

# USAFA Board of Visitors Meeting

December 8, 2025

## AI TRANSCRIPT

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### [00:00:00.000] - Raquel Rimpola

All right. I think we have the chairman already back as a panelist. Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the December eighth Committee Meeting of the US Air Force Academy Board of Visitors. My name is Raquel Rimpola. I'm the designated federal officer for the board. Before we begin, I would like to share a few administrative notes. This meeting is held via virtual meeting that's open to the public with a link posted on the USAFA Board of Visitor website. The agenda as well is posted to that website. This requires us to record the meeting participants, and we would appreciate it if you could log your first name and your last name when you register. This is especially important for those who have submitted public comments as we will be switching your profiles to enable you to speak during the public comments section of the meeting. At this point, I have confirmed that we have met the quorum for this meeting and declared this meeting open. I welcome our chairman, Congressman August Pfluger, to share his opening remarks. Over to you, sir.

### [00:01:00.000] - Congressman Pfugger

Thank you very much, Raquel. And I want to make sure that all of our members from the administrative meeting have come over and joined us. Can you confirm with me that those that were in attendance in the administrative session are, in fact, on with us?

### [00:01:21.320] - Raquel Rimpola

Yes, sir. I'm checking. Sir, maybe another two minutes.

### [00:02:09.220] - Congressman Pfugger

Hey, Raquel, this is Congressman Pfluger. On this Zoom workplace. I'm not seeing an option for a camera.

### [00:02:21.860] - Raquel Rimpola

You should be able to see it at the bottom right, sir, but we'll double check if Mr. Jeffrey can check also. Perhaps not a panelist, but a co-host for congressman's speaker. Thank you.

**[00:02:36.940] - Congressman Pfuger**

Join as a panelist is what it says now.

**[00:02:40.260] - Raquel Rimpola**

We'll get you updated, sir.

**[00:02:57.460] - Congressman Pfuger**

Okay, I am seeing that now. And just want to confirm that everybody that was in the administrative meeting is also, because I'm not seeing a bunch of the names that were there of our board members. Raquel, if you can help me by admitting the other board members.

**[00:03:38.280] - Raquel Rimpola**

Yes, sir. I think I have about three left, sir, if they indicated first name and last name, sir. We're getting there. Sir, we're still pending two more, Mr. Dan Clark and Ms. Dina Powell, but I'll reach out to them via email. Everyone else from the previous meeting is here except for the two.

**[00:05:20.120] - Congressman Pfuger**

Okay. We'll go ahead and get started. That transition from Teams to Zoom has caused some Give you some delays there. Good morning. I'm congressman August Fleur, and proud to be the chairman of the Air Force Academy Board of Visitors. The US Air Force Academy Board of Visitors meets today for the second time this year for an update on action since our last meeting in August, and together additional information to shape our report that we will submit to the Secretary of War. Recording in progress. Looking ahead, we will hold our next in-person meeting here in Washington, DC, in February, and we will hold a virtual meeting later in the spring to deliver a second report to Secretary Hegseth in the summer of 2026. Over the last several months, the Board has worked diligently with a clear-eye mission to help ensure that the United States Air Force Academy continues to produce the world's finest officers who are prepared to lead and defend our nation.

**[00:06:23.500] - Congressman Pfuger**

And the Board is executing the President's vision to restore America's fighting force. We are committed to ensuring the Academy is a merit-based institution that develops disciplined, innovative, and service-minded leaders for the Air Force and the Space Force. To that end, we are also continuing our comprehensive review of the Air Force Academy's curriculum, the military training philosophy, and the athletic programs. The board has spent the last four months meeting with graduates, stakeholders, and outside groups, including representatives from higher education associations. As we approach the next budget cycle, I look forward to advancing the Air Force Academy's priorities through the National Defense Authorization Act and the appropriations process. We are interested in hearing about any legislative authorities or resourcing needs that are essential to the academy. And I'm proud to highlight that the Academy received high ratings in the recent US news and World Report's best College rankings, which is a testament to the enduring quality and rigor of the academic programs. Additionally, the Academy had multiple engineering programs ranked in the top 10 for their specialties. So we're very proud of that work and want to continue in that vein. I want to address a couple of things as we got to this meeting and as we are preparing for this meeting, that there is an area of concern that this board wants to work with the Air Force Academy, wants to work with the Department of the Air Force.

**[00:07:58.820] - Congressman Pfuger**

And as we submitted I had questions for record to the academy on September 16th, 2025, with an agreed upon suspense date of November 21st, 2025, I'm concerned about the Air Force Academy's timeliness in responding to the Board's questions. These questions, for the record, are essential for the Board to fulfill our mandated responsibilities and report to the Secretary of War, the Secretary of the Air Force, the Senate Arm Service Committee, the House Arm Service Committee, and our elected leadership. Unfortunately, the suspense date was not met for responding to the questions for the record, and nor did the academy utilize the agreed-upon process for requesting an extension. I understand that the government shutdown may have prevented all of the questions from being answered on time. However, the decision to not submit any responses on time really hindered our ability to conduct our statutory duties and provide the Secretary of War with our assessment. And in fact, we did not get the questions, and for the record, the answers to those and the responses until late Friday night or early Saturday morning, which really doesn't give a lot of time for our board members in their schedules to consume the data and synthesize it and be prepared for a discussion.

**[00:09:21.900] - Congressman Pfuger**

So I hope that we will rectify that going forward. And I look forward to today's discussion on academics, our faculty Decomposition, Civilian Faculty Departments and accreditation. And it's

imperative that the board understand if civilian faculty departures have impacted the academy and how they have done so. The academy must retain its gold standard of academic excellence. We all agree on that, and I think that this will be a good, healthy discussion. I'd like to also mention that in addition to our board members that are dialing in today that have been appointed, we do have Senator Kevin Kramer of North Dakota, who's also joining us. And Senator Kramer chairs the Senate Armed Services Committee, a subcommittee on air and land. And Senator Kramer is an advocate for our Air Force. I want to thank him for attending today's meeting and anticipate that he will soon be a board member. Finally, I want to take a moment to honor a cherished friend and a colleague that we lost this September, just almost immediately after our August meetings in Colorado Springs. Charlie Kirk was a presidential appointee on the Board of Visitors, and the US Academy Board of Visitors and all of America mourns the tragic death of Charlie Kirk, who was murdered, assassinated in a horrific act of political violence.

**[00:10:41.240] - Congressman Pfuger**

Many of us had the opportunity to meet with Charlie at our board meeting in Colorado Springs, and we remember well his commitment to advancing the academy, to inspiring the next generation of service members, and truly enjoyed watching him interact with cadets. Charlie's passion to support the cadet wing was evident. And I know that I speak for our entire board that we were so honored to serve alongside him. His loss is profound, and I ask the US Air Force Academy community to continue to pray for the Kirk family, his wife, Erica, and their children, as they navigate the unimaginable loss of their husband and father. Political violence truly is from the pit of hell and has no place in this country, regardless of what side of the aisle it happens on. And I think it's appropriate that we all condemn those acts of violence. Charlie's closing comments at the board meeting were about American exceptionalism, and they inspired all of us. And in fact, he said that he wanted to know that cadets who were willing to attend the Air Force Academy, willing to give their lives in the defense of this great nation, that they knew why this country was special, that they knew why what they were serving was so incredibly important, and that the country that they were serving, that they had a deep love for it.

**[00:12:00.000] - Congressman Pfuger**

And I think that was really a very profound statement that he made and one that I personally will never forget. So we welcome everyone to this meeting, and we're almost back on track. Dr. Rimbler, is there anything that you'd like to mention?

**[00:12:25.420] - Raquel Rimpola**

No, sir. Nothing to add to your comments, sir. We're happy to move forward with the meeting, sir.

**[00:12:32.140] - Congressman Pfuger**

Okay, very good. And for our board members, there will be time to discuss and have comments. But at this point, we'll go to the next section. And we welcome General Bauer and the United States Air Force Academy Superintendent for his update, and then questions for the record to follow that.

**[00:12:57.840] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

Good morning, Representative Pfuger. How do you have us?

**[00:13:01.160] - Congressman Pfuger**

We've got you loud and clear.

**[00:13:02.920] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

Outstanding. Good morning, and appreciate everyone's time for dialing in as we move forward. And thank you for those opening comments, and we acknowledge all as we move forward. And sir, the intent today for my opening comments is to give you an update on the Cadet Chapel, as you so highly note in recognizing Mr. Kirk, that that was also a deep passion for Mr. Kirk as well. So we want to start off with that update.

**[00:13:27.980] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

And then give an update of where we are at the Air Force Academy with Restoring America's Fighting Force. We'll give an update, and then we will turn to SAF/MR for as they have also assessed us. Then we'll talk about the personnel reductions that have been met throughout the United States Air Force Academy. And finally, a quick primer on the accreditation process. And so with that in mind, I'd like to go slide, please, and talk about an update on the Cadet Chapel. And I would like to turn to General Miller from Air Force Civil Engineering Center, who is the lead for the Cadet Chapel. So, General Miller, over to you, sir.

**[00:14:07.660] - Brig General Pat Miller**

Yes, sir. I'll bring you General Pat Miller here. Just a quick calm check before I begin talking. Good to go. All right. Thanks, sir. So again, this is Brigadier General Pat Miller. I'm the Commander for the Air Force Civil Engineer Center. I've also got online with us Brigadier General Connie Young. She is the Commander for the Air Force Installation Contracting Center. And the two of us are

charged with making sure we continue the Chapel Restoration Project moving forward, keep things going.

**[00:14:38.890] - Brig General Pat Miller**

I will tell you, we've made a lot of progress since the Board of Visitors meeting when you all had the opportunity to tour the Cadet Chapel. I won't litigate the history on it while you were out there. You were probably informed of the asbestos issues that pushed a major delay, and then some of the alignment issues with the steel structure that pushed a second a large delay. Those two issues combined account for about a four and a half year push to the right on the project. We are now at the point where we are anticipating doing our water testing to confirm that everything works, and then we'll be able to explode across the rest of the chapel and continue to make great progress moving forward. We can go to the next slide, please. When you're out there, you saw the affectionate big box surrounding the chapel. And hopefully you got an appreciation that although we refer to it as a white box, it's not like curtains that are draped over the building. This is a building constructed over top of a building. And it's doing a lot of great things for us to keep the contractor moving despite the diverse weather and climate issues that happen out there.

**[00:15:46.780] - Brig General Pat Miller**

That contractor has the ability to press forward no matter what the conditions are. And it also ensures that as we take the exterior off of that chapel, it is not exposed to the element further causing damage that we're trying to repair since that water damage has started from initial construction. If you go forward one more slide, I want to talk some of that significant movement. Post-board of Visitors' meeting, the Secretary of the Air Force had pulled together a meeting with myself, General Young, and some of the senior leaders within half and staff, just to talk about the Academy Chapel, and mainly to say, Team, you've got our support. Let me know where we can take down barriers to accelerate progress on this project. We had a lot of good conversations, and that resulted in the memo that you see on the left-hand portion of this slide, which freed up some maneuver space for the team to press on acceleration. Post that discussion, the Undersecretary of the Air Force went out, and General Young and I had the opportunity to tour him in-depth. We spent about two hours on the chapel site, going all the way in the inside up to the eighth level of the scaffolding, working our way down through the Protestant and Catholic areas, Then going on the outside, we also put them on a man lift and put them up on the outside so that you can see and gain an appreciation of what it takes for the joint sealant and the weather resistant panels, the cladding, all the things that it takes to put that exterior back together to get us back to a water tight, water resistant exostructure on that chapel.

**[00:17:22.280] - Brig General Pat Miller**

Very important because that's what brought us to where we are today. He came out of there with a better appreciation and again reiterated Secretary's direction of, you've got the full force of the half and staff behind you as we work through acceleration. And the memo outlined several things. I want to highlight where we're at on a few of those issues. One is strengthening that project management team. We now have a dedicated Air Force Air Force 06 Civil Engineer out there as a project manager on site. We also adjusted our contracting team that is supporting it. So we've got a dedicated contracting entity, currently a Major and a National Sergeant geared towards supporting that team. And then we are adding a captain in December, and it will switch to a major in the summer. That officer that we're adding to that team, this is somebody that the Air Force invested in to send them out for a graduate degree in construction management, project management. So we're capitalizing on that investment that the Air Force made in this individual, and we're putting that skilled investment out on that Academy project management team. And then we were rounding that out with the civilians.

**[00:18:30.470] - Brig General Pat Miller**

We will have three on site as well as the contracting team and dedicated support. And so those are some things that we're doing to strengthen the overall project management side of there. As far as overcoming bureaucracy, we looked at some of the processes that take time. And that time ends up adding time to the contract or adding cost to the contract. And those are things like negotiations, modifications, where we have to go for different approval levels. And we really streamline that process to make sure that as we work through the contract stuff, the modifications, the approvals, we are doing that as fast as possible. And so that's aligning the team with the right mission to accelerate this project. As far as operationalizing the deal team, this deal team is something that the Office Secretary of War has and really looks at different contracts that are out there, evaluates finances, figures out how we can streamline efforts, where we can make some to bring the schedule from right to left to make things go faster. That team is actively engaged. As a matter of fact, today, part of that deal team is out in Kansas City with the contractor and our contracting team to dig through some of those financials, to understand how the project is being expensed, reimbursed, and take a look at that schedule moving forward.

**[00:19:53.640] - Brig General Pat Miller**

That is setting the stage for what I will quickly drop down to that modification, acceleration modification bullet. That will set the stage for the modification negotiations that are going to happen later this week. And so our contracting team, our project management team, and the contractor will come to San Antonio. And we will engage in two days of face to face negotiations in response to an acceleration mod for what it's going to take to bring that schedule from right to left, looking at things like increased labor force, crashing the schedule, Fully understanding the

critical path and identifying how we can maneuver that critical path to move things right to left, take a look at the supply chain. Everything that's out there, we told them, look, nothing is off the table. No holds barred. If it's possible, let us know. Put the decision in our court. And so we put out a request for a proposal. The contractor has replied to that request for a proposal. We have had multiple small group iterations on that request throughout the process, and the official negotiations will take place later on this week. So we're excited to see where that acceleration model will take us from the current completion date and moving that left and getting us to something that we are happier about.

