

DACOWITS



Defense Advisory
Committee on Women
in the Services



2020 Executive Summary



Cover photos

First row

U.S. Coast Guard Cdr. Brett R. Workman, from Bethany Beach, Del., and Cdr. Rebecca Albert, from Colorado Springs, Colo., work in the Javits Convention Center in New York as liasons transferring patients from hospitals to the Military Sealift Command hospital ship USNS Comfort (T-AH 20). The Javits Center is one of the many places available in supporting in COVID-19 relief in New York.

Second row, Left

Navy Seaman Ella Koudaya rings two bells during a 9/11 remembrance ceremony on the main deck of the USS Blue Ridge in Yokosuka, Japan, Sept. 11, 2020.

Second row, right

Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force JoAnne S. Bass speaks after a presentation for the Air Force Association 2020 Virtual Air, Space & Cyber Conference, at the Pentagon, Arlington, Va., Sept. 14, 2020. Bass succeeded Kaleth Wright as the 19th chief master sergeant of the Air Force and is the first woman ever to serve as the highest-ranking NCO in any branch of the military.

Third row, left

A Marine Corps drill instructor adjusts a Marine's cover during a final uniform inspection for a platoon at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, S.C., May 1, 2020.

Third row, middle

Army Pfc. Kathryn Ratliff works at the Nissan Stadium COVID-19 testing site in downtown Nashville, Tenn., Aug. 21, 2020. Since March, more than 2,000 Tennessee National Guardsmen have been activated to assist communities.

Third row, right

U.S. Space Force Capt. Hannah Best, Space and Missile Systems Center Aide-de-camp to the commander at Los Angeles Air Force Base, California, participates in a ceremonial swearing-in event broadcasted from the Air Force Association's 2020 Virtual Air, Space and Cyber Conference and administered by Gen. John "Jay" Raymond, United States Space Force Chief of Space Operations, at Los Angeles Air Force Base, California, Sept. 15, 2020. To officially transfer from one military service to another, a military member separates from the current service and commissions or enlists into the new service in their current rank.

The estimated cost of this report or study for the Department of Defense is approximately \$986,000 for the 2020 Fiscal Year. This includes \$394,000 in expenses and \$592,000 in DoD labor. Generated on 2020Dec14 RefID: A-083621A

List of DACOWITS Members

General Janet C. Wolfenbarger, USAF, Retired (Chair)
Command Sergeant Major Michele S. Jones, USA, Retired (Vice Chair – term ended September 2020)
Major General George A. Alexander, ARNG, Retired (appointed June 2020)
Captain Kenneth J. Barrett, USN, Retired
Colonel John T. Boggs, USMC, Retired (term ended March 2020)
Vice Admiral Robin R. Braun, USN, Retired (appointed June 2020)
Lieutenant General Judith A. Fedder, USAF, Retired
Colonel Many-Bears Grinder, USA, Retired (appointed June 2020)
Command Master Chief Octavia D. Harris, USN, Retired (appointed June 2020)
Ms. Therese A. Hughes
Dr. Kyleanne M. Hunter, USMC Veteran (term ended March 2020)
Major General Ronald L. Johnson, USA, Retired (appointed June 2020)
Ms. Robin Kelleher (appointed June 2020)
Major Priscilla W. Locke, USA, Retired
Lieutenant General Kevin W. Mangum, USA, Retired
Ms. Janie L. Mines, USN Veteran (term ended September 2020)
Fleet Master Chief JoAnn M. Ortloff, USN, Retired (term ended September 2020)
Brigadier General Jarrisse J. Sanborn, USAF, Retired
Brigadier General Allyson R. Solomon, ANG, Retired
Rear Admiral Cari B. Thomas, USCG, Retired
Fleet Master Chief Susan A. Whitman, USN, Retired

Report Contributors

DACOWITS Staff

Colonel R. Elaine Freeman, USA, Military Director and Designated Federal Officer
Ms. Jessica C. Myers, Program Support Strategic Advisor
Mr. Robert D. Bowling II, Operations Officer
Master Sergeant Kristen M. Pitlock, USAF, Superintendent

Insight Policy Research

Ms. Rachel J. Gaddes
Ms. Shannon M. Griffin
Ms. Zoe R. Jacobson
Dr. Sidra J. Montgomery
Mr. Jordan W. Stangle
Ms. Ayanna K. Williams



A soldier assigned to the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment, known as “The Old Guard,” places flags at headstones as part of Flags-In at Arlington National Cemetery, Va., May 21, 2020.

