

## ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT

# Evaluating and Assessing the Ethical Leadership Framework for Air Force Leader Development

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### ABSTRACT

In this paper we discuss the assessment plan for the validation and implementation of the Ethical Leadership Framework (ELF) for leader development in the Air Force. The ELF, informed by research on leader and ethical leadership development, views all leadership within an ethical context, and strategic leadership capacities (e.g., absorptive, strategic, decision-making) are conceptualized as capacities that are also inherently ethical capacities. The ELF will be used, over the next five years, to inform curriculum development at Air University (AU), the lead agent for Air Force education. Prior to beginning the curriculum development process, however, the first task is to validate the conceptual framework. Second, guided by the framework and associated competencies, we will conduct a baseline assessment to identify and describe the leadership knowledge, skills, and attitudes (KSA) currently represented in Air University students (e.g., officer, enlisted, civilian cohorts and faculty). The results of the baseline assessment will inform the development of curriculum to reinforce existing strengths and seeks to provide additional education and training, and structure for areas of growth within the framework of the Ethical Leadership Framework.

## Introduction

In this paper we discuss the assessment plan for the validation and implementation of the Ethical Leadership Framework (ELF) for leader development in the Air Force via Air University curriculum. Informed by the research and theoretical underpinnings of leadership development, the Ethical Leadership model is a framework informed by the ethical leadership literature to not only address the growing ethical dilemmas military personnel face (Asencio, et al., 2017; Mastroianni, 2011; Meine & Dunn, 2017; Wead, 2015) but also to situate ethical leader development within the context of all leader development in the Air Force. In the past, ethical leadership and ethical thinking frameworks have been treated as separate from overall leadership development (e.g., strategy, decision-making) and ethical decision-making has frequently been addressed as choosing between legal/illegal or right/wrong. In the ELF, all leadership is viewed within an ethical context, and strategic leadership capacities (e.g., absorptive, strategic, decision-making) are conceptualized as capacities that are also inherently ethical capacities. Through the ELF, all leadership development is conceptualized as ethical leadership development (for a full discussion of the conceptual framework and rationale for the ELF, see Parson, Weise, Tatum, Allison, & Farrell, Under Review).

The ELF was developed in support of Air University's 5-year Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) (a requirement of SACSCOC accreditation), *Leadership and Ethics across the Continuum of Learning*. As discussed in the full QEP, Air University has identified three institutional outcomes for the QEP. Air University will:

- Develop a leadership model and leader development framework for the continuum of learning.
- Develop faculty expertise in leadership development.
- Develop a forum for theorists, researchers and practitioners.

In addition, Air University has identified the following QEP Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) for the implementation of the ELF. Students will:

- Understand the domains of strategic-ethical leadership in the context of a developmental continuum across an individual's career.
- Apply leadership development theories and models as appropriate to their career level and roles.
- Demonstrate leadership skills appropriate to their career level and roles.

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The development of the ELF directly addressed the first institutional outcome, supports the other two institutional outcomes, and enables the three SLOs. These SLOs guide assessment and curriculum development, and will be adapted as needed according to the first stage of QEP assessment where the ELF is validated through internal and external review.

The ELF will be used to inform leadership curriculum development at Air University, the lead agent for Air Force education. Prior to beginning the curriculum development process, however, the first task is to validate the conceptual framework and make revisions so that the ELF is representative of leadership from a practitioner standpoint and reinforces the ethics and values of the Air Force. As a part of that review, we will develop leadership competencies that describe leadership knowledge, skills, and attitudes (KSAs; while the A in KSA often refers to abilities, in this framework, the A refers to attitudes) to define how the ELF looks in practice. Simultaneously, we will be working with representatives from across Air University programs to develop a curriculum map to describe the current state

and structure of leadership education at Air University. Second, guided by the framework and associated competencies, we will conduct a baseline assessment to identify and describe the leadership KSAs currently represented in Air University students (e.g., officer, enlisted, civilian cohorts) and faculty. The results of the baseline assessment will inform the development of curriculum to reinforce existing strengths and seek to provide additional education, training and structure for areas of growth within the framework of the ELF. We will discuss each of these steps in more detail, beginning with a brief overview of the ELF.

