

DEVELOPING LEADERS OF CHARACTER  
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# Developing Leaders of Character

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A typical definition of leadership has to do with some sort of influence by an individual (the leader) to get a group of people to accomplish a goal. While a seemingly straightforward definition, anyone who has spent time in a leadership position knows that effective leadership takes intentional work and investment. That is because there are a myriad of factors that will influence the leadership dynamic to include the leader, the follower, and the context (situation). However, it is not just about accomplishing the goal. It is also about the journey...how you get there. That is a critical distinction for leader development and is foundational for the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA). At USAFA, the mission is, "...to educate, train, and inspire men and women to become officers of character, motivated to lead the United States Air and Space Forces in service to our nation." As you can see from that statement, it's not just about leadership or the leader. It is about serving in that capacity with character...about who the individual is and their subsequent journey.

A question that often comes up when one hears the mission statement is, "What is a leader of character?" That is a fair question, but one that is not so simply answered. The reason for this is not due to the word *leader*. Based on decades

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of empirical research, we have a good understanding of what effective leadership looks like in and across domains. Even though you will still occasionally hear the false dichotomy question of, “Are leaders born or made?”, we have progressed beyond this outdated notion of “either/or” to the much more accurate “and/both.” The reality is that effective leadership considers the characteristics of the individual combined with their actions. It also is influenced by factors such as education, training, and experiences of the individual. The fact is that yes, you can learn leadership. Even a cursory review of the literature indicates that there are very intentional things that a leader can do to increase their leadership capacity and effectiveness (e.g., Day et al., 2014; Zaccaro, Dubrow, & Kolze, 2018). Finally, and importantly, it is also shaped by the context in which the leadership is enacted.

The challenge comes in when we talk about the word *character*. It is not because people do not believe that leaders need character. Quite the contrary. The history books are replete with examples of leaders whose lack of character had dire implications for followers, organizations, and even nations. It has to do with two principle questions. The first of these is, “What is character?” That is an important question because there are just about as many definitions and conceptualizations of character as there are for leadership. So, in some respect, there is a bit of a definitional problem. Think to yourself, “How would

you define character?” It is not easy to define it in concrete terms. Is it attitude? Is it actions or behaviors? Is it a collection of traits? Personality perhaps?

The second question is, “Can you develop character?” Let’s assume we can clearly articulate the definition of character. Depending on how character is defined, we might answer that question differently. If it is seen as something that is inherent in the individual, then many would say it can’t really be developed. Just the opposite can be said if the definition revolves around behaviors.

If we take the previously listed mission of USAFA coupled with the above discussion and then combine it with the vision of USAFA to “...serve as the Air and Space Forces premier institution for developing leaders of character,” it is a fundamental belief of the institution that we can develop cadets as leaders of character. If that is the guiding principle of USAFA, then there must be a plan in place to ensure this development takes place. The good news, is that there is and it has been codified.

### What is a Leader of Character?

In 2011, based on research and through collaboration of many experts on character and leadership, USAFA’s Center for Character and Leadership Development (CCLD) designed a framework that defined a leader of character, and explained how the institution would

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approach developing cadets as leaders of character (Figure 1). The framework outlines that a leader of character is someone who lives honorably by consistently practicing the virtues embodied in the Air Force core values<sup>1</sup>, lifts others to their best possible selves, and elevates performance toward a common and noble purpose (CCLD, 2011). This definition is derived from a combination of Air Force Doctrine, character education theory, and transformational leadership theory. With this definition in hand, we can explore how USAFA aims to develop cadets as leaders of character.

<sup>1</sup> The Air Force Core Values are Service Before Self, Excellence in all We Do, and Integrity First.

### What is Development?

Development is a complex lifelong process which is experienced by an individual that results in a qualitative improvement of their behavior. This is not a uniform process and individuals are at different levels of development and have different levels of readiness or motivation to develop. What we know, is that development is most likely to occur in an environment of trust and can become the norm of a culture when individuals grasp that everyone around them is motivated to develop (CCLD, 2011). Development occurs through a variety of experiences (training,

