



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
WASHINGTON, DC

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

22 November 2022

MEMORANDUM FOR DACOWITS

FROM: HQ USAF  
1720 Air Force Pentagon  
Washington DC 20330-1720

SUBJECT: DAF DACOWITS RFI Responses

**QUESTION #9**

Since the 1960s, the Committee has examined and identified barriers to women's career progression in the military, which included gender discrimination or gender bias that affected servicewomen's promotion opportunities. Most recently in 2019, the Committee recommended that, "The Secretary of Defense should establish a DoD policy that defines and provides guidance to eliminate conscious and unconscious gender bias." The Committee remains dedicated to the elimination of gender discrimination, to include within the promotion board process by ensuring that performance is the lone criterion considered for selection.

The Committee requests a briefing from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, and Coast Guard on the following:

a. What policies and procedures are in place to prevent conscious and unconscious gender bias within the promotion process (e.g., performance evaluations, board screenings, etc.)?

- The 2022 Command Selection Board, working with SAF/DI included the just-in-time SAF/DI developed "Increasing Bias Awareness Workshop" for board members on the first day of the first week and a refresher/primer on the first day of the second week.

- SAF/DI is supporting AIP's exploration into if it is appropriate to provide just-in-time Bias Awareness training that focuses on the influence of bias specific to the promotion board purpose and process which is a best practice supported by research and if it is appropriate, based on current law and DoD policy, where in the board process it can be inserted. The bias awareness training is inclusive and would not focus on one specific under-represented group, but instead focus on mitigating the influence of bias as it applies to all populations.

b. What gender specific demographic information has been removed from promotion packages (e.g., first and last names, gender pronouns, photographs, etc.)? Specifically, state whether any gender specific demographic information is still being included. If so, are there plans to remove gender specific demographic information? Provide projected timeline for each demographic modification.

RFI 9 - Attachment 1 - Officer Promotion Policies

c. What other actions have been taken to prevent conscious and unconscious gender bias from factoring in promotion reviews/scoring?

RFI 9 - Attachment 1 - Officer Promotion Policies

d. Since these actions were taken to reduce conscious and unconscious gender bias, provide trends that have emerged and data on the impact of these policies, instructions, or guidance on selection results.

- These efforts are still too new to discern trends.

e. Provide copies of policies, instructions, or written guidance delivered to selection boards, nomination boards, or promotion boards intended to mitigate conscious and unconscious gender bias.

RFI 9 – Attachment 2 – Memorandum on Instructions for Selection Boards

RFI 9 – Attachment 3 – Mitigating Unconscious Bias Training Slides

Attachments:

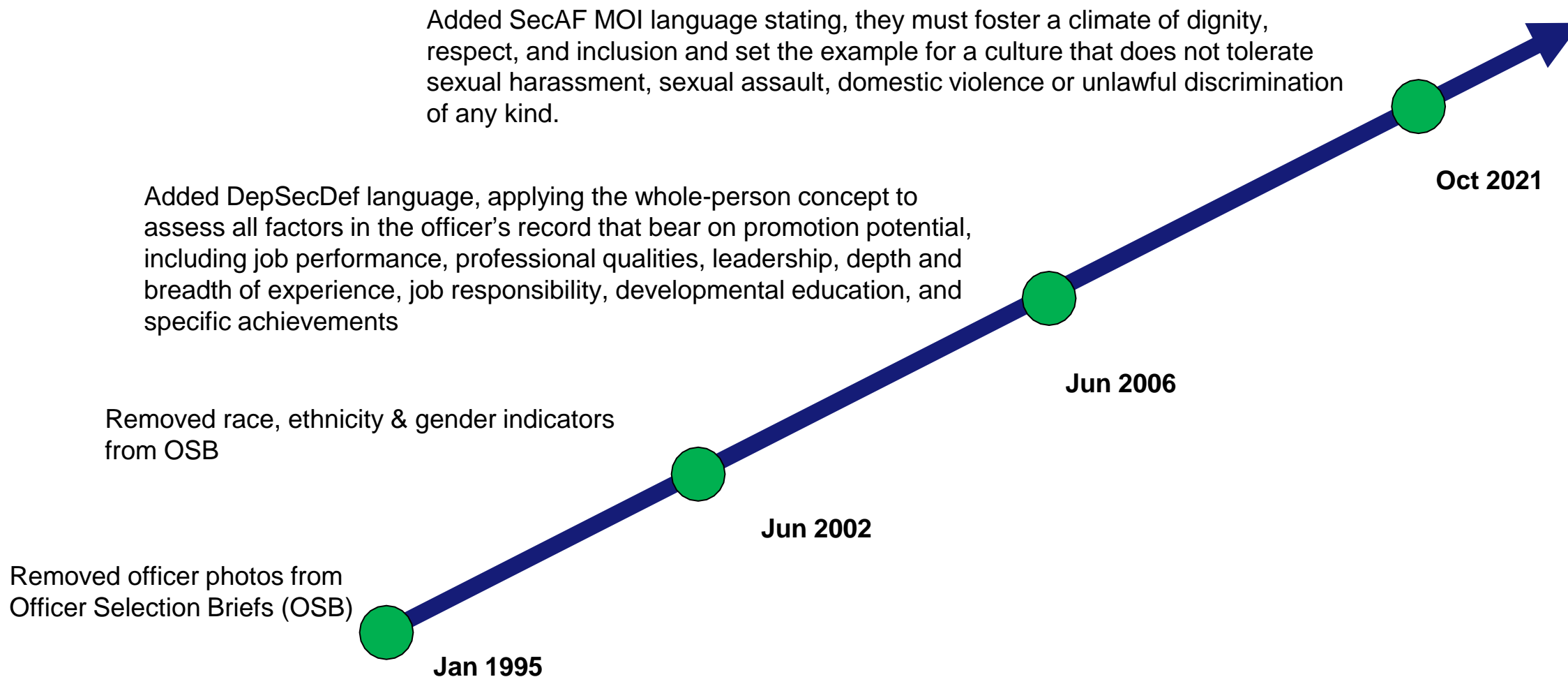
RFI 9 - Attachment 1 - Officer Promotion Policies