### Ethical Leadership Framework (ELF)

Ethical leadership development occurs in two major continuums: sociocognitive and interpersonal. Sociocognitively, ethical leadership development occurs as an individual develops, solidifies, and acts on their internal beliefs about what is moral and right (Immel, 2016). Interpersonally, ethical leadership development occurs within the three Air Force domains: Individual, Team, and Organization. The ELF focuses on leadership development in each of the

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domains in order to provide a construct that promotes a deliberate and methodical way to analyze, evaluate, develop, and assess existing and future leadership development programs (Figure 1). The framework seeks to model the relationship between “an individual’s understandings of “self,” their ability as a “team” leader to create an environment that fosters subordinates’ individual development, and the capacity to foster culture/climate of the Air Force as an organization (Figure 2). This, then, represents the bi-directional relationship of influence between the capacities within Airmen and the teams they lead, and the Air Force as a

broader organization” (Parson, Weise, Tatum, Allison, and Farrell, Under Review). All learning, but especially ethical leadership learning, begins in the Self domain (Ascencio et al., 2017). Guided by the ELF, Air Force programs and development efforts must ensure Airmen are deliberately developed in these capacities across a continuum of their learning, from introductory concepts during accession and early stages of their careers, to more advanced concepts and applications as they mature in their experiences and levels of responsibility.

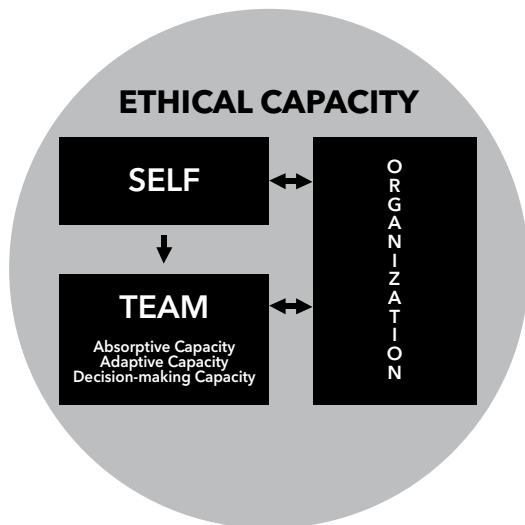


Figure 1: Ethical Leadership Framework



Figure 2: Ethical Leadership Framework in Air Force Organizational Context

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The Air Force’s stated and espoused Core Values (Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence in all We Do), along with accepted normative behaviors and embedded mechanisms, are a significant influence on the broad organizational culture and climate of the Air Force, which influences the development process of Airmen as individuals and leaders of teams (Schein, 2010). The intent of Air University is to educate and develop individual Airmen in each domain so that they can use their knowledge, skills, and attitudes in their unit for application. Guided by the ELF, leadership development at Air University proceeds horizontally and vertically; an Airman develops as a leader horizontally with increasing roles and responsibilities and develops in each domain vertically, deepening their skills as a part of the development process (Figure 3). To be successful, leadership development must be reflected in practice. The ELF guides curriculum development for Air University programs and the curriculum development cycle is guided by continual assessment

of the ethical leadership capabilities of Airmen. This results in a curriculum that is dynamic and responsive to the evolving nature of war, warfighting, and the continued development of Airmen. In that way, the ELF guides the development of a “set of capacities that are developed, nurtured, and eventually adopted as normative practices within the culture and climate of the Air Force as an overall organization” (Parson, Weise, Tatum, Allison, and Farrell, Under Review). The following section provides a brief overview of the three domains of the ELF conceptual framework: Individual, Team, and Organization.

**Individual**

According to Asencio et al. (2017), the foundation of ethical development is the identification of ethical beliefs and values, such as honesty, courage, responsibility, agreeableness, respect, duty, loyalty, conscientiousness, and empathy, that guides decision-making and moral reasoning (Asencio et al., 2017, Baarle et al., 2015;