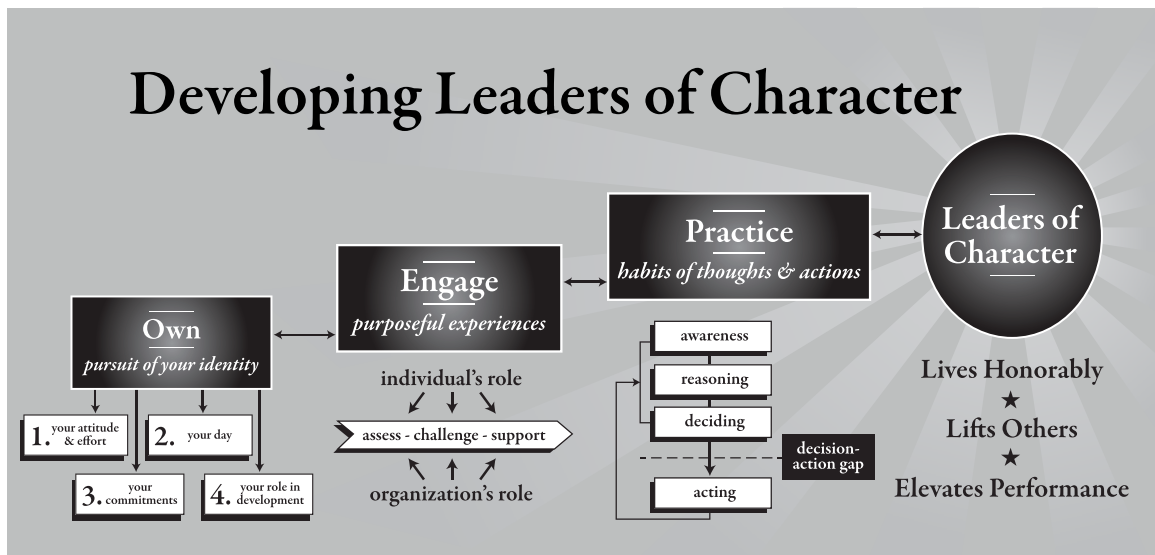


Figure 1: USAFA Leader of Character Framework

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educational, other) and does not occur just because an individual has experienced a singular program. Critically, development often occurs when a leader is stretched beyond their current capability and given the chance to expand it (CCLD, 2011; Lerner, 2002). In addition, due to development being an individual process, one program or one timeline does not work for every individual. That means a one size fits all approach, which is often appropriate when trying to train a particular skill, isn't appropriate for individual leader and character development. The developmental program must be tailorable to meet the individual at their particular level of development.

### How Does a Leader of Character Develop?

The process begins with the idea of owning and pursuing one's identity based on Albert Bandura's work surrounding self-efficacy theory. Self-efficacy is defined as an "individual's belief about his or her capacity to perform, master experiences and challenges, as well as the ability to receive constructive feedback and encouragement about one's perceived capacities." (Bandura, 1997). Context is critical here because, in the military, there is a mission to accomplish. Individual identity must be aligned and consistent with USAFA's mission. While pursuing other identities is a normal

part of adolescent maturity, for the sake of becoming a commissioned officer, this notion of identity has a specific meaning. It means owning one's attitude, effort, duty, commitments, and role in developing as a soon to be officer (Appendix, Figure 1). But this effort is not limited to the individual, rather it is also the responsibility of the organization (faculty/staff) to inspire individuals to increase their ownership and pursuit of this identity.

This leads us to the next piece of the development process. In order to shape an identity and develop capacity, the organization must purposely engage the individual in a comprehensive manner that assesses, challenges, and supports them (Appendix, Figure 2; Ting & Scisco, 2006). When we say organization, we mean the individuals that make up the organization. At times, individuals in the organization will be moving in and out of roles of being developed and being developers. This engagement is what an organization can both formally and informally control. Formally, this occurs through resource prioritization in support of the execution of curricula (both training and education), programs, and processes. Informally, this occurs via role modeling and demonstrating how habits and behaviors align with values. How an organization does this engagement determines the type and amount

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of development we can expect from individuals (Astin, 1993; Chickering & Gamson, 1991; Kuh & Schneider, 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

The last piece of the development process is the culmination of the previous two in that it requires that individuals practice habits of thought and action (Appendix, Figure 3). This practice occurs in a four-step process which begins with one's awareness of self and situation and moves to an ability to morally *reason* about the situation, then to *decide* on the most effective course of action, and finally to act on that decision (Rest, 1979; 1999). This process (termed ARDA) is not merely intellectual, rather it involves both thinking about and implementing the behaviors of effective leadership. As one develops as a leader of character, one's ability to practice ARDA concomitantly improves in terms of aligning with the concepts of living honorably, lifting others, and elevating performance.

It must be noted that development does not end or become complete with the practice of habits of thought and action. Rather this practice informs one's identity which in turn begins the cycle all over again. In addition, this is a lifelong process that started before cadets arrived at USAFA and continues long after they depart. The goal of USAFA as an organization with a mission to develop officers of character, is that we can influence and accelerate this developmental trajectory through engagement of purposeful training, education, and experiences over a 47-month time frame. Additionally, we must lay the groundwork for future growth.

### How Does a Leader of Character Develop at USAFA?

To help inform this question, we think it best to offer examples at USAFA of how engagement between

someone being developed and someone developing may play out in terms of better aligning one's habits with the definition of a leader of character. These engaging purposeful experiences occur across all facets of USAFA to include academics, military, athletics, and airmanship. In all contexts, the ability to assess, challenge, and support one's development is salient. Let's begin with a simple/generic example that involves one's habit of living honorably.

#### *Living Honorably*

USAFA has an Honor Code which states "We will not lie, steal, or cheat, nor tolerate among us anyone who does". With this standard of behavior in hand, it is straightforward to say that if a cadet lies, steals, cheats, or tolerates; they would be acting in manner not aligned with living honorably. It can be instructive to work backward from this action of violating the Honor Code to better understand how to develop from it.