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

The Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) (hereafter referred to as the “Committee” or “DACOWITS”) was established in 1951 with a mandate to provide the Secretary of Defense (SecDef) with independent advice and recommendations on matters and policies relating to the recruitment of servicewomen in the Armed Forces of the United States. Since its inception, the Committee’s charter has expanded to include a focus on recruitment and retention, employment and integration, and the well-being and treatment of U.S. servicewomen. The Committee is now composed of no more than 20 members who are appointed by the SecDef and serve in a voluntary capacity for 1- to 4-year terms.

Each year, the SecDef, via the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and



Texas Army National Guard Capt. Nadine Wiley De Moura helps students collect trash at Elena Gjika School in Mitrovica, Kosovo, Aug. 14, 2020. Capt. De Moura and other soldiers volunteered for the beautification project to support building strong relationships with communities in the area.

Readiness, provides the Committee study topics to examine during the following year. In 2020, DACOWITS studied 11 topics. The Committee gathered information from multiple sources in examining these topics; for example, briefings and written responses from Department of Defense (DoD) and Service-level military representatives and peer-reviewed literature. During this research year, DACOWITS held in-person quarterly business meetings in December and March, received written requests for information in June, and held its first virtual quarterly business meeting in September 2020. Although the Committee would normally conduct installation visits and focus groups with Service members as part of the annual research cycle, no installation visits or focus groups were conducted in 2020 because of travel restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Based upon the data collected and analyzed, DACOWITS offers 10 recommendations and 5 continuing concerns. Each recommendation and continuing concern, along with a brief synopsis of the supporting reasoning for each, follows. A detailed description of the reasoning supporting each recommendation and a discussion of each continuing concern is provided in the full annual report for 2020, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

DACOWITS 2020 Recommendations and Continuing Concerns

Recruitment and Retention

Marketing Strategies

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should increase oversight and assess the effectiveness and scale of outreach programs with the objective of directing new programs and/or adjusting the purpose of existing programs to positively impact adolescent women's propensity for military service.

Synopsis

The Committee commends the Military Services on their recent efforts to develop and implement creative, tailored marketing content to attract women to join the military. However, DACOWITS continues to observe modest increases in the percentage of women joining the military and consistently lower rates of young women's propensity to serve compared with young men. The Committee acknowledges that DoD and the Military Services understand the importance of building awareness of military service opportunities and propensity to serve in middle-school-aged youth (11–14-year-olds) as evidenced by the maintenance of various DoD and Military Service-sponsored community outreach programs. However, the Committee believes DoD should assess the scale and effectiveness of

these programs with the goal of increasing adolescent women's propensity to serve.

A detailed reasoning description of the reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 2 of the full annual report for 2020, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Retention and Exit Surveys

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should direct the Military Services to share and implement best practices, to include leveraging civilian industry best practices, on utilization of retention and exit survey data to identify barriers and/or lessons learned to improve servicewomen's retention.

Synopsis

While each Military Service employs retention and/or exit surveys to understand factors that influence Service members to stay in or leave the military, the Committee believes the data collection and analysis of the survey data could be improved. Data collection strategies employed by each Military Service differ methodologically, resulting in data that are not comparable across Military Services and, for some Military Services, may not facilitate analysis of factors that influence retention by gender. The Committee believes direct DoD oversight on the administration and collection of exit and retention surveys could help to standardize the survey methodologies employed by the Military Services and help determine opportunity

areas and actionable steps to improve the retention of servicewomen.