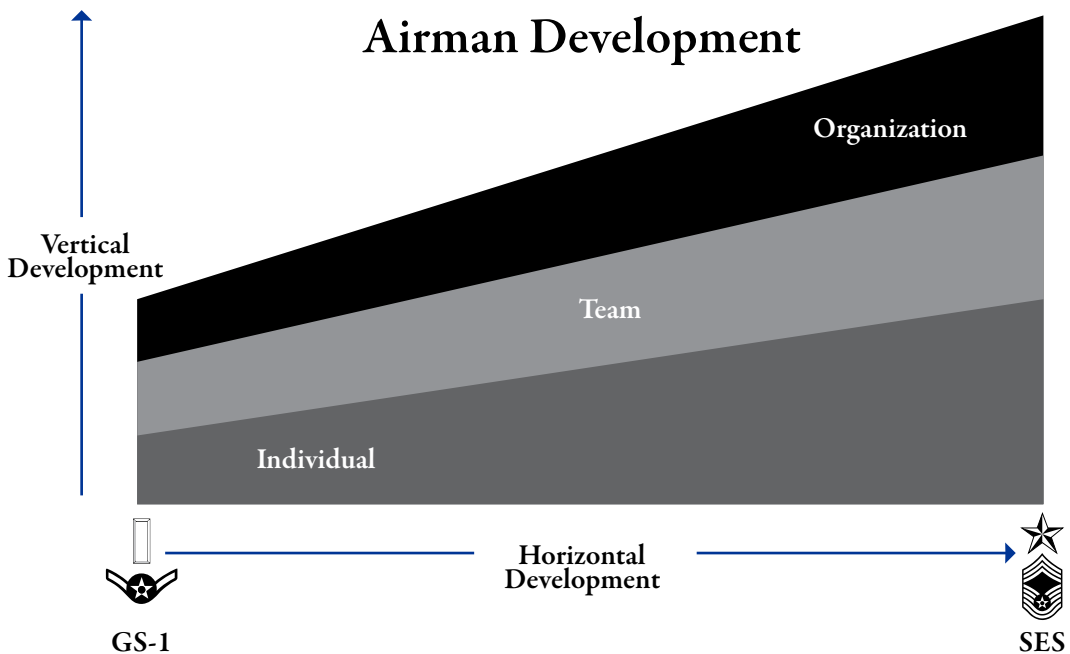


Figure 3: Airman Vertical & Horizontal Development

Ko et al., 2018; Shulzke, 2012; Toner, 2006). At the individual level, Air Force leadership development focuses on helping Airmen to identify and reflect on internal beliefs and to connect their ethical values to Air Force values (Ash, 2011). The goal of leadership development at the individual level is that each Airman understands how their values align with Air Force values and that they are able to see their beliefs as aligned with Air Force organizational ethical beliefs (Ash, 2001).

### Team

At the Team level, ethical development is focused on the development of an ethical environment where leaders are able to foster a subordinate's individual ethical development and contribute to the development and reinforcement of the Air Force as an ethical organization. While leaders must continue their individual level ethical development, ethical leadership development at the Team level also involves developing leaders to create an ethical culture for subordinates, which involves moral management and developing subordinates in ethical decision-making (Asencio, Byrne, & Mujkic, 2017; Ko et al., 2018; Schulzke, 2012; Szfranski & Toner, 1994; Warner & Appenzeller, 2011). "Measurable learning outcomes in the Team domain are: (a) model ethical behavior; (b) develop ethical behavior in subordinates; (c) reward ethical behavior in subordinates (morality of aspiration); (d) punish unethical violations equitable (morality of obligation); and (e) foster an environment that supports ethical behavior (e.g., safe, secure, and stable within the constraints of the field)." Within the Team domain, the ELF focuses on three specific strategic capacities of particular interest to the Air Force strategic context: absorptive capacity, adaptive capacity, and decision-making capacity (Ko et al., 2018). These capacities are the foundational traits and skills necessary to create ethical leaders within the demanding Air Force mission and are integral to a developmental continuum across an Airman's career (Boal & Hooijberg, 2000). First, absorptive capacity is one's ability to learn through directed and self-directed learning and apply the knowledge to a specific context (Lane, Koka, &

Pathak, 2006). Absorptive capacity is dependent on the procedures of an organization which includes policy, practices, socialization, and how relationships are facilitated (Daghfous, 2004). Second, adaptive capacity is the individual's ability to change or adapt in moments of incongruence, which requires flexibility, a willingness to seek the input of others, and cognitive and behavioral development (Boal & Whitehead, 1992; Hooijberg, Hunt, & Dodge, 1997; Zaccaro, 1996). Development in this capacity requires creativity and innovation to be able to seek out new solutions or options to conflict. Third, decision-making capacity is the ability to understand individual and organizational actors, individual and organizational relationships, and how to make decisions at the appropriate time while creating and maintaining relationships (Gardner, 1985, 1993; Sternberg, 1985; Zaccaro et al., 1991). This tenet of strategic leadership relies on the social intelligence of the individual.