Prior to this situation, this aforementioned cadet experienced numerous Honor Code education lessons since all cadets get these lessons starting in Basic Cadet Training. In addition, this cadet arrived at USAFA owning some form (ranging from none to complete) of identity related to wanting to live honorably. So, if these components were in place, why did the cadet choose to violate the code? Maybe their identity wasn't in strong enough alignment to the idea of living honorably? Maybe the Honor Code education lesson was designed or executed ineffectively, they weren't aware enough of the seriousness of the situation, or maybe, the moral reasoning they decided on was not aligned with the Honor Code standard?

A question to consider is, "How do we develop these areas of "maybe"?" That's where USAFA as an organization comes in. In order to develop this cadet

to better align their habits and actions, someone (i.e., the developers) must engage with this cadet to assess, challenge, and support them. The assessment piece is pretty simple. The cadet violated a standard, and must be made aware of this deficiency. Next, through different mechanisms (e.g., conversations, reflection, probation, etc.) the developers must persuade this cadet, and inspire/motivate him or her to want to meet the challenge of adhering to the standard. Lastly, the developers must offer supporting mechanisms for nurturing this inspiration and facilitate practicing of this habit. Practicing of the habit allows the development cycle to continue in that it shapes one's identify and changes how they can engage in future purposeful experiences (Figure 2).

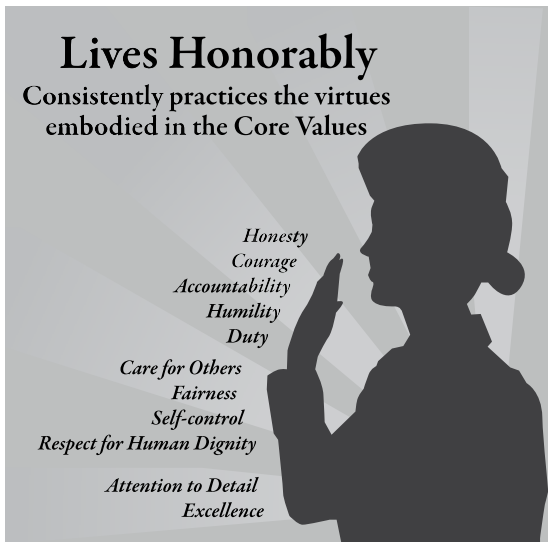


Figure 2: *What it Means to Live Honorably*

What we just explained may seem complex and vague. This is understandable because developing as a leader of character involves an almost infinite number of variables all at play at the same time. However, doing this work is critically important. Next, we'll offer a more concrete example in the context of lifting others.

### *Lifting Others*

Lifting others to their best possible self means taking on the responsibility of influencing those around you to optimize their performance (Figure 3). It does not mean that you do all the work, but rather that you enable and facilitate others to lift themselves. For instance, when a cadet becomes a sophomore (3-degree/third-class cadet), he or she is given their first chance to supervise a freshman cadet (4-degree/fourth-class cadet). In this supervisory role, these cadets are asked to encourage their subordinate to maximize performance. A simple way of describing this is in the context of athletic performance.

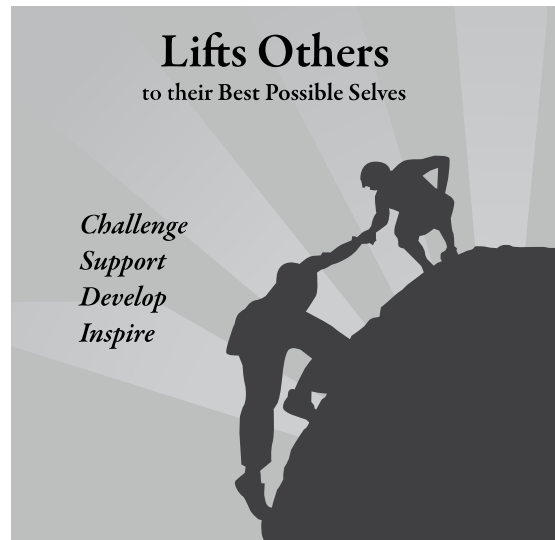


Figure 3: *Lifting Others to Their Best Possible Selves*

Let's say a 3-degree is supervising a 4-degree who is not meeting the physical fitness test standards. The 3-degree has a decision to make as to how they will engage with their 4-degree on this matter. The 3-degree could decide to ignore the issue, to fully engage, or to act somewhere in between. However, in order for intentional development to occur for the