RFI 9 – Attachment 2 – Memorandum on Instructions for Selection Boards

RFI 9 – Attachment 3 – Mitigating Unconscious Bias Training Slides



# Officer Promotion Demographic Policy Changes





# USAF Officer Promotion Policies and Procedures



- Policies and procedures in place to prevent conscious and unconscious gender bias within the promotion process are captured in the following:
  - Department of the Air Force Instruction 36-2501 (para 1.3, 2.1, 2.1.1, 2.5.6)
  - Department of the Air Force Instruction 36-2406 (para 1.12.2.1, 1.12.9)
  - Promotion Board First Day Slides
  - Secretary of the Air Force Memorandum of Instructions
- AF Continues to include first and last names and allow pronoun usage on evaluations, recognition and promotion recommendation data
  - Pronoun usage is under review; decision pending OSD study results
- Unconscious awareness training for officer promotion board members was included as a RDR Root Cause Analysis recommendations
  - SAF/DI Bias Awareness Training proposal is currently under review by SAF/GCI for promotion board inclusion

# SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE MEMORANDUM OF INSTRUCTIONS

## For [insert board] Central Selection Boards and [insert board] Selective Continuation Boards

### I. Authority and Requirements

I have appointed you as members of the [insert boards]. During this process, you will represent me, under oath. Your purpose is to select officers for promotion to [insert grades] in their respective competitive categories and to consider [insert grades] two or more times non-selected for promotion for selective continuation.

Your task is to recommend the best-qualified Air Force officers for promotion, and to ensure that all selected individuals are fully qualified for that promotion. I have also determined certain officers are eligible for selective continuation and you will carefully select those who are qualified to be continued. You must act in the best interest of the Air Force, and not in the interest of any particular command, specialty, or group. You must consider all eligible officers regardless of promotion zone without prejudice or partiality, having in view the special fitness of the officers under consideration and the efficiency and effectiveness of the United States Air Force. Equal opportunity is an essential element of our selection system. Your evaluation of all officers must afford them fair and equitable consideration.

In order to encourage officers to broaden their assignments and remain competitive for increased responsibility, you shall not consider time in grade or year of commissioning in your evaluation of best qualified for promotion.

I am the only person who may appear in person to address you on other than administrative matters. All communications with this board, other than those clearly administrative, must be in writing, given to each of you, and made part of the board's record. I have designated in writing those persons authorized to provide routine administrative information to you.

The Board President is a non-voting member of each of these boards and ensures each board is conducted in accordance with applicable laws and directives, and my guidance. While the Board President may participate in the discussions of the board as allowed by law and Department of Defense directives, the Board President may not constrain the voting members of the board from recommending for promotion or continuation those officers the Board President considers best qualified to meet the needs of the Air Force.

### II. Considerations in Evaluating Records

You will apply the whole-person concept to assess all factors in the officer's record that bear on promotion potential or continuation of service. These factors include job performance, professional qualities, leadership, depth and breadth of experience, job responsibility, advanced academic and developmental education, and specific achievements. Of these factors, given officers equally committed to Air Force values, job performance is the most important.

You are prohibited from considering an officer's marital status, civilian employment, religion, or volunteer service activities, or any information regarding an officer's spouse. You are further prohibited from considering an officer's previous decision to opt out of a promotion selection board or to participate in the Career Intermission Program. If you see such information in the records you review, you will disregard it. Give no weight, whatsoever, to an officer's age.