**[00:21:12.020] - Brig General Pat Miller**

None of us are thrilled with where we are with the cost and schedule on this contract, but we are working hard to accelerate that from right to left. And so the deal team is helping that out. The elevate supply designation, that's something we're doing within the contracting and supply world to put a code on. If there are parts or pieces for this project that are getting hung up in manufacturing, this can accelerate the priority of that. And so we're doing everything we can possible to try and bring that schedule from right to left. And then the last piece, as we look at the remaining dollars that we may need for this contract, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, one of the flexibilities with that act is it is not one year money, it is multiple year money. And so that helps us in that negotiation process. It helps us overcome some of that bureaucracy because that money has longer time to be expensed. And then if we don't use it all, we can put it off to other projects and not risk losing that money. So it gives us more flexibility and more buying power and negotiating power by using funds that were allocated for facility sustainment, restoration, and modernization.

**[00:22:22.120] - Brig General Pat Miller**

And then the last thing we're doing is working hard on the public messaging and increasing engagement, whether that's tours like the Board of Visitors tour, Tours with the academy graduates, tours with current cadets, the community, but getting them out there and seeing what's going on inside this white box. Because that white box, the barrier that it does pose is folks can't see progress. And so by getting folks into the box and seeing it, we're hoping to increase that public messaging. And then what we want to do is start to tell a story of the chapel restoration in parts and pieces. One of the strategies that we're looking at is 2-3 minutes, I think, YouTube videos, where we take an element such as the weather resistant panel, something that was value engineered out of the original project, and highlight why this is important, what it's going to do, and how it improves project and give small pieces. Another example, the joint sealant. Everybody's culked a tub. And when you hear about sealant, you think, oh, that's just like culkg my tub at home. And it's not. It's more complicated than that. But telling that story in small sound

bites, increasing that messaging to the public to let them understand what's going on inside the box we think is important, and we'll eliminate some of those questions.

**[00:23:40.130] - Brig General Pat Miller**

It won't make everybody, again, thrilled or happy, but at least they see progress and understand what's going on inside the box instead of that being an enigma. Next slide, please. As we go forward, I just want to show some of the remaining milestones here on the exterior. The next big milestone is that water testing. That The water testing is something we're going to do next week. What the water testing is geared towards is it's taking an entire section, as you see that picture on the right, it's going to take an entire section between those two spires from top to bottom. It will be complete It will have the windows installed, the weather resistant panels installed. It will have everything done there. And then we are going to water test that. It's that testing of the proof of concept. And once we know that we are good, that that meets, now we know

**[00:24:37.720] - Raquel Rimpola**

Sir, we lost audio. Do you have us? We have the USAPHA Cag office on. We hear you loud and clear.

**[00:24:57.560] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

Representative Pfluger, I sense that we've lost General Miller. With your concurrence, we'll move on to the next portion.

**[00:25:06.600] - Congressman Pfugger**

Yeah, that'd be great. We can come back to that if we need to.

**[00:25:10.820] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

Okay. For my team, if we can check with General Miller's team, see if we can get him back connected Please, please. Okay. Yes, sir. Now, I would like to give you an update, as we did last time, on meeting Restoring America's Fighting Force 4. As discussed last time, we had established three task forces to make sure we were complying with Secretary of War and POTUS's guidance on Restoring America's Fighting Force. The first was curriculum inside of the dean of faculty. The second was overarching curriculum throughout the entire academy Experience, think Commissioning Education, Center for Character and Leadership, Development, Physical Education, and then finally, Facilities. We have since added a fourth task force, as reported last time. Our confidence is high that we are reviewing this appropriately and making the

appropriate changes, but we also know that we are going to find new things we need to address. The fourth task force we found was reviewing all of the surveys that occur at the United States Air Force Academy to ensure they are also compliant. And so I'd like to turn it over to two of my task force leads to just give a 2-3 minute update on how they approached it, starting with Colonel Hastead, acting dean on a review of the curriculum.

**[00:26:32.140] - Colonel Steve Hastead**

Good morning, everyone. I'm Colonel Steve Hastead. And just following up, thank you all for your time and for being here. Following up on some of the questions from our in-person POV here at the Academy a number of months ago. We led them to a very deliberate and comprehensive curriculum review process led by three 06s, each with different subject matter expertise, funneled everything through a large language learning model to identify anything that might be not in compliance with the executive orders and the direction on Restoring America's Fighting Force. Through that process, we then broke that out further to push down to individual subject matter expertise at each department level. Ultimately, I think we provided the same summary then, but it resulted in a number of changes. And thanks to the Bov, we had some follow-up queries from a course of instruction review on some word searches. There were areas where we had corrected and revised the curriculum that were not caught up across all pages, reference in our USAPHA course of instruction, the comprehensive document that includes both our academic as well as all academic and training, education, and athletic and military requirements for USAPHA. I think the big takeaway is that we feel confident that we are in compliance with all of this, and we also know that there might still be items that pop up as we identify them, both from internal processes as well as from external stakeholders.

**[00:28:08.220] - Colonel Steve Hastead**

And we will continue to roll those back into the process for more deliberate review to make sure that we remain fully in compliance and very deliberately so. From a curricular perspective, we also just completed our fall session of the Curriculum Review Committee. We'll have recommendations coming to the superintendent and the Academy Board in the next couple of weeks. Some of these are just we have a dynamic curriculum on purpose as the institution continues to evolve to both educational best practices within disciplinary norms, as well as the requirements of us as a National Service Academy. So a lot of those, some of those changes we'll see include things that we're deliberately doing within the realm of AI and adapting our curriculum, how we're revising things. We also have the permanent professor body is engaged in a very deliberate core curriculum review. This will be our first core curriculum review for about 15 years. We have Koa that we've presented to the superintendent recently. He is still considering, but looking at what we want to make sure we are doing deliberately from a core for all students,

as well as potentially creating some space for additional requirements as the institutional and national requirements for our academy continue to be dynamic.

**[00:29:26.620] - Colonel Steve Hastead**

All focused on the warfighters to win, leaders of character and and critical thinkers to adapt. Sir, if there's anything else you need me to jump into there.

**[00:29:34.750] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

Thank you very much for all that. Ms. Block, if you would give a quick touch point on how we would do our facilities.

**[00:29:39.620] - Jennifer Block**

Good morning, Representative Fuller, and to the Board of Visitors. My name is Jennifer Block. I'm the executive director of athletics, and I was the task force leader for the facilities review. I did not have to use AI, but I did walk about 20,000 steps during my task force review within a couple of days. So I'm from the athletic department, so that made a lot of sense, but I got this one. Within a couple of days of the executive review, we formed a task force. I had a cross-functional team that had a couple of first sergeants and a couple of attorneys and then members from every mission unit, major unit lead. We looked at all the executive orders. We had a list of what we were looking for, and then we walked every area of the base. We looked at bulletin boards, common areas, and all the murals and areas where we had things hanging on all the surfaces.

**[00:30:37.100] - Jennifer Block**

We were to ensure strict compliance with all the executive orders. We had a running list of things that needed to be corrected, things that needed to be removed. It was actually a very small list because all the commanders had done a really good job of getting out there and being forward. We had a small list, and then we had a list of things that we were in question that we weren't sure. And of those And that really dealt with people's outer offices and inner offices. And we had a list of things that we ran through our attorneys and then sent up through SAP M. R. To get greater clarification. And so within probably a week of the executive orders, USAPHA was in compliant with the executive order.

**[00:31:17.180] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

Thank you very much, Ms. Block. And now I'd like to turn out to SAP MR, Mr. Scarlett, who we hosted him and his team to also assess our compliance with the executive orders. Mr. Scarlett.

**[00:31:29.320] - Brian Scarlett**

Good morning. Good morning, congressmen, board of visitors, members. My name is Brian Scarlett. Just to give you a little bit of background. This past summer, I'm currently the PDAS in MR, but this past summer, I was asked to come over from the army because I was originally appointed by the President to go over the Army MR office.

**[00:31:48.550] - Brian Scarlett**

And OSW and Wailo asked me to be PTDO in August, in September for Air Force MR. And one of the first questions that Secretary Meink had at me was, Hey, listen, we're still getting a lot of questions of DEI admissions process. We did the RAFT Task Force and we signed it out, but we haven't had any political leadership go out to USAFA to really see if they are in compliant, could I go out? And so myself and my team, we went out for two, two and a half days in August to do a really thorough deep dive to make sure that the whole USAFA was in compliance with the executive orders, also to really look at the admissions process in real detail to make sure that it was merit-based. And then the other one is to hear from people on the ground. And so we did a lot of sensing sessions. And so the culmination of that, in summary, is with respect to the executive orders, we do believe that to the board, I would commit, submit that they are in alliance with the executive orders. General Bauernfeind is doing a very good job of constantly following up.

**[00:33:06.260] - Brian Scarlett**

And that was one of the things that he and I had a good long conversation one on one with is there are going to be little things like the forms that pop up that you might have missed, and proactively and quickly identifying them and rectifying them. One of the things that I appreciate from General Bauernfeind is that in the past couple of months, when there has been something that they have identified, he has immediately contacted with SAFMR and said, Hey, listen, we found something, we are already addressing it. And by the time we've gotten on the books to have a call, it's either addressed and or will be addressed in a matter of days. And so I appreciate that. And So it's not just, Hey, we just checked the box this spring, and we've said it and forget it. They are constantly searching to make sure that they are in compliance. So the proactive nature of making sure that they understand that there might be something that pops up and constantly staying on top of it as they hear stuff is appreciated and why I believe that we're in compliance there. Within missions, we spent a very long time.

**[00:34:13.100] - Brian Scarlett**

My team spent a whole day reviewing the one to end list of the emissions list for this coming year, as well as the process. And then I spent myself another half day on it as well. And so we spent basically on emissions, specifically a day and a half reviewing the process. And with the changes that they are putting into place, we do believe that it is a merit-based process and that they are taking DEI and all of the issues that the President and our administration has concerns about with that out of the process. Was there some of that there in the past? Absolutely. That was what the previous administration was looking to have. But has General Bauernfeind and his leadership understood the change in direction and where we want to take it? Absolutely. And I think that the process leading into this cycle is going to yield truly a merit-based approach, where when you look at the list that comes out this spring, you'll have confidence that it's merit-based. We are not done reviewing this piece, though, because we are going to... My myself and our team is going to go out this spring to observe some of the days where they actually go through the process of admitting people when the committee meets so that we can watch how they go through their checklist and how they go through their merit-based approach, not just to say on a piece of paper X, Y, and Z is what we do, and this is why it's merit-based, but to actually watch it in practice.

**[00:35:56.500] - Brian Scarlett**

And so my team's plan is to continue to monitor. We looked at the rubric that they're using for merit-based this year. We thought it was very fair and merit-based, but we're going to then watch them as they go through this process to make sure that it is actually executed. And so this is an ongoing process that I think that will yield great results and bring in people that we know when we look at the class for next year, is we can be confident that it's merit-based and it's the best possible class that we could have seen come to USAFA. And there are people that want to be there as well as be there for all the right reasons. The last thing we spent, we had did sensing sessions with cadets, faculty, and athletic individuals. And it was a very, very eye-opening experience. Getting down to the on level and hearing from everybody was really helpful. There were individuals that were very excited with the changes, and especially in students that were excited with the changes in curriculum because it got back to warfighting. And then there were some students that asked why were there changes?

**[00:37:16.700] - Brian Scarlett**

And so I was not surprised about that because that would show the whole depth and breadth of a student body. One of the biggest things that came out of these Sensing Sessions was understanding the why more. This generation wants to know why on everything, and that's not necessarily a bad thing. And General Bauernfeind and I had some conversations about that, and he acknowledged that. And one of the things that I appreciate is actually his speech to the cadets while at lunch was talking about the why and how they're going to start doing that more. It's also

making sure that the leaders that are dumb understand how they communicate to their wing communication. And it's a learning process for those cadets who are the leaders of those wings, how they need to better communicate. And so he and I had some really good conversations of how much does he communicate versus how much does he help feed the information to the wing commanders of those cadets so that they learn how to be good communicators for when they do join the full Air Force. And there's that Balancing Act. But I think that this year is the year of Y, and they're doing a lot better of understanding that.

**[00:38:32.410] - Brian Scarlett**

So when I go back out in the spring, plan to do some more sensing sessions to see if some of the things that were brought up in the sensing sessions then are moving in the positive direction. But overall, what I will say is the executive orders are being executed and there's proactive effort to try to continue to look for this as individuals. The admissions process, we do have confidence on at the Pentagon that the process is merit-based and that we are seeing the change that we need to address some of the cadets' concerns. So with that, I'll turn it over to questions or anything else that the committee has.

**[00:39:15.300] - Congressman Pfugger**

Thank you. General, I know we're running a few minutes behind for the next section, but are there other briefing topics?

**[00:39:26.260] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

Yeah, let me just topically cover those very quickly, sir. Mr. Scarlett, thank you for your time. First of all, as far as civilian staffing at the United States Air Force Academy, yes, we are part of the entire Department of War and Department of Air Force downsizing, but it is being applied across all of the United States Air Force Academy. What I will offer for you is, as we focus on faculty, we have seen a reduction of faculty by 5.5%, but I'm also proud of our dean of faculty team for continuing to generate the capabilities we need to reinforce all majors for the class of 26 are protected. All majors for the class of 27 are protected. No core classes have been canceled. The class of 28 has just started, have just selected their majors as we go forward. And as we did a look back over how many courses we offered, while we say we have 735 academic courses in the course of instruction, how many we offer each semester. We look back on that and what we saw was a 2 % reduction in non-core electives. So our core classes and our majors, core classes are protected. But there is a small seven elective classes that we were unable to support due to those reductions. Our faculty is doing that out of their hard work, their diligence, and their focus on our future leaders. The student ratio, as we look at it, back in '24 was 8. 2 cadets per faculty.

We're now at 8.8, well below the national average of 18 students to faculty at undergrad-only institutions. And then finally, as we look at sev/mil ratios, last summer, we were at approximately 61 % military, 39 % civilian, and now we're at approximately 66 military, 34 % civilian.

**[00:41:33.120] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

And so I wanted to highlight that, but also reinforce that those reductions are being felt across all of the United States Air Force Academy as we move forward and proud of the team as it goes forward. And sir, I'll leave this to you, but I have Colonel Cooper, who can probably give a three-minute 101 on the accreditation process, if you would like. Over. Sure. Go ahead. Thank you. Colonel Cooper, please. Sure.