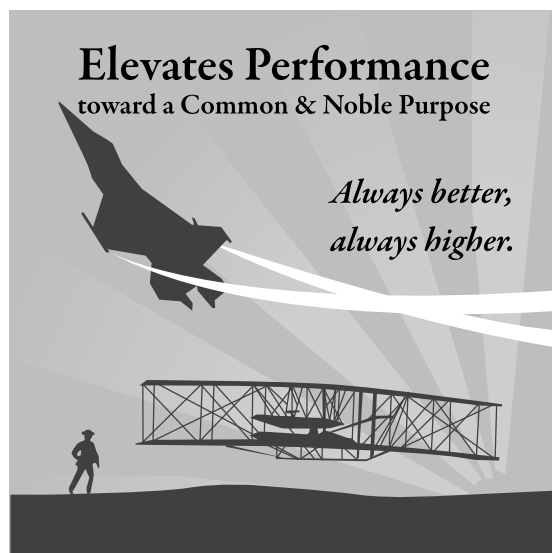
4-degree, the 3-degree must engage in a manner that effectively conveys the requirements to the 4-degree, challenges them to improve based on the standards, and then supports them in that challenge. Conveying the requirements could involve a simple conversation between the supervisor and subordinate, explaining the lack of meeting the standard and a leading to a better understanding of what led to the result to meet the standard. From that understanding, the supervisor could ask the subordinate if they desire to improve in this context in order to meet the standard. Ideally, the subordinate will say yes, at which point the supervisor can ask what they can do to help them improve in this area. Once a plan has been formulated, the supervisor helps the subordinate to execute the plan with the goal of an effective outcome and improved performance.

Obviously this scenario could play out in other less effective ways. For instance, if the conversation doesn't happen, the subordinate may not even know that they aren't meeting a standard. Or, the supervisor could simply say, "you're not doing well enough, fix it!" In order for optimal development to occur, a developer should intentionally follow the assess, challenge, and support process. This is not easy, nor intuitive, and being an effective developer requires habituation in order to hone this ability in the pursuit of excellence.

### ***Elevates Performance***

Which leads us to our next example of where development can occur at USAFA. We define a leader of character as someone who elevates performance to a common and noble purpose (Figure 4). What is meant by this is that individuals do not just merely get things done, but rather they seek out more effective ways of how to get things done in terms of serving a common and noble purpose. This aspect of developing as a leader of character is what enables one to go beyond simply

being a "good" person, to being an effective leader. This is the most complex component of our leader of character definition. An example can be instructive as to how development of this component could play out at USAFA.



*Figure 4: Elevating Performance Toward a Common & Noble Purpose*

Academics account for a significant portion of a cadet's time at USAFA. In fact, more time is scheduled in this context than any other (i.e., military, physical, or airmanship). Through pursuit of a degree, and exposure to knowledge from different domains, it is hoped that cadets are motivated by the love for knowledge, a curiosity to better understand the world, and an ability to make the world better with their application of this understanding through their future service as an officer. In other words, the investment in learning and knowledge is so that they can serve at a higher capacity and contribute more effectively (toward the noble purpose). This infers an intrinsic motivation by the individual. However, this is not necessarily the case for all cadets, and some are more extrinsically motivated by looking at what can be gained individually. This

extrinsic motivation can be due to a combination of factors. While some of it is as a result of a lack of intrinsic motivation of cadets themselves, it can also be influenced by organizational policies and reward systems that focus on individual achievement instead of the larger purpose.

In order to better develop cadets' ability to elevate performance toward that noble purpose in the academic context, faculty and staff have a critical role. While certain rewards are inherent in an evaluative (e.g., grading) context, there must be a larger discussion about how the knowledge, independent of the proximal extrinsic rewards, can have distal and significant longer term organizational rewards. By specifically tying the grades to extrinsic rewards (e.g., career field selection, advanced degree positions, etc.), it can overwhelm the ability to develop the intrinsic motivation to gain knowledge for cadets. Again, it is the elevating of performance toward a common and noble purpose.

### The Officer Development System

The Leader of Character Framework is not the only guide for leader development at the USAF Academy. In fact, the Officer Development System (ODS) preceded the Leader of Character Framework by almost a decade, and is still in force. This begs the question: why are there two systems—or philosophies—of development? In short, as the following paragraphs will attempt to explain, the two systems are complementary in that the Leader of Character Framework targets the interaction of character and leadership and is applicable beyond just cadets, while the ODS is focused on the why and how of developing cadets into officers. In terms of hierarchy, the Leader of Character Framework is the overarching, strategic guidance; while the ODS is utilized at the operational level.

The cornerstone document explaining the ODS is USAF Academy Pamphlet 36-3527, *The Officer Development System: Developing Officers of Character*<sup>2</sup>. The ODS charges USAF Academy leaders, faculty, and staff with increasing cadet understanding of officer identity as a noble profession; fostering cadet commitment to developing themselves into “officers of high character”; and developing cadet competencies “essential to officers of character.” This purpose closely aligns with the “Own-Engage-Practice” model explained in the Leader of Character Framework. The remaining pages of the ODS Pamphlet explain the foundation, goals, and process—or “why,” “what,” and “how”—providing a concrete set of explanations and methods for cadets, faculty, and staff.

The ODS developed out of a need to link the overall USAF Academy mission to the developmental courses and programs making up the course of instruction (Price, 2004). In other words, there was no operational level framework to link the strategic mission with the tactical-level, day-to-day execution of development. Investigations surrounding a very public sexual assault scandal in 2003 and the resulting Agenda for Change, uncovered a need for a more concrete leader development concept at the USAF Academy. As a result, USAFA stood up a team, with members representing all USAFA mission elements, to conceptualize a system that would be developmental, adjust the potentially abusive “Fourth Class System,” and advocate a transformational leadership culture (Price, 2004). The team rolled out the new ODS to the cadets, faculty, and staff in early 2004.