### **A. Performance, Core Values, and Exemplary Conduct**

I charge you with selecting officers who demonstrate commitment to integrity, service, and excellence. An evaluation of an officer's performance must rest on a foundation of commitment to our core values as demonstrated by an officer's conduct. I will only accept officers for promotion who have distinguished themselves through their job performance and who are models of exemplary conduct. You are required to deliberately review any information raising questions about departures from our core values and incidents casting doubt on an officer's ability to set the example to lead others to live in accordance with our core values.

Officers recommended for promotion must excel in four key performance areas:

1. Officers must execute their assigned mission. They will have mastered their craft and accomplished assigned tasks consistently and persistently with a high degree of skill and dedication.
2. Officers must lead people effectively. They will have inspired confidence in subordinates and fostered good order, discipline, teamwork, and trust. They must foster a climate of dignity, respect, and inclusion and set the example for a culture that does not tolerate sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence or unlawful discrimination of any kind.
3. Officers must display proficiency at managing resources. They will have been exemplary stewards of manpower, funds, equipment, facilities, and time.
4. Officers must improve their unit. They will have demonstrated the ability to identify needed improvements and led positive change so that the unit is better than they found it.

Excelling in these four performance areas is built on values and high professional standards, a healthy command climate, and personal conduct that is above reproach. You will only recommend officers for promotion who are disciplined and lead by example on and off duty.

With this understanding, during your board deliberations, you may review records containing adverse information. You should carefully weigh the adverse information against the officer's complete record of performance and potential to serve in the next higher grade. You should give the information appropriate weight, neither ignoring significant information nor giving excessive weight to minor infractions or to matters of slight significance. In examining adverse information, consider its severity, repetition, timing within the officer's career, the amount of time passed since the incident, the officer's performance since, and the senior rater's assessment of the officer. These factors may indicate whether or not the officer has demonstrated the potential to serve in the next higher grade. In particular, you should first make the judgement in each case whether the matter has served as a learning experience or is symptomatic of carelessness or character flaw, and then consider whether or not the incident should be a bar to

promotion. While we need to avoid creating the perception of a “one mistake Air Force,” you should not recommend any officers for promotion who have demonstrated through their conduct that they do not have the demonstrated potential to serve in the next higher grade.

To recommend an officer for promotion or continuation, including those who have adverse information in their records, you must find that the officer meets the needs of the Air Force consistent with the requirement of exemplary conduct set forth in Title 10, United States Code, Section 9233. Section 9233 requires all commanding officers and others in authority in the Air Force and in the Space Force: to show in themselves a good example of virtue, honor, patriotism, and subordination; to be vigilant in inspecting the conduct of all persons who are placed under their command; to guard against and suppress all dissolute and immoral practices, and to correct, according to the laws and regulations of the Air Force or the Space Force, respectively, all persons who are guilty of them; and to take all necessary and proper measures, under the laws, regulations, and customs of the Air Force or the Space Force, to promote and safeguard the morale, the physical well-being, and the general welfare of the officers and enlisted persons under their command or charge.

## **B. Specific Experiences and Qualifications**

I have approved career briefs for use by the boards for each core Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC) and/or functional community. The brief includes typical career progression milestones, developmental guidance, and other unique considerations. The briefs are provided to give you a baseline understanding of the career area. Strict adherence to career progression norms outlined in the brief is not a prerequisite for promotion.

You should take into consideration not all officers follow a common career path. In particular, we need officers who have experience beyond their core specialty. Career broadening assignments enhance the strength and professionalism of the officer corps, and officers with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives drive our competitive edge.

You should consider experiences and education that contribute to cultural awareness, particularly of pacing threats, and enable better communication in a global operating environment are crucial underpinnings to support strategic national interests.

Finally, you should consider that technical experiences in science and technology specialties such as engineering, physics, aeronautical and aerospace disciplines, cyber security, artificial intelligence, and information operations aid in our ability to develop new capabilities and drive innovation to meet and deter highly technical threats.

Formal Instructor and Recruiting Duty. You will evaluate the records of officers who have performed, or who are performing, instructor and recruiting special duties to build our next generation of Airmen leaders. You should consider recruiting and developing a high-quality workforce as essential to warfighting success and many of the officers who are filling or who have filled these roles were competitively selected. While this is not a pass-fail item, officers who perform a successful instructor and/or recruiting assignment gain valuable enterprise perspective that increase their skill sets and future leadership potential.

