

Acquisition Career Experience Program Expanding

The Acquisition Career Experience (ACE) Program is not your typical summer internship. Just ask the seven students who participated in this past summer's first-ever ACE Program. They will tell you how they gained first-hand experience working in Army acquisition programs before graduating from college—and they got paid for it. The ACE Program recruits exceptional college students with multi-disciplined backgrounds for a two-year summer program working in various acquisition organizations. According to Sandy Long, Acting Deputy Director for the ACMO, "Our intent is that successful ACE students will become interns in an acquisition career field after college graduation and completion of the program requirements."

Background

The idea for the ACE Program originated in 1998 when participants of the Army Materiel Command's (AMC) Contracting XXI Blueprint initiative undertook the task of identifying business area improvements important to the future success of Army contracting. Not surprisingly, the group identified revitalization of the workforce as one of the most critical improvements. In response to this finding, representatives from HQ AMC in Alexandria, VA, and the Communications-Electronics Command (CECOM) Acquisition Center Army Acquisition Workforce

Development Group at Fort Monmouth, NJ, developed an outline for the ACE Program. This outline reflected an innovative educational approach that combined business and the sciences into one degree program. James Madison University in Harrisonburg, VA, was identified as a key educational partner because a multi-disciplined Integrated Science and Technology Program, recently developed there with industry, paralleled future ACE educational needs. In 1999, the ACMO agreed to support a pilot ACE Program.

Hands-On Experience

On June 5, 2000, the seven ACE interns—Justin Creech, Jefferson Kinney, Kyle Peddicord, Matthew Thompson, Scott Wallace, and Douglas Wixted, at Fort Belvoir, VA, and Benjamin Paris at Fort Monmouth, NJ—reported for duty. Each student teamed with an academic advisor and an Army mentor and worked on challenging projects ranging from acquisition issues to knowledge management endeavors. The two-year program features rotations in acquisition functions. The interns' next assignment is based on their desired career goals and their need for exposure to different areas.

ACE Program participant Matt Thompson described his experience saying, "I was able to extend my understanding of knowledge management systems and



ACE Intern Debriefing, August 2000.

Back row (left to right): Matthew Thompson, Doug Wixted, Ben Paris, Gregory Seitz (mentor), and Bruce Trimble (mentor).

Front row (left to right): Scott Wallace, Gloria McGee (mentor), and Kyle Peddicord.

apply these concepts to the Army acquisition process. In addition, I was given the opportunity to take part in demonstrations given by companies from the private sector to the PEO. This hands-on experience was a valuable tool in helping me to not only understand more about Army acquisition, but also about the processes involved in information technology transfer." Matt also developed and maintained the ACE Program web site, which can be found at http://dacm.sarda.army.mil/ACE/ACE_HOMEPAGE1A.htm.

Expanding the ACE Program

Due to its overwhelming success, the program is expanding rapidly. This summer, slots for 40 students are funded. The program is also being expanded to other colleges and universities. ACMs are currently working with local colleges and universities to identify students inter-

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them with the best support possible," says William.

Demonstrating her thorough understanding of DAWIA, Christi identified and communicated two instances of inappropriate applications of DAWIA provisions to the ACMO. In both instances, the ACMO and the Office of the Army General Counsel supported her. In one case, at least five employee separations were averted and others were allowed the opportunity to retire. "Her expertise and timeliness in resolving issues is well known throughout the region," says William, "and her advice is

frequently sought by ACMs and others in the acquisition career management community." Christi also managed the development of the Regional Training Plan and received Department of the Army approval for five courses. Through her innovative planning, acquisition members were able to attend premium classes that enhanced their leadership and team participation skills.

Upon receiving the award, Christi exclaimed, "What a shock and pleasant surprise to hear my name announced! I'm delighted and honored to have been nominated by the OSC and selected by the Army to receive this award." She

went on to say, "As one of the first ACMs to come on board in 1997, I, my fellow ACMs, and the ACMO, blazed some new trails that led the way to providing the Acquisition Workforce with the latest information and best career management tools presently available. It has been an exciting time to be a part of this new, innovative, and continuously evolving Army process. It is your suggestions and comments that provide us the direct feedback necessary to pursue and implement viable improvements to our career management program, so please let us continue to hear from you!"

