

FROM THE EDITOR

VUCAH Leadership

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To say that things are uncertain and complex seems to be understating the obvious. To find a word that accurately describes the current environment is a bit of a fool's errand. However, what comes to mind is an acronym that is often used when looking at the environment a leader needs to navigate...VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous). While imperfect, it gets closest to what we are experiencing. Since the last issue of the *Journal of Character & Leadership Development (JCLD)* was published in February, we have seen the devastating and disruptive global impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. It has added new terms to our daily lexicon (e.g., social distancing), changed the way that work is conducted (e.g., distributed workforce, online meetings, etc.), and impacted how we think about health (e.g., telemedicine, masks, etc.). Simply put, we are working and living differently, and as never before in most of our lifetimes. VUCA describes our "new normal."

In addition, due to a preventable tragic event, the issue of racial discrimination has been brought to the forefront of our national consciousness. While the triggering incident (the killing of George Floyd) is recent, the underlying social injustices have been long-standing in our country. Many have experienced and deeply felt racial inequality for a very long time, while others (some of who were in a position to make positive change) have not taken action to confront this issue. These events have also contributed to the current VUCA context.

Individually, these health and discrimination crises create a need for reckoning in our nation. However, together, they create the potential for a leadership watershed. The term watershed is applicable here because with the confluence of these events, time will tell if it is either a defining moment or a breaking point. Part of the challenge is that we can't address each of these significant issues individually because, in the midst of a pandemic, there are fundamental

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social equality issues that warrant immediate, focused, and deliberate attention. They are intertwined, at this moment in history; yet both have unique issues and different consequences to consider. We must get both right. As with many leadership challenges, we don't get to choose the timing of the challenge. We do, however, get to choose how we rise to meet those challenges. How will we react? Who will act? Who will be involved in the conversation? What is the right conversation? Where will the leadership come from? How are long-term inequities eliminated? These are but a few of the questions we will, and must, wrestle with over time.

We can't talk about operating in a VUCA world, without the humanity to do so. Hence, my proposed new acronym is VUCAH. It is imperative to recognize the humanity mandate in our leadership and to be intentional about it.

While VUCA begins to describe the context of events that are taking place, it leaves out one critical component, the one that provides the purpose for our leadership. It is the component that explains why leaders, and specifically leaders of character are vital. That component is humanity. It is the connection between VUCA (the context) and leaders. It is what people mean when they talk about authentic leadership and being a servant leader. Leading in a VUCA environment without understanding, appreciating, and valuing humanity misses the mark. Mission, objectives, and logistics don't successfully occur without the people who are making them a reality. If we lose sight of that, we lose sight of what it means

to lead...to serve...to be human. We can't talk about operating in a VUCA world, without the humanity to do so. Hence, my proposed new acronym is VUCAH. It is imperative to recognize the humanity mandate in our leadership and to be intentional about it.

Leadership in a VUCAH world is hard work. In the Air Force, we have Core Values: Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence in All We Do. At the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA), we also have the Leader of Character Framework: Living Honorably, Lifting Others, and Elevating Performance. All of these are undergirded

by Respect for Human Dignity as their foundation, cornerstone and essence. This is precisely where our development will focus as we all lead in a VUCAH reality. The United States Air Force Academy (USAFA), as an institution that develops leaders of character for our Air Force and nation, contributes to that understanding.

Looking back, when we choose the theme for this issue of the JCLD, it was as if we were in a different era. The theme, focused on USAFA's strategic planning, was determined before COVID-19 and the George Floyd's killing. However, while this theme is not a direct dialogue on current events, it does have direct relevance because it speaks to our strategic plan to develop leaders of character who are faced with the current and future challenges for our Air and Space forces, nation, and world. Specifically, the theme for this issue focuses on the four strategic goals for USAFA:

- Develop Leaders of Character Committed to Service to our Nation

- Preparing for Future Conflict
- Foster a Culture That Embraces Innovation, Fueled by Airmen
- Executes Operations in an Integrated, Accountable, and Agile Manner

These are lofty goals. They are important goals. They are goals that our nation needs the institution to get right, even more urgently with the present VUCAH backdrop. With respect to the first goal of developing leaders of character, how can you develop leaders of character if you don't value what each member of the organization brings to the fight? How can you develop leaders of character if you don't understand who should be included in the team? How can you develop leaders of character if you don't understand and value humanity and the context in which your leadership will be enacted (e.g., combat)? All of this requires more than mere technical proficiency. Technical proficiency is the price of admission. Ongoing character and leader development is the key.