[Joint Experience. Joint Duty Assignment experience is also an extremely important consideration for promotion for Line of the Air Force officers. The law and Department of Defense policy require the qualifications of officers assigned to joint duty be such that:

1. Officers who are serving on, or have served on, the Joint Staff or within the Office of the Secretary of Defense are expected, as a group, to be promoted at a rate not less than the rate for officers in the same grade and competitive category who are serving on, or have served on, the Service headquarters staff; and
2. Officers who hold the grade of major or above who have been designated as a Joint Qualified Officer are expected, as a group, to be promoted at a rate not less than the average rate for officers in the same grade and competitive category.]

[Acquisition Workforce. Air Force acquisition officers work in a variety of career fields leading and supporting the development, procurement, and sustainment of materiel and weapon systems vital to our Nation's defense. Moreover, an understanding of acquisition matters is an important quality for officers called to serve in leadership positions. The law requires that the qualifications of commissioned officers in the acquisition workforce are such that those officers are expected, as a group, to be promoted at a rate not less than the average for the same grade and competitive category [both] In-the-Promotion Zone [and Below-the-Promotion Zone.]]

### **III. Quotas**

The maximum numbers of officers you may recommend for promotion, by grade and competitive category as percentages of In-the-Promotion-Zone eligible officers are:

[Insert Quotas]

You, however, are not obligated to meet those quotas.

Promotion selection is based on the "best qualified" method and boards must also ensure all selectees are "fully qualified" to assume the next higher grade.

[The maximum Below-the-Promotion-Zone quota for each competitive category is equal to a percentage of total available promotions prescribed by me and must displace less qualified officers selected In-the-Promotion-Zone and Above-the-Promotion Zone.] *Note: Although BPZ is no longer utilized by the USAF, the SecAF retains the option for future use. As a result, BPZ verbiage remains bracketed*

### **IV. Integrity of the Board and Communications**

Each of you (president, members, recorders, and administrative support personnel) is responsible for maintaining the integrity and independence of this promotion selection board, and for fostering the careful consideration, without prejudice or partiality, of all eligible officers. Department of Defense Instruction 1320.14 provides specific rules governing the conduct of officer selection boards and the actions of selection board personnel.

You must pay particularly close attention to the rules governing communications with and among other board members, the information authorized to be provided to you, and the



procedures you should follow if you believe that the integrity of this selection board has been improperly affected.

You may not receive, initiate, or participate in communications or discussions involving information that Department of Defense Instruction 1320.14 precludes from consideration by a selection board. You are to base your recommendations on the material in each officer's military record, any information I have provided to the board in accordance with Department of Defense Instruction 1320.14, and any information about the officer's own record communicated to you by individual eligible officers under directives and instructions I have issued.

In your deliberations, you may discuss your own personal knowledge and evaluation of the professional qualifications of eligible officers to the extent such matters are not precluded by law, Department of Defense Instruction 1320.14, or an Air Force directive or instruction from consideration by a selection board or inclusion in an officer's military personnel record. You may not discuss or disclose the opinion of any person not a member of the board concerning an officer being considered unless that opinion is contained in material provided to the board in accordance with Department of Defense Instruction 1320.14.

Before the report of the selection board is signed, the recommendations and proceedings may be disclosed only to members of the board, recorders, and those administrative support personnel I have designated in writing. After you sign the board report and the public release has been made, only the recommendations of the board may be disclosed. Procedures and processes of the board may be discussed only in general terms. The disclosure of recommendations and proceedings of the board are governed by Air Force Instruction 36-2501; Department of Defense Instruction 1320.14; and sections 613a, 616(f), and 618 of Title 10, United States Code. The proceedings of the board may not be disclosed to any person not a board member or board recorder, except to request relief from board duties in accordance with the law and Department of Defense Instruction 1320.14.

If at any time you believe you cannot, in good conscience, perform your duties as a member of the board without prejudice or partiality, you have a duty to request relief by me from this duty. I will honor any such request. If you believe that the integrity of the board's proceedings has been affected by improper influence of military or civilian authority, misconduct by the board president or a member, or any other reason, you have a duty to request from me, or the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, relief from your obligation not to disclose board proceedings and, upon receiving it, to report the basis for your belief.

## **V. Merit-Based Reordering of the Promotion List**

You shall recommend officers of particular merit, from those officers recommended for promotion in each competitive category, to be placed higher on the promotion list than seniority alone dictates. "Officers of particular merit" are those whose records contain documented performance consistently superior to the performance of others.

You shall consider the recommended order to be the relative standing of each officer selected for promotion, as determined by board record scoring. Your report will include a separate roster, in recommended order, of all those officers determined per the guidance above to merit higher placement on the promotion list.

[Medical and Dental Corps promotions to the grade of major only] Merit-Based reordering is not authorized for selection boards considering Medical Corps and Dental Corps officers for promotion to the grade of major.