The ODS pamphlet begins with an explanation of the foundation, or the “why,” of ODS. This foundation sets out to establish a desired identity for

<sup>2</sup> The Officer Development System Pamphlet can be found at: <https://static.e-publishing.af.mil/production/1/usafa/publication/usafapam36-3527/usafapam36-3527.pdf>



USAFA graduates and is really the target of officer development. The key components are the U.S. Constitution, which provides guidance and authority for the military officer's service; the officer's oath, a public pronouncement of the officer's moral obligation to "support and defend"; the Air Force Core Values, a set of values and virtues expected of all Airmen; and finally the concept of officership. This last component includes attributes expected of an officer: warrior spirit, professional, leader of character, and servant of the nation. An officer corps possessing these qualities is vital to our nation's defense, and the ODS clearly sets these qualities as goals for the developmental process.

The goal—or "what" of ODS is to produce officers through education, training, and experiences; and possessing all of the institutional outcomes when they walk across the stage at the end of their 47-month experience. The number and organization of the institutional outcomes has been refined since the initial implementation of ODS, but now consist of nine outcomes such as "warrior ethos as Airmen and citizens," "critical thinking," "ethics and respect for human dignity," "leadership, teamwork, and organizational management," and so forth<sup>3</sup>. Of note, a cross-mission element committee closely shepherds each of the nine outcomes, with a specific focus of aligning experiences and assessing progress of programs and individual cadet performance.

The bulk of the ODS pamphlet describes tools available to do the "how" of development. Called the "process," this section offers three models for officer development, each with a specific focus. These models are designed as systems to support molding cadets toward the desired officer identity, and ensuring they are proficient in the nine educational, training, and

athletic outcomes by the time they graduate and are commissioned. The first and most well-known model is named after an acronym—PITO (Appendix, Figure 4). Those letters stand for Personal, Interpersonal, Team, and Organizational, and they describe the levels of leadership generally aligned with each of the four years of a cadet's experience. The fourth-classmen (freshmen), focus on how to "learn and live loyalty to values, mission, chain of command, and Air Force standards." Third classmen (sophomores), work on "excel[ing] as a wingman and coach the fourth-classmen in the ways of the loyal follower." Second-classmen (juniors) are expected to "lead teams in support of the mission while enhancing subordinate development" while the first-classmen (seniors) "lead the cadet wing while developing, shaping and inspiring all cadets." Specific objectives appear under each year's focus, such as honing followership abilities for fourth-classmen and "create[ing] an environment where all members of the organization can reach their full potential" for first-classmen. An important aspect of this model is that at each stage of development cadets are reminded to continue working on the previous years' objectives.

The Leader of Character definition—live honorably, lift others, elevate performance—naturally appears in the PITO model. Fourth-classmen, for example, are charged with setting the example and to comply with policies, part of the living honorably concept. Third classmen coach and help other cadets achieve their personal goals—very much in line with lifting others. The upper two classes support unit goals and drive organizational culture and professionalism—with the intention of elevating performance of the organization.

Process-wise, both the PITO model and Leader of Character Framework are seen in action across the Cadet Wing on a daily basis. Cadet squadron, group, and wing positions align very well with the objectives stated

3 A full list of the USAFA Outcomes and an explanation of each can be found at: <https://www.usafa.edu/academics/outcomes/>

for each PITO year group. For example, in the cadet squadrons the fourth-classmen work on followership and living honorably, third classmen are assigned to be coaches in order to lift the fourth-classmen to be their best possible selves, second-classmen take on leadership roles of small teams to accomplish squadron objectives, and first-classmen serve as the cadet officers who are responsible for leading at the organizational level, and elevating performance while they do so. Both models even appear in the intramural program where cadets progress from player to individual coach and mentor; to team captain as a second-classmen; and then to serving as program administrators, schedulers, and referees as first-classmen.

The PITO model is after all a model and there are clearly exceptions to the year-by-year development. Reality just isn't that clean. A fourth-classmen who is elected as class president may have to operate at the organizational level at a very early stage. Likewise, a first-classmen with no formal staff role may have to learn about organizational leadership by observing classmates, and at the same time exercise the interpersonal level of leadership over a fourth-classmen in their squadron who might be struggling with academics.

The second tool of the ODS process is the Leadership Growth Model (LGM). This model explains the developmental relationship between supervisor and subordinate and will be familiar to anyone who has worked in a professional setting. The LGM explains that leaders should set expectations and provide inspiration to their subordinates, offer instruction on the task at hand, give feedback after the subordinate executes the task, and then provide time for the subordinate to reflect on their own performance. The entire process repeats almost continuously, leading to individual growth.

