

CEO Update

BY WILLIAM "T" THOMPSON, '73, PRESIDENT AND CEO



Greetings grads, parents and other members. We have just finished graduation week at USAFA and have welcomed another 1021 graduates as part of the Long Blue Line. These young men and women have unlimited opportunities ahead of them but enter a challenging and rapidly changing world both globally and domestically. They are also joining the most powerful and advanced Air Force in the history of the world but a service that is going through many changes with very different rules than when most of us were 2nd Lieutenants.

Our newest members come to an AOG that has also undergone major change since they entered the Academy four years ago. While change can often be unsettling for some, the consensus opinion is that the change we have endured has helped to move the association in a positive direction and is making us a stronger, better organization. While your Board of Directors and AOG staff can take pride in the progress we have made on your behalf, there is still much work to be done. To guide us in this process, your staff has put together a four-year Operations Strategic Plan (OSP) designed to give you a stronger connection to the Academy, bring you a better alumni structure, and make us a stronger organization from both a customer service and financial perspective. As such, you can expect to see even more change as we implement the OSP with annual business plans over the next four years. As Winston Churchill once remarked, "There is nothing wrong with change if it's in the right direction."

Speaking of a stronger connection to the Academy, I want to thank the many of you who listened to the Connection Project video, read the paper and took the time and effort to share your views. The response was surprisingly overwhelming and extremely positive. There is clearly a strong desire in the graduate community to connect with the Academy, particularly with cadets. There is also a concurrent aspiration among grads to connect with each other, both in the active duty service and in the business world. We received numerous comments from earlier grads, now retired, who expressed a longing to have had graduate mentors while they were on active duty. We have grads currently on active duty who have expressed that same desire. There are also a significant number of grads that have been reluctant to share their Academy graduate status on active duty, yet have been very proud of this significant accomplishment. It seems with some that the Connection Project paper has given them leave to express that pride.

Comments from grads now separated from active duty mirrored those expressed above. Our grads want a strong business mentoring, contact and information network. We want to help and be helped in both the corporate and entrepreneurial sectors. While these wishes are strong, there is also the general feeling that no structure, informal or otherwise, has previously existed to tackle these needs.

The AOG is committed to aggressively addressing these and many of the other issues highlighted in the Connection Project paper. In fact, we have made considerable progress in building our networking infrastructure through the Chapter development program over the past year. We have doubled the number of AOG Chapters around the world, from 31 in April of 2010, to 61 today. But this is more than just a numbers game. We have also put in place a process to create strong, viable chapters and have created the incentives for chapters to develop strong networking components. Additionally, many of our new chapters are in communities that are the homes of nearby Air Force bases, giving our active duty grads an opportunity to connect in an informal but collegial setting.

We are also working with the Academy on a pilot Mentoring Project which will have our grads paired with cadets to pass on important leadership, character, and general life skills. In my view this is a critically important first step in helping our cadets to understand the true meaning of being a member of the Long Blue Line.


A continuing challenge will be to address the processes in the Air Force concerning the unique status of the AOG and now the Endowment, in their partner-


ship with the Academy. It is clear that both Army and Navy have developed an understanding that values the relationship between their alumni associations and foundation and their Academies. As a result, their administrations have crafted an approach which actively supports their membership and fundraising efforts. We still have a way to go to address these issues. Our Academy leadership is aware of these challenges and we are collectively looking at ways to conduct these programs so that we can best support our Academy in the most productive manner possible.

Many of you asked how you could help and have volunteered to get involved. I will close by asking you to join, or become more active in your local chapters. Attend the networking lunches and dinners. If you are senior officers on active duty, reach out to the younger grads and give them guidance on how to have a successful career. Come back to the Academy when you can and interact with cadets. Reunions, football games, NCLS and the upcoming Mentoring Program will all provide excellent opportunities. Hire grads in your businesses or help them get interviews. Become Sabre Society members and encourage your fellow grads to do the same. By working together and each doing whatever we can, we'll create the connections that make us collectively, and the Academy, even stronger. Go Air Force!!!


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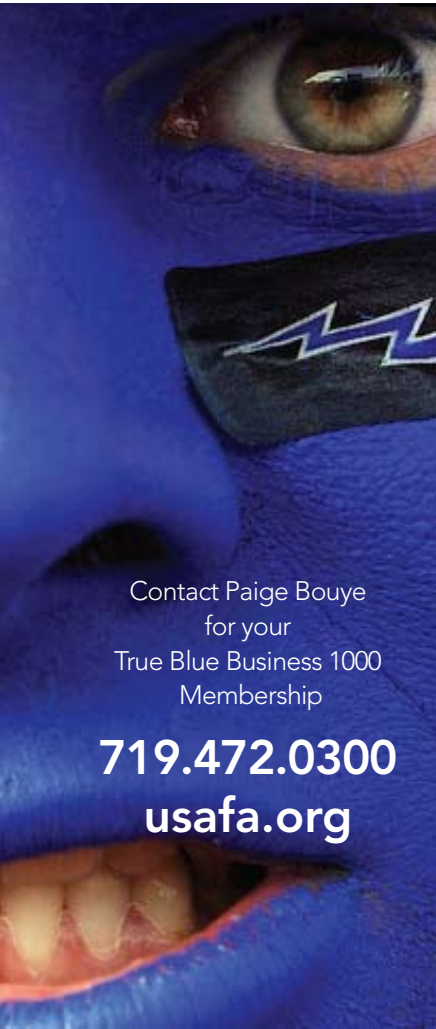


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Connect with your Academy through the benefits of joining **TRUE BLUE BUSINESS 1000**. The **BUSINESS 1000** club is designed as a select and elite club of Academy friends and sponsors who are interested in receiving unprecedented access to Academy events and activities, while helping to directly support our cadets. **TRUE BLUE BUSINESS 1000** club members receive:

- Special invitations to Association of Graduate and Academy events
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Building a Strong Community Together

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