### Organization

At the organizational level, leadership development is focused on the facilitation of organizational conditions that provide opportunities for dissent, questions, and clear procedures to report ethical violations (Asencio et al., 2017; Lucas, 2009). An ethical organization creates an environment where ethical behavior is an institutional norm (Weigle & Allen, 2017). "Measurable outcomes in the Organization domain are: (a) reinforce organizational ethical values through modeling, open conversations, rewarding ethical behavior and enforcing punishment equally for violations; (b) create a shared vision; (c) implement checks and balances for personal leadership roles; and (d) provide opportunities for dissent (e.g., dissent channels)."

The holistic vision of the ELF models the professional development/training/education of Airmen across the spectrum of profession, rank, and status. The ELF establishes a broad and solid foundation of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for leadership in the Air Force and continues to develop and deepen

those skills and knowledge throughout an Airman's development continuum, from accessions to senior level development. Accession programs provide the initial education, training, and acculturation foundations for each Services' entry into the Profession of Arms. Primary levels of Professional Military Education (PME), and other equivalent development opportunities, prepare individuals for their career specialties and provide broad Service-oriented education largely centered on the tactical level of war. As the individual progresses across the continuum of a career, the intermediate levels of PME (and equivalent) begin to focus on applying leadership and strategy to joint warfighting and the operational level of war. Senior levels of PME (and equivalent) then focus on the strategic level of leadership and advisement, national security strategy, joint planning systems, and decision-making akin to a medical post-doctoral or residency experience.

### Assessment Plan

**Stage 1.** The assessment process begins by validating the ELF and, if necessary, making revisions to the ELF so that it more accurately reflects the contextual needs of the Air Force. Following a stepwise competency-based curriculum development model (Parson, Weise, Tatum, Allison, and Farrell, Under Review), Stage 1 involved the development of the ELF. Through an in-depth review of the leadership and ethical leadership development empirical literature inside and outside of the military, the authors crafted the ELF as an empirically-based leadership framework.

**Stage 2<sup>1</sup>.** The purpose of Stage 2 is validation of the

1 Programs include Squadron Officer School (SOS), Air Command and Staff College (ACSC), Air War College (AWC), School of Advanced Air and Space Studies (SAASS), eSchool of Graduate PME, Thomas M. Barnes Center for Enlisted Education programs/courses (Airman Leadership School, NCO Academy, AF Senior NCO Academy, USAF First Sergeant Academy, Chief Master Sergeant Leadership Course, Community College of the Air Force), Jeanne M. Holm Center for Officer Accessions and Citizen Development programs (OTS, AF ROTC), the Muir S. Fairchild Research Information Center, and the Ira C. Eaker Center for Professional Development (numerous military and civilian continuing education courses, Associate of Applied

ELF through the competency-based curriculum design process informed by feedback from key stakeholders representing all major officer, enlisted, and civilian-centered academic programs across Air University. In competency-based curriculum design (Parson, Childs, & Elzie, 2018) competencies are identified through discussions with key stakeholders who can speak to the required Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes (KSAs) needed to be an effective leader in the Air Force. Using a modified Delphi Method (Hsu & Sandford, 2007), the input of these stakeholders will be sought to understand the current state of leadership development at Air University, the ethics and values of the Air Force both embodied in doctrine and practice, and the vision of the future that seeks to understand how and where ethical leadership development can improve. In addition to feedback from key stakeholders, the literature, Air Force doctrine, and policy/legal references will be revisited to identify leadership KSAs in each of the domains and capacities reflected in the ELF. KSAs will be transformed into competencies by making them active, behavioral statements – identifying how the KSA should look in practice. While a focus on attitudes, instead of abilities, is challenging because attitudes are difficult to measure, we view attitude development as an essential part of ethical leadership development. In both stakeholder focus groups and document review, one priority will be identifying if additional leadership capacities exist (in addition to adaptive, absorptive, and decision-making) that would change the ELF. As a part of the competency development process, key stakeholders will be asked to describe leadership development curriculum in their units, contributing to a curriculum map for leadership development that will be used later in the process to guide curriculum development. At the conclusion of Stage 2, the ELF will be revised to reflect what was learned in the competency development process.