A detailed description of the reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 2 of the full annual report for 2020, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Dual-Military Co-Location

Continuing Concern

Synopsis

The Committee continues to be concerned with the status of the Military Services' dual-military co-location policies. Based on its research, the Committee believes inadequate dual-military co-location policies may influence women to leave the military at higher rates than men at various career points. Most Military Services' co-location policies do not address the needs of dual-military parents who share parental custody and desire to be in the same geographic location regardless of their marital status. The Committee is also concerned with the lack of significant updates to the Military Services' dual-military co-location policies after exploration of the topic and recommendations provided to the SecDef in 2017. DACOWITS believes this topic requires additional exploration as a continuing concern.

A discussion supporting this continuing concern is provided in Chapter 2 of the full annual report for 2020, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Employment and Integration

Gender Integration Implementation Plans

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should designate a single office of primary responsibility to provide active attention and oversight to the implementation of the Military Services' gender integration plans in order to restore momentum and measure progress.

Synopsis

DACOWITS commends the Military Services' past progress on gender integration since all positions were opened to women in 2016. It notes a major factor in the advancement of that effort was a singularly focused means of providing oversight of the Military Services' gender integration implementation plans, initiatives, and policies through an office dedicated to that function. With the transition of gender integration oversight to the Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ODEI), the Committee believes the singular focus on advancement of those gender integration efforts has diminished. The Committee recommends designating a separate and distinct office and staff solely dedicated to this critical objective without collateral duties.

A detailed description of the reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 3 of the full annual report for 2020, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Army Combat Fitness Test

Continuing Concern

Synopsis

DACOWITS continues its study on the age- and gender-neutral Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT), which replaced the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) as of October 1, 2020. Although the Army's physical fitness test is required to be science based, the Committee believes the scientific approach to designing the test should account for physiological differences between men and women. The Committee respects the Army's goal of preparing all Soldiers, regardless of gender, for various types of operations but remains concerned that the current ACFT may result in injuries for female Soldiers and lower test scores that could affect promotions, assignments, retention, and overall morale. DACOWITS also believes a general health assessment for overall service fitness should remain separate from an occupational specialty-specific assessment. The Committee encourages the Army to use science-based research and technology to study physiological differences between women and men and to keep the overall fitness test separate from specific military occupational specialty (MOS) assessments.

A discussion supporting this continuing concern is provided in Chapter 3 of the full annual report for 2020, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Marine Corps Recruit Training

Continuing Concern

Synopsis

In 2020, DACOWITS continued its study on gender integration within recruit training and is repeating its 2018 and 2019 continuing concerns regarding Marine Corps recruit training. The Marine Corps remains the only Military Service without fully gender-integrated recruit training. Although the Committee is encouraged by the Marine Corps' progress toward integration, it continues to support further integration and will monitor future efforts in this endeavor.

A discussion supporting this continuing concern is provided in Chapter 3 of the full annual report for 2020, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Women in Aviation

Continuing Concern

Synopsis

Despite an increase in women in the Military Services overall, the numbers of women in aviation across the Military Services have remained stagnant. Although DACOWITS is encouraged by the Military Services' ongoing anthropometric research and improvements within the context of aviation, the Committee believes the Military Services should focus strategically

on oversight of recruitment, retention, promotion, quality of service, and quality of life of female aviators.

A discussion supporting this continuing concern is provided in Chapter 3 of the full annual report for 2020, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Women in Space

Continuing Concern

Synopsis

DACOWITS is interested in the promotion of gender diversity practices, equal opportunities for women and men, and expanded leadership opportunities for women in the United States Space Force (Space Force). The Committee is encouraged the Space Force is seeking to create innovative career models for the recruitment and retention of personnel. As the Space Force and the Department of the Air Force finalize Space Force personnel policies, the Committee looks forward to maintaining a partnership with the Service to continue promoting career opportunities for women in the Space Force, encouraging the piloting of innovative and effective diversity practices, and creating a platform for the Space Force to share best practices and lessons learned across DoD.

