

Executive Summary

Air University Quality Enhancement Plan 2009-2014: “Cross-Culturally Competent Airmen”

Over the next five years, Air University will systematically enhance student learning to develop more cross-culturally competent Airmen to meet the needs of the US Air Force. Air University has defined cross-cultural competence (3C) as: *The ability to quickly and accurately comprehend, then appropriately and effectively act in a culturally complex environment to achieve the desired effect.*

Air Force senior leaders have identified 3C as an urgent educational requirement due to the increasing requirements of global operations. The QEP will empower faculty to achieve this objective by enhancing student learning, assessment and support. The QEP has therefore received broad support from the Air University community and Air Force constituencies, as well as significant resources.

Air University faculty members have developed an academic model of 3C for the Air Force, and the QEP’s four student learning outcomes are derived from the model’s four components:

- A body of culture-general knowledge. This provides the intellectual scaffolding necessary for students to learn about specific cultural contexts they encounter.
- Cross-cultural skills. Communicating, negotiating and relating effectively with culturally distinct individuals are essential to Airmen’s success on operations.
- Positive attitudes. Openness to learning and acceptance of cultural differences provide the gateway to acquiring cultural knowledge and enacting cross-cultural skills.
- Application. Opportunities to apply culture-general knowledge/skills in specific cultural contexts (i.e., exercises, simulations, research, etc.) are critical to operationalizing this learning.

This QEP will take advantage of the Air Force approach to career-long learning, since all members of the institution attend Air University at multiple points in their career. Air University will implement the QEP across the curriculum – in both our undergraduate and graduate programs – and employ distance learning to maximize learning opportunities for all students.

The QEP’s curricular interventions will be implemented in three phases:

- First, given the importance of early and broad intervention, three educational efforts will address the cross-cultural learning needs of junior enlisted Airmen, future officers and junior officers starting in Academic Year 2009-2010, expanding in 2010-2011 and continuing through 2014.
- Second, three existing senior educational programs – one for enlisted Airmen and two for officers – with varying degrees of cross-cultural learning will be piloted as they are developed, rolled-out no later than Academic Year 2011-2012 and fully implemented by 2012-2013.
- Third, by Academic Year 2013-2014, all six programs will be fully operational, permitting the Director of Academic Affairs’ staff to coordinate comprehensive assessment and reporting prior to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools – Commission on College’s impact study.

Air University’s QEP will assess student learning outcomes using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The results will permit us to improve curriculum and instruction on a recurring basis. We are also hiring additional specialized faculty members, enhancing professional development programs for faculty/staff and acquiring additional learning resources. Together with sufficient financial resources and strong institutional leadership, these measures will significantly enhance the environment that supports Air University students’ development of 3C.

Air University’s QEP homepage is www.culture.af.edu/qep.html, and our point of contact is Dr.

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