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Science Degree in Air Force Leadership and Management Studies).

**Stage 3.** While the literature has described ethical lapses by military leaders and staff, limited research exists that seeks to describe the current ethical state of the Air Force, as described by the ethical knowledge, skills, and attitudes of individual Airmen.

To reiterate, ethical leadership in this context includes, but is not limited to the concept of correctly choosing between known rights and wrongs. Ethical leadership includes a broader application of moral reasoning and frameworks in all daily decision-making processes, not just those typically reviewed in ethical decision-making dilemmas that often limit discussion to black/white ethical questions. In order to design curriculum that meets the needs of Airmen at each level of their Air University education, curriculum designers, faculty, and administrators need to understand the ethical knowledge, skills, and attitudes of Air University students. In order to measure ethical leadership development, a baseline assessment must occur to understand the ethical knowledge, skills, and attitudes of each Airman; this baseline will also inform the validation process of the ELF, establishing if and where gaps in the framework exist and making revisions to the framework so that it more accurately reflects holistic leadership development. A baseline assessment will inform leaders on where Airmen are in their early stages of ethical leadership development.

### Measurement

Baseline assessment measures and scales have been modified or developed to align to institutional goals and student learning outcomes for ethical leadership development. Air University's focus on learning occurs at the individual, group, and institutional level. At the individual level, the implementation of the ELF seeks to develop the knowledge and expertise of faculty and students. The implementation of the framework into curriculum will provide both students and faculty

the knowledge of ethics and leadership theories. At the team level, the implementation of the ELF will help guide leaders to practice moral management and influence subordinates to make ethical decisions. At the organizational level, the ELF seeks to develop the knowledge and expertise across Air University and the Air Force. Specifically, the ELF provides a framework to create University-level faculty development opportunities, supporting the second QEP institutional

*...limited research exists that seeks to describe the current ethical state of the Air Force, as described by the ethical knowledge, skills, and attitudes of individual Airmen.*

outcome: Program-specific faculty development requirements will be coordinated through the University's various 'leadership program' representatives who serve on the standing QEP working group.

**Approach.** To measure the SLOs identified, we will use the modified *Moral Metacognition Scale* (McMahon & Good, 2016), the *Ethical Leadership Questionnaire* (Yukl et al., 2013), and the *Organizational Ethical Culture Measure* (Huhtala et al., 2018). Each measure is discussed in more detail below.

### The Moral Metacognition Scale

In the individual domain (to measure SLOs 1, 2, & 3), participating Airmen will complete the Moral Metacognition Scale (McMahon & Good, 2016), designed to measure individual ethical competence and self-knowledge. The MMS measures competence in the Individual domain and can be given to all Airmen regardless of rank or responsibility. Participants will respond on a scale of 1 (*Very strongly disagree*) to 6 (*Very strongly agree*) to questions like "I ask myself what is important before engaging in the ethical decision-making process," "I find myself pausing regularly to



confirm that I am considering all aspects of an ethical dilemma,” and “I spend time reflecting on my decision after I have made it.”

### The Ethical Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ)

To measure competence in the Team domain, the Ethical Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ) (Yukl, Mahsud, Hassan, & Prussia, 2013) will be given to each participant, with modifications based on rank and responsibility. To measure SLOs 1, 2, and 3 at the Team level, the Ethical Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ) (Yukl, Mahsud, Hassan, & Prussia, 2013) will be given to each participant, with modifications based on rank and responsibility. Version A of the ELQ will be given to those in junior leadership positions and Version B will be given to those in more senior leadership positions. Participants taking Version A will respond to questions using a scale from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 6 (*Strongly agree*) that begin with "My Boss," such as "My boss sets an example of ethical behavior in his/her decisions and actions." These questions will measure the perceptions of the ethical leadership of their leaders. Participants taking version B will respond to questions using the same scale answering questions that begin with "My subordinates think that I ..." such as "My subordinates think that I set an example of ethical behavior in my decisions and actions." This will allow those Airmen developing leadership skills to begin to identify the ethical leadership skills important to ethical leadership while still allowing for assessment data that reflects the team/group ethical development of Air Force leaders. The ELQ will also be used to measure perceptions of the competence of Air University faculty in strategic-ethical leadership.