## **VI. Reports and Certifications by the Board**

Upon the completion of board deliberations, you will, at a minimum, certify in your report to me that:

1. To the best of your knowledge, the board complied with Department of Defense Instruction 1320.14;
2. You were not subject to or aware of any censure, reprimand, or admonishment about the recommendations of the board or the exercise of any lawful function within the authorized discretion of the board;
3. You were not subject to or aware of any attempt to coerce or influence improperly any action in the formulation of the board's recommendations;
4. You were not party to or aware of any attempt at unauthorized communications;
5. To the best of your knowledge, the board carefully considered the records of each officer whose name was furnished to the board;
6. The officers recommended for promotion are, in the opinion of the majority of the members of the board, fully qualified and best qualified to meet the needs of the Air Force among those officers whose names were provided to the board;
7. The officers recommended for promotion, including those who had adverse information provided to the board, are, in the opinion of the majority of the members of the board, fully qualified and among the best qualified to meet the needs of the Air Force among those officers whose names were provided to the board, consistent with the exemplary conduct requirements of section 9233 of Title 10, United States Code;
8. The officers recommended for continuation are, in the opinion of the majority of the members of the board, fully qualified to meet the needs of the Air Force among those officers whose names were furnished to the board;
9. The non-continuation of majors within six years and captains within four years of retirement, as of [Insert date], is in the best interest of the Air Force; and
10. The officers recommended for merit-based reordering are, in the opinion of the majority of the members of the board, to be placed higher on the promotion list than seniority alone dictates and in the order recommended as determined by record scoring.

In your final report, you must also identify any officers whose records, in the opinion of a majority of the members of the board, indicate it may be appropriate for commanders to require them to "Show Cause" for retention on active duty. However, you are not obligated to identify an officer who is reflected in the selection record as being in an absent without leave or deserter

status or on appellate leave; nor are you obligated to identify an officer who is clearly reflected in the selection record as having been court-martialed and sentenced with a punitive dismissal which has been approved by the court-martial convening authority.

In addition, you will also include the name of any officer not recommended by the board who submitted to the board a request not to be selected for promotion or who otherwise directly caused the officer's nonselection through written communication to the board.

I am attaching two addenda that are integral parts of my guidance to you. In signing your report to me, you are certifying you acted in accordance with my instructions.

Frank Kendall  
Secretary of the Air Force

Addenda:

1. Additional Secretarial Instructions
2. Selective Continuation Board Instructions

**Attachment 1: Additional Secretarial Instructions**  
**For [insert board] Central Selection Boards; and [insert board] Selective Continuation Boards**

For the purposes of promotion and continuation, your consideration should include the following matters in no priority order:

**A. For All Competitive Categories**

Together with the rest of the Department of Defense, the Air Force needs to continue to foster a culture that encourages and rewards creativity, innovation, intelligent risk-taking, and critical thinking throughout the Department.

The effectiveness and efficiency of the Air Force, and the rest of the Department of Defense enterprise, will continue to demand excellent executive management skills. It is therefore essential that service leadership be well grounded in business practices.

To remain competitive, the Department must have members from the entire spectrum of qualified talent available in the United States. Accordingly, the Department of Defense needs to make every effort to encourage service by individuals from all backgrounds by providing for the equal treatment and equitable consideration of all personnel considered for promotion.

Air Force personnel who have performed duty in or are performing duty in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Indo-Pacific region, and other areas of the world have developed or are developing combat, international partnering, and coalition-building skills that need to be retained and utilized for future application.

Deployment information, critical language skills, and assignments in the Indo-Pacific region may be reflected in various documents in an officer's record. You should not make this a pass-fail item in your assessment. There are officers who have not had the opportunity to deploy or have not been assigned to the Indo-Pacific region. However, a successful tour in a deployed environment or assignment in the Indo-Pacific region, especially as a commander, provides insights into an officer's potential for assuming the next higher grade.

Foreign Area Officers (FAO) directly influence our efforts to sustain coalitions, pursue regional stability, and enable security cooperation. FAOs contribute to multi-national operations through regional expertise, foreign language proficiency, cultural understanding, and political-military experience. Successful performance of FAO duties enables the Air Force to engage globally and is a significant indicator of potential for promotion. In addition, you should consider that these officers, because of the needs of the Air Force and unique career development requirements, do not follow the traditional career progression of their peers in other AFSCs.

You should consider experiences and education that contribute to cultural awareness, particularly of pacing threats, and enable better communication in a global operating environment are crucial underpinnings to support strategic national interests.

Undergraduate and advanced academic degrees are only displayed in records being considered for the grade of colonel. The possession of an advanced academic degree, or lack thereof, will not be considered in assessing the potential of an officer until promotion to the grade of

colonel. [You should not make this a pass-fail item in your assessment. The Air Force considers it essential that our officers have the knowledge and competency to accomplish the mission. However, completion of advanced academic education, like other whole-person factors, must be assessed in terms of how it enhances performance and potential; and contributes to the mission and effectiveness of the Air Force.]