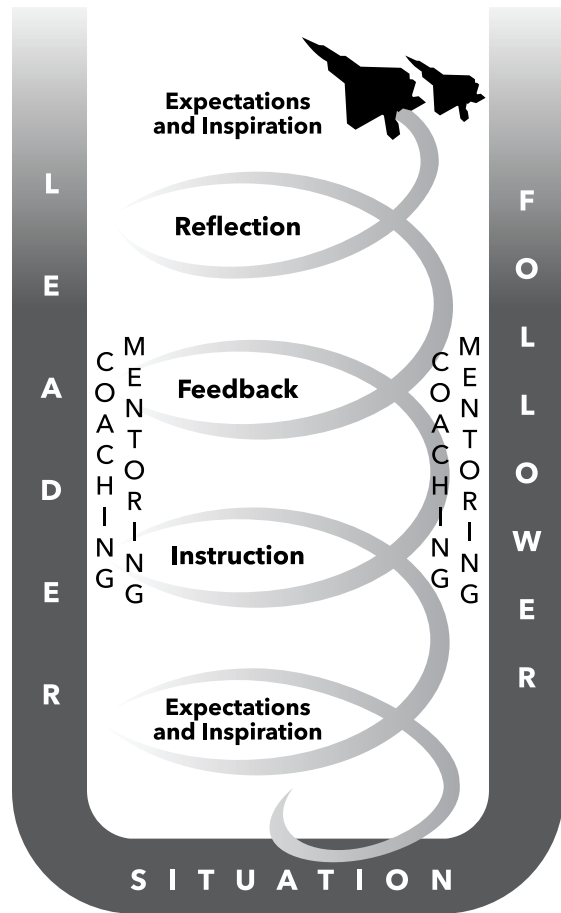


Figure 5: Leadership Growth Model

Though it provides much more detail, the Leader of Character Framework's Own-Engage-Practice model reflects the LGM in many ways. Convincing a cadet to own—or commit—to developing themselves as leaders of character is the concrete purpose of the initial expectation-setting and inspiration stage of the LGM. Instruction, feedback, and reflection all represent the engage portion of developing competence in living honorably. Finally, the iterative nature of the LGM is directly related to the practice idea of building confidence in one's own ability to make proper moral decisions.

Figure 6: Integration of Leader of Character Framework and the Officer Development System.

<b>USAF Core Value: Integrity</b>	<b>USAF Core Value: Service</b>	<b>USAF Core Value: Excellence</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LoC Framework: <b>Lives Honorably</b></li> <li>• ODS PITO Level: <b>Personal</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LoC Framework: <b>Lift Others</b></li> <li>• ODS PITO Level: <b>Interpersonal &amp; Team</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LoC Framework: <b>Elevates Performance</b></li> <li>• ODS PITO Level: <b>Organizational</b></li> </ul>

Finally, the third and last ODS process tool is simply a set of nine Guiding Principles (GPs), largely provided to support faculty and staff who create learning experiences for cadets (Appendix, Figure 5). GPs are the rules of engagement for officer development and include directions such as “align the USAFA experience with accepted USAF practices” and “use goal-oriented and standards-based approaches to build skill-set expertise.” Again, elements of the Leader of Character Framework appear in the GPs, the latter of which were established almost 10 years before the publication of the Leader of Character Framework. GP number 2 states “emphasize cadet ownership and accountability for their own development.” Clearly this reflects the “Own” of the Own-Engage-Practice model. GP number 4 directs us to “establish a common core of experiences and multiple paths to similar outcomes,” which essentially describes the “Engage” phase from the Conceptual Framework. Finally, GP number 7 charges the staff member to appreciate that cadets develop at different speeds, meaning that some will need more “Practice” than others, as mentioned above in the development discussion.

The ODS provides the USAF Academy with a philosophical foundation, a clear target of specific

competencies and outcomes, and a set of three tools to reach those targets. It is linked closely to the Leader of Character Framework, and the two documents are synergistic. They are both about relationships and interconnectedness. They serve as guides for both individuals being developed as leaders of character as well as for those who we might consider to be leader developers. They are both strongly grounded in the Air Force Core Values. And, they both support the USAF Academy mission (Figure 6).

There are, however, several major differences between the two documents. The Leader of Character Framework is a model that can apply to any context and be successful with minimal editing. Substitute Apple or IBM core values for the Air Force core values in the “Lives Honorably” definition, and the Leader of Character Framework could work anywhere. The ODS on the other hand specifically targets developing leaders who will serve in a specific context, as USAF officers. The foundation section of the document makes this particularly clear.

Another difference is that the Leader of Character Framework is noticeably a scholarly document. Several years of focused research went into its development,

and its extensive bibliography clearly communicates this academic grounding. On the surface, the ODS pamphlet does not appear to be an academically-driven document, but it did enjoy contributions from a team of 30 USAFA senior leaders and civilian academics (Price, 2004). Finally, the ODS remains the “common education and training philosophy across the academy” (Enger et. al., 2010, p. 3). In other words, the ODS is USAFA’s official doctrine for leader development. The Leader of Character Framework—though taught in the academic and military training curriculum to cadets, and to faculty and staff in professional development workshops—is not. Perhaps it is time to make it so. One possibility is to set the Leader of Character Framework as the overarching model for leader development with all the other models and systems as ways of implementing that framework. We believe that all of these models can work in concert to ensure effective programs and experiences for cadets.