**[00:42:00.000] - Colonel Cory Cooper**

Good morning, Representative Fluger and Classmate, members of the Board, and ladies and gentlemen. I'm Colonel Cory Cooper. I'm a permanent professor of mechanical engineering, but also the Higher Learning Commission accreditation liaison officer here for the United States Air Force Academy. I'll give a brief overview of accreditation activities at the Academy, US Code Title 10 Chapter 953, as well as our Air Force Mission Directive 12, and our DAFI 36-3501. They expect us to provide exceptional education and an accredited Bachelor of Science Degree that produces intellectually and developed leaders for the Department of the Air Force. To that end, we've been accredited by the Higher Learning Commission, a regional accreditor since our founding on 10-year cycles. Hlc and institutional accreditation validates the quality of an institution's educational programs, but it also looks at the quality of an institution as a whole and goes through the use of criteria, assume practices, and federal compliance standards to do So the four key criteria that someone like HLC looks at are things like our mission, our institution mission, our integrity and ethical and responsible conduct as we go through that mission.

**[00:43:14.080] - Colonel Cory Cooper**

Criteria three is teaching and learning for student success. We demonstrate a responsibility for the quality of our educational programs, learning environments, and support services. And then criteria four, sustainability, institutional effectiveness, resource and planning to ensure that our institution institutions, resources, structures, policies, procedures, and planning enable us to fulfill our mission and improve the quality of our educational programs. Hlc, as a regional creditor, unbounded its region a couple of years ago and is now available to eligible institutions across the US. But other accreditation bodies are able to accredit institutions largely formed by regions, which is a bit historical and legacy. The Air Force Institute of Technology is accredited by HLC. All institutions of higher education in Colorado are accredited by HLC. Our other service

academies based on region, are accredited by the Middle States or New England as appropriate. Our key activities at the academy include a 10-year process. It's called the Open Pathways by HLC, which is reserved for the highest-level mature institutions of higher education. It includes a mid-cycle update at the four-year mark, as well as a quality initiative of which we've just kicked off to do in advance of our 2028 comprehensive review.

**[00:44:36.120] - Colonel Cory Cooper**

In addition to institutional accreditation, we also conduct disciplinary accreditations based on certain majors. The Accreditation Board for Engineering Technology or ABE, credits all of our engineering majors and computer science major. The American Chemical Society has a six-year accreditation cycle as well for our chemistry major. And the Association to Advanced Collegiate Schools of Business currently accredits our management major. Hopefully, this provides a very brief overview of US office accreditation process and our relationships to ensure we continue to provide exceptional education. Is there anything, any questions, sir?

**[00:45:12.520] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

Thank you very much, Colonel Cooper. And Representative Pfluger will stand by any questions on those quick updates. As you know, there's thousands of things going on here at the Air Force Academy. But those four, we work with Mr. Nugent to make sure we address.

**[00:45:28.680] - Congressman Pfugger**

Thank you for that. Thank you for the updates on that. I have a couple of updates. In a private session, the board has voted to establish a couple of different working groups, one on admissions, one on accreditation, and another on the... Let me... Ai, sir. Ai. Thank you for the help on that. We appreciate the updates on those. And as you know, there's been...

**[00:46:04.800] - Congressman Pfugger**

You've dealt with a lot of concerns on the accreditation process, and our board members have fielded questions on that as well. So the intent of this is to work with you and to work with Those throughout the department and maybe even outside voices to come up with different ways that will either help streamline or make it more efficient on all three those topics and how we can offer some different solutions. I know that our board has some questions. I'll kick it off. I would ask our board members to use the raise hand function. And we've got about a half an hour for this, which puts us a little bit behind schedule, but this is important. I'll kick it off. Thank you for the data, General Bauernfeind on admissions. We see that the The data you provided indicates that offers of admission are approximately 1,400 per year. The Navy Fiscal 26 budget has a in-strength of

4,350 mid-shipmen. The Army Fiscal 26 in strength is 4,459, and the Air Force Fiscal 26 is 4,000. So 350 to 450 less than both West Point and Annapolis. Is the Air Force considering an increase of cadet in strength to match Annapolis and West Point?

**[00:47:34.020] - Congressman Pfuger**

And are the 1,400 offers of admission based on a target of 4,000 cadets, or are they based on a higher amount, a higher in strength that matches West Point and Annapolis? I'm sorry. Your last question in reference to Army, can you repeat that again? Just in the last statement. We offer 1,400. Is that based on an in strength of 4000, or is it based on trying to meet an instrength that is more representative or more even with West Point, Annapolis's instrength?

**[00:48:08.480] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

Yes, sir. Sir, I would offer to you that that is a Department of Air Force decision, as I understand it, historically, we went from 4,400 to 4,000 during sequestration in 2018. Army and West Point never made that cut, but we made a sequestration cut as that went forward. As we went forward, and that has not ever returned post-sequestration from 2018. And I'm looking at my teammates who have much longer time here. Colonel Hastea

**[00:48:42.080] - Colonel Steve Hastea**

Yes, sir. That's a great question. And during sequestration, the Air Force Academy took a 100 faculty billet cut. West Point and Annapolis were never cut. Their faculty were never cut. That's why they were able to maintain that 4,400 cadet wing, mid-shipman wing and strength.

**[00:48:58.000] - Colonel Steve Hastea**

Over time, that's why we drew down We just without losing those 100 faculty billets, and it was a combination of mill and civilian billets, we just did not have the throughput capacity from a logistics and a scheduling capacity to support 4,400 cadets. So that was that that cut to the faculty of 100 personnel was immediate during sequestration. The draw down from 4,400 to 4,000 cadets was a little more gradual, but it was capacity management based on our ability to schedule cadets into those classes.

**[00:49:28.920] - Congressman Pfuger**

So what we're hearing is that was from sequestration, and was there never a push to get back up?

**[00:49:37.300] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

To my knowledge, sir, it has not. And what I will attest is we can work with the Department of Air Force in this board to identify the requirements. From my assessment, we have the appropriate facilities to return to a cadet wing size of 4,400 plus. The issue at bear is really the associated manpower, primarily in DF and the athletic Department, as well as some associated O&M to support that. But we can work with the Department Air Force to say if we were to return to that. Now, for that 1,400 offers, we are adjusting that offer because we are looking to onboard approximately, I'm looking at my director of missions, 1,135 appointees.

**[00:50:26.360] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

Based upon historical, those offers will lead to that place of about 1,135 appointees that show up on IDay. But we would love to share with you the resources required to grow us back to match what West Point, Indianapolis, are doing. One caveat to that is we are about this summer to crack open Sijon Hall that will make us a little tighter, but I'm confident that we can figure this out. Over.

**[00:50:59.160] - Congressman Pfugger**

Okay. Yeah, Thank you. And we'll certainly want to continue those discussions and really look into this to see if that's just a holdover, but it's been about a decade or a little bit more. I think Representative Crank from Colorado has his hand up. Jeff, you're still muted. There you go.

**[00:51:30.000] - Congressman Jeff Crank**

Thank you. It was a little difficult getting a hold of that mute button, so my apologies on that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it. I wanted to just talk briefly, and I know I mentioned this to the chairman General Superintendent and I have had numerous discussions about the visitor center, and I appreciate the general taking some folks from the community on a tour through the facility. Just maybe for the record, the total cost of that facility is \$90 million, provided through bonding, through the community, raised a total of about \$322 million in bonds, and this included the Polaris Hotel, which is next to that facility.

**[00:52:22.100] - Congressman Jeff Crank**

There was, as I understand it, in general, you and I have had a discussion about this, about \$6 million that was discussed trust from previous Superintendents, even though it was not written down, that would be put in there for interactive top floor exhibits, I believe. Of course, we've also had it. We had a planned open date of December of 2023 for the visitor center. Right now, we're targeted for May 2026. And I know you, General, have guaranteed and secured that we're still on

track to do that. That's very, very important because of the bonds, right? There's many in the community, including the state of Colorado, the county, the school district there, the library, and several others who have bonded and provided money for this project. And of course, those bonds have to be repaid. And so I just wanted to, I guess, ask the question. I know the state's very concerned about that money being provided so that the original intent that we all agreed to when we did this visitor center is lived up to. Just wanted to have that discussion, throw the issue out there. It's a very important issue. I don't want us to default on these bonds, and I'm very concerned that we might because of the delayed opening of this visitor center. But just to make sure that the commitment to the original plan is there, that we're still focused on that and moving forward, General. Thank you.

**[00:54:09.300] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

No, thank you very much, Representative Crank, and we are still on track to open up on 15 May as discussed, as we held several local leaders that went through that. As with respect to additional US governmental dollars, those were not available to us. There was a request for an unfunded request that did not meet the cut line with the Department of the Air Force. And so we are working closely with our alumni and other benefactors like the Palmaer Group, who put in the glider for the visitor center. And so for a short time, the second deck will be more of an event center. And in the future, those interactive capabilities may come to bear as we work closely with other benefactors for the visitor center. Er. But for the opening on 15 May, purposely aligned to the upcoming graduation, we will have a great interactive process to highlight the United States Air Force Academy, its mission, and its recruiting value to bring in the best and brightest from America as you go into it.

**[00:55:20.420] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

And I'm very appreciative to all the support we've received from the community as well as teams to include our athletics department, where there will be a great opportunity to have a sports shop. The fanatics will be going in there and very exciting. And then also that the visitor center meets all the requirements that are levied upon us by the US government. And so very excited to see that move forward, as well as the whole True North Commons project and see how valuable that is for not only the United States Air Force Academy, but also the city of Colorado Springs and the State of Colorado. And we have responded to the State of Colorado, and we expect to hear a response by 18th of December. And so we look forward to continuing to partner as that moves forward. And thank you for your support on this, sir. Over.

**[00:56:14.180] - Congressman Jeff Crank**

Thank you. And if I could, Mr. Chairman, I appreciate that, General, and I do really appreciate you hosting a couple of meetings there and a tour of the facility for members of the community. There's a lot of stakeholders in Colorado Springs and in the State of Colorado who put significant resources into this, and in some ways, gifted that as a gift to the federal government and to the US Air Force Academy.

**[00:56:42.020] - Congressman Jeff Crank**

So I want to make sure that the original intent of that is followed. And I would just, as a final point on this, maybe suggest that we do perhaps talk to all the folks who were in the room when those initial discussions were had. And I realized that maybe there wasn't a written down commitment that certain things were going to be done. But I think there was an understanding. And so we move forward with \$322 million worth of bonding on these projects. And we just need to make sure we're following that original intent, because even though the military now owns this facility, the taxpayers of the United States now own it, there's a lot of other stakeholders who put money into it and paid for this facility. No knowing that we were going to come up with certain things at the end. I want to make sure that we're following through on that. But thank you so much for your ability to continue to work on this issue. Thank you.

**[00:57:43.920] - Congressman Pfugger**

Thanks, Representative Crank. I think let's go to Representative Bacon from Nebraska.

**[00:57:53.040] - Congressman Bacon**

Thank you, Chairman. My question to the general is this. We all have different roles on these boards. I've tried to emphasize on mine, getting funding for particular needs of the academy. What would be the two or three top things you would like us to work on when it comes to this next year's defense appropriations and the NDAA? Thank you.

**[00:58:18.420] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

Representative Bacon, if I could, I would like to follow up on the record on that response to make sure that I'm not just giving you off the cuff answers. And I'd also I'd like to work with the Secretary of the Air Forces team to respond on that. But I think we've already teased to that is, is there a desire to return the Air Force Academy to the past force structure that we had? And that's a Departmental decision as that moves forward and the associated manpower that goes with that. Also with that would be the required procurement lines to sustain more of the high-end stem equipment that is needed in many of our academic departments. Many of our devices are now procurement items and not O&M items, and we just need to be able to sustain that more

fulsomely. Then I would say, finally, is putting pen to paper with a better definition of what is a 50-year look of the sustainment of the Air Force Academy.

**[00:59:27.940] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

It was an academy that was built out over about 10 years. Each of the buildings about a 50-year design life cycle. All of them well past that now. And how do we now spread those out so that we can continue to refer the amazing installation that the taxpayers have given us. Once we're done with Sijan, do we go to Vandy next or to Fairchild? At what point do we get back down to the Cadets in the ACM? When do we get the the boiler plant redone and brought back out of the 1950s into the 2030s and have those type of conversations. Representative Bacon, we owe you a more defined detail on that, and we will work with Department of the Air Force to work that for you. Over. Just as you I know. I've worked over the last nine years. It's been my primary emphasis. What can we do? What can we help us in this approach process and the NDA to make sure we're hitting the needs that you got? And I think we have a great record of doing it. With that, I yield. Thank you very much, Representative Bacon. Thank you.

**[01:00:34.700] - Congressman Bacon**

I'll continue with an additional question, General Bauernfeind. Thank you for the data that you provided. The board, and it Regarding the faculty, the academic faculty stated that in the past, from 2016 to 2024, that we had 50 new civilian instructors that were added, but only in the military, faculty decreased by four in the same period. My question for you is, were there new requirements that led to the increase of civilians and the decrease in military? And is USAPH a permanently resourced for these personnel or were these temporary?

**[01:01:22.120] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

Sir, I'm going to turn this over to Colonel Hastead for first answer, and then I'll follow up overall.

**[01:01:28.680] - Colonel Steve Hastead**

Yes, sir. Thank you for the And so really, it's pretty dynamic. So if we looked at our new faculty orientation, the number of members that we brought in for this last academic year, we had almost 80 new military faculty officers coming in, and that includes some of our sister service exchange officers, and 15 to 20-ish new civilian faculty. The military faculty are more fungible in that generally, when we're hiring them, not based by AFSC, but by their advanced academic degree specialty. So we have a little more flexibility disability in when we have some dynamic shifts in enrollment or requirements, our military faculty are where we surge and move them around from an academic Department perspective.

**[01:02:11.140] - Colonel Steve Hastead**

Some of the increases that we saw were less of a permanent increase. They weren't conversions from... We did do some military to civilian conversions within the last 8 to 10 years just because we didn't have an inventory of active duty officers with the appropriate AADs to support those disciplinary alignments. Thinking particularly of some of our... Like the English Department, we have a tough time retaining an active duty military pipeline to continue to flow officers back into that academic specialty. So we ended up converting some of those positions from military to civilian just because there's not the inventory on the active duty military side to support that. I think we go back to the superintendent highlighted earlier, the military to civilian faculty proportions were about currently 66 % military, 34 % civilian, with 493 teaching faculty positions on our UMD. Some of that flexibility, sir, coming to your earlier question, if we were to retarget and through coordination and alignment with staff to get us back towards a 4,400s N-Strength Cadet wing, then we could certainly address more of the proportions of built to sieve faculty within that broader construct, depending on requirements and resourcing.