Preparing for future conflict also has a direct tie to what we see today. A leader must not only understand the capabilities they and their team bring to the fight, but also the implications of those actions. Who needs to be on the team? Whose voices need to be heard? What are the implications if we don't have the right opinions, ideas, and people around the table when we are thinking through the application of that technology? The same applies on the back side when we are thinking about the impact of the action. We have tactics, techniques, and procedures that drive our Rules of Engagement (ROE) of how we fight. Those are bounded by humanitarian principles.

If we want to foster a culture that embraces innovation fueled by Airmen, how can we do that if

we don't understand innovation and who we are asking to innovate? Or, if we are not willing to value and consider new ideas and take risks to examine them? What perspectives are needed? What environment does the leader need to enable that fosters ideas and new approaches, and not simply be tied to legacy processes and procedures? If the current and future environment is as VUCA as some suggest, then it will take a VUCAH leadership approach to innovatively solve those problems.

Finally, integrated, accountable, and agile operations requires a certain mindset. Cutting down institutional silos and thinking about how we approach complex problems is not only a technology challenge, it is also a people opportunity. How do we utilize and support our personnel in such a way that we are able to maximize the technology that exists? How do we lead in such a way that we enable and not hinder that approach? That is leadership. That is VUCAH leadership.

Current events will most certainly impact how we move forward and leadership is the key leverage point to those solutions. Our ability to successfully meet USAFA's strategic goals will depend on our ability to develop leaders of character who not only understand their VUCA context, but can lead successfully with the humanity that makes it all make sense. In short, we need VUCAH-ready leaders.

In This Issue

As previously mentioned this issue of the JCLD is organized around the four strategic goals of USAFA. Several articles have been included that address each of the goals. The articles are not intended to be a complete coverage of each the goals, as that would be difficult given their broad scope. Instead, the articles

address key elements and provide insight on how each of the goals can be addressed, offer strategic thinking on relevant topics, and how capacities in each of the goals can be developed with respect to character and leadership development. While these goals may be focused toward USAFA, it is clear that each organization deals with aspects of these goals in their own domain. For example, the medical community will need to wrestle with each of these as they deal with future epidemics, develop medical staff that lead with character, figure out how to innovate in not only technology but in methods of practice, and how to interface with other government and private entities. So as you read through the articles, it is important to see how they apply to your domain, organization, and to your own leader development.

Before the issue begins to address the four goals, it starts with several conversations with Lieutenant General Jay Silveria (USAFA 1985), the Superintendent of USAFA. In the first conversation, he addresses what it is like to lead in a crisis as a result of COVID-19. In the second conversation, he addresses discrimination and valuing all members on the team. These are important conversations as they highlight what leadership looks like in challenging times (VUCA) but also how to value and lead all members on the team (VUCAH).

Leaders of Character

The first section addresses the goal of Developing Leaders of Character Committed to Service to our Nation. That goal, lifted right from the institutional mission statement is the mandate for USAFA. It is why the institution exists. To provide qualified and capable officers who will lead and serve in the United States Air and Space Forces. Specifically, under that goal, there are the objectives of being able to:

- 1) Better develop Airmen to live honorably by consistently practicing the virtues embodied in the Core Values.
- 2) Better develop Airmen to lift others to their best possible selves.
- 3) Better develop Airmen to elevate performance toward a common and noble purpose.