### Leader Developers

So why does USAFA think developing leaders of character is so important and how can each of us contribute? These are important questions to consider. First, we have seen the positive difference that leaders of character can make in their organizations. When leaders live honorably, the people in their organizations trust them and rely on them to do what they say they will do and to make decisions that are consistent with the needs of the organization’s stakeholders. When leaders lift others, they are able to bring out the best in their subordinates and ensure that each individual is challenged and given opportunities to thrive in their environment. When leaders elevate performance, they are able to come into an organization and immediately look for ways to make the organization better and focus organization members on how they can each contribute to increasing the organization’s success.

Overall, leaders of character make their organizations better — from a performance perspective, from a consistency perspective, and from an overall quality of work environment perspective. This is what the Air Force and Space Force need from their leaders, and it is why we put so much emphasis on it at USAFA.

In terms of how developers can help, the most important thing to do is to be a leader of character yourself and model it to cadets. Currently, USAFA, our country, and the world are in the throes of a global pandemic. As USAFA has navigated these uncharted waters, there have been examples of high character leadership at every echelon. Senior leaders have been very transparent about the fact that the “right” decision is not always clear and that they are striving to do what is right, but mistakes may be made. There have been individual academic advisors and cadets who have reached out to others who were struggling with unique circumstances, ensuring they got the help they needed to improve their situations. There have been faculty and staff members who have worked together to take the in residence-based curriculum and other cadet experiences online in an effort to continue operations at USAFA. These collaborations have helped to make the transition smoother and ensured that cadets still have the same opportunities to develop as leaders of character. It has been a great example of the important roles that leaders of character play in making the organization successful and allowing members to thrive.

Many who are reading this have probably been involved in the efforts described above and have been practicing high character leadership already. If, for some reason, you don’t think you are a critical part of the effort to develop cadets as leaders of character, let us be clear...you are! For those who are a member of the permanent party faculty or staff at USAFA then,

first and foremost, you are a developer of leaders of character. For those in other parts of USAFA working on leader development, you are as well. No matter where you work or what your duty title is, this should be the number one priority. It can happen anywhere: in the classroom, on the athletic fields, in the dining facility, or at the commissary. Day-to-day life is filled with opportunities to instill character in those around us. It is done by modeling the correct behavior, by making corrections when we see discrepancies, and by talking about the importance of character in everyday conversations. Character is about doing the right thing in every situation (living honorably), treating people with dignity and respect (lifting others), and taking responsibility for our role in the organization (elevating performance). Each one of us has a duty to do these things ourselves and also to teach them to others, in particular officer candidates (cadets).

If we are to successfully accomplish this mission of developing leaders of character, it cannot fall only to certain designated positions at USAFA. Every member of the staff at the USAFA needs to get involved and help with this mission. Cadets need to hear a unified message from everyone with whom they come in contact. Inconsistent messages can be confusing and frustrating. They make people wonder what is truly important. It is critical that every member of the USAFA team plays their role in accomplishing the mission...developing leaders of character. No matter where you work - airfield, the medical clinic, gym, etc., each one of us has the ability and the responsibility to develop character in these future leaders of our Air Force, Space Force, and our nation.

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Appendix: Leadership Development Figures