### The Organizational Ethical Culture Measure (OECM)

To understand the third domain of ethical leadership, the organizational domain, the Organizational Ethical Culture Measure (Huhtala et al., 2018) will have three versions. Version A will be delivered to the same groups as Version A of the ELQ and Version B to all but the most

senior AF leaders. Participants will respond on a scale 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 6 (*Strongly agree*) to questions like “The Air Force makes it sufficiently clear to me how I should conduct myself appropriately toward others within the organization,” “I am not asked to do things that conflict with my conscience in my immediate working environment,” and “In my immediate working environment, ethical conduct is rewarded.” A third version, Version C, will be delivered to senior leaders and Air University Faculty/Instructors. Measure questions shift, in versions B and C, to focus on a leader’s behaviors (e.g., “I set a good example in terms of ethical behavior,” “I do not ask Airmen/students to sacrifice their personal norms and values in order to be successful in the Air Force.”). To measure Institutional Goal 1, which provides understanding of the third domain of ethical leadership, the organizational domain (SLO 3), the Organizational Ethical Culture Measure will be delivered to representative Air Force officers, enlisted, and civilians. Each version will allow Airmen to assess the current state of strategic-ethical leadership development and, in each stage, to measure the success of the Ethical Leadership Framework.

To measure Institutional Goal 2, the development of Air University faculty in the area of strategic-ethical leadership, Version C of OECM will provide an assessment of faculty expertise in leadership development and competence. Finally, based on the results of the baseline assessments, a Faculty Teaching Effectiveness Rubric for evaluations of Air University faculty will be created that will assess strategic-ethical leadership knowledge and competence in delivering leadership competency to students. The development of a Teaching Effectiveness Rubric will be a formative tool that helps faculty to identify areas of weakness and develop strategies to develop strategic-ethical leaders and design strategic-ethical leadership curriculum and lessons.

### The Judgment Index

Finally, according to Steve Byrum & Bill Wilson

(personal communications, 2017) *the Judgment Index* is an assessment tool that measures the intrinsic (self and others), extrinsic (social and practical solutions), and systemic (ideas, rules, regulations, and order) values of an individual. Administering the Judgment Index to Airmen aligns with the domains of Individual, Team, and Organization. Incorporating assessment in our ELF provides useful data to explore how ethical leadership behaviors, perceptions, and development have shifted. The Judgment Index is a tool that provides quantifiable insight into an individual's judgment and ethical decision-making capacities (Pomeroy, 2005). Aligned with the three domains of our ethical leadership conceptual framework, the Judgment Index measures 50 areas of judgment strength within three dimensions: (1) Intrinsic (self and others); (2) Extrinsic (social and practical situations); and (3) Systemic (abstraction, ideas, rules, regulations, and order) (Pomeroy, 2005). The Judgment Index provides a holistic assessment to measure an individual's judgment within the three domains of our conceptual framework.

The Judgment Index is designed "to enhance understanding of human beings both individually and in operational teams. It will show the leader how to improve and develop themselves on the personal side of 'who' they are. 'Who' we are vitally supports 'what' we 'do' (S. Byrum & B. Wilson, personal communication; Jan 17, 2019; Pomeroy, 2005). The Judgment Index enables "enhanced conversations about leadership judgment, development of better judgment in subordinates, creating intentional high-judgment teams, issues of character that extend beyond competence, and the kinds of value orientations that inform ethical behavior and decision-making. Use of this information can have three significant applications: (1) building stronger individuals; (2) building stronger teams; and, (3) contributing in specific ways to enhancing organizations in general." (B. Wilson, personal communication; Jan 17, 2019; Pomeroy, 2005)

Because the Judgment Index has already been used to collect data from a select population of Air Force Airmen and the categories of intrinsic (self and others), extrinsic (social and practical solutions), and systemic (ideas, rules, regulations, and order) align with the domains of Individual, Team, and Organization, the use of the Judgment Index will provide familiar scale to validate findings and provide a holistic assessment of strategic-ethical leadership. The Judgment Index will be used both as a baseline and in post-testing.

**Procedures.** Although the measures to be delivered in the baseline assessment have already been developed, they will be reviewed prior to data collection to ensure that they reflect any adjustments made during the ELF validation process in Stages 2 and 3. Prior to delivering the measures to all Air University students, pilot testing of the instrument will be done to check the validity of the instruments internally and externally. After it is validated, the survey will be delivered via survey software. Data from the survey will be analyzed using descriptive statistics and t-tests in order to identify where and how ethical leadership education is needed in Air University curriculum.