A discussion supporting this continuing concern is provided in Chapter 3 of the full annual report for 2020, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Well-Being and Treatment

Effect of Grooming Standards on Women's Health

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should require the Military Services to include precautionary statements in the grooming standards and training regarding potential health issues associated with prolonged use of tightly gathered hairstyles, dyes, and chemical hair products.

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should require the Defense Health Agency (DHA) to conduct a study of the potential physical and psychological health issues and treatments associated with tightly gathered hairstyles, dyes, chemical hair products, and prolonged use of certain headgear, and should direct the Military Services to implement DHA recommendations regarding education, prevention, medical risks, and treatment.

Synopsis

DACOWITS remains concerned about the overall health and well-being of women in the military. In its examination of the Military Services' hair and grooming standards, DACOWITS identified how adherence to certain grooming practices is causing irreversible hair loss and potential long-term health conditions for servicewomen. Repetitive tight pulling of the hair, use of chemical hair products, and prolonged use of certain headgear can cause permanent

damage to the hair and scalp. Women who are racial or ethnic minorities may have greater difficulty conforming to the Military Services' grooming standards because of differences in hair texture and bulk. The Committee recommends the Military Services include precautionary statements in all grooming standards and training materials to create awareness about these adverse health effects. DACOWITS also recommends DHA conduct a study to identify the potential physical and psychological health issues associated with conforming to the hair grooming standards to expand education, prevention, and treatment among servicewomen.

A detailed description of the reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 4 of the full annual report for 2020, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Caregiver Leave

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should direct the Military Services to implement flexible (noncontinuous) primary and secondary caregiver leave options, in accordance with the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020, to ensure caregivers have maximum flexibility in making caregiving arrangements best suited to their family and service circumstances.

Synopsis

The Committee continues to support caregiver leave policies that provide Service members the ability to balance

the demands of their military service with the needs of their families. In 2017 and 2018, DACOWITS recommended the SecDef allow the Military Services to permit flexible (noncontinuous) use of primary and secondary caregiver leave if requested by the caregiver(s) to ensure the military remains competitive with private sector benefits. The NDAA for FY 2020 lifts previous restrictions on noncontinuous leave and authorizes Service members the ability to take leave for the birth or adoption of a child in more than one increment. DACOWITS recommends the SecDef direct the Military Services to implement flexible (noncontinuous) primary and secondary caregiver leave options to ensure caregivers have maximum flexibility in the use of their caregiver leave. The Committee strongly supports the ability for Service members to use caregiver leave in a flexible way to best balance their family needs and work schedule.

A detailed description of the reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 4 of the full annual report for 2020, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should direct the Navy and Marine Corps to authorize their Service members the full 21 days of secondary caregiver leave provided for in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017.

Synopsis

DACOWITS recognizes the importance of caregiver leave in recruiting and retaining a ready force. The Committee continues to be interested in the enhancement of caregiver leave policies to encourage the retention of Service members by reducing work–family conflict and ensuring military benefits stay competitive with private sector benefits. In 2018, the Committee recommended the SecDef mandate the consistent application of 21 days of leave for all secondary caregivers across all Military Services, noting the Navy and Marine Corps authorized only 14 days of secondary caregiver leave. The Committee repeats this recommendation in 2020 and continues to believe secondary caregiver leave should be consistent across the Military Services. Authorizing Sailors and Marines the maximum allowable 21 days of nonchargeable secondary caregiver leave will afford equitable opportunities to Service members across all Military Services, enabling them to best care for their families and promote retention.

A detailed description of the reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 4 of the full annual report for 2020, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should direct the Military Services to remove all barriers that prohibit Service members from determining as a family which parent shall be designated the primary caregiver and which shall be designated the secondary caregiver.

Synopsis

Service members must balance their work and service obligations with the demands of family life. DoD’s Military Parental Leave Program (MPLP) provides maternity convalescent leave and nonchargeable primary and secondary caregiver leave following a qualifying birth event or adoption of a child. While the Department’s policy does not restrict the designation of Service members as the primary or secondary caregiver, some Military Services’ individual policies create restrictions on Service members’ ability to determine who will serve as a primary or secondary caregiver in their families.

