.

In today's fiscally restrained environment, it makes sense for AU to attempt to produce an independent, flexible, and all-encompassing network of its own design. Thankfully, that is not necessary in order to reach a national network of alumni or a global audience of interested

⁵² WPAOG. (n.d.). Retrieved April 1, 2015, from <https://www.youtube.com/user/WPAOG/about>

⁵³ MIT Massachusetts Institute of Technology Alumni. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2015, from https://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=69586&trk=anetsrch_name&goback=.gdr_1248319588821_1

⁵⁴ Caltech Alumni Association. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2015, from https://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=1156&trk=anetsrch_name&goback=.gdr_1248319588819_1

civilians, academics, and industry partners who are intrigued by AU's research, education, and opportunities. The top social media sites ranked by daily page views in the United States are: Facebook[®], YouTube[®], Twitter[®], LinkedIn[®], and Instagram (ranked 2nd, 3rd, 7th, 9th, and 23rd nationally).⁵⁵ Additionally, they are also among the most popular overall websites in the world when ranked by the same metric – 2nd, 3rd, 8th, 12th,⁵⁶ and 35th⁵⁷ respectively. Facebook[®] alone had an average of 890 million users per day in December 2014,⁵⁸ Twitter[®] connects with 288 million a month,⁵⁹ while the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's YouTube[®] page has over 23,000 subscribers and over 7.5 million views on its 2,000 videos.⁶⁰ AU can leverage these preexisting networks to develop an interactive, engaging, and interesting presence online. This will enable it to fully connect with individuals both internal to AU and those externally who wish to become more knowledgeable about its mission, products, and research.

Website redesign

AU's current webpage is not as well developed as webpages at other universities. The current main page consists of some introductory information and then half of the main page consists of Maxwell AFB gate schedules and current traffic updates. This indicates that AU's main page is currently targeted to individuals who are in the Maxwell area and who are concerned primarily with the most efficient ways of getting on and off of base. Considering for whom AU's webpage is designed, essentially reveals who the same webpage excludes (i.e. any person potentially interested in AU who might not physically be at Maxwell AFB). If AU's

⁵⁵ Top Sites - United States. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2015, from <http://www.alexacom/topsites/countries/US>

⁵⁶ Top Sites. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2015, from <http://www.alexacom/topsites>

⁵⁷ Top Sites. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2015, from <http://www.alexacom/topsites/global:1>

⁵⁸ Company Info | Facebook Newsroom. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2015, from <http://newsroom.fb.com/company-info/>

⁵⁹ About Twitter, Inc. | About. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2015, from <https://about.twitter.com/company>

⁶⁰ NATO - About. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2015, from <https://www.youtube.com/user/NATOCOMMUNITY/about>

webpage is intended to communicate what AU has to offer, as far as cutting edge research and intellectual opportunities, the webpage should be targeting a global audience rather than a local audience. In order to capture this global audience, AU's website must be comparable in terms of quality standards to other global institutions. To this end, AU should use the existing university websites as an initial standard for what an inspirationally global organization's website should look like. In order to match other universities' website quality, AU will need to avail itself of the same quality web engineering department that is found at and other comparable organizations. This could be accomplished by using active duty troops or by hiring the appropriate individuals from the private sector. The remaining challenge will be having a governing body that is capable of evaluating the quality of website and establishing vision for the web design department.

Marketing

The Goal of Marketing Air University

As the intellectual center of the Air Force, AU has a wide variety of educational resources and opportunities of interest to service members, federal partners, and the general public. These resources include the Muir S. Fairchild Research Information Center, expert speakers, leadership presentations, a broadly experienced faculty, access to leading edge tactical experts from across the USAF, and the AU publishing house. Though these and other resources provide great opportunities to Airmen, partners, and future partners, they are currently underutilized insofar as potential users are unaware of the resources that are available at and through AU.

Poor awareness of AU can be thought of as a transaction cost for utilization of AU resources. If potential users have to conduct intensive searches to discover and access AU resources only those determined enough to persevere will ultimately utilize those AU resources.

Many other potential users will likely go elsewhere as they find this cost of entry to be prohibitive. Increased effort required to locate AU resources corresponds with decreased consumption of AU resources and as a second order effect, limits AU's prestige and public image. Decreasing the effort required to access AU materials will lead to increased utilization of resources and a subsequent increase in prestige and recognition.