The first article by Dr. Douglas Lindsay (USAFA 1992), Dr. John Abbatiello (USAFA 1987), Lieutenant Colonel David Huston (USAFA 2001), & Colonel Scott Heyler (USAFA 1994) outlines USAFA's approach for developing leaders of character. It ties together several key institutional documents and frameworks to show how all members at USAFA have a role in and are responsible for leader and character development. This is an important article in that it explains the who, what, when, why, and how of leader and character development at USAFA.

The next article is a conversation with Dr. Steven Trainor who is the Head of Faculty Development at the Google School for Leaders. He discusses his journey through his own leader development as well as some of the specific things that Google is doing to develop their leaders and their leadership capacity. In addition, he discusses the power of coaching and the impact it can have on leaders and how they develop over time. The conversation wraps up with a discussion on developing leadership capacity and how thinking about leadership as a capacity can enhance our ability to develop as leaders across a range of situations and domains.

This section ends with a piece by Dr. David Walker, from the University of Alabama, in which he talks about ethical judgement and character among British Army officers. He highlights a larger study that was conducted at the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues at the University of Birmingham, UK. Dr.

Walker covers some of the practical implications from the study to include training from training to a profession, balancing compassion and the mission, and developing ethical justification reasoning.

Preparing for Future Conflict

The second section addresses the goal of preparing leaders for conflict in the future. While there are trends that may indicate what future conflict may look like, it is really about cognitively and behaviorally preparing future leaders to be more comfortable in an uncertain and complex space. In other words, what can we do today, to prepare future leaders to be able to handle the changing and uncertain demand signals that they will face in the future (VUCAH)? Specifically, the goal has the following objectives:

- 1) USAFA Airmen and graduates possess and employ the cognitive skills necessary to orient, adapt, and lead in technologically complex and dynamic contemporary and future environments.
- 2) USAFA Airmen and graduates understand the theory and application of military power, technology, and their strategic and cultural context in contemporary and future environments.
- 3) USAFA Airmen and graduates cultivate, articulate, and embody a joint-minded, culturally-aware warrior ethos and ethic committed to developing, leading, and integrating air, space, and cyber power in support of national security objectives.

We start this section with conversations with two different futurists and how they think about the future. The first conversation is with Dr. Brian David Johnson who is an applied futurist, consultant, and the

Director of the Threatcasting Laboratory at Arizona State University. In this conversation, he talks about his journey to become a futurist, his role as the Chief Futurist at the Intel Corporation and his focus on threatcasting. Dr. Johnson not only provides advice on what junior leaders need to be thinking about moving forward, he also discusses how organizations need to think about innovation. He offers practical advice for those who want to understand how to look toward the future in order help develop leaders and capacity today.

The second conversation with a futurist is with Jason Schenker. He discusses his background in economics and how that led to his role as a futurist and setting up The Futurist Institute. Schenker talks about the role of a futurist and how they can help organizations be more productive. In addition, he covers how using a futurist mindset can help identify trends from the past, combine it with data from the present, in order to make predictions about the future. He also shares a bit how to use the concept of spikes to help individual and leader development.

The final paper in this section focuses on the Institute for Future Conflict (IFC). The IFC is an Air Force Academy Foundation (AFAF) funded organization which has the vision of creating a learning culture at USAFA that produces leaders not only versed in emerging technologies (e.g., advanced computing, “big data” analytics, artificial intelligence, autonomy, robotics, directed energy, hypersonics, and biotechnology), but also to be able to think critically about their social, historical, ethical, and legal implications. The article is a conversation with Dr. Paul Kaminski (USAFA 1964), Lieutenant General (ret) Ervin Rokke (USAFA 1962), General (ret) Gregory Martin (USAFA 1970), and Mr. John Fox (USAFA 1963) moderated by Brigadier General (ret) Gary Packard Jr. (USAFA 1982). The conversation centers

around their experiences at USAFA, their work in the military and other domains (private sector) and the reasons why they are actively involved in supporting the IFC concept. They discuss why it is critical for USAFA to embrace avenues like the IFC to help develop future officers for the Air Force.