The Committee believes Service members should be afforded maximum flexibility in using caregiver leave to best meet their family’s needs. Dual-military couples face unique challenges that necessitate flexible parental roles supported by military policy. Restrictions that inhibit the designation of primary caregiver status run counter to the Military Services’ efforts to retain servicewomen. DACOWITS recommends the SecDef direct the Military Services to remove barriers that prohibit Service members from determining as a family which parent is designated as the primary caregiver and which parent as the secondary caregiver.

A detailed description of the reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 4 of the full annual report for 2020, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should ensure servicewomen in the Reserve Component receive full creditable military service, similar to their Active Component counterparts, so they are not penalized for unavoidable absences resulting from a pregnancy and/or birth event.

Synopsis

The fair and equitable treatment of pregnant servicewomen is imperative for the long-term readiness of the Military Services and the retention of servicewomen. For decades, the Committee has made recommendations to improve the treatment and well-being of pregnant servicewomen, including the most recent 2019 recommendation that the SecDef direct the Military Services to develop and implement policies ensuring a servicewoman's career is not negatively affected as a result of pregnancy. DACOWITS believes there is a clear disparity in DoD policy regarding parental leave benefits afforded to servicewomen in the Active component compared with servicewomen in the Reserve component. DACOWITS recommends the SecDef ensure servicewomen in the Reserve Component receive full creditable military service pay and retirement points, so they are not penalized for unavoidable absences resulting from a pregnancy and/or birth event. A detailed description of the reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 4 of the full annual report for 2020, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Caregiver Sabbatical

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should establish a caregiver sabbatical or extended parental leave alternative with the objective of developing more flexible caregiver leave options that will encourage, promote, and increase female Service member retention by mitigating the stresses, burdens, and pressures associated with balancing service and family obligations.

Synopsis

DACOWITS has an established history of recommendations to enhance servicewomen's ability to balance military service and family life. DACOWITS made recommendations in 2004, 2008, and 2009 supporting the development of sabbatical programs to increase women's retention in the Military Services. This year, the Committee was asked by the Department to examine whether the option for a caregiver sabbatical would help alleviate servicewomen's work-life balance challenges by providing a defined career break after which they could resume their military service. The objective would be to increase retention rates and retain talent. Evidence from the international community, foreign military services, and the U.S. civilian labor market demonstrates more generous parental leave policies can increase retention and productivity while improving health outcomes for mothers and their children. The Committee recommends the SecDef establish a caregiver sabbatical or extended parental leave alternative with the objective of developing more flexible

caregiver leave options that will encourage, promote, and increase female Service member retention.

A detailed description of the reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 4 of the full annual report for 2020, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Historical Review of the Influence of DACOWITS, 1951 to Present: A 70-Year Review

In preparation for the DACOWITS' upcoming 70th anniversary in 2021, the Committee conducted an analysis of its efforts and impact during its history. The purpose of the analysis is to present an overview of DACOWITS' impact through a detailed review of the more than 1,000 recommendations made by the Committee. These recommendations have addressed dozens of issues and challenges facing women in the U.S. military, some of which have been resolved over time and others that persist today.

As evidenced in this historical analysis, DACOWITS has been influential in ensuring the advancement of women in the military. It has been at the forefront of many emerging issues, notifying DoD and the public about issues and challenges facing servicewomen and making recommendations early to ensure issues are addressed as soon as possible. Despite the vast and critical work accomplished by the Committee to date, DACOWITS' work is not finished. Women play an essential role in an evolving military with constantly changing mission sets. DACOWITS continues to fulfill its mission by ensuring women are provided opportunities to thrive and serve as leaders in all Military Services. DACOWITS' work carries on into the next decade as it continues to gather information from DoD, the Military Services, and Service members to inform its evidence-based recommendations.

The comprehensive historical analysis is provided in Chapter 5 of the full annual report for 2020, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).



Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services