

To: AOG Board of Directors

From: Class Advisory Senate

The attached paper, Moving Forward, is a follow up to the CAS assessment of USAFA AOG Strategic Goals, dated 20 October 2007, and should be read in conjunction with that paper. The assessment found general support for the AOG vision, mission, core purpose and strategic goals (the devil was in the details). Moving Forward draws on that assessment and provides specific recommendations based on broad member input. As such it represents a consensus of member views.

The Senate is aware that the Board is being pushed and pulled in different directions by different individuals and groups with differing agendas. At the same time the Board has to deal with challenges that have been developing over a number of years.

The Senate felt that it would be useful to provide the Board with an assessment – based on member perceptions – of where we are and to inform the Board of member views and recommendation on the issues that the Board is facing.

The Senate believes that prompt action on the recommendation contained in Moving Forward will energize the membership behind the Board as it moves forward. This is especially important as the Board prepares for upcoming meetings with the Superintendent, the USAFA Endowment and other fund raising entities.

Respectfully Submitted,

Richard Sexton
President
Class Advisory Senate

MOVING FORWARD

Recommendations to the AOG Board of Directors on Strategic Planning

Approved by the Class Advisory Senate, January 31, 2008

BACKGROUND: The election of a new Board of Directors (BOD), the establishment of an independent Foundation, the resignation of the AOG President and the absence of two Vice Presidents present the BOD with both a challenge and an opportunity to chart a new course. Without a clear and unequivocal vision of what the AOG is and where it is going, it will simply drift from one crisis to another without moving forward. The result will be continued erosion of support for the AOG. Conversely, a clear statement of vision, mission, and goals and an implementation plan will lead to a reinvigorated AOG, with increased support.

THE SENATE RECOMMENDS that the BOD revalidate or revise the existing Strategic Plan in light of the current situation and task the CEO to develop an implementation plan to be approved by the BOD. The Class Advisory Senate (CAS) is prepared to assist in this effort.

FIRST: Some deliberate decisions need to be made on the mission and governance of the AOG.

1. The By-Laws lay out a three part mission of the AOG (support of the Academy, support of the graduates, and support of USAFA heritage). While there are differences as to emphasis, there is general support for the Vision, Mission and Core Purpose as currently stated in the By-Laws. The CAS strongly endorses all three mission elements. Accordingly, the AOG will remain a significant fund raiser even while co-operating with other fund raising organizations.

THE SENATE RECOMMENDS that the BOD reaffirm its commitment to the Vision, Mission and Core Purpose as currently stated in the By-Laws and take the necessary actions to rebuild an effective fund raising structure and task the CEO to develop a comprehensive fund raising plan.

2. In order to accomplish the above tasks, the AOG will require a strong CEO with a clear charter to manage the entire operation of the AOG in accordance with policy guidance provided by the BOD. The CEO should be given the responsibility and authority to carry out the tasks assigned by the BOD. The BOD should provide the necessary policy, strategic guidance and oversight and hold the CEO responsible for results. Failure to clearly define the respective roles of the CEO and the BOD will result in conflict and misunderstanding. Furthermore, delay in putting a permanent CEO in place will only result in further drift and erosion of support for the AOG.

THE SENATE RECOMMENDS that the BOD select a permanent CEO as soon as possible but not later than 15 July 2008. The CEO should have the responsibility and authority to carry out the mission of the AOG in accordance with policy guidance provided by the BOD.

SECOND: THE SENATE RECOMMENDS that the BOD clearly identifies the challenges facing the AOG as it moves forward. The CAS assessment of “USAFA AOG Strategic Goals, dated 22 October 2007” identified a number of challenges, summarized as:

1. Loss of confidence by the USAFA Superintendent, major donors and members. This confidence has been eroded by a very divisive election campaign and well-meaning but ill-advised attempts to impose graduate influence on Academy policy.
2. Perception by some members that the AOG is irrelevant and/or does not meet their expectations.
3. Decline in morale among the AOG staff due to changes in leadership and conflicting guidance from the BOD.
4. AOG members who do not know/understand the AOG’s vision, mission, and goals nor the programs and projects that result.
5. The withdrawal of major donor support, the virtual collapse of the Capital Campaign, and the current budget shortfall require a major review of the AOG’s financial structure and a clear plan to redress this situation.

FINALLY: THE SENATE RECOMMENDS that the BOD task the CEO to develop a plan to meet these challenges and any other challenges that the BOD identifies. Again, the CAS assessment of “USAFA AOG Strategic Goals” can serve as a starting point for developing specific actions to be taken, summarized as:

1. Look for ways to regain the confidence of the senior Academy staff. Emphasize the AOG’s dedication to supporting the Academy missions with a “how can we help” attitude. Invite the Superintendent and Academy staff to identify specific areas where the AOG can help.
2. Reassure all donors by rebuilding an effective fund raising structure and demonstrating its effective stewardship of funds entrusted to the AOG. Inform members of current and planned projects, along with projected costs and time lines.
3. Make the AOG relevant to all graduates. Communicate the AOG’s vision, mission, goals, strategic plan and operations to all graduates and be receptive to all graduate feedback. Reassure graduates of the AOG’s dedication in providing service and support to the graduate community. Inform graduates of the services currently provided and seek input on those areas of greatest interest to graduates. The 2006 Graduate Survey can serve as a starting point in this process. Actively reach out and get graduates to invest in the AOG by keeping them informed as to AOG activities and inviting/responding to graduate input. In this regard, the AOG web site and Zoomie Nation are useful tools but are essentially passive; the members have to reach out to the AOG for information. Checkpoints is active; it reaches out to the members. The CAS is inter-active; it provides a two-way conduit between the AOG leadership and the graduate community, informing graduates and serving as a filter on feedback, as well as serving as a sounding board/beta test for AOG plans. Furthermore, the AOG staff and the BOD should actively make opportunities to meet members of the graduate community.
4. Rebuild the AOG staff by providing inspired leadership, demonstrating real

compassion, and aggressively addressing the funding shortfalls that threaten their job security.

5. With an updated Strategic Plan, the BOD must review the financial assumptions and current spending plan and rebuild the budget.

Respectfully submitted as member input by the Class Advisory Senate, January 31, 2008