A Culture of Innovation

The third strategic goal that is addressed in this issue is that of Fostering a Culture that Embraces Innovation, Fueled by Airmen. If we understand that the future environment will be continually changing, iterating, and advancing, we need Airmen who are able to innovate to be able to meet the future demand signals. Specifically, this goal has the objectives to:

- 1) Educate and inspire Airmen in cultural and procedural innovation to shift the institutional mindset.
- 2) Develop and maintain infrastructure and technological capabilities to enable innovation.
- 3) Expand and maintain innovation communities and partnerships to increase the flow of ideas.

The first article in this section is by Chris Weller, Lieutenant Colonel David Huston (USAFA 2001), and Lieutenant Colonel Matt Horner (USAFA 2002) and discusses the relationship between neuroscience, leadership, and innovation. Relatively new to the leadership discussion, neuroscience has much to offer our understanding of leadership and leadership development. They cover how brain science is foundational to the study of leadership, expand on social threats and rewards, discuss how to create a culture of innovation, and then wrap up the article with how what we know about neuroscience can be applied to develop leaders of character.

The second article is by Lieutenant General (ret) Christopher Miller (USAFA 1980) who introduces us to a challenging discussion of rebooting the Profession of Arms. He leads the reader through a thoughtful discussion of what we know about conflict from the past, what we see from conflict today, and how we need to think about conflict in the future. Challenging our mental models around what conflict looks like, he expands the discussion to include what a battle field will likely look like in the future. It will be one that is far different than mass on mass of military forces squaring off on some remote terrain. His discourse on conflict challenges us to broaden our perspectives, expand our thinking, and consider innovative approaches to future conflict.

Executing Operations

The fourth goal is focused on how we need to work in the future. Specifically, that we are able to Execute Operations in an Integrated, Accountable, and Agile Manner. With future problems requiring complex adaptive solutions, we need to work together in order to bring the full totality of our forces to bear at a time and place of our choosing. To that end, this goal has the objectives of being able to:

- 1) Enhance institutional effectiveness through instilling a culture of assessment, supporting integrative solutions, and optimizing current resources.
- 2) Improve organizational accountability through extreme ownership of educating the workforce, enforcing standards, and resolving deficiencies.
- 3) Integrate team processes through cross-functional collaboration focused on a shared vision and optimization of constrained resources.

This section begins with an empirical examination by Dr. John Sosik and colleagues as to the relationship of affective experiences and charismatic leadership. Using a sample of Air Force Captains enrolled at Squadron Officer's College, they were able to show how and when a leader's affective experience produces charismatic behavior. Empirical studies are important because they help ensure that there is science and evidence behind the courses we teach, the programs we develop, and the training we execute. Their article is a great example of how we can utilize our understanding of assessment to inform what we know about leadership and character development.

In a large organization like the Air Force, there can be many organizational impediments to being integrated and agile. Large bureaucracies often suffer from stovepipes and siloed thinking. In order to combat this, the Air Force Warfighter Integration Capability (AFWIC) was established. The next article is a conversation with Major General Michael Fantini who is the former Director of AFWIC. In this discussion, Gen Fantini discusses the challenges with such an approach and the successes that they were able to have through influencing decision making capacity for senior Air Force leadership.

The final article is by Dr. Justin Stoddard who discusses the role of resiliency and how it can be integrated into leader development programs. He begins with an in-depth discussion of resiliency theory, definitions, development, and a resiliency framework. Following this review, he turns attention to how you can build resiliency and discusses several attempts by the U.S. military to develop resiliency programs listing examples from the Army, the Air Force, and USAFA. He finishes with several suggestions for leaders (self-reflection and after-action reviews) as to how they can develop resilience in themselves and others.

While these articles and conversations are not an exhaustive review of all of the topics that fall under the theme of this issue, it is hoped that it is a start toward understanding, developing, and working toward these goals. When we consider that leaders need to be well versed in leading in a VUCAH environment, this information can help support your own learning and growth in these areas.

