

## INTRODUCTION

The United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) is a premier institution of higher education, where the heart of our unique mission is dedicated to producing leaders of character. We educate, train and inspire our cadets to become the officers who will guide our Air and Space Forces into the future, and defend our country and its constitutional principles of equality, liberty, and justice for all. Our mission is essential to national security, and it is our duty to ensure that we remain on a path of excellence.

Systemic racism exists in our society. Identity groups, whether based on race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or disability, have all experienced less-than-equal treatment in our nation, both historically and persisting in the present day. Ongoing events across our nation and around the world are a stark reminder that racism and social injustice continue to afflict our society. We must acknowledge that at USAFA we are not immune to these issues. What happens outside our gates also happens across our installation, and throughout the Cadet Wing. We would be naïve to think otherwise, and negligent to ignore the impact of racism and injustice on our cadets, our permanent party and their families and our entire USAFA community.

Our military superiority relies on an incredibly diverse force of innovative individuals who must work cohesively as a team. There is no place in our words or actions for discrimination or racial bias of any kind, nor can we allow these behaviors to persist in the culture of our institution. A disregard for dignity and respect is corrosive to mission success, and will not be tolerated. To address these issues we must each, and as a cohesive team, look inward to continually examine ourselves and our institution for the prevalence of racism, discrimination, and injustice.

To that end, I directed what I hope will be an enduring, lasting effort to promote racial understanding and diversity in the context of leadership. These actions included the establishment of a Critical Conversations Working Group (CCWG), led by the Center for Character Development (CCLD), to facilitate recurring USAFA-wide critical conversations for cadets and permanent party. In addition, my Director of Staff and the Director of Equal Opportunity co-chaired an internal assessment and review for biases within our policies, processes, practices, curriculum, and artifacts. The objective of the assessment was to identify racial disparities unique to USAFA. The findings are documented in the pages that follow.

This is only the beginning. These efforts are the initial steps in what must be a continuous effort to ensure enduring change. These findings and recommendations will inform immediate actions and provide a blueprint for the next steps. I applaud the efforts of all those involved, from those who led and facilitated the assessment and review, to the courageous individuals who shared personal experiences, and to the many who participated in critical conversations and forums. As of the release of the report, more than 50 formal, organized critical conversations have been held across our installation, and many more informal conversations have been held throughout our USAFA community.

When I first arrived at the United States Air Force Academy in 1981, I looked to my left and right and found a mostly homogenous incoming class. We were not very diverse, and about 90 percent male. Most of us came from similar backgrounds, and brought to our education and training an intellectual foundation built on a similar worldview. My fellow cadets and I were a group of good scholars and standout athletes, but we were not an accurate reflection of our nation, or a representation of its full potential. Returning to my alma mater as Superintendent, I found an institution much different from the one I attended, and one that is continuing to evolve.

This past summer we welcomed our newest class, the Class of 2024, as the most diverse class in our Academy's history, both in terms of gender, racial, and ethnic composition. The country's trajectory is one of greater diversity which translates to greater capability. To remain relevant, USAFA must fully utilize one of our nation's greatest strengths – its unique diversity. It is our moral responsibility to embrace and leverage the increased warfighting capability of diversity and inclusion.

USAFA must continue its long-standing efforts to lead in the arena and set the standard for excellence. Earlier this summer, I asked everyone at USAFA to acknowledge, act, and advocate. We need to acknowledge that there are disparities in the treatment of our personnel. We must put actions to our observations. And must all be advocates for a positive environment and strive to make USAFA a better place than when we arrived.

As I relinquish command of my beloved alma mater to the next Superintendent, it is imperative this work continues. I am confident my successors will remain dedicated to improving USAFA on all fronts, including diversity and inclusion.

Introspective examination of our institution and ourselves is not easy. It is a messy process, and can be fraught with emotion. But we cannot afford to delay addressing our issues, and we cannot avoid these conversations because they are uncomfortable. Sometimes our most difficult endeavors are the most productive, and leaders do not shy away from these kind of challenges – they take them on. We can and we will develop officers of character who will lead a diverse and serve our nation aligned with the values and ideals it stands for – equality, liberty, and justice. Now is the time to work toward positive progress together, and now is always the time to do the right thing.

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