**Stage 4.** After reviewing data from the baseline assessments, competencies identified in Stage 2 as well as the curriculum map will inform the development of curriculum to guide ethical leadership development within the framework of the ELF. The implementation of the curriculum will be explored at the local level (course specific) through regular program evaluation activities (outside the purview of this manuscript).

**Stage 5.** Finally, we will conduct the full assessment again at the end of the fifth year using the same instrument to all Air University students to measure the overall ethical state of the Air Force again. Although we will not be assessing the same group of students as the baseline assessment, because this assessment is focused on exploring the institution as one that develops ethical

and strategic leaders, the purpose of this assessment will be to see if and how the organization has shifted. Individual-level assessment will occur at the course level and will also be measured, although individual level assessment is not the focus of this manuscript. Through this plan, we will adhere to the mission of Air University to “develop leaders, enrich minds, advance airpower, build relationships, and inspire service” (Air University, 2015, p. 6) through theoretically supported curriculum. The use of the baseline assessment will be formative as well as summative; the results of the baseline assessments will direct the curriculum and faculty development. In addition, each measure will be used within courses and lessons integrated into the curriculum as formative measures of success that faculty and students can use to direct their own development.

### Project Design, Implementation and Management

With the vision of being the Intellectual and Leadership Center of the Air Force, leadership development is a University-wide endeavor across all centers, schools and programs. The QEP’s linkage to the University’s vision, mission, and strategic planning documents support and necessitate University-wide participation in creating a more deliberate, cohesive, and coherent approach to leadership development.

Air University has designed the QEP to support a deliberate and phased approach to integration, implementation, and execution across the enterprise. The overarching goal of the ELF is to inform the development of curriculum that leads to an improvement of ethical leadership across the Air Force. As described in the formal QEP document, Air University has identified the following timeline with the specific goals of each stage of the ELF for the QEP’s integration, implementation and execution:

#### *Year 1: Baseline Assessment and Benchmark Current State.*

- Develop/select assessment(s), conduct baseline

assessment(s), and evaluate results of baseline assessment—Judgment Index, Leadership/Ethics Survey, etc.

- Conduct a baseline assessment of selected degree and non-degree program students
- Benchmark existing curriculum use of leader development models and activities
- Benchmark existing faculty engagement and development in leader development models and activities

#### *Year 2: Design of Learning Engagement and Faculty Development.*

- Design learning engagement for students. Pilot with a defined cohort of students
- Design faculty development. Pilot with a defined cohort of faculty
- Assessment of students and faculty for piloted engagement and baseline instruments

#### *Year 3: Formal Design and Implementation of Curriculum, Learning Engagement and Learning Activities.*

- Design and deliver curriculum, learning engagement and learning activities
- Design and deliver faculty development
- Assessment and evaluation

#### *Years 4 & 5: Continuous Review and Improvement.*

- Continuous assessment, analysis, evaluation, and review of curriculum, learning engagement and learning activities
- Continuous assessment, analysis, evaluation, and review of faculty development
- Assessment and evaluation

In the first year of the QEP implementation, the Director of the Air University Leadership Institute, in the capacity as the Director of the QEP, will establish a standing QEP working group. The working group will consist of representatives from the major centers, schools and programs; these representatives will be those

who represent the various leadership programs and/or equities within these programs. This will allow those directly involved with the development and execution of leadership programs, as well as the development of their respective faculty, to be directly involved in both the beginning stages and maturation of the various elements within the ELF, as well as the broader effort. This will help ensure efforts are maximized for effectiveness within each individual program, given the diverse nature of each program's student demographics (Airmen within various stages of their career and level of responsibilities) and desired learning and program outcomes. The Air University Commander will also establish a QEP Advisory Board consisting of members of Air University military and academic leadership to provide advice to the QEP Director and feedback to Air University senior leadership. The QEP will consist of elements to support the learning of students, development of faculty, and the development of subject matter expertise. The QEP will shape the content and design of curriculum, learning engagements and learning activities across Air University. The QEP will also shape faculty development and learning engagement across Air University. Air University's QEP will also shape and be shaped by the scholarship on professionalism, leadership and ethics.