**[01:03:35.660] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

I'd like to follow up to one of the changes we've made at the academy is we have elevated and reinforced our military faculty development pipeline. In the past, it was a good pipeline, but it tended to be handled by each department. And we wanted to bring the power of the headquarters working with Department of the Air Force and Air Force Personnel Center to ensure that we were highlighting the prioritization of returning those military members who we had invested in for master's programs and PhD programs for their required paybacks at the United States Air Force Academy to bring in not only that subject matter expertise, but also that operational experience that is so valuable in the classroom. And then the final thing that we continue to work is we see that there is a very strong cohort of academic excellence in our reserve and our guard components. And we're working closely with Air Force Personnel Center and Department of the Air Force for the future of how we can take advantage of that expertise that is in the total force. Over.

**[01:04:49.160] - Congressman Pfuger**

Yeah. Thank you for that. So it sounds like there wasn't a new policy that was put in place, but it was a combination of factors that led to the dynamics in the data that you sent. And my follow-up question is, does the Air Force have enough military personnel to replace civilian faculty that have departed at this point in time?

**[01:05:18.820] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

Sir, I think it's appropriate that I defer that to the Department of the Air Force to answer. From my perspective, I think that if we work with the Department of the Air Force, we have opportunities As discussed, the Total Force is a great example of that as we lean forward. But some of the questions we got to work with the total force is just our total force is looking also for a commitment. They're not looking for 30 days of mandate. They're looking for a three-year commitment. And so how do we work with the Department of the Air Force to identify that requirement and get support from the Department of the Air Force over?

**[01:05:56.700] - Congressman Jeff Crank**

Well, thank you. It's obviously something that that the Board of Visitors wants to continue to stay in touch with and understand. We definitely understand how long it takes to train a PhD. And I think that there are, I think the Secretary of War has had similar questions and wants to understand not just the composition, but the way that the hiring happens and the type of specialties that you need and the resources to deliver, as we mentioned, the highest academic quality that we possibly can.

**[01:06:34.540] - Congressman Jeff Crank**

But we definitely want to stay on top of this. And to my colleague, Don Macon's previous questions, I mean, these are the types of things that we would like in a presentation like this, for you to advocate to us and ask us for help on. As the statute clearly says, that we have appropriators and different members of HASC and SASC as part of this board. So you have a captive audience that's listening. And so we expect that in the next meeting, that as part of your presentation, that you will ask us for help on the things that you need. And please do come prepared to do that so that we can be helpful. Let me pause for just a second to see if there's any other board member questions. Dan Clark, go ahead. Dan, I think you're still on mute.

**[01:07:34.020] - Stoli Nikolai**

Yeah, Mr. Chairman, this is Mr. Nikolai. Can you hear me?

**[01:07:41.140] - Congressman Pfugger**

Yes. And Stoli, I'll get to you in just a second. Dan, if you're-

**[01:07:46.180] - Dan Clark**

Yeah, I just have a specific question while we're on the concept and idea of appropriations. A specific question for you, Colonel Jenn Block. It's good to hear you, and thanks for all you do.

**[01:07:57.820] - Dan Clark**

From an athletic perspective, When we start talking about growing the academy or doing what we need to do, take it to the next level. I understand when the athletic corporation was established, certain funds were appropriated as seed money. So I have two questions. Is the athletic corporation still receiving appropriated funds to take it to the next level? And my second question is, what do we need to do to fund and continuously move the athletic department forward from a financial perspective, a supportive perspective? How can we get involved as a board of visitors to make sure that Nate or any of the coaches don't feel handcuffed in what they're trying to do in recruiting and pushing forward that highly competitive visibility piece that the athletic department and the sports teams bring to the academy. Over.

**[01:09:01.840] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

And I'll open up there, Mr. Clark. And as I understand it, AFAAC is still funded at 75 % from appropriated funds, and that has been held. There was an origination of to slowly decrease that over time, but that's been held at 75 % for several years. And I'll turn it over to Ms. Block for the rest.

**[01:09:23.540] - Jennifer Block**

Good morning, sir, Mr. Clark and to the board. Yes, I agree. General Bauernfeind is correct. There is a great cooperative agreement, and it's a great symbiotic relationship between the AFAAC and the Air Force, and it works really well. And as everybody on this phone call knows that college athletics is extremely competitive, and it is harder than ever to be competitive. But I do believe we do college athletics properly and right, and that we have the resources resources that we need, and we stay true to who we are, and we will continue to be competitive. We bring in the right people with the help from our Colonel Pipes and our admissions team. We will continue to be out. We are resourced properly. We are finding the right Americans to be here and to represent.

**[01:10:19.900] - Congressman Jeff Crank**

Thank you very much. We'll wrap this up with Mr. Nikolai, a question from him, and move to the next section.

**[01:10:33.880] - Stoli Nikolai**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On our MQF questions for the record, more than six or seven were answered by or not answered because of Privacy Act. So I would like to request a private meeting sometime before the New Year. Then I may speak with the USAA legal office to better understand the Privacy Act, and how may we word questions better in order to get some information versus a blanket no? Is that a possibility?

**[01:11:13.080] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

Mr. Nikolai, I encourage us to have that conversation. I look forward to it. I would just ask that we include SAFMR and SAFTC in that conversation as well.

**[01:11:24.660] - Stoli Nikolai**

Yes, by all means. Thank you. And my second question is, we ask about, like Brian Scarlett was mentioning about the DEI and the RAFT Task Force. The academy used to have a five-man DEI office, which was stood down as part of the RAFT message. However, we asked if any of those personnel were still at the academy, and the answer was the five billets assigned to the DEI office no longer exist. There is one individual, a data analyst with no DEI a background who has been reassigned to a different location. However, when I look on the public-facing websites before and after the DEI office, Mr. Dom Angiolo was also part of that DEI office, and now he is currently listed as the Director of Cadet and Faculty Support Assistant Professor of Law. And like I said, he was previously assigned one of the viables to the DE office. Can you confirm that, please?

**[01:12:29.220] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

Mr. Nikolai, I'd like to turn that over to our Chief of Staff who can address that.

**[01:12:36.920] - Leslie Foster**

Hello, sir. Leslie Foster here. Sir, Mr. Angiolo was previously assigned to our J. A. Office, but he was actually never assigned in the office that was Culture, Climate, and Diversity. And then he transitioned from our J. A. Office over to the dean of faculty, sir.

**[01:12:58.480] - Stoli Nikolai**

All right. Thank you for that clarification. I appreciate the answer.

**[01:13:02.600] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

And as I understand, I just want to be clear, we were talking about the headquarters, USAPA DEI office. If I recall, there were five billets. And if I recall, Two of the billets were unfilled, or was it three that were unfilled?

**[01:13:19.520] - Leslie Foster**

There were actually three, sir, that were unfilled. Right. And then two individuals took DRP.

**[01:13:26.790] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

Two took DRP, and then one data analyst that that was assigned to the DEI office we moved to another data analyst position inside the headquarters. So let's follow up on record to make sure that we're very clear with the board of visitors on that.

**[01:13:43.240] - Leslie Foster**

Yes, sir.

**[01:13:45.220] - Stoli Nikolai**

All right. Thank you again.

**[01:13:46.460] - Congressman Pfuger**

Thank you, Mr. Nikolai. And General Bauernfeind, thank you for the round of questions there, and truly do want to use this period in our next meeting to hear you and the priorities.

**[01:14:01.020] - Congressman Pfuger**

I think Representative Bacon said it very, very well that this is a great opportunity for the academy and the department to advocate to the board for things that you need, resources that you may not have or that you think you can identify that would help the mission. And so I'll look forward to that in person in DC at the next meeting, but very excited to introduce Dr. Paul Schwinnison, who not only is a classmate of mine, But one of the takeaways that we had coming out of the August meetings there on site at the academy was a real question just on how can cadets continue to be inspired on air and space power and air and space dominance and being practitioners early on. And I think just a general observation from many of us over the last couple of years in light of the The conflict that's going on between Russia and Ukraine is that there is a significant drone effort that's underway in the innovation to change and adapt and keep up with the latest and greatest technology is happening in that conflict, and that we've got 4,000 cadets who are extremely bright

and have great ideas, and we definitely want to leverage and their abilities, but also take advantage of an opportunity for them to innovate and become inspired to be air and space practitioners. So Dr. Schwinnison, thank you for joining us. Thanks for what you do in this field. Over to you.

**[01:15:47.500] - Dr. Paul Schwinnison**

Super. Thank you very much. Comms check. Everybody hear me okay? We've got you. I can hear. Okay. Well, just wanted to wish everybody a happy day after Pearl Harbor Day, 85 years, worth noting in light of the circumstances, and I hope it doesn't set too much of a Cassandra-like tone here, but I do want to emphasize the gravity of our current geo-strategic position vis-a-vis the Academy preparation for it. I'll ask you to just put your imagination hats on for a minute and just ask yourself, Pearl Harbor seems like a long time ago, and more or less irrelevant in terms of current strategy, but I don't think it's inconceivable, and I don't think many people in the room here think it's inconceivable, that an operation like what the Ukrainian SBU pulled off in Russia, the Operation Spider-Web, which many of you remember from headlines, which was the deep strike of embedded drone units throughout the entire Federation of Russia, which, by the way, spans 11 time zones. It makes the US look paltry. The significance of that operation on Russian air power was astonishing and has been likened to a Pearl Harbor moment for Russians.

**[01:17:10.160] - Dr. Paul Schwinnison**

And so thank goodness it happened to our strategic rivals instead of us. But it is not impossible to imagine the same thing happening today. Again, I don't want to sound overly shrill here, but I do want to emphasize this is not an exercise in imagination only. It would be possible, I think, for a squadron of trucks to drop FPV drones onto every tarmac-based F-22 at Langley tomorrow. I don't think the security forces or anybody else would be able to do much about it as they came in and quietly took out large swaths of our air power. You all in the room are far more versed in this than I, but it seems like something we should not ignore. I'll just do a quick overview here, try to keep it a little bit lighter. I didn't want to start off quite so heavy. I show this picture here, it shows my Air Force Academy 2000 belt buckle, along with a safety pin. And I was a history major, not an English major at the Air Force Academy, so I can't probably come up with the best metaphor here. But my daughter, who was in her plea beer at West Point, I tried my best, folks.

**[01:18:27.260] - Dr. Paul Schwinnison**

I tried. She I saw this safety pin on my desk and said, Wait a minute, we have the same safety pin on our laundry bags, which I thought was funny. I have no idea why I kept this as some strange memento from my Air Force Academy days. But it was a stark reminder of just how little changes.

You have West Point and Air Force Academy share the same basic DNA, even down to the laundry bag pins. And that's not a bad Tradition and heritage means a lot. But I do want to remind us all that we've got to look forward. This quote by General Billy Mitchell, at the bottom, hopefully you can all read, just reminds us that we must look ahead. We must think about the upcoming conflict and not look back. I do feel that we are at the very edge of something very radical in the way military campaigns will be conducted. And to the extent that we can prepare our cadets, our future Air Force leaders, for that, I think we have an obligation to do so. And we need to start really emphasizing just how real this is. This is no longer business as usual.

**[01:19:45.920] - Dr. Paul Schwinnison**

This is no longer just a university with a military commitment, but this is a wartime footing, and that we have to be ready for it. Next slide, please. So as As Representative Pfluger has said, I've spent a lot of time in Ukraine, nine trips and counting, ever since the first days of the kickoff of the full-scale invasion. I was slow to this, and I don't like to be an exaggerator, but I have to say nothing seems to be as it was. The war in Ukraine has shifted everybody's basic perceptions of how one applies lethal force, and it has democratized violence in ways that I don't think anybody expected. I want this briefing here to be basically a conversation starter. I don't offer many solutions, if any. I just want this to be a think piece, and I would encourage everybody in the room to interrupt me at any point during this conversation, during this briefing. I want ideas to flow. This is a theme that I'm hoping I can leave with you, is that we need to try to change not only the way we prepare cadets, but the way we need to be starting to think more horizontally, more bottom-up, less hierarchically, and go back to some of the Air Force roots about how to procure weapon systems, how to deploy weapon systems, how to train our very people.

**[01:21:17.840] - Dr. Paul Schwinnison**

Next slide. So talking about strategic context, I don't think I need to remind this audience here that that exquisite weapons just don't mean what they once did. They can, and they can certainly be part of a potent mix. But if we rest on our laurels thinking that billion dollar weapons platforms will carry the day, I think we're in for a rude awakening. We are seeing over and over and over again in the Ukrainian theater multimillion dollar platforms being destroyed by hundreds of dollar platforms from the Ukrainian side and vice versa. We've had Abrams tanks being taken out by \$300, \$300 FVs from the Russian side as well. So I don't really want to dwell on that. I think we all get it. But if you want me to expound, please, again, raise your hand. Interrupt me. I want this to be a free flowing conversation to the extent it can be. Awkward as Zoom may be. And I have to say, some of what I say about the Air Force Academy curriculum, I may have to offer an advanced Nantes mea culpa. I've spent far more time in Ukraine than I have at USAPHA over the

last years, and I've only just recently become aware of the effort at the IFC, the Institute for future conflict.

**[01:22:46.580] - Dr. Paul Schwinnison**

And I have to say, having now had that brought to my attention, I'm gratified to see it. I'm very gratified. I think it's exactly the right effort happening at the intellectual level, for sure. How that translates into actual cadet preparation is an open question, probably within the IFC itself as well. But to go back to this strategy, we're facing a moment, a historical moment, a world historical moment of democratized weaponry. We have built ourselves, the Air Force at large, the Department of War at large, and probably Air Force Academy at the immediate has built a culture of hierarchical weapons delivery done at massive expense and very slow procurement timelines, whereas what is happening in Ukraine is precisely opposite. It's happening extremely rapidly. The iteration cycle is in the order of days, not years. And we need to learn as much as we possibly can from that theater, and we need to do it in an institutionalized way. I think maybe in some ways, if we can try to In fact, if you hit the next slide for me, please. In some ways, it's not about just new things. I think this is about getting back to our Air Force heritage.

