

SHARED SKIES, SEPARATE ORBITS

THE NEXT CHAPTER OF AIR AND SPACE FORCE EDUCATION

World War II had unequivocally proven the strategic potential of airpower. In its wake, US Army leaders began deliberately planning a new, thorough system of professional education for its air component. They were determined to solve the pre-war problems that had hampered them—the division of doctrinal agencies and the absence of a tiered structure for junior and senior officer training. The solution was the creation of a unique and integrated school system dedicated to airpower thought and leader development. In March 1946, the Army Air Forces officially established Air University. By September of that year, a full twelve months before the US Air Force would become an independent branch of service, courses dedicated to air warfare theory were underway within this Army-built institution. This history offers more than just a parallel; it is a powerful precedent for how a parent service's deliberate stewardship can accelerate the development of a new service's unique educational foundation.

The historical echo resonates powerfully today as the Department of the Air Force (DAF) navigates a similar, and equally vital, inflection point. The establishment of the United States Space Force in 2019 initiated a new chapter in military evolution, with a parent service once again guiding a nascent force toward a strong and self-supporting future. Because Air University was born from the Army's deliberate support, we acutely understand our responsibility to serve as that same supportive incubator for the Space Force today. As the Commander of Air University, I believe this moment demands a clear, collaborative strategy. My vision is twofold: to deliberately support the Space Force's need for a distinct, Guardian-focused educational enterprise, while simultaneously refocusing and strengthening Air University's core mission as the world's premier institution for airpower. This is how we chart the next chapter for the warfighters who defend our shared skies and the boundless space above them.

Just as early airmen had to determine which functions were uniquely "air" versus those that remained part of the broader Army, leaders today must assess which institutions should support one service, and which should serve the entire Department. Air University recognizes the immense value of shared DAF institutions. The Air Force Institute of Technology, for example, provides highly specialized, graduate-level technical education that logically serves as a DAF-wide center for advanced learning. Similarly, the US Air Force Academy continues to function as a critical commissioning source for both services. Strategic broadening opportunities, such as fellowships, are also effectively managed as shared programs. Furthermore, the DAF-level School of Advanced Air and Space Stud-

ies remains a unique model, reserving specific seats for Guardians to ensure joint intellectual cross-pollination. This approach ensures efficiency, allowing the Space Force to leverage the Air Force's established institutional power where it makes the most strategic sense.

However, we also recognize that true domain mastery requires more than just shared classrooms. The imperative to build a unique Space Force culture stems from the fundamental purpose of military service: to contest and, when necessary, control a physical warfighting domain. Just as the Army was created for the land and the Navy for the sea, the Space Force was established to secure superiority in space. The differences between operating in the air and in space are even more distinct and dramatic than operating on land versus at sea. Unique operational concepts are required in an environment with no front lines and where threats move at orbital velocities. Furthermore, as strategic competitors have demonstrated, space is no longer a benign support environment but a battlefield from which US forces can be targeted.

At Air University, we understand that winning in this domain requires Guardians who possess a deep, native understanding of these realities. We know we cannot build a Guardian ethos using an Airman's curriculum. Therefore, we fully support the principle that a Guardian's entire professional education must be focused on instilling the mindset, skills, and strategic theory required to achieve space superiority. To the greatest extent possible, a Guardian's education must be steeped in the unique theory, doctrine, and culture of the space domain.

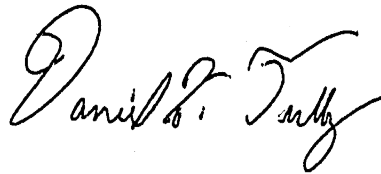
This understanding is already reshaping how we operate at Maxwell Air Force Base. Today, Air University welcomes Space Force officers and enlisted personnel into our Professional Military Education (PME) schools, not merely as subordinate DAF members, but as true sister-service students, in the exact same way we welcome a Soldier, Sailor, or Marine. We are deliberately adapting our approach to give the Space Force the operational room it needs to grow its own institutional framework. This separation is not a rejection of Air Force support; rather, it is Air University fulfilling its historical mandate to help a new service build the foundation required to win in its respective domain.

To envision how this relationship will mature, the Department of the Navy illustrates a highly effective model in its relationship with the US Marine Corps. The two services are inextricably linked, yet when it comes to PME, their approach is a masterclass in organized separation. Marine Corps University is the Marine Corps' own distinct intellectual enterprise, instilling its unique warfighting ethos, and allowing the Corps to remain focused on its core mission, relying on its parent service to provide everything from medical and chaplain services to major logistical support. While the two services maintain their own PME ecosystems, they actively exchange students, ensuring joint effectiveness. This model provides a historical blueprint for how two distinct services can thrive through a combination of institutional independence and pragmatic, shared support.

Foreword

Whatever final educational architecture the Space Force ultimately builds to meet its congressional and operational mandates, Air University's path forward is clear. We will aggressively hone our focus on the art and science of air warfare. At the same time, we will remain an always-available, collaborative DAF partner, ready to support the Space Force with specialized graduate-level education, DAF-level programs, and shared infrastructure.

The integration of all domains is essential for modern combat operations and is pertinent to all military education institutions. The deliberate evolution of air and space education into distinct paths is not a sign of division, it is a hallmark of strategic maturity. It is a recognition that true mastery in domains as complex as air and space requires dedicated focus, a principle understood by pioneers like General Muir S. Fairchild who guided the establishment of Air University. Today, we empower each service to cultivate deep, native expertise, exponentially enhancing the lethality and effectiveness of the entire Department of the Air Force. The Air Force and Space Force, born from a shared heritage and bound by common purpose, are moving forward together with the entire Joint Force—separate, but unified. This is how we will provide our nation with the integrated combat power required to compete, deter, and win now and into the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel H. Tulley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

LT GEN DANIEL H. TULLEY, USAF
Commander and President, Air University

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