Book Reviews

In addition to the articles that are in the JCLD, our goal is to introduce the readers to other works related to character and leadership development. While there are a myriad of books that are published yearly on these topics, we try to highlight several works that are specifically related to the theme of the JCLD. In that light, we have reviews on two books. The first is a review by Lieutenant General (ret) Irvin Rokke (USAFA 1962) on the book titled *Without Warning: The Saga of Gettysburg, A Reluctant Union Hero, and the Men He Inspired* that is authored by Terry Pierce. The second review is by Colonel (ret) Dawn Zoldi on the book *Gender, Power, Law & Leadership* authored by Hannah Brenner and Renee Knake. One of the keys habits of successful leaders is to be a reader. We encourage you to take a look at these books as you develop your personal reading list.

Profiles in Leadership

One way to understand and learn leadership is to examine previous leaders. Historians have understood this for a long time and their ability to pull from the past to inform the future, provides great insight into understanding leaders, why they made the decisions that they did, and how we can apply that information to our own development. With this in mind, we have added a new section to the JCLD called Profiles in

Leadership. We are fortunate to have Dr. Steven P. Randolph (USAFA 1974) join the JCLD team to be the Profiles in Leadership Editor. Dr. Randolph serves as the Rokke-Fox Chair at the Center for Character and Leadership Development (CCLD), United States Air Force Academy. His work at the CCLD culminates a nearly fifty-year career in public service, in successive roles as a fighter pilot, policy advisor, strategic planner, professor, leader, and scholar. This initial Profile was done by Dr. Randolph and focuses on General (ret) John Vogt. Dr. Randolph discusses Gen Vogt's rise in the Air Force though his time in command during the Vietnam War. He uses Gen Vogt's story to highlight several lessons that are important to all who will lead.

Looking Ahead

This issue wraps up two years of the JCLD since I have taken over as Editor. The focus has been to put out a quality product that reflects a range of practical, evidence based information on character and leadership development that is applicable to all levels of leadership across all domains. We are fortunate to have an Editorial Board that provides vital strategic guidance and insight as we develop as a publication. We are also fortunate to have the Air Force Academy Foundation whose generous support enables the JCLD to exist and thrive.

As we look toward future issues, we have some exciting topics for you to consider. The October issue will again feature conversations with leaders and thought leaders from different domains. The JCLD uses the conversation format (instead of interviews) development occurs through learning, experience, conversations, and relationships. This format allows conversations with leaders in which they can share their personal experiences, discuss how they approach their own development, challenges and successes they

have had along the way, individuals who have impacted them, what leadership and character mean to them on a day to day basis, and other related topics. This is important because we need to have a wide range of perspectives to contribute to the conversation around character and leader development. If you have any suggestions on people who would be good to have conversations with, please let me know.

The Feb 2021 issue will continue our previous practice of aligning the theme of that issue with the National Character and Leadership Symposium (NCLS). This year's theme will be Warrior Ethos as Airmen and Citizens. What we mean by Warrior ethos is the embodiment of the warrior spirit: tough mindedness, tireless motivation, an unceasing vigilance, a willingness to sacrifice one's life for the country, if necessary, and a commitment to be the world's premier air, space and cyberspace force. Warrior ethos is also one of the four attributes of officership as defined by the USAFA Officer Development System (ODS). The warrior ethos proficiencies that follow comprise a structure that is based on the intellectual development inherent to the Profession of Arms, and the values development prescribed by the Air Force Core Values. Specifically, USAFA wants graduates that can: 1) Analyze and Value the Profession of Arms, 2) Demonstrate Integrity as Related to Moral Courage, 3) Demonstrate Service before Self as Related to Physical Courage, and 4) Demonstrate Excellence in All We Do as Related to Discipline. While this theme is focused toward USAFA and future military leaders (Airmen), the components that make up Warrior Ethos are informed and developed by many different disciplines and domains. Therefore, submission for articles are encouraged from all domains. This breadth of knowledge helps inform all of us about the topic of Warrior Ethos.

If you have an interest in submitting work on the above topics or know of someone who would be interesting to have a conversation with, please contact me at douglas.lindsay@afacademy.af.edu or jcld@usafa.edu with your ideas.

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