The goal of an effective marketing program at AU is to minimize the aforementioned transaction costs associated with accessing AU resources. Rather than having to seek out AU resources and opportunities, AU will endeavor to place these resources and opportunities in front of as many potential users as possible. This will be conducted through a six-part effort. First, AU will establish a dedicated marketing department to coordinate and ensure a unified and effective marketing strategy. Second, each major center within AU will have a dedicated marketing point of contact that will ensure seamless integration of each center with AU Marketing. Third, AU will enhance alumni association outreach. Fourth, AU will enhance the speaker's bureau. Fifth, AU will develop a coordinated social media outreach. Finally, AU will redesign its website, keeping it consistent with other contemporary university sites. This six-part approach will enable AU to greatly reduce the transaction costs associated with utilizing AU resources and opportunities.

Establish a Marketing Department

AU encompasses six major centers, 14 schools and academies, and several other institutes and organizations. All of these entities have their own unique opportunities and resources that are potentially valuable to additional users. Yet all of these entities conducting their own marketing efforts retain transaction costs due to inconsistencies in approaches. What

is required is a single coordinated marketing entity to ensure that the wide variety of opportunities available through AU is effectively marketed in a consistent way beyond the circle of Maxwell AFB.

Marketing efforts “combine a range of strategies that work together to create awareness, generating a positive image by communicating effectively with a *targeted* audience. Under this definition, marketing provides the structure and discipline for continuously demonstrating the group’s value to the community it serves.”⁶¹ This type of unified marketing effort will be conducted by AU Marketing. With one single marketing department, marketing professionals will be able to ensure that the full spectrum of AU opportunities are communicated to those beyond the circle and they will also be able to tailor specific messages to specifically targeted audiences. In this way, different marketing pushes will be directed at currently serving Airmen versus civilian academic communities versus industry partners and private businesses. By communicating a targeted message to diverse potential consumers, AU can put its best foot forward and present a unified marketing presence. These actions by AU will enable potential customers to discover additional resources beyond their initial purview that are accessed with little to no transaction costs because they are marketed to the user in a standard format.

Conclusion

Any business must invest in marketing if it is to thrive. While AU is, in many ways, different from other businesses, or even civilian academic institutions, it, too must implement a meaningful, dedicated marketing effort if it is to gain the prestige and recognition it deserves.

⁶¹ Hartnett, B., & Matan, R. (2011). *Marketing Your Nonprofit Organization* (p. 22). Sobel & Co., LLC. Retrieved from <http://sobel-cpa.com/sites/default/files/whitepaper%20Marketing.pdf>

This paper has identified the need for dedicated marketing at AU, proposed a marketing approach that will connect AU's various internal schools and departments; "push" AU's important research and academic offerings out to academic partners, industry partners and sister services; and pull top academics, industry leaders, and AU alumni back into the institution to teach, research and work on joint projects.

In designing this approach, this team learned that many students and faculty at AU have little awareness of what schools comprise AU and what work goes on at those schools. Students and faculty at AU should have pride in their institutions' important work and academic rigor, but in order to have such pride, they must understand what is happening university-wide. An internally focused marketing campaign will facilitate awareness of the various curricula, research projects and other happenings between AU schools. This knowledge will increase morale and pride among AU students, faculty and alumni. Perhaps more importantly, it will facilitate inter-department collaborations, thus opening the scope of academic opportunities at the university.

Marketing is also the key to helping AU develop and maintain relationships with academic partners, industry partners, sister services and potential students worldwide. AU already has resources in place to accomplish this, but those resources are not sufficiently leveraged. Examination of other universities' (military and civilian) marketing efforts reveals that a widespread online presence featuring online courses (i.e. MOOCs) and the use of social media are central to their success. AU already has distance learning programs, a web site, and various social media accounts. Unfortunately, these resources have not been well designed nor aggressively used to market AU. By redesigning the way AU leverages these resources, AU will establish a prominent online presence and develop a reputation as a leader in fields such as leadership studies, airpower, and strategic studies. Ultimately, the prestige and name recognition

that results from effective internal and external marketing focused on the use of online platforms will elevate AU's appeal to industry and academic leaders, and successful alumni who could be pulled into the institution to lecture, collaborate on projects and otherwise partner with AU faculty and students.

The widespread democratization of education has made it necessary for universities to compete for students, partnerships and prestige. Universities are no longer elite just by virtue of being institutions of higher learning. Now, they must make themselves appealing to tech-savvy consumers worldwide. By virtue of its mandatory military education for students' career progression, AU has managed to get by without competing in this new landscape. Unfortunately, this lack of presence has contributed to widespread ignorance about the important work happening at AU and a loss of prestige and name recognition for the institution. By modeling a marketing effort after those of other thriving universities, and leveraging technological resources that are already largely in place, AU can claim its rightful place as an institution known for academic rigor in the fields of leadership development, airpower and strategic studies.