



MLDC Research Areas

- Definition of Diversity
- Legal Implications
- Outreach & Recruiting
- Leadership & Training
- Branching & Assignments
- Promotion
- Retention
- Implementation & Accountability
- Metrics
- National Guard & Reserve

This issue paper aims to aid in the deliberations of the MLDC. It does not contain the recommendations of the MLDC.

Military Leadership Diversity Commission
1851 South Bell Street
Arlington, VA 22202
(703) 602-0818

<http://mldc.whs.mil/>

Service Academy Preparatory Schools as a Resource for Racial/Ethnic Diversity in the Officer Corps

Abstract

Originally created with the intent of equipping enlisted personnel for appointment to Service academies, Service academy preparatory schools now also provide an avenue for civilian applicants who do not receive Service academy appointments. Those who complete the 10-month preparatory school curriculum—a blend of academics, military training, and physical fitness—then have the opportunity to enter the relevant Service academy the following year. The Service academy preparatory schools have also become an important tool in diversity outreach and recruiting for the academies. For example, recent data indicate that around 50 percent of preparatory school enrollees have been racial/ethnic minorities, and a considerable percentage of these students continue on to successfully graduate from the Service academies. Thus, the preparatory schools represent one avenue for increasing demographic diversity within the Service academies.

One of the charter tasks for the MLDC specifically requests the commission to examine “the possible effect of expanding Department of Defense secondary educational programs to diverse civilian populations, including military academy preparatory schools” (10 U.S.C. 596, 2008). Therefore, this issue paper provides an overview of the Service academy preparatory schools and focuses on their function as a resource for diversity outreach and recruiting. It begins with a brief review of the history and purpose of the military academy preparatory schools and then shows the demographic profile of recent preparatory school enrollees as well as the rates at which those

enrolled ultimately completed Service academy programs.

Overview of the Military Academy Preparatory Schools

The academy preparatory schools (hereafter referred to as *prep schools*) originated in President Woodrow Wilson’s expansion of the U.S. Military Academy’s (USMA’s) corps of cadets in 1916, authorizing 180 slots for prior enlisted personnel (Malstrom, 2009). The reality at the time, however, was that few enlisted personnel were capable of transitioning directly to a Service academy without additional academic preparation. The idea of Service academy prep schools for both the Army and the Navy came about as a way to meet this need. Currently, each Department of Defense (DoD) Service academy oversees a single prep school and partners with various foundations and private postsecondary institutions to augment its prep school efforts.

The modern purpose of the prep schools still includes their original mission of providing additional preparation to prior enlisted personnel, but it has been generalized to also offer opportunities for civilian applicants. At one point, the DoD directive governing the prep schools explicitly stated that the prep schools should give “primary consideration” to “nominees to fill officer accession objectives for minorities, including women . . .” (U.S. Department of Defense, Deputy Secretary of Defense, 1994, section 4.9.2). However, for legal reasons, this primary consideration for minorities has been discontinued at the prep schools (Lt Col R. M. Jourdan, Assistant Director, Officer Commissioning Programs, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense/Personnel & Readiness, personal communication, March 25, 2010). Despite this change in the governing directive, the prep schools are still a significant resource for minority enrollment. For example, the

U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA) Preparatory School is the source of 40 percent of USAFA's minority enrollment (Weller, 2007).

Although there are private military prep schools with programs designed to prepare prospective Service academy appointees (see Appendix A), most of the cadets who reach Service academies via the prep school route attend the U.S. Military Academy Preparatory School (USMAPS), the Naval Academy Preparatory School (NAPS), or the USAFA Preparatory School. The Coast Guard Academy (CGA) does not have its own prep school. Prior to 2009, CGA sent some prospective cadets to NAPS. Since 2009, however, the CGA has used only private programs to serve the prep school function because the private programs were found to be more cost-effective than NAPS.

The prep schools do not do their own recruiting; rather, they select students from the pool of applicants who did not receive an appointment to the relevant Service academy (Thirtle, 2001). The prep schools also do not charge tuition. To enter the prep schools, students enlist in the reserves at the lowest enlisted rank (and are paid accordingly). The prep school programs last 10 months, and the curriculum is a combination of academic/athletic preparation and military training. Overall, the prep schools supply about 100–200 qualified candidates per year for appointment to each of the Service academies (Thirtle, 2001).¹

The Basic Demographics of Recent Prep School Enrollees

Table 1 shows the basic demographics of those initially enrolled in the prep school classes of 2006 to 2009 (which correspond to the relevant Service academy classes of 2010 to 2013—all the classes currently attending Service academies). From these data, it is clear that the prep schools provide opportunities to minority applicants who might not otherwise have been admitted to the Service academies. Over this period, nearly 50 percent of USMAPS and USAFA Preparatory School enrollees were racial/ethnic minorities, and over 50 percent of NAPS enrollees were racial/ethnic minorities.

In terms of gender, the prep schools tend to enroll cohorts that are mostly male. Enrollees at each prep school were only 15–20 percent female. Over one third of prep school enrollees in each Service academy were recruited athletes. Finally, 25 percent of USMAPS, 19 percent of NAPS, and 20 percent of USAFA Preparatory School enrollees during this period were prior enlisted.

Academy Graduation Rates for Cadets Enrolled in Prep Schools

Although the prep school enrollment demographics show that the prep schools offer opportunities to many minority applicants, the degree to which prep schools affect the demographic composition of the officer corps depends on the rates at which applicants complete both the prep school and the relevant Service academy programs. Therefore, for the USMAPS, NAPS, and USAFA Preparatory School classes of 2001 to 2004, Table 2 shows both the rates at which prep school enrollees eventually graduated from their Service academies and the total numbers of academy graduates. These prep school classes correspond to the Service academy classes of 2005 to 2008.