**[01:24:11.460] - Dr. Paul Schwinnison**

We need to somehow, and this might be an impossible paradox, but we need to institutionalize a renegade attitude. Our service was built upon the reputations of the cranks and renegades. They saw things differently. They pushed back against establishment established norms, and they saw potential in new weapon systems, and particularly in the value of air power as a strategic concept. And I think we need to try to get back to that however we possibly can. I see, hold on one second, a comment, and I'd love to try to address it real-time. So bear me with me.

**[01:24:53.120] - Congressman Pfugger**

Paul, this is August. I'll just jump in in the interest of time. I think getting to some of the recommendations or thoughts on how the Air Force Academy can leverage what you're saying, because I think we all agree that the world is changing and shifting. And what can we do, especially in the area of drones, to leverage cadets and think in a way that you're saying?

**[01:25:22.880] - Dr. Paul Schwinnison**

Yeah, fair enough. I will pull through. If you hit the next slide for me, we'll zip on. Not that it needs repeating, but this is a shot from the front lines of Ukraine.

**[01:25:36.620] - Dr. Paul Schwinnison**

It marks the transition from standard. This is a 308 sniper platform, which is effectively obsolete these days. Moving the same operator, and now flies a 15-inch fiber-optic spuel drone and does 10 times the damage with one-tenth of training. And so you're going to see this ratio repeated over and over and over again. Next slide. I was shooting from the hip here. I was asked to present some ideas to Fluger's office. I think in many ways, broadly enough, the conceptual framework I proposed here matches largely with what is happening at the IFC already. So I think if there's any takeaway here, it would be, let's try to fuel up what is happening at the IFC already at the academy, try to throw some gasoline on that effort, and really push it into making a market improvement in our cadets leadership posture and the way they think about warfare itself. And again, I just want to emphasize this. We've got to try to encourage a bottom-up warfighter mentality. That's what's happening in Ukraine. It is happening at kitchen tables. Technology design is happening in back garages. It is not happening from large centralized bureaucratic procurement systems. All right, next slide.

**[01:27:06.800] - Dr. Paul Schwinnison**

Okay, next slide after that. And by the way, as a a caveat to everything I just said, make no mistake, the PRC, many of our near peers, are doing precisely this. They are adopting what is happening in Ukraine. They are taking very very, very careful note. And I think this may be our competitive advantage in general as an American society, as a freedom-loving society, is that we tend to prefer bottom-up solutions. We tend to empower individuals. My hope is that the PRC and others are approaching the Ukrainian lessons from the top down, that they are actually trying to institutionalize this in a very top-heavy command-to-control way And I would just beg everyone in the room to, We must avoid that. We have got to play to our advantage, which is to emphasize individual initiative and that bottom-up approach to war welfare, which the Ukrainians are helping to model for us. Some examples. These are literally just spitballing ideas. Joint service drone challenges. It's happening. I was asked by somebody who's running the naval academy's drone program, where was the Air Force Academy team? And I had to tell them, I don't know. I have no idea.

**[01:28:38.320] - Dr. Paul Schwinnison**

It's not there. It's not at the competition. And he joked with me only half jokingly that why would the Air Force, which is supposed to dominate the skies, not have a drone team at that competition? They were at Sandhurst in England on a multinational drone competition, and Air Force was nowhere to be seen. Now, I may be stepping on toes here. Maybe there's other parallel initiatives. I don't know. But that's what I do know is that at the Naval Academy West Point side, they were surprised that Air Force wasn't playing, let alone dominating. Next slide. We'll just move

through some of these ideas. Again, I want this to be a think piece and get some juices flowing. I remember my time as a cadet, and I think, again, this goes back to the theme of this is a real moment. We need to get to a wartime footing. Cadets love to be treated like adults. I think getting them into the mix now, doing some genuine operational travel, get them to work alongside our NATO allies, get into near conflict zones. I recognize the headaches that comes with, but it's time. It is time to get our cadets and our future leaders into the game in a real way, Treat them as adults, give them responsibility, ask them.

**[01:30:04.460] - Dr. Paul Schwinnison**

Ask them to bring their initiative, their ideas, their creativity into this absolutely new domain of warfare. We cannot rest on the idea of indoctrination, indoctrination, indoctrination, we've got to ask them to help build a brand new doctrine that moves flexibly and dynamically the way it's going in Ukraine. Next slide. Ideas It's happening a little bit at the academy already with these adaptation labs, but the idea of inculcating it, integrating the culture of messing around with technology, that to me seems to be the secret sauce in Ukraine, is that everybody is digitally fluent, and they're all messing around. It's the messing around that leads to these rapid iterations. When you have a thousand people who are just messing around with different available technologies and reintegrating them in novel ways, that's where you see dramatic changes in weapon systems. It is not coming from the top. Again, it could be a mixture. I'm not trying to be a pure revolutionary here, but we need to try to adopt and embrace that idea that people are empowered at the lowest level to play with technology and reconfigure things in an evolutionary dynamic way. Okay, next slide.

**[01:31:34.520] - Raquel Rimpola**

Dr. Shoshana, as we switch to another slide, just a reminder, last four minutes, sir. Over

**[01:31:40.470] - Dr. Paul Schwinnison**

Thank you. I will skip this slide then. Give me a little more time for the conclusion. Obviously, leadership integration. This goes back to my point about we need leadership training that is less theoretical and more realistic. We need to get cadets into leadership environments. That means into operational sectors on the US side or otherwise. Let them see, taste, and feel it. There was an earlier slide with Robin Olds. I remember talking with him when I was interviewing him for a history project, and he was saying how thrilled they were when he was at West Point, when they all announced early graduation, because suddenly they went from cadet to warfighter in the blink of an eye. And we need to remind ourselves that that could very well happen in our situation. It could happen tomorrow. Next slide. I'm going to blow past these because they're just ideas. The

idea of creating or emphasizing the Center of Excellence for linking to other types of forward-thinking research laboratories, AFRL, DARPA, RAND. Get these guys on campus. It would be great for the cadets to see and know people at RAND. Why not? It's not impossible. Next slide.

**[01:33:05.660] - Dr. Paul Schwinnison**

Everybody remembers our Ops Air Force summer, I'm sure. I think we should do this even more so in a deeper and frankly longer time frame, maybe something that bleeds from summer into fall. They need more immersion time to really see and feel what's happening in the modern battlefield. Next slide. Integrating it, as you said earlier, with the mainstream university system is a great idea. It's a way for cadets to see what real University students are doing in terms of developing cutting-edge research and technology applications. Next slide. Coming up on the final lap here. In my view, and this is just my humble opinion, the strategic output here would be officers who are genuinely fluent in these new concepts of autonomous weapon systems. They're genuinely fluent in an adaptive approach to technology, and they're working in a joint capacity with their sister services to develop a very, very lethal and frankly, never before seen way of warfare. And we need to ask our cadets to be part of that, not teach them how to do it, but ask them to teach us all how to do it. And last slide, if you could. Again, I want to emphasize that this feels to me very much like a real-world scenario here.

**[01:34:39.770] - Dr. Paul Schwinnison**

I don't think we're years away from a conflict. We might be literally hours away from a conflict, and we may not see it coming. We really may not. Yesterday was a quiet Sunday, December seventh. There will be many more quiet Sundays, and starting next week, we may have it in our lap, and we really have got to try to get our heads wrapped around how to teach and empower our young leaders to really lead this new way of warfare. I would just leave one last thing and propose an action item to the extent that I'm able, that I would happy to be part of a commission, or you can commission anyone else, but to try to get someone who's familiar with what's happening in the Ukrainian theater and in the world's most currently, the most modern battle space, to come to the Air Force Academy and to understand how or if the Air Force Academy is incorporating the lessons from Ukraine, and then get back to this board in a hurry. I'm talking about before the next meeting so that we can try to really wrap our heads and hands around this problem. I didn't mean it to sound so dire. It came out that way, but that's where I'm at, and I'm happy to take questions.

**[01:36:01.160] - Dr. Paul Schwinnison**

Thank you, Dr. Swinnison. We appreciate it. I think what this represents is, as was advertised, not necessarily every solution, but a thought process on how we innovate, how we adapt, how we think iteratively, iteratively about joint doctrine. And we know that the air and space domains are everywhere. There's not a single theater that we're going to be involved in any competition transition or conflict that what the Air Force Academy is training its officers and leaders to go and do will not be involved. They will. General Bannerprine, we'd love to hear your thoughts. I know that you've been working on some thoughts on drones And drones really represent, I think, something that is achievable and a tool that we can use to iterate and innovate and teach people how to think. It's not necessarily just about the end product, but I think that's what this board took away from the last meeting is how can we fold in all of these different things that are happening, the Cyber Center of Excellence, the other things, the initiatives that you have going on.

**[01:37:07.350] - Congressman Pfuger**

So Dr. Shwinison, thank you. And I think maybe we have time for one question. Stoli, Mr. Nikolai, if you don't mind, and then we'll take a break. We're a little bit behind, but we'll catch up later on.

**[01:37:20.920] - Stoli Nikolai**

Yeah, not a question, just a statement that just, I think yesterday, Secretary Hegseth, Secwar, announced a drone dominance program that basically he wants to produce over 300,000 drones by the end of 2027. So I would suggest that maybe the Air Force Academy look into that program and see if there's any money there to fund these initiatives mentioned. Over.

**[01:37:48.260] - Congressman Pfuger**

Great point. Absolutely great point. And General Bauernfeind, let me just yield to you and hear any thoughts before we take a quick break.

**[01:37:58.180] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

Hey, sir. I just want to say thank you to the board for allowing Dr. Shwinnison to brief us. This is a real concern that we have. We've had it for years as we've gone through it, whether it be the replicator program, the drone dominance program. We've got to get serious about how we go through this. So what I would ask to that task is Dr. Shwinnison, if you would mind, I would love to host you so you can see what we are doing from an educational front in the dean of faculty, what we are doing in a training and hands-on approach inside the Cadet Wing, what we're doing in an airspace, just simply how we rail against the archaic airspace system that prohibits a lot of this innovative thing, and how we can take some of the efforts we're doing, prioritize them, fight for the resources, as Mr. Nikolai said, so we can accelerate this.

**[01:38:49.540] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

I think we have all observed what has occurred in Ukraine. We saw what happened at Langley without getting into the details, and it's a serious matter. And so we must get aggressive about air, space, and cyber of those effects, and how we inculcate that in a baseline of all cadets, while we know that we will have some magical cadets that will become those drone team members that go much deeper than everyone else. But thank you very much and look forward to hosting.

**[01:39:24.680] - Congressman Pfuger**

Very good. Dr. Shwinnison, thanks again. Great brief. And Raquel, I think we're probably about maybe 10 minutes or 15 minutes behind. No big deal. I think we'll be able to catch up. The next thing that we have is public comments that are set to start right now. And I think we should offer attendees a little bit of a break, maybe a 15 minute break. So is there any issue with us reconvening at 12:30, keeping the 15 minutes and just reconvening at 12:30?

**[01:40:13.640] - Raquel Rimpola**

No, sir. We should be good to go with that one. So everyone, please come back at 12:30.

**[01:40:29.360] - Congressman Pfuger**

Okay, very good. Thank you. We'll reconvene at 12: 30.

**[01:40:29.940] - Congressman Pfuger**

Yeah. Okay. Dr. Rimpola, how are we looking on getting everybody back in the room? General Bauernfeind. Can you hear me?

**[01:41:28.120] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

Yes, sir. We have you loud and clear. Okay. On the 30-minute warning, ready to receive.

**[01:41:35.480] - Congressman Pfuger**

Excellent. Raquel, can you hear me?

**[01:41:42.000] - Captain Cassidy**

Unfortunately, it appears that Dr. Rimpola got kicked out of the meeting. She's walking back in now. Okay. I'm just going to go down the list to confirm that all the staff, that all the board members are here. Okay. I see Representative Pfluger is here. Mr. Nikolai, are you here? Yes, sir, I am. Representative Bacon, are you here? I'm here. Representative Crank, are you here? I am here. Representative Vazquez, are you here? I'm here. Senator Tuberville, are you here? Here. Mr. Clark, are you here? Here. Ms. Paula, are you here? I'm here. Confirming that all you SOFA members are available for any questions? We are present.

**[01:42:32.120] - Congressman Pfuger**

Okay, great. Thank you so much. And we'll reconvene. And I've got adjusted times here. We'll see we've got about 25 minutes. So I'm going to keep this section to 25 minutes. And I think on the back-end, we can catch up, so we're doing okay.

**[01:42:49.460] - Congressman Pfuger**

I'm pleased to say that we're going to do public comments, and I think it's important for our public and those that have an interest or a stake in the success of the academy are able to have their voice heard. I would like to set some ground rules here. Number one, we will give General Bauernfeind and his team the opportunity to briefly respond. Nine questions for public comment have been previously submitted. I don't know, and don't know whether or not we have all nine that are here, but those have been submitted. So Dr. Rimbel, I'll let you run administratively this piece of it. But I will ask those that are going to speak publicly in the interest of time, as we have done for other speakers today, we will keep it as brief as possible. So I'd like to keep a two-minute timeline on that. And it's important that we do that so we can continue the meeting, hear your concerns, your comments and thoughts, and move to the next speaker while briefly giving the Air Force Academy a chance to respond. So Dr. Rimpola, over to you to run through the order. And I don't have that order, but I think you may have that.

**[01:44:08.280] - Raquel Rimpola**

Yes, sir. Thank you. Thank you so much, sir and board members. Nine comments were submitted by the public, and these are categorized into the themes consistent with the meeting agenda. On the subject of curriculum, we have Professor Thomas Buhly submitting his comments with recommendations for the board to consider. Professor Buhly, you may add me.

**[01:44:30.740] - Thomas Buhly**

Yes, thank you. Audio check, can you hear me?

**[01:44:33.560] - Raquel Rimpola**

Loud and clear, sir.

**[01:44:34.860] - Thomas Buhly**

Okay, very good. So all BoV members have a copy of my submitted letter. For everyone else, the letter is publicly posted at [tierrabuhly. Substack. Com](https://tierrabuhly.substack.com), so you can feel free to grab it there. Along with several further analysis that go into depth about the current problems and a blueprint for a path forward. My letter today addresses three key issues and a few simple recommendations which directly address each. In the interest of time, I'm only going to read portions of this letter aloud. Issue number one, the September 15th, SECDEF memo, recently published at KAA, directed all 3.3 million folks in the DOD to maintain consistent and aligned public communications that reflect the policy decisions made by department's leadership. On November 17th, USOP responded by requiring a new Request for Present Approval Form be submitted in advance of any public engagement.