Implementation of the ELF will occur with Air University faculty and curriculum developers to enhance, expand, or add courses, curriculum elements, and instructional practices in ethical leadership and ethical leader development. The Air University Leadership Institute will provide the venue for the engagement of subject matter expertise in professionalism, ethics, leadership, and leader development internally and externally for development of courses, curriculum, and instructional practices. The Air University Leadership Institute will also utilize the Leadership Forum (LEDx) and the development of a Case Studies repository to inform the development and enhancement of courses and curriculum. The Air University Leadership Institute will develop a mechanism to disseminate the lessons

learned from the engagement with subject matter experts and the development of courses, curriculum, and instructional practices.

Air University's implementation of the ELF reflects a commitment to conduct sufficient baseline and benchmark activities for effective enhancement of learning engagement and faculty development. The design supports the deliberate analysis of existing curricula, case studies, and other instructional elements for incorporation of the ELF. The design also incorporates the establishment of an annual forum (LEDx) for theorists, researchers and practitioners in professionalism, leadership, leader development, and ethics. The forum plays a key role in the QEP's scholarly engagement of experts from academia and Government. The forum will solicit formal manuscripts for peer review and publication in the annual proceedings. Air University will disseminate progress in QEP efforts and seek peer feedback through the forum.

**Challenges.** First, we anticipate challenges in the revision and implementation of the revised curriculum. As with any change to curriculum, but especially changes to entrenched leadership frameworks or concepts, there may be resistance from faculty to those changes as well as an adjustment period for faculty to revisit and redesign curriculum within the ELF. We hope that by conducting this rigorous validation process with the participation of the working group, that we can both anticipate potential concerns and adjust the ELF so that it has clear applications for curriculum and case study development. Second, in addition to traditional challenges with changing and implementing new curricula, it will also be challenging to measure if and how curriculum changes impact the Air Force as an organization. While our five-year assessment will provide another data point that informs how curriculum might need to shift according to the experiences and perceptions of Airmen, it cannot be seen as a direct measure of the success of curriculum changes. Instead, we see this assessment as critical to

directing the new curriculum developed and ensuring that leadership curriculum continues to adjust to reflect new challenges, the changing nature of war, and the continued development of Air Force Leaders. The steps discussed in this paper are simply the beginning of that ongoing and iterative process. Finally, related to the goal of this becoming an ongoing process, we acknowledge that maintaining continual assessment and program evaluation might be difficult to sustain. This is why our plan, although it begins with the QEP process, will be continually assessed and revisited through program evaluation and institution-wide assessment.

**Success.** The Air University's QEP is a deliberate effort to enhance and reinvigorate the development of Air Force leaders in the profession of arms. We have developed the ELF as a conceptual framework that purposefully integrates the areas of ethical and strategic leadership. As part of this deliberate effort, the University intends to use the QEP and ELF to build bridges that span the educational opportunities within and across the officer, enlisted and civilian development continuums. It is also intended to help fill the development gaps that occur between education, training and application. Perhaps best articulated by a member of the QEP working group (discussed previously), the QEP and ELF will be a successful effort if, "the essence of Leadership and Ethics are brought to the forefront of all we do and are wholly-assimilated into the psyche of Airmen." (G. Kamena, personal communications, February 2, 2019)

## Conclusion

As shown by the literature, the military currently faces several ethical dilemmas due to the increased complexity of warfare (Wead, 2015); advancements in technology and the use of unmanned weapons (Asencio et al., 2017; Meine & Dunn, 2017); blurred lines between civilian and combatant (Mastroianni, 2011); lack of delineated separate combat zones, concerns about sexual violence and increased public awareness of military operations (Arbeit, 2018; Meine & Dunn, 2017; Schulzke,

2012). The creation and implementation of the ELF seeks to address these issues by developing the ethical decision-making competencies of leaders in the Air Force. Drawing increased efforts and resources to the ethical development of military leaders is a step toward fostering a culture and organization that values ethics. This encourages those within the organization to act ethically and encourages continual development of ethical leaders. This goes well beyond the practice of moral management and choosing between known normative standards of right and wrong. To measure effective leader outcomes, we have provided assessment techniques/strategies designed to fit the needs of military organizations. Though created within the context of the Air Force, the ELF has practical implications for other military branches and organizations to develop the ethical decision-making skills of leaders.

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