While Developmental Education should not be a pass-fail item in your assessment of an officer's potential for promotion, the Air Force considers Developmental Education important and encourages its officers to complete it. [The completion of Developmental Education, or lack thereof, will not be considered in assessing the potential of an officer until in- and above-the-promotion zone.] In addition, because officers who are listed as a "SELECT" to attend Developmental Education in-residence have no control over when they attend Developmental Education and are also precluded from completing it by any other method, Developmental Education "SELECT" status will be given equal weight to Developmental Education "COMPLETE" status for the same level of Developmental Education.

No undue weight should be given to multiple training reports or few performance reports for officers currently enrolled or recently completing Air Force-sponsored graduate education programs. These officers were competitively selected for these opportunities, which meet a specific Air Force requirement.

No undue weight should be given when officers have short duty histories because they entered active service with constructive credit for education or civilian experience.

#### **[B. For Line of the Air Force - Air Operations and Special Warfare**

Officers with experience in Remotely Piloted Aircraft operations possess unique skills critical to national security and to our success in today's global environment. In addition, successful performance of Remotely Piloted Aircraft flight duties, especially under demanding, high-stress conditions, is a significant indicator of potential for promotion to the next higher grade. Some of these officers have been required to remain in place for extended periods of time, or return prematurely from other assignments to contribute directly to combat and contingency operations. You should consider that these officers, because of the needs of the Air Force and combatant commanders, may not have received the same development opportunities and normal career progression as their peers.]

#### **[C. For Health Professions**

You will consider the records of officers in clinical, scientific, or functional specialties assigned to fill critical requirements in direct patient care or education and training. Because of the needs of the Air Force, these officers may not have a traditional career path or assignments commensurate with their grade.

When considering Health Professions officers, clinical/functional skills or medical proficiency are important factors in assessing job performance. [For Health Professions promotions to the grades of major and lieutenant colonel, you must give consideration to an officer's clinical proficiency and skill as a health professional to at least as great an extent as you give to the officer's administrative and management skills.]

[For promotion to colonel only, you will consider that the professional development of Health Professions officers can emphasize progression along a path focused on executive leadership, clinical/functional proficiency, and/or academic prowess, each of which are highly valued and are important factors in professional development.]

Board certification in a career field-related professional organization is considered an important accomplishment for promotion, except for Biomedical Sciences Corps officers.

**[D. For Line of the Air Force – Combat Support**

The Aerospace Physiologist (AFSC 13H) is a medical specialty which recently transitioned from the Biomedical Sciences Corps (BSC) competitive category to Line of the Air Force – Combat Support (LAF-C) in FY22. These officers may not have received the same developmental and career progression opportunities as their LAF-C peers and will have different promotion timing, dates of rank, duty titles, and constructive service credit, and will have had limited opportunity to attend in-residence PME. As you evaluate each officer’s record, you are to take these unique factors into consideration when assessing each officer’s promotion potential.]

## **Attachment 2: Selective Continuation Board Instructions For [insert board] Selective Continuation Boards**

The purpose of these Selective Continuation Boards is to consider [Insert competitive categories, grades, times non-selected, and promotion board non-selected], for selective continuation on active duty.

As there is no quota applied, you may select up to 100% of eligible, fully qualified officers; but you must also consider the following guidance:

Experience and length of service are important factors in selecting officers for continuation. However, those factors do not override the needs of the Air Force or performance factors.

Majors who will qualify for retirement within six years as of [Insert date] and captains who will qualify for retirement within four years as of [Insert date] shall normally be continued. Majors not within six years or captains not within four years as of [Insert date] may be recommended for continuation, but only if you determine that continuation is clearly in the best interest of the Air Force.

It will normally be in the best interest of the Air Force to also continue officers with critical skills (including capabilities, experiences, and other attributes); [this list is subject to change based on SecAF approval]. I have determined that the following skills are critical to the Air Force:

[For captains non-selected for promotion to major] [Pilots (11X); Bomber Combat Systems Officers (12B); Fighter Combat Systems Officers (12F); Rescue Combat Systems Officers (12H); Mobility Combat Systems Officers (12M); Reconnaissance, Surveillance, Electronic Warfare Combat Systems Officers (12R); Special Operations Combat Systems Officers (12S); Remotely Piloted Aircraft Combat Systems Officers (12U); Air Battle Manager Officers (13B); Aerospace Physiologist Officers (13H); Operations Research Analyst Officers (15A); Weather and Environmental Sciences Officers (15W); Remotely Piloted Aircraft Pilots (18X); Special Warfare Officers (19Z); Chaplains (52R); Chemist and Biologist Officers (61C); Physicist and Nuclear Engineer Officers (61D); Developmental Engineers (62E); Acquisition Manager Officers (63A); Preventive Medicine Officers (44B); Occupational Medicine Officers (44U); Critical Care Medicine Officers (44Y); Flight Nurse Officers (46F); Pediatric Dentist Officers (47K); Aerospace Medicine Physician Specialist Officers (48A); Residency Trained Flight Surgeon Officers (48R); Pilot-Physician Officers (48V)]; officers currently earning, or having earned, Air Force-Sponsored advanced degrees; those who are Wounded Warriors; and/or those with Afghanistan/Pakistan Hands experience or Indo-Pacific region experiences.

[For majors non-selected for promotion to lieutenant colonel] [Pilots (11X); Bomber Combat Systems Officers (12B); Fighter Combat Systems Officers (12F); Rescue Combat Systems Officers (12H); Mobility Combat Systems Officers (12M); Reconnaissance, Surveillance, Electronic Warfare Combat Systems Officers (12R); Special Operations Combat Systems Officers (12S); Remotely Piloted Aircraft Combat Systems Officers (12U); Air Battle Manager Officers (13B); Aerospace Physiologist Officers (13H); Remotely Piloted Aircraft Pilots (18X); Special Warfare Officers (19Z); Chaplains (52R); Physicist and Nuclear Engineer Officers (61D); Preventive Medicine Officers (44B); Occupational Medicine Officers (44U); Critical Care Medicine Officers (44Y); Flight Nurse Officers (46F); Pediatric Dentist Officers (47K); Aerospace Medicine Physician Specialist Officers (48A); Residency Trained Flight Surgeon

Officers (48R); Pilot-Physician Officers (48V)]; officers currently earning, or having earned, Air Force-Sponsored advanced degrees; those who are Wounded Warriors; and/or those with Afghanistan/Pakistan Hands experience or Indo-Pacific region experiences.

However, you normally should not continue officers with negative quality indicators documented in their record, or who will not qualify for retirement within six years (majors) or four years (captains) as of [Insert date], or who does not have a critical skill described above, unless it is clearly in the best interest of the Air Force.

You also have the discretion to recommend an officer not be continued who is within the specified years of retirement or who has one of the critical skills I have identified, if you otherwise determine the officer's record does not clearly justify continuation.



# Mitigating Unconscious Bias

---

## SMALL GROUP FACILITATOR GUIDE



23 JULY 2020

Air Force Diversity and Inclusion Division (AF/A1DV)

## **FACILITATOR TEACHING STRATEGY**

**Time:** 60 minutes minimum; if feasible, consider allotting additional discussion to reach a sense of closure.

**Facilitation Method:** Video/Guided Discussion

**Required Support Material:** Air Force “*Neurons & Narratives*” Video

**Objective:** The intent of this discussion is to expand the participants existing knowledge of unconscious bias and encourage use of strategies to decrease susceptibility to this natural phenomenon.

Prior to facilitating this discussion, ensure you review this guide in its entirety, all material identified in “Required Support Material” and the sequence of events highlighted below.

Pay particular attention to the following areas:

- 1 – Areas identified as “**Say**” can be paraphrased or read verbatim.
- 2 – Discussion questions can be read and/or paraphrased to fit the requirements of the group.

### **Guided Discussion Sequence of Events:**

\*Ideal group size is between 10-15 participants.

**Part I, Introduction.** This 10-minute discussion is intended to foster an environment where all participants feel accepted, respected, and free to share their beliefs without fear of negative consequences. All participants should be encouraged to participate. Facilitators are responsible for managing pace/length of introductions to remain within the prescribed time window.

**Part II, Neurons and Narratives Video.** This 20-minute block is intended to level set all participants knowledge for the upcoming discussion. Facilitators are encouraged to watch the video more than once prior to delivering the guided discussion. This enables facilitators to gain a deeper understanding and be prepared to answer participants’ questions.

**Part III, Group Discussion.** This 30-minute discussion briefly explores how participants have experienced bias. Participants should be able to articulate responses to the discussion questions. If necessary, facilitators may re-phrase questions to fit the specific requirements of the participants. Facilitators should ensure that the discussion remains on topic. As you facilitate this discussion, you may have to use more creative questioning to get the values-based responses desired, but do avoid providing the anticipated responses. Your questioning should be geared to get participants to provide responses similar to the provided anticipated responses.

**Reproduction, modification and /or distribution in whole or part in electronic, paper, or other forms without consent of the Air Force Diversity and Inclusion Division (AF/A1DV) permission is prohibited**

**Facilitator Note:** For virtual delivery environments, recommend conducting a systems check with all participants (i.e. mic and video) prior to initiating session. Consider establishing rules of engagement for virtual environment. (Participants mute mic when they are not speaking to reduce feedback, requesting participants’ utilization of “raise hand” feature, etc.)