**[01:45:23.420] - Thomas Buhly**

Several at USAP are intimidated by this new request form in general, and one specific question on it which asks, does content address DEI gender and official DOW positions or policy. My recommendations are, one, remove entirely this one question from the new Request for Presentation Approval Form, two, describe under what specific circumstances that such requests will be denied, and three, articulate via new USAFA policy that in the future, when such requests are denied, that the reason for such denials will be made clear in public. Further discussion is in the letter. Issue number two, USAFA The faculty and cadets do not have confidence in the long-term academic vision articulated by its leadership. Recommendations. One, work the word education back into the USAFA mission statement. Symbolic but valuable. Two, articulate to the BoV why it has been so difficult to fill the one-star dean position. They can since may. And how USAPA plans to fill this position before next semester begins. Three, commit to work with the SECAF to Here's the proposal, Convert the two-star vice superintendent position to that of a long-term civilian SES Provost, with a focus on long-term academic continuity, transparency, and accessibility by both faculty and cadets.

**[01:46:43.880] - Thomas Buhly**

The USAFA This new leadership structure will be akin to the Provost position at AFFET, will report directly to SECAF, and will work in close collaboration with the USAFA Superintendent and Dean. This new leadership structure will assure the public at large that a proper check and balance is in place, providing oversight on USAAF's actions regarding academics. Issue number

three is the hardest. I appreciate that personnel workforce issues are difficult for the whole USAFA community, so let me start with a question. When dealing with the present reduction in force over the last year, has anyone at the Air Force Academy been asked to sign a nondisclosure agreement? Just a yes or no is fine for now. Perhaps the Air Force Academy can provide an answer to this in the BoV meeting minutes in response. If NDAs were used, this might constitute an in the reach of authority, which should be scrutinized by the appropriate DOD IG.

**[01:47:33.900] - Captain Cassidy**

We went to a hotel, got decorated and played games.

**[01:47:40.620] - Thomas Buhly**

We had a hot mic. Okay. Back to you, sir. Appreciate that. Thank you, sir. So the larger topic should be, instead of matter, discussed more openly. I'm glad to see that we're making huge steps towards that today.

**[01:47:57.160] - Thomas Buhly**

I appreciate all the comments that I've heard so far today. Many of them have been right on the money. Notwithstanding the recent 2025 and review post-Recording in progress. Which suggests an overall loss between early April and now of only 491 minus 475 equals 16 faculty, which I believe to be incorrect, the full scope of the ongoing exodus of senior faculty from USAPHA has not really been fully accurately reported, and I think it must be. I have duly reported what little that I know by virtue of my former as a DVP in engineering. Dfme had 24 faculty last year. It has 15 now, and it will have nine by next year. Dfme is responsible for the popular MEK and systems degrees. The systems area in particular is now down to a single dedicated faculty member. This year, DFAS is losing six senior faculty members and one seasoned civilian faculty member. And this year, their important aerospace structures focus area, which spans MEK and Arrow, is losing all three of its senior faculty members. So the scope of these losses is not unique to Mec, Astero, and Arrow. That's just what I know about. This is clearly just the tip of a larger iceberg facing the USASFA academics as a whole, and I think sunlight is the best disinfectant.

**[01:49:13.960] - Thomas Buhly**

So my The recommendations are to report accurately working directly with departmental leadership to collect the necessary info. Report publicly to the BoV, to the HLC, to the faculty, and to the media, exactly how many civilian, DVP, and active duty instructors there were, are, and will be for the last two years now and projected out to next year, which I think we now know accurately, in each of the 20 academic departments at USAFA. With what degrees, PhD versus MS, and with

what relevant USAFA, US Air Force and US Space Force experience, with how much teaching experience and at what military ranks. Overall, also please report what percentage of civilian faculty at USAFA during these periods are seasoned Air Force and Space Force veterans. In light of the answers to that question, realistically, we will report the anticipated effect that these losses will have on available majors and minors, evaporated special focus areas like aerospace structures with zero now senior faculty, core classes, and anticipated class sizes at USAF in the next academic year. With nine faculty members, for instance, DFME, I saw Cory's there, he can speak to this, I don't think DFME can any longer properly deliver the MEC and systems majors as we did before.

**[01:50:28.730] - Thomas Buhly**

If we try, class sizes will be skyrocketing, and we will be setting up our faculty and our cadets, possibly for failure. And of course, failure is not an option. If majors, minors, focus areas, and/or core classes must be cut at the Air Force Academy, articulate by what manner the difficult decisions will be made.

**[01:50:46.680] - Congressman Pfuger**

Dr. Buhl, this is Chairman. I'm sorry. These are great recommendations. Can you please follow up in writing with these? We do need to move to the next person. So please summarize quickly and we'll move on.

**[01:51:00.060] - Thomas Buhly**

Okay. If majors and minors are going to be cut, articulate by what manner these decisions will be made. Will there be a committee and a Blue Robin panel? And how will that work? How do we get buy-in? The last recommendation on point three is confirm hard deadlines by which requested self-study reports will be made available. And can we please have such reports by the beginning of the next semester so we can move forward? So finally, thank you all, and sorry, I went slightly over time, for the our opportunity to address these critical issues facing America's Premier Military Academy. Thank you. Thank you.

**[01:51:43.780] - Raquel Rimpola**

We'd like to have the Is there an opportunity for USAFA Superintendent, General Bauernfeind to respond.

**[01:51:50.140] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

In the sake of time, sir, we will acknowledge this perspective and move on. Over.

**[01:51:59.500] - Raquel Rimpola**

Thank you, Thank you, sir. The next group of comments are on resources, and we received two public comments. I'd like to call on Dr. Anthony Aretz, who has requested for information on plans to deal with faculty vacancies.

**[01:52:19.060] - Dr. Anthony Aretz**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the time. I really appreciate it. I realized my comments have been addressed by some comments made previously in the meeting, and I apologize for that. But as a 1980 Academy graduate, retired Academy military professor of 17 years, and a retired higher education administrator, including two university presidencies, I am deeply concerned about the Academy's ability to maintain HLC accreditation standards given the significant current and future faculty departures. Specifically, I would like to know the plans for dealing with faculty vacancies, especially PhD slots. I have been told the current approach to filling vacancies with active duty military is problematic due to the lack of available academically qualified officers. This is not surprising. When I was a faculty member in the Behavioral Sciences and Leadership Department, we mostly had to grow our own military faculty by sponsoring officers for master's and PhD programs through AFFET.

**[01:53:19.260] - Dr. Anthony Aretz**

Existing qualified military officers were rare, and it was always difficult to get officers released from operational career fields for graduate school with a follow-on academy assignment. It was a continuing challenge to maintain a fully staffed department. The only viable solution I see to maintain HLC accreditation standards is to request additional funding to maintain current staffing levels and to restructure academic programs so current faculty can manage the increased teaching load. And that's all I wanted to say today, but I also want to offer my services in the future going forward, if you think my experience or background may be helpful in solving any of these issues. Thank you.

**[01:54:04.540] - Raquel Rimpola**

Thank you, Dr. Aretz, for your comments. General Bauernfeind, sir. Over to you if you have any comments, sir.

**[01:54:11.300] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

Dr. Aretz, thank you very much for that. I appreciate that perspective in that offer. And again, I just want to reaffirm a couple of things. Classes 26 majors are good to go. Classes 27 majors are good to go. We are only offering 2 % less electives across the board because of our amazing dean faculty team that is making this work out, and our student-to-faculty ratio has only increased slightly.

**[01:54:36.840] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

We do acknowledge the stress, but we're also proud of our amazing team that continues to deliver this going forward. But I would like to turn it to Colonel Haset, our dean of faculty, to address how we're moving forward.

**[01:54:50.240] - Colonel Steve Hastea**

Yes, this is Colonel Steve Hastea, acting dean of faculty. And just to follow up on that, the pipeline in our sponsorship program remains absolutely essential. We are currently in negotiations right now with the SUP's support and through the headquarters, USAFA A1 staff in concert with half A1D, looking at our Afford Air Force Educational Requirements Board to ensure that we are allocated sufficient student manures to not only sustain the requirement for our highly qualified military faculty, that's both at the MS, MA, and PhD level, but also to potentially grow them depending if there are offsets. These are decisions that are not yet made. Still, negotiations occurring at the senior corporate level regarding our ultimate requirements for the Air Force Academy, as well as the resources to support those ultimate requirements. But absolutely, full support that our sustainment and our sponsorship pipeline is absolutely essential to all of our academic programs. And we are still in strong pursuit to make sure that we are at sustainment or increasing some of those eventual faculty resources from the military side.

**[01:56:04.440] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

And I just want to say thank you as well. Always in the time of decreasing resources, it's always tough as to go forward. So if there is opportunities for adjustments to those resource reductions, we would also apply them appropriately to keep us going forward. But I want to attest that I am confident in our dean of faculty team and our accreditation process. Over. Thank you.

**[01:56:29.580] - Raquel Rimpola**

Thank you, sir. We have comments from Dr. Kempt Murphy on his request for review of military and civilian faculty pool. Please keep your comments to up to two minutes, sir. Over to you. Dr. Murphy, unmute button.

**[01:57:02.250] - Dr. Kempt Murphy**

Yes. Are you hearing me now? Yes, we hear you now. Great. At our last Board of Visitors meeting, the superintendent acknowledged that he was going to have to do some civilian reductions in our faculty to the tune of potentially 40 or 50 positions total. K-o-a-a was present at the meeting, our local news channel, and they verified that it is recorded. The concept at that time that he put forth was that we'd be replacing civilian faculty losses with active duty personnel. I've done the research. We've spoke with Colonel Ann Johnson, who's an expert on the reserve forces that could be available to do this along with active duty.

**[01:57:50.540] - Dr. Kempt Murphy**

This plan is completely nonviable. The reason for this is the following. These replacements on the military side would have to meet three criteria. First of all, they have to have advanced degrees in the exact fields needed. Second, their knowledge base has to be highly current, including knowledge of ongoing research efforts in their given specialty. Finally, and most importantly, their commanders would need to be willing to and able to release them to teach at a time when our warfighting assets are already stretched very, very thinly. So recruiters have a name for these people. Basically, they're unicorns. Almost all of our current civilian faculty members are actively seeking employment elsewhere. They're job shopping their resumes via LinkedIn and other forums. We're continuously and slowly hemorrhaging them. To make matters worse, many of our military educators are putting their papers in early. They simply don't want to teach in an academically understaffed, low morale environment. I am requesting that the USAPA Board of Visitors require senior year leadership at the academy to, number one, document that a sufficient pool of qualified military PhD-holding or senior masters-holding educators exists. I want to note one thing, and that is that the Higher Learning Commission, we say HLC, Dr. Aretz noted that, there have now been four formal protests filed.

**[01:59:26.680] - Dr. Kempt Murphy**

I filed the first one, and other ones have been filed since. Basically, the HLC complaint number 3 speaks to this issue that we do not believe that there are enough people available to backfill the losses that we filled and lost in April due to the deferred resignation program and further losses that the superintendent is claiming that he has to do due to budgetary constraints from Secretary Hegseth.

**[01:59:58.960] - Raquel Rimpola**

Apologies, Dr. Murphy, if you could just conclude your comments, sir.

**[02:00:03.460] - Dr. Kempt Murphy**

Yeah. So let me just say that I want to echo with Dr. Buhly that we need a staffing plan. We need to know how we're going to maintain this academic oversight, which is what the HLC will evaluate us on. And I also want to acknowledge Senator Kramer being here, and I want to let him know that Jenny Davis there at SETCF is being kept in the loop on this, and he should definitely take a look at what's going on with this HLC complaint issue. Thank you very much.

**[02:00:36.440] - Dr. Kempt Murphy**

Thank you, sir. General Bauernfeind for your comments, sir.

**[02:00:40.100] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

I appreciate that, Mr. Murphy, Dr. Murphy, as we go forward and acknowledge that Secretary of the Air Force is aware of the HLC complaint. And when we receive HLC's judication, we will also share that with Secretary of the Air Force. But again, I reaffirm that from an accreditation perspective, I am confident in our team. Over.

**[02:01:06.660] - Raquel Rimpola**

Thank you. Moving on to the next topic, climate. On the subject of climate, the board received five public comments. I'd like to call on Ms. Denise Gimple, provided comments with seven attachments on her request to review USAFA due process. Ma'am?

**[02:01:27.220] - Denise Gimple**

Hi. Thank you for allowing me to speak today. I am Denise Gumpel, and my son, Gregor Gumpel, was involuntarily disenrolled because he was considered academically deficient in English at the end of his junior year. Based on subjective and erroneous evidence, he was never allowed to see, understand, or challenge before disenrollment. He needed only 37 points to pass the class, averaged over 80% on his essays, held a 2. 9 overall performance, had zero demerits, tours, or confinements. Yet, Instructor Leah Young failed his essay with zero based solely on a suspicion of AI use and reported it to ARC as fact without notice, evidence, or opportunity to respond. Instructor Young's official statements to ARC falsely reported his submitted work, omitted favorable grades, excluded 95 % of her required coursework, erasing his positive effort and performance made in the course.

**[02:02:24.340] - Denise Gimple**

These omissions and misrepresentations created a false narrative that deprived him of a fair process was with ARC. After ARC made the decision to disenroll him, the allegation shifted to inadvertent plagiarism, again without any evidence. Both these claims were disproven by detection tools and senior university professors. Allowing a glimmer of hope, General Bauer-Fyne granted a Title X re-exam, which Congress mandates to be equal in scope and difficulty to the original. Instead, the exam quadrupled from one text, revisable essay, to four text, multiple blind prompts, two unresimmed, unrevisable, handwritten essays with barely over 24 hours to prepare. Again, he was denied access to see his results. When these decisions can end a career and reshape a life, there must be a moral and ethical responsibility for accuracy, honesty, and fairness. Allowing anything less fails the duty and justice of this academy. Given the recent death of a cadet following disenrollment, these policies could not be more important. Honor and justice cannot be optional. My son believes in this institution, and I respectfully ask that you advocate for my son's reinstatement to allow him to complete his final year.

**[02:03:45.160] - Raquel Rimpola**

Thank you, ma'am. General Bauernfeind, open for your comments, sir.

**[02:03:50.600] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

Thank you. And Ms. Gimbel, thank you very much for your public comments. I do not want to speak on the specifics of this case. But I would like to turn to Colonel Hastea to give an overview of our Academic Review Committee and the process that goes along with that, as well as how we approach a Title 10 reexamination. Colonel Aston.