Overall, 58 percent of students who entered USMAPS during this period eventually graduated from the United States Military Academy (USMA); 70 percent of those who entered NAPS and 55 percent of those who entered USAFA Preparatory School graduated from the relevant Service academies. Non-Hispanic black and Hispanic prep school cadets were slightly more likely than non-Hispanic white cadets to graduate from USMA, and non-Hispanic cadets of other races/ethnicities were slightly less likely to do so. Among NAPS enrollees, the graduation rate of non-Hispanic black midshipmen was about 6 percentage points lower than the graduation rate of non-Hispanic white midshipmen. For USAFA Preparatory School enrollees, there was little difference across demographic groups in terms of graduation rates, except that the graduation rate of non-Hispanic white cadets

Table 1: Demographics of Prep School Enrollees, Classes of 2006 to 2009, by Service

	USMAPS	NAPS	USAFA Prep
Total enrolled	964	1,076	940
Black (non-Hispanic)	21%	21%	21%
Hispanic	17%	20%	17%
Other (non-Hispanic)	9%	12%	11%
All minority	47%	53%	48%
Female	15%	18%	20%
Recruited athlete	38%	35% ^a	39%
Prior enlisted	25%	19%	20%

SOURCE: Data for the analyses were provided by each Service academy prep school.

NOTE: a—Information on recruited athletes was only available for 2006, so the NAPS percentage reflects only the NAPS class of 2006.

was about 10 percentage points lower than those of other demographic groups.

Finally, Table 2 shows the actual contribution of the prep schools to officer racial/ethnic diversity: Over four Service academy classes, the prep schools helped produce 214 minority USMA graduates, 326 minority United States Naval Academy (USNA) graduates, and 276 minority USAFA graduates. Among those admitted to Service academies, cadets/midshipmen who attended prep schools had graduation rates comparable to those of their directly appointed classmates. In the USMA, USNA, and USAFA classes of 1997 to 2002, 73 percent of prep school graduates who accepted appointments to their respective academies went on to graduate, compared with 78 percent of students who were directly appointed to the academies. One would not expect these rates to be the same, given that prep school opportunities are only offered to applicants who are not competitive enough for a direct appointment. Still, the fact that they are comparable suggests that prep schools are effective either in equipping deficient candidates or in screening out candidates who lack the necessary qualities to graduate.

Conclusion

The prep schools are one potential avenue for increasing minority access to the high-quality training and education offered by Service academies. The data show that a large portion (around 50 percent) of those admitted to the prep schools are racial/ethnic minorities and that most (55–70 percent, depending on the Service academy) of the students admitted to prep schools eventually become officers. Therefore, assuming that the prep school enrollees would not otherwise have had an opportunity to attend a Service academy, the prep schools have been an effective resource for producing minority officers.

It is difficult to say whether the prep school training itself is effective because some of the prep school graduates may have been able to complete a Service academy program without attending prep school. Still, the fact that prep school graduates complete Service academy programs at rates comparable to those directly appointed suggests that the prep schools are effective in either equipping deficient candidates

or screening out candidates who would not successfully graduate from the Service academy. Thus, the prep school function—to equip deficient candidates with leadership potential to meet the rigors of a Service academy program—lends itself naturally to diversity outreach and recruiting, and the prep schools have been useful in this capacity.

Notes

¹Service academies do not guarantee appointments to each prep school graduate. However, academy and prep school leadership often exercise oversight over which candidates receive appointments.

References

Allvord, T. (n.d.). *History of NAPS*. Retrieved March 9, 2010, from <http://www.usna.com/NAPS/history.html>

Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009, Pub L. 110-417, 122 Stat. 4477, October 14, 2008, codified at 10 U.S. Code § 596 (2008).

Falcon Foundation website. (n.d.). Retrieved March 15, 2010, from <http://www.falconfoundation.org/>

Malstrom, F. (2009, June). Before there was a USAFA prep school. *Checkpoints*, 30.

Stewart, D. B. (2003). *Military education: DoD needs to align academy preparatory schools' mission statements with overall guidance and establish performance goals* [GAO-03-1017]. Washington, DC: General Accounting Office.

Thirtle, M. R. (2001). *Educational benefits and officer-commissioning opportunities available to U.S. military servicemembers* [MR-981-OSD]. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.

U.S. Department of Defense, Deputy Secretary of Defense. (1994, August 24). *Service academies* [DoDD 1322.22]

U.S. Naval Academy Alumni Association & Foundation website. (n.d.). Retrieved March 15, 2010, from <http://www.usna.com/Page.aspx?pid=484>

Table 2: Service Academy Graduation Information for Prep School Enrollees, Classes of 2005 to 2008, by Demographic Group

	USMAPS		NAPS		USAFA Prep	
	Rate	Number Graduated	Rate	Number Graduated	Rate	Number Graduated
White (non-Hispanic)	58%	306	71%	341	50%	231
Black (non-Hispanic)	60%	107	65%	135	59%	102
Hispanic	62%	68	70%	135	61%	114
Other	53%	39	76%	56	61%	60
Female	66%	98	68%	94	60%	94
All	58%	520	70%	667	55%	506

SOURCE: Data for the analyses were provided by each Service academy prep school.

Weller, R. (2007, May 12). Academy: Diversity strong despite rule change. *Air Force Times*. Retrieved March 9, 2010, from http://www.airforcetimes.com/news/2007/05/ap_airforceacademypolicy_070512/

West Point preparatory scholarship program website. (n.d.). *West Point Association of Graduates*. Retrieved March 15, 2010, from <http://www.aogusma.org/aog/wppspadd.htm>