Figure 1: *Owning Your Identity*

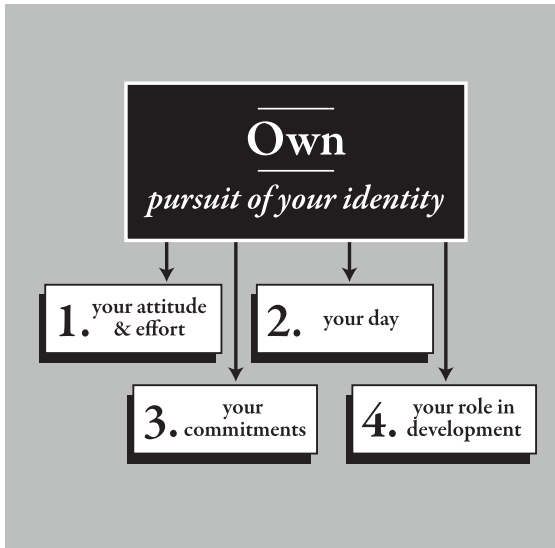


Figure 3: *Practice*

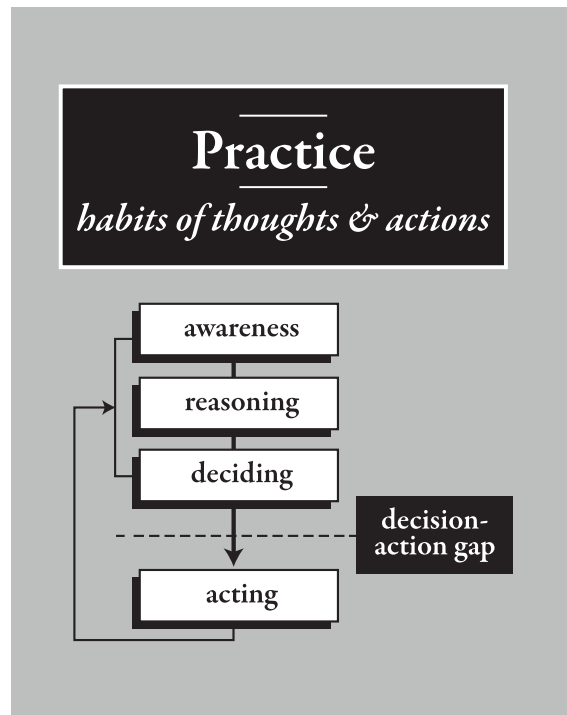
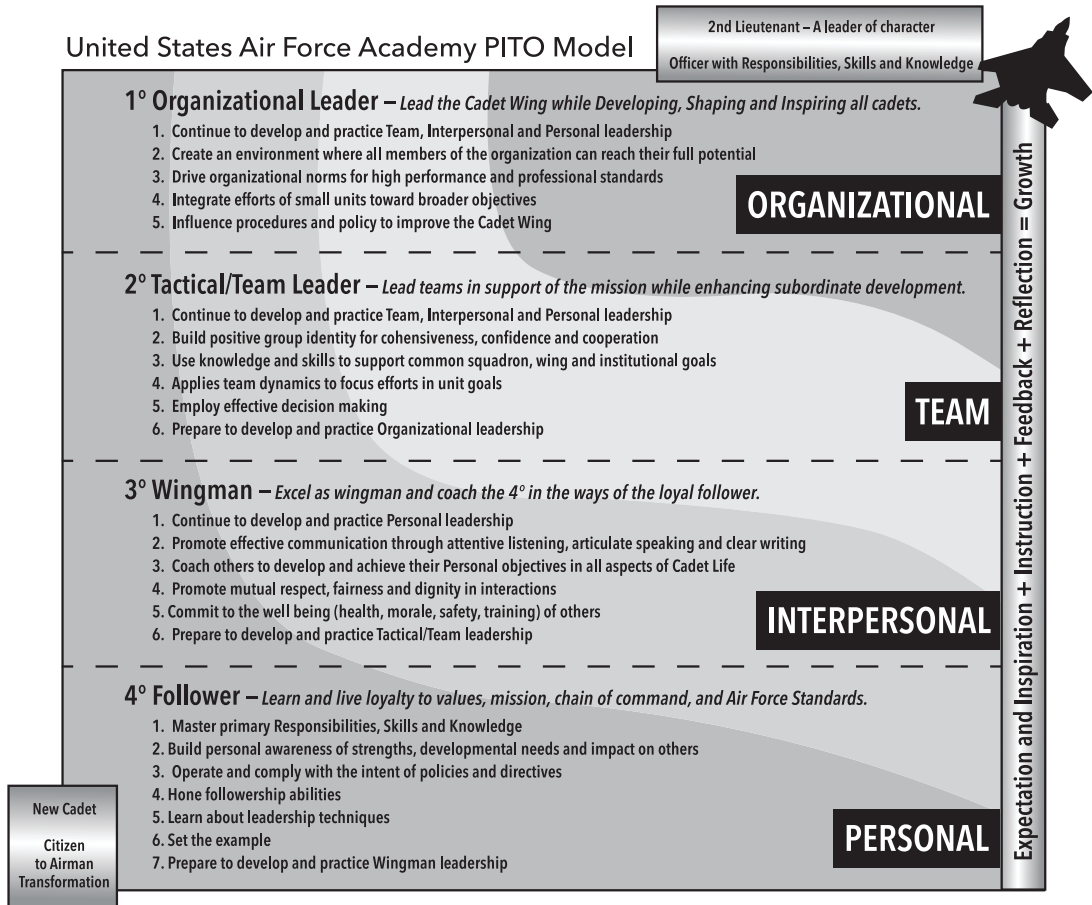


Figure 2: *Engaging in Purposeful Experiences*



Figure 4: USAFA PITO Model



*Figure 5: Guiding Principles*

- 1) Align the USAFA experience with accepted USAF practices.
- 2) Emphasize cadet ownership and accountability for their own development.
- 3) Ensure all leaders and followers gain from each developmental experience, including both successes and failures.
- 4) Establish a common core of experiences and multiple paths to similar outcomes.
- 5) Strike an appropriate balance between quality and quantity of development experiences.
- 6) Create depth of expertise sequentially and progressively based on a cadet's developmental level using the PITO model.
- 7) Couple adequate support with every challenge; tailor every challenge with an appreciation that cadets develop differently and will move through the process at different speeds.
- 8) Use goal-oriented and standards-based approaches to build skill-set expertise.
- 9) Assess the effectiveness of education, training and experiential processes in accordance with the USAFA Institutional Effectiveness Program (IEP).