**[02:04:15.280] - Colonel Steve Hastea**

Yes, sir. And thank you all. And thank you, ma'am. So just the overview process from the Academic Review Committee process is a very deliberate board. It's consolidated from across all of the major units as well as the Cadet Leadership Team. In this case, specific In the case, this was an opportunity for a Title X alternate final exam based on a two-time failure of one of the required core courses, English 2. 11. Consistent with that, the failure, There are a couple of parallel processes at work in this particular incident, but specifically to the ARC process. Once a cadet twice fails a core course, the Title X opportunity to take an alternate final exam, in this case, was fielded from the same texts that were used throughout the context of the course. The course was very deliberately using the alternate assessment, using those prompts for an in-class, for an in-session, handwritten response.

**[02:05:19.420] - Colonel Steve Hastea**

We're based both on the materials used within the context of the course, and the questions were derived, as well as the assessment framework from both current and former English 2. 11 course directors. Upon the assessment of those responses, we're also blind-tested with other faculty members at USAPHA. It was a very deliberate and integrated process, and the ultimate result was that the final assessment was still deemed to be a failure after that twice repeat of that core course, English 2: 11.

**[02:05:54.720] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

Thank you very much, Steve. Thank you very much, Ms. Gimple.

**[02:05:58.680] - Congressman Pfluger**

And General Bauernfeind, this is Chairman Pfluger. I think in the interest of time, would it be agreeable if we had responses after the fact in writing that we could get through the comments? Would that be agreeable to you?

**[02:06:18.060] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

Representative Pfluger, we would absolutely take those for the record. Okay. Yes or so, yes. Thank you.

**[02:06:26.360] - Raquel Rimpola**

For our next comment, we have Mr. Richard Coe, who provided his comment with three attachments on his request to review the men's soccer team case. Sir, over to you.

**[02:06:38.640] - Richard Coe**

Hello, and thank you for the opportunity to address the Board of Visitors. I'm a 1968 graduate of the Air Force Academy. I was a captain of the men's soccer team in 1967, and I'm speaking today on behalf of a group of my classmates and the soccer team alumni regarding the situation and the events surrounding nine senior on the class of 2025 soccer team. There was an event in August of last year that the seniors participated in. Subsequent to that, in September, there was another incident that the seniors did not participate in. When the accusations were brought against these cadets, the two incidents were conflated and resulted in a letter of reprimand to all nine cadets. And that was in April of 2025. Thirty days later, three days before graduation, the cadets were given another form of punishment, which prevented them from graduating and commissioning and put them on six months probation. Less than 30 days after that, they were given a letter of notification of disenrollment from the Air Force Academy, which the

superintendent stayed and gave them an option of graduating one year late and being on probation for that full conduct probation for that full year. So my request to the board is to review the appropriateness of the accusations that were brought against these cadets and to review the appropriateness of the punishment. That's all I have. Thank you.

**[02:08:13.120] - Raquel Rimpola**

Thank you, sir. General Bauernfeind we don't find we have two other comments that are similar in nature. Would you like to comment now or wait until all three speakers have completed their comments, sir?

**[02:08:23.940] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

Dr. Rimpola, I understand from Representative Luger that I will respond in writing after all of these.

**[02:08:30.680] - Raquel Rimpola**

Okay, sir. Our next comment is from Mr. Mike Rose. He provided one document on his request to review the USAFA Cadet Disenrollment Conduct and Honor System.

**[02:08:43.760] - Mike Rose**

Are you able to hear me? Yes, sir. I am Mike Rose. I'm a 1969 Air Force Academy graduate and a lawyer. I have advised, written, lectured, and litigated about cadet disciplinary honor and disenrollment matters for decades. The read ahead memo I sent you details my experience and the history of changes made over time to counterproductive, unfair, and sometimes illegal cadet disciplinary practices. These changes often were forced by public pressure and negative publicity amid denials of the need for change by academy officials. We asked the board to exercise its authority and influence to investigate and recommend improvements to the Cadet Disciplinary Systems and to authorize knowledgeable outside consultants to advise the board on these matters.

**[02:09:39.880] - Mike Rose**

Many have complained to this board and others about continued policy and legal problems when disenrolling an otherwise punishing cadets. These complaints include eight categories. One, lack a fair notice of specific charges and evidence and a fair opportunity to respond. Two, lack a prior notice of conduct prohibited and punishments allowed. Three, excessive disproportionate punishments. Four, excessive delays. Five, inconsistent punishment. Six, misleading cadets about the amount of punishments. Seven, ex post facto changes. And eight, punishment based

on membership in a group, not individual conduct. The board should investigate and recommend how to fix these problems because the problems are causing, one, careers and lives to be destroyed. Two, morale and respect deployment. Three, the Air and Space Forces in our country to lose good people unnecessarily and at great costs. The law says it is the responsibility of the board to, quote, inquire into the morale, discipline, and social climate, and other matters relating to the academy, and to recommend appropriate action, unquote. The best hope for fixing these cadet problems is for the board to fulfill this responsibility. Thank you.

**[02:11:04.480] - Raquel Rimpola**

Thank you, sir. For our final comments, we have Mr. Marc Stout, who presented one document that includes comments previously submitted during the August seventh meeting On his request to review due process related to the men's soccer team case.

**[02:11:19.780] - Marc Stout**

Thank you very much and greetings from Montgomery, Alabama. Hopefully you can hear me. So before I start, can I get a confirmation on the soundcheck? Got you loud and clear, sir. Wonderful. Thank you. So, yes, I did speak in August and submitted the statements then. So I'll frankly allow Mr. Coe's facts to stand. They were a good recitation. But I will say that the academy did punish nine seniors. One of those happens to be my son. And they punish them as if they were involved in a sexual assault or knew about it or caused it. And that couldn't be further from the truth. What that led to is a very significantly disproportionate punishment in this case. And I'll address that in a moment. And also a failure of due process. I would like to say that when I spoke to the board in August, the superintendent addressed me specifically as soon as I sat down. It appeared to me as if they were... He was reading comments that were pre-prepared. The important reason I say that is he said due process occurred. And under the Constitution, I think a quick look suggests due process did not take place.

**[02:12:29.540] - Marc Stout**

And then And the superintendent actually proved my point. After he said due process was afforded to the cadets, he said there were things that I was unaware of in the case. Well, that's exactly the point of due process. You consider what you've been put on notice, notice of, and that's it. You don't bring up all the things that nobody seems to know about them. So either he didn't know what due process was or that statement was false in either situation. I think that's a real problem in this case. What should you consider today? First, the seniors complied with all aspects of probation since August. They were endured ridiculed in ostracism that was created by the academy leadership when those leaders spoke to all the incoming inter-collegiate athletes. They plowed

through that admirably. They also did more than what was required, and they completed an extra semester of coursework. Second, why is the punishment disproportionately harsh? Well, the seniors lost their date of rank. They lost pay, and they lost training and job opportunities, and this puts them months behind their peers. And this punishment will negatively impact all nine seniors for an entire career. So it's not just a one and done.

**[02:13:44.900] - Marc Stout**

This is a lifelong issue. And finally, if the academy leaders have actually an ounce of grace or decency, you would graduate these seniors immediately and let them get on with life and earn the money and paycheck and rank and the responsibility that they've deserved for the last four years with all their efforts. That's all I have, and I really appreciate the time.

**[02:14:08.180] - Raquel Rimpola**

Thank you, sir. Chairman Pfluger, that concludes all of our comments, sir.

**[02:14:12.060] - Congressman Pfuger**

Well, thank you very much. And thank you to those that were not only here at the August meeting, but also returning. And we're trying to run this meeting in an efficient way. But I do want to make a comment, especially to answer Mr. Mr. Coe, Mr. Stouts' comments, that one of the recommendations that we are going to make, based on feedback that we've received from the last two meetings, we'll deal with just the overall honor system, the overall disciplinary system, both administrative and nonjudicial, the issue of due process. I think it's very healthy for us to inquire about these things, to make sure that the integrity is there, that what the academy and its core values stands for is upheld.

**[02:15:07.660] - Congressman Pfuger**

And on the other side of that, that there is due process and that people know what the punishments are for certain offenses, and that they're either carried out in a timely manner or adjudicated in a timely manner. So we hear you loud and clear. I think the superintendent will respond in writing to each of the comments there that were made. But I wanted to make that point in this next report that we will be addressing this very issue. Thanks, Dr. Rimpla. I think we're going to be okay on getting back to time here, but I think the next item is an action item briefing and review. Is that correct?

**[02:15:54.920] - Raquel Rimpola**

That's correct, sir. Captain Cassidy will preside over this part.

**[02:16:00.120] - Captain Cassidy**

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, esteemed board members. We are now moving on to the action item review. I'll read a brief summary of each action item before the board moves on to a discussion of the item and a vote to either close the item or keep it open. Action item 1, separate budget and resources. This item was opened in 2018 to provide a status update on the state of the Use Office Tapper program and budget.

**[02:16:21.920] - Captain Cassidy**

The board received updated information in your read ahead. Are there any questions?

**[02:16:29.640] - Raquel Rimpola**

There At this point, we would ask if the board would like to keep it open or close this one.

**[02:16:36.180] - Stoli Nikolai**

Mr. Nikolai, the read ahead said that they procured a funding going into the next fiscal years, so I move to close this one.

**[02:16:49.580] - Raquel Rimpola**

Do we have a second? I will second.

**[02:16:58.680] - Congressman Pfuger**

All in favor of Closing this issue, say Aye. Aye. Aye. Opposed, Nay. Aye. Okay, we can close this issue. Thank you. And why don't we do this? Why don't you make your recommendations, and we'll go to the end, and we'll have one final vote on the overall recommendations. I think everybody is going to be familiar with most of these. If any board member has a question on any of the individual items that are being briefed, please stop at that, but we'll roll the vote to the end.

**[02:17:35.380] - Captain Cassidy**

Moving on to action item 2, the Space Education Center. This item was opened in 2022, so we're running an update on the plans and funding for the proposed Space Education Center. The board receives an updated information in your reader heads. Are there any questions before moving on to action item 3?

**[02:17:52.020] - Raquel Rimpola**

Captain Cassidy, after each one, if you'll just say recommend to close. That way we can go line by line. Thank

**[02:18:04.020] - Captain Cassidy**

Moving on to action item three, Military Professor Copyright. This item is opened in 2022 to provide a status update on the legislation to allow military professors to scare copyrights during their time at USAFA. The board received information in your read-aheads. Recommending closure of this item. Any questions?

**[02:18:24.560] - Dan Clark**

Dan Clark here. I'm not familiar with the closure of it, and I'm such a proponent for the copyright it's being awarded to the military professors. Is there information that says that that is now in process, or is it still under discussion over?

**[02:18:41.400] - Stoli Nikolai**

Yeah, Dan, the write-up was that it requires a legislative action, and that's where it sits right now. So basically, it's up in Congress, and they need to take action on it.

**[02:18:53.940] - Congressman Bacon**

If I may echo on this, this is Don Bacon. We've been able to get this through the House, and I just want to be candid. I've always received pushback from staff members on the Senate side on the SASC. But I'm with Dan. This is an important thing. If we want to retain good professors, and we've done it on the civilian side, I think it makes sense to do also on the military side.

**[02:19:17.220] - Congressman Bacon**

But we've routinely hit a roadblock on the Senate side, but we've been able to pass it out of the House side. So that's my understanding of where we're at. Dawn, do believe that we should keep this open as a matter of keeping it in front of us while the legislation- I'd like to keep pushing it. Now, I have to go back and double-check in this next last NDAA if we had any action done on it. And I haven't confirmed it. But if we still have it resolved, I think it would be wise to still pursue it. And I think now that we're getting more senators on the board, we have a chance to win this argument if it wasn't resolved in this last NDAA.

**[02:20:04.520] - Congressman Jeff Crank**

Any other comments? Jeff Crank, go ahead.

**[02:20:06.740] - Congressman Jeff Crank**

Yeah, I'll work with Dawn and make sure that moving into the future, that we continue to push this from the House side in the NDAA. And if we can try and find someone in the Senate to pick that up, we'll get a legislative fix for it.

**[02:20:25.320] - Congressman Pfuger**

I think keeping this one open, and especially with some board members joining, could be a very helpful thing. So I recommend that we have an individual vote on this one instead of rolling it together. And we'll do that at the end.

**[02:20:44.580] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

Representative Fluger, may I jump in? Yes, go ahead. I was a little... I hate to go backwards in time, but for the Space Education Center, just to be clear, we're asking for that one to stay open. I might have missed it being said, but we're That is still an open action over. Okay. So number two, instead of closing that, the ask is to keep it open. Sure. That is our recommendation. We want it, but we're still working through the appropriate programmatic processes to get the funding. So it's a act in progress over.

**[02:21:31.660] - Congressman Pfuger**

From the board perspective, any comments on number two on the Space Education Center?

**[02:21:46.080] - Stoli Nikolai**

Yes, Stoli. I think it's needed without... The other option would be the nuclear option of developing a separate space academy. So I think this is crucial in giving our space cadets, so to speak, a building to do their magic in and focus efforts. Over.

**[02:22:06.560] - Congressman Pfuger**

Okay. All right. So I'm tracking that the proposal for number two is to keep it open, that there is a debate on number 3, and that there is at least two or three folks who are in favor of keeping number 3 open. And we can move to the next one.

**[02:22:29.040] - Captain Cassidy**

Moving on to action item number 4, Update on the strategy for the prevention of harmful behaviors. The site was open in 2024, and it capitalizes the Let's be clear campaign in the Climate Transportation Task Force effort, CTTF. The use office, CTTF, submitted their final report to SAFF MR. A copy of the final report was provided to the board. Are there any questions? And the recommendation is for closure. Hearing no comments. Moving on to action item number 5. Action item number 5. Update on the use office progress in response to the SACF Direction for Reoptimization. This item was opened in 2024 to provide updates to the board on the previous SACF's Direction for Reoptimization. A new SACF and a new SACF has been appointed since this item was opened. And during the seventh August 2025 administrative meeting, all members discussed that this item was still necessary with the new administration. Recommendation is closure. Any comments or questions? Hearing no comments or questions, moving on to action item 6. Update on BOSI USAFA. This item was opened in 2024 when BOSI USAPHA was introduced to the board. The resort received updated information to include FIX USAFA 2.0 in your read-aheads. Are there any questions or comments? Recommendation: Closure.

