



Our vital dedication

By Mark Hille '97, CEO, U.S. Air Force Academy Association & Foundation

In his address to the Corps of Cadets in 1962, Gen. Douglas MacArthur referred to the “welter of change and development” that might tempt future officers to lose focus on their responsibilities. He reminded them that their “mission remained fixed, determined,” that being to “win our wars.” All other concerns — public projects, needs and purposes — would find others for their accomplishment. He concluded that “theirs alone was the profession of arms.”

It is truly one of the finest speeches in American oratory.

But aside from the message it still sends to future warfighters, I was reminded of the speech as **we** grapple with the questions about our own priorities. Gen. MacArthur’s words might cause us to consider: What is **our** “fixed, determined, inviolable” mission? And what concerns, valuable as they may be, must we leave to others and perhaps other organizations to achieve?

I offer these priorities for your consideration:

- First, we inform and engage our graduates, providing them avenues to connect and opportunities to provide their voice. We support chapters, host events, run tailgates and reunions, and publish a magazine, several newsletters and a series of podcasts. We provide relevant services during one’s cadet journey, during career transitions and finally when a graduate passes away.
- Second, we raise and steward private charitable support for our Academy. We build buildings; we support cadet programs and teams, academic departments, and research projects; and, when able, we enhance cadet quality of life. We help to ensure that the training, education and experiences of Air Force Academy cadets are not just sufficient but truly excellent. To do so, we carefully invest, diligently track and responsibly use each dollar provided to us by donors, as intended.
- And third, we preserve the growing heritage of our Academy and its graduates, highlighting their achievements and their service and honoring our shared traditions and values.

In doing these things, we have growing influence and impact on that which we value — the future leaders attending our Academy, and the nation they will serve and protect. Indeed, since 2022, we have welcomed nearly 8,000 new graduate members and now serve graduates from ages 22 to 92. We have launched new


media and freshened our brand. We have introduced a modern mobile-friendly website, created several notable additions to our Doolittle campus and assembled a staff of growing capacity and professionalism. We concluded a \$330 million campaign and have completed capital projects for the Academy, established programs and endowments to support cadets, and secured special legal status encoded in federal law. And with smart investment and efficient use of resources, the financial strength of both organizations has continued to grow.

All of this in just a few short years, thanks to the leadership, the engagement and support of so many graduates, parents and friends; and the skill and hard work of our dedicated staff.

Our updated strategic plan for the Association & Foundation builds on these successes and sets our roadmap for the coming three years (scan the QR code below to access our plan). Over the past six months, we have received input and approval from the Association of Graduates and Air Force Academy Foundation boards. We have also received approval of our 2026 budget, which provides the resources to tackle the strategic imperatives articulated in the plan — a budget that represents no increase from 2025.

This all takes place amid a dynamic time in which perspectives vary widely on many unresolved cultural and social issues. I am not debating the merits of any position, but I do suggest that these times apply additional pressure for us to take positions or not, to make statements or not, and to engage on a specific issue or not.

So back to my opening question. What is our “fixed, determined, inviolable” mission? I believe the answer to that question is simple: serving our graduates, supporting our Academy and preserving the growing heritage of the Academy and the Long Blue Line.

All else, as Gen. MacArthur said, is “corollary to this vital dedication.” 

With best wishes,

A stylized handwritten signature in dark blue ink, appearing to read 'Mark'.

Mark Hille '97