DAU Online/Hybrid Courses Available

The Defense Acquisition University (DAU) is continually transitioning traditional resident DAU courses to distance learning via the Internet. This initiative provides individuals wider access to courses and provides a cost savings to the DAU in travel and per diem. Many courses have already been converted to online formats or transitioned to a “hybrid” configuration (one part online and one part resident). Below is a list of both types of courses currently available:

Online:

- ACQ 101** Fundamentals of Systems Acquisition Management
- BCF 102** Fundamentals of Earned Value Management
- CON 237** Simplified Acquisition Procedures
- IRM 101** Basic Information Systems Acquisition
- LOG 101** Acquisition Logistics Fundamentals
- PMT 250** Program Management Tools Course
- PQM 101** Production and Quality Management Fundamentals
- SAM 101** Basic Software Acquisition Management
- TST 101** Introduction to Acquisition Workforce Test & Evaluation

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to make it of lasting value to you.” Julie adds that it is very important to have a mentor throughout your CDG experience to help maximize your options.

In summary, Julie says: “Be prepared to prove yourself in each new job situation you face as a CDG member. The qualifications on paper that contributed to your selection into the CDG will, in a work or promotion situation, always be weighed against the known capabilities and loyalties of employees already present in the organizations in which you may work during your time as a CDG member. A CDG member needs to realize this going in and work harder and faster to create a niche, add value, and become competitive in new situations.”

Hybrid:

- BCF 211** Acquisition Business Management
- PQM 201** Intermediate Production and Quality Management

The DAU is working on converting other courses in the near future. ACQ 201, for example, is due to be released as a hybrid in March. This will require individuals to take the first part via the Internet and then attend a one-week resident class. Hybrid courses require the individual to first register for the resident class. Once enrolled, the student is automatically enrolled in the online portion and notified by e-mail with instructions.

Another initiative of the DAU is the re-engineering of PMT 302. The course will be split into two separate courses: PMT

302 and PMT 352. In the future, PMT 352 will be the new course required to obtain Level III certification in Program Management. PMT 401 will be the new course designated for personnel who have been selected or desire to become a PM. The prerequisite for PMT 401 will be PMT 352.

For more information on the conversion of DAU courses to online and/or hybrid versions, log on to the ATRRS Internet Training Application System (AITAS) at <https://www.atrrs.army.mil/channels/aitas/>. **Reminder:** Army personnel must use AITAS to apply for all DAU courses whether they are online, hybrid, or resident. Army A&TWF personnel must also have the DAU course(s) approved on their automated IDP before applying in AITAS. For a complete listing of courses, including those online, check out the DAU web site at <https://dau1.fedworld.gov/dau/index.htm>.

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ested in participating in the program. “It’s a win-win situation for everyone,” says Northeast Regional Director for Acquisition Career Management Kelly Irvin. “The students gain real-world experience while getting paid and the Army gets superior candidates for the acquisition intern program and future top managers.”

Beginning this year, interns will be board-selected. Each student will then be slated according to the needs of the various organizations and the student’s area of interest. ACE students begin the program at the GS-4 level and progress to GS-5 their second year.

Students then begin their formal internship at the GS-7 level. The ACMO is responsible for the logistical and administrative details of the student recruiting and board selection. Organizations are responsible for all personnel actions, in-processing, proposing challenging tasks, and providing a mentor for each student.

For more information about the ACE Program, contact Janet Jones at (703) 805-1052, DSN 655-1052, janet.jones@aaesa.belvoir.army.mil or Kelly Irvin, (732) 532-1406, DSN 992-1406, kelly.irvin@mail1.monmouth.army.mil, or visit the ACE Program web site at the address listed in this article.

Important Information for Organizations Participating in the ACE Program

Student applications are now being accepted throughout all regions and should be completed and submitted to local points of contact no later than March 14, 2001. The application packages should contain a letter of introduction, resume, copy of unofficial transcripts, and letter of recommendation from a faculty member. All application packages will be screened for completeness and forwarded to the selection board, which is scheduled to convene March 20, 2001. The selection board will develop an Order of Merit Listing for each region. It is expected that slating will be accomplished in early April.