**[02:24:00.160] - Stoli Nikolai**

Hey, this is Stoli. Based on the continuing battle to gain funding for infrastructure at the Air Force Academy, I would like to see this one remain open so we can flight follow their efforts. I think this is crucial in gaining funding. And as we get more Congressional members to actually participate in our board, I think that might give us a little more leverage to get a little more money to keep our infrastructure in place. In my comments, you'll see that the dorms are not doing well. So like I said, I would like to see this one open to flight follow. Over.

**[02:24:37.540] - Congressman Jeff Crank**

And I'll chime in as well. I think we should keep this one open and also update it with the prioritized funding list of what the near and medium term priorities are for funding.

**[02:24:57.340] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

And a representative of Philly or from USAFA We welcome that perspective. Sorry for many miscommunications. Our intent was to request to keep that open.

**[02:25:10.500] - Congressman Pfuger**

Okay, so I've got this last one is open and a proposal to update it. Are there any other action items? And many of these were talked about at the last meeting, but I think we've been able to discuss them. Are there any other comments from the on any of these that we passed?

**[02:25:35.420] - Congressman Bacon**

Hey, August, I think on that number three one, with the new senators coming on board, we have a real opportunity to maybe close this in this coming year. We just haven't had a lot of support on the senate side. Just to restate the issue there. Thank you.

**[02:25:52.520] - Congressman Jeff Crank**

I understand. So let's get a rollup of two, three, four, five, and six of where we are. Captain Cassidy.

**[02:26:02.880] - Captain Cassidy**

For action item 2, Space Education Center. It has been recommended that it should be remained open by Representative Bacon. For Action Item 3, Military Professor Copper writes, It has been recommended that it remain open. For action item 4, updated strategy on prevention of harmful behavior. It has been recommended that it be closed. For action item 5, updated on USAPHA's progress in response to SACF direction for re-optimization. It has been recommended closer. Fraction item 6, updated on BOSI USAPHA. It has been recommended open with a prioritized funding list to be updated. Do we have a motion to pass as recommended?

**[02:26:46.620] - Congressman Bacon**

Don Bacon, motions to pass as recommended.

**[02:26:49.700] - Congressman Jeff Crank**

I will second. All in favor say, Aye.

**[02:26:53.060] - Congressman Jeff Crank**

Aye. Opposed, Nay. Okay, this will proceed as recommended. And Dr. Rimpelow, what I'd like to ask is that these be briefed, not just as action items as we've done here in the last meeting. We decided that we would look at proceeding as we have done today. But in the next in-person meeting, we'd like to get updates on these action items briefed by the Air Force Academy and the Department of the Air Force where needed. Yes, Okay, very good. Any other discussions from

board members on action items that need to be proposed? We will have a chance here in just a moment to make comments that could result in questions for the record as well. Okay, very good. We'll go to this next section. And I'll open it up for board members' comments. And please just use the raise hand function. Start with Mr. Nikolai.

**[02:28:16.540] - Stoli Nikolai**

All right. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. After hearing everything today, I want to affirm this board's responsibility to provide rigorous, consistent oversight of this great institution. Our discussions today I highlight the importance of examining every dimension of the cadet experience, and like we discussed, academics, military training, character development, athletics, infrastructure, and overall well-being.

**[02:28:43.140] - Stoli Nikolai**

There are areas, however, that warrant deeper investigation, as we've discussed, starting up some focus groups. These are not to be construed as criticisms, but as opportunities to elevate the academy to an even higher standard of excellence. I just received an email update that they wanted to include in the public comments. Due to the severity and safety factor, I...

**[02:29:30.150] - Congressman Pfuger**

Mr. Nikolai, we lost audio, sir. Stoli, you're on mute if you-

**[02:29:31.270] - Stoli Nikolai**

Okay, how's that? I got an Internet connection. A mother of a cadet wrote me, and she says, I'm writing today to pass along a message from some concerned parents and sick cadets. One of the dorm buildings, it happens to be Sijan, has flattened dorm rooms twice. Cadets are reporting to their parents of mold growing in the air and the air being moldy in the rooms they are currently living and sleeping in. Another parent on Facebook said, My cadet's room has flattened twice this month. There is visible mold in the carpet, walls, and under the sink. People came to look and told them that it was toxic mold, but nothing has been done. She and her roommate are sleeping in a room with other cadets as the smell is terrible and they both start coughing as soon as they stay in the room too long.

**[02:30:13.860] - Stoli Nikolai**

So I hope that gets some immediate attention from the USAFA staff. And like I said, I just want to express my sincere appreciation to General Bauernfeind, his leadership team, faculty staff, and

all the Department of Air Force folks who continue to support our board. And as we look ahead, I'm confident that our continued collaboration and commitment to excellence will propel USASFA to even greater heights. Together, we'll ensure that every cadet is prepared to lead, to serve, and to carry our highest ideals into the future. Our best work and USAP's biggest wins are still to come. Thank you.

**[02:30:52.340] - Stoli Nikolai**

Yeah, thank you very much. I appreciate that.

**[02:30:55.680] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

Representative Pfluger, may I just give an update? Please, go Hey, Mr. Nikolai, thank you so much for highlighting that. We also got word of that this morning. And again, for everybody, anytime we have an infrastructure issue, we want to hear about it from the cadets, from parents, from anybody, so our great 10th Airbase wing can respond. On that one, the original leak was reported on 4 December, and they were able to fix it the same day and do a water extraction cleanup performed on 5 December.

**[02:31:25.920] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

But then they got feedback after the weekend that it didn't meet muster. So they're about back out there again working on that. I just advocate that these are old dormitories. And so the more sensors we have, the better we are. We've got a great CE team that responds. And that also doubles down on the great refurb that we're going to start this summer on Si John Hall. So for the public, the more sensors, the better. Thank you.

**[02:31:54.360] - Congressman Pfuger**

Thank you very much. Other board member comments?

**[02:32:03.900] - Congressman Bacon**

Chairman, I'll speak up just briefly. Go ahead. It just seems to me, after doing this for going on nine years, that the infrastructure is the number one issue that we got to work on. And I think The general stated right, they were all built at the same time. They're all coming overdue. So I think that's a good focus area for us. Also, I appreciate the board's interest in a wide array of things. There's always room to make things better at the academy and keep pushing for more excellence. But every time I get to the academy and I talk to the cadets, I went to the graduation.

**[02:32:38.020] - Congressman Bacon**

I have a bunch of cadets from Omaha that come back and I get a chance to talk to them. It always reaffirms me that we are doing a heck of a lot right. They're always inspiring when you talk to these folks who are at the academy and their selflessness or patriotism. So there's tons of great stuff that we can always come back to to say, we know we're doing a lot right. With that, I yield.

**[02:33:05.420] - Congressman Pfuger**

Thank you, Representative Bacon. Other board member comments? Mr. Chairman. We'll go Mr. Crank and then to Dan Clark.

**[02:33:18.900] - Congressman Jeff Crank**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just wanted to point out the work that we are doing through my office and with the superintendent and his team on encroachment issues around the Air Force Academy, proactively making sure that we do protect, particularly Jacks Valley. I know the superintendent has promised that he will get us all documents that we need to make sure that from a community standpoint, we're doing everything with building codes and other things to protect the integrity and the future mission for the United States Air Force Academy. And I don't know if the superintendent has any comments on that, but appreciate all he's done on that.

**[02:34:08.020] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

Representative Crank, we just want to say thank you to you and your team for doing that for us to where we can have a good conversation of areas where we can have conversations with the community to benefit community growth as it goes forward, at the same time making sure those higher risk activities are protected like you're doing throughout all of Colorado. So thank you for that, sir. And I was just looking at my chief of staff and said we had a great conversation last week on that, and we'll make sure we keep following up on all the borders of USAPHA. Over.

**[02:34:44.020] - Dan Clark**

Mr. Clark. Thank you, sir. I just wanted to go on public record of how we support and endorse you. General Bauernfeind, you're a fine leader, and I love your style. Cautioning from micromanagement, macromanagement, and all the things that we've been discussing here today. Obviously, as an advocate for the athletic program, to remind everybody on public record about the home field advantage when we can make sure our sports programs are up to speed, that they have the nutrition, the extra calories that they need as they come through the lunch line.

**[02:35:25.060] - Dan Clark**

As a quick reminder, how football success imparts academy or improves academy admissions. We get increased visibility and interest, showcasing academy values, the halo effect, which creates a positive perception and the fan base increases. As a board, we want to use our initiative and our innovation to figure out a way to fill that stadium every single home game, make it an experience for people to come on campus and do whatever it takes to help the athletic program hold its own and be that flag that we can wave across the country so that next year we can defeat Army, we can defeat Navy as we so appropriately need to do year in and year out. Again, thanks, General Bauernfeind, for your vision, your hard work, and your ability to take these individual cases and figure out a way to fix what's broken. And I'd like to acknowledge August Pfluger. I think most of the input that I'm getting from parents who notify me and professionals and academy grads is that this board of Visitors is really taking this opportunity seriously to oversight, give suggestions, and do what's ever in the best interest of our cadets and their families.

**[02:36:58.980] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

Hey, I'm Mr. Clark, I just wanted to say thanks to you as well for your support, not only to the Bov, but I'm also tracking the support to the spring NCLS. So I don't know if we've gotten a final on that, but I know we're working through that. So thank you very much for that. And you're exactly right. When we talk about showing that home field advantage, hopefully everybody's been impressed by the enhanced cadet wing march on at the football games. But I can tell you it's equally as impressive when we're packing Clune Arena for When we're wrestling in basketball, when we're in the hockey rink, in the natatorium, and on the soccer pitch, when all the cadets come out and have that home field advantage, I'll go back and relook it, but I'm pretty sure our winning percentage has been going up quite a bit. And with respect to Army and Navy, we've been doing pretty well across our 30 sports. And I'll follow up that it's nice to see when hockey goes out to West Point and delivers two home victories. The same with rifle, the same with men's and women's swimming, diving, The same with boxing.

**[02:38:02.140] - Gen. Tony Bauernfeind**

So I'll share with the board our layout against the Service Academies. While we want to be 32 and 0 in all the sports, every now and then we got to give a couple up. Over.

**[02:38:14.740] - Congressman Jeff Crank**

Thank you, Mr. Clark. Other comments from board members? Okay. Well, I want to thank Dr. Rimpelow and your team in the Air Force Academy. I think it's been a very productive meeting and just to remind everyone of the meeting schedule, the battle rhythm, as it were. We had an in-

person meeting in August at the Air Force Academy. Now this virtual meeting is a chance to really answer some of those QFRs, and then to write a report that we can make statutorially required a series of recommendations to both the Secretary of the Air Force and the Secretary of War. So very important for us as we go into the next meeting, which will be in February in Washington, DC, an in-person meeting. And by that point in time, we will have submitted our recommendations and thoughts via the report. Then we take seriously the timelines and in general, asking for your support on that, because I think it will prevent duplicative questions and really give our board there was time to think about the things that we have asked to receive.

**[02:39:51.320] - Congressman Jeff Crank**

And I know there was on the action items, I think what we were looking for there is transmitted by Mr. Nugent was not just a summary, a bit more of a brief on the action items, a brief on where we stand on it, issues that are important for us to understand, how can we advocate? I mean, again, on those action items, that's a perfect opportunity for the Air Force Academy to ask for help from the board on a series of things, knowing that we do have elected and unelected officials who have been appointed for a variety of reasons, but have some abilities to go to bat for this an institution that we all dearly love, and that really is the point of this board. So as we get into the next meeting and into the prep, we will ask for your support on that. And I think it's very important that we stick to the timelines and stick to the playbook on that. I want to say just how important this institution is to me personally and what I see it doing for leaders that it's training and those that want to go there. They want to go to the Air Force Academy because it's not just another service academy.

**[02:41:11.280] - Congressman Pfugger**

It's the service academy that puts you into the air and space domain. And that's very exciting for young men and women. And the most important responsibility we have as congressmen and women is to appoint those new students, those young leaders, those men and women who have that dream. And staying ahead, as we heard from Dr. Swinnison, thinking about that next domain and how to adapt and overcome and meet the challenges is really exciting. And I'm 100 % convinced this is the Best Serpents Academy. And yes, I am biased, and that's okay. But I think it's an exciting time, and we should always be willing to look at some of the things that are challenges to us. But then how do we overcome those and refine the institution? I appreciate the public comments today, especially by way of academics. I think that we are facing a challenging time in how to meet that academic standard, how to retain excellence in the ranks of our professors, how to make sure that the courses that the curriculum contains are really refined towards that lethality and readiness and how to think and how to develop those young minds to become leaders.

**[02:42:32.140] - Congressman Jeff Crank**

So we're going to focus on that and continue to ask questions and advocate at the end of the day. And when you really think about the ways that the academy is different from universities, it's challenging cadets, academically, physically, emotionally, spiritually, and certainly militarily, to become the leaders that we need to make sure that if and when that next December seventh happens, that we've got a corps of officers who are ready to lead this country. So that's really when I think about the responsibility of being on this board, that's the perspective that I'm thinking about is how to train, how to best prepare, and how to advocate for the resources needed. So I want to thank my fellow board members. I want to thank the Air Force Academy for your time and effort in getting us to this point so that we can have these meetings. We promised to reinvigorate the Air Force Academy Board of Visitors, and that's exactly what we intend to do, not to be over burdensome, but to be a partner with the Department of the Air Force, with the Air Force Academy, with our Congressional leaders, and with the White House to make sure that we are advocating in the right way.

**[02:43:54.690] - Congressman Pfugger**

So Dr. Ripla, I'll hand it over to you. I know that we As a board, we're going to adjourn into a private session to discuss some of the administrative items here, but in a public format. I would request Dr. Ripla that we stay on this medium, that we don't change back to another one. I'm wondering if there's a way for the board members to stay here. And then for those that join the meeting that we can just adjourn to a private setting. But I'll hand it over to you to give us details of what to do next.

**[02:44:34.680] - Raquel Rimpola**

Yes, sir. Thank you so much. So thank you so much for members of the public who participated in the meeting. I now declare this meeting closed. As Chairman Fluger has mentioned, we will be switching over the profiles to limit access just to board members, staffers, as well as DAF personnel, and that switch it over to an administrative meeting. So board members, please stay on the line with this Zoom meeting as we make switches to our participants, members of the public. Again, thank you so much for participating. Please have a wonderful day. You may log off now. Thank you.