## **PART I: INTRODUCTION (10 Minutes)**

### **FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Inform group that you request an introduction consisting of them sharing something unique about themselves that no one may know.
2. Provide participants about 2 minutes to organize thoughts.
3. After 2 minutes, facilitators will lead off with conducting a brief introduction.  
**NOTE:** *Set pace for other participants by ensuring introduction is no more than 30 seconds. Be sure that your introduction includes your rank, place of work and something unique about yourself.*
4. Then proceed with allowing all participants to introduce themselves to the group.

**SAY:** Thanks for taking a moment to allow all of us to get more familiar with one another. Now let’s take a moment to view a 20-minute presentation regarding Unconscious Bias. I encourage you all to capture insightful points for utilization in an upcoming discussion.

## **PART II: Neurons and Narratives Video (20 Minutes)**



Play video “Neurons and Narratives”

**SAY:** The previous video offers some great insight regarding how unconscious bias manifest when interacting with people. In addition, we all understand that we have an opportunity to mitigate, which is reduce, the harmful effects of unconscious bias. This will help us to consciously approach challenges. Now let’s take a moment to discuss your experiences with unconscious bias.

### PART III: Group Discussion (30 Minutes)



#### ACTIVITY

**SAY:** As we engage in this discussion, I want to encourage you all to participate in the discussion. Please remain open and respectful of one another as people share their experiences.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

**Facilitator Note:** Examples have been provided to help break silence and spark conversation.

#### ANTICIPATED RESPONSES

**ASK (5 Minutes):** What other rules of engagement should we establish as we proceed with the discussion?

*Responses will vary upon experiences of participants*

*Example:* “We need to strive to be comfortable and open to discussing topics of race and racism.” Or “We need to strive to share the air time and not dominate the discussion.”

**ASK (5 Minutes):** What biases have you experienced and how have they affected you?

*Responses will vary upon experiences of participants*

*Example:* “As a woman, I have noticed that when I offer comments or ideas, they are often ignored. However, when a male team member makes the same statement a few moments later, I notice that others are much more receptive.”

**SAY:** As we saw in the video, no one is immune to bias; however, there are strategies that we can leverage to mitigate its negative effects. The first mitigation step requires us to “Acknowledge” we all have biases.

**ASK (5 Minutes):** So why may acknowledging we have bias be difficult?

- We may perceive that having bias is bad
- May believe that “Good” people are unbiased

*Example:* “For me, believing that bias is bad causes me to want to deny or self-justify my position. Rather than moving to get a better understanding of what might be occurring.”

**SAY:** Now there are a number of ways in which we can interrupt the role that unconscious bias plays in our decision making. For example, one way involves engaging with people in groups you may not know very well.

**ASK (5 Minutes):** How might engaging with groups that we may not know well help to reprogram our bias toward those groups?

- Provides us access to new information sources

*Example:* “Before joining the military, I did not get outside of my hometown very often. And in my hometown, many people looked just like me. However, my first assignment was overseas in Japan. This experience really challenged the stereotypes I had of others who did not originate from the U.S. and helped me gain a deeper understanding of other cultures.”

- Creates opportunities to form new personal and professional relationships, thus discovering how much we have in common with others

**SAY:** Now let’s explore a key driver for inclusive work environments known as psychological safety. With that said, psychological safety has to do with whether or not people experience the freedom and safety to engage in their work rather than feeling like they have to protect themselves in some way. With this in mind, let’s consider:

**ASK (5 Minutes):** How can you create psychological safety within your organization?

- Foster a workplace environment where honest feedback is sought out and leveraged as an asset to the mission

*Example:* “I have to really pay attention to what’s happening. And seek to understand others while withholding my interpretations and judgments.”

- Create space where individuals can share their unique personal experiences

**ASK (5 Minutes):** What is your obligation to try to keep your biases in check?

- We have a responsibility to create an inclusive environment where all members are able to make their fullest contribution to the success of the group, and where there are no unnecessary barriers to success

- Our actions and behaviors help establish the organizational culture.

**SAY:** As we close, I want to thank each of you for being supportive in this learning experience. This was a necessary and important conversation. As you recall in the video, we are all impacted by unconscious bias. It is a human condition and not a disease to be cured from. Our call to action is to make the unconscious -- conscious -- so we can address bias head-on and take the necessary steps to be more inclusive in our approach.

Finally, let's be clear – one single training event is not the “cure all”. We must continue to engage in self-reflection and explore opportunities to learn from the experiences of others on our team. We all have a stake in creating the culture we need.