**Chapter President’s Report 2019**

**Local Chapter Topics**

              Although the 2019 Chapter Presidents’ Conference covered many wide-ranging topics, all of which will be addressed, I will discuss the most relevant to us as a new chapter first, which is how to keep a chapter active.  As Dave Wilson (’74) mentioned during the August lunch, just doing monthly lunches and occasional football watch parties is not enough to keep a chapter active.  Much of the Presidents’ Conference concerned what chapters can and should do over the course of a year to stay active by focusing on three purposes:  Serving the local USAFA alumni, serving USAFA through local outreach, and serving the local community.  Focusing on these three things as well as following the checklist in the Chapter Handbook is the way to keep a chapter active and to get recognized as a Distinguished Chapter.

              For me, and probably for most USAFA alumni, a local AOG chapter is thought of as a way to promote camaraderie among graduates in the local area, and to network with other graduates for jobs, business contacts and opportunities or find prospective employees.  There were some things suggested during one of the sessions at the Conference by suggesting new ideas to keep events “fresh” beyond the typical lunches, football watch parties, and golf outings.  These included beer tastings, wine tastings, chili cook offs and other food events, all Academies events, unique local activities, and charitable service events.  Only a little time was spent on this topic.  The overall theme regarding this was most chapters, with the exception of the DC area chapter which has a large constituency networking for government and government contractor jobs, don’t have success staying active focusing overwhelmingly on this area.  Most chapters that stay active, and become Distinguished Chapters, by supporting a local charitable organization, and especially by supporting USAFA.

              Much of the Presidents’ Conference was spent encouraging chapters to support USAFA by engaging with cadets from the local area, engaging and coordinating with the local Parents Club, supporting the local Air Liaison Officer, meeting with prospective cadets, and hosting cadets when in central Oklahoma for different sporting events and club events, in addition to the well known summer time Ops Air Force cadets that visit Tinker.  Our Central OK chapter has already done much for this such as hosting a Founders Day event which included the Parents Club and USAFA Director of Admissions, and hosted cadets at Tinker for Ops Air Force.  But local chapter engagement along these lines has run into the roadblock of the Privacy Act which prohibits sharing of contact information of current cadets from Oklahoma and the difficulty of finding out when different sports teams, or one of the many clubs may be in central Oklahoma.  Initially Bill Preston, AOG Director of Parent and Chapter Programs, referred me to the Oklahoma Parents Club president, Kerri Stephens, for current cadet information.  Unfortunately, she did not have a comprehensive list either and assumed the Parents Club would get that information from the AOG.  After further conversations with Bill Preston he would see if he can provide a list of current cadets’ names with towns and/or high schools and year, while staying in compliance with the Privacy Act.  Also, USAFA Strategic Communications is exploring ways to notify local chapters when cadets will be in their area, or at least create a way for chapters to more easily find those events themselves.

              A couple other things that were suggested to foster local coordination with the Parents Club and ALO is to create hyperlinks between each other’s websites (already in place on our side) to have a new cadet send off each year (joined by Matt Waldron in June).  Some items that were suggested for the send-off were showing the BCT movie “A Year in the Blue”, possibly visiting the local bases, in our case Tinker and even Vance, and, surprising to me, emphasizing the specific Physical Fitness Test requirements to help ensure they are informed of the USAFA’s fitness expectations.

              As a final note on the importance of this aspect of local AOG chapters, is the conscious decision to have the AOG Presidents’ Conference coincides with the Parents Club Conference.  This allowed AOG chapter representatives to meet with local Parents Club representatives during the Wednesday evening Superintendent’s Reception and Thursday morning’s Senior Staff briefings.  It is clear a point of emphasis they recommend is engaging with local cadets, parents, and ALO’s as much as possible.

              The last area recommended as a focus area for AOG chapters is to support a charitable organization, and most chapters pick a military affiliated organization. Although not a lot of time was dedicated to this area, it was mentioned several times as an area of focus for local chapters. Again, our Central Oklahoma AOG Chapter has started to fulfill this recommendation with its support of “Wreaths across America” for the Air Force Academy Cemetery.

              To sum up, our local chapter members should understand USAFA AOG recommends we focus on serving our local alumni by promoting camaraderie and facilitating networking among graduates, supporting a local charitable organization, and especially supporting USAFA by coordinating and engaging with the Parents Club, ALO’s, prospective candidates, local cadets, and cadets passing through for club and sports activities, and Ops Air Force.  Our Central Oklahoma Chapter has already begun all these activities and should continue to expand them and communicate chapter events to USAFA AOG to keep the chapter active and to become a Distinguished Chapter.

**National AOG Topics**

              One of the biggest topics at the national level is the creation of the “Single CEO” for the AOG and the AFA Endowment, and the structure and coordination of fundraising organizations which support USAFA.  Earlier this year the AOG voted in favor of the “Single CEO” for the AOG and AFA Endowment in which there will be two different boards of directors but one President.  A search is still on going to fill this position.  The intent is to have what is **currently** named the Endowment focus on fundraising, and the AOG to focus on supporting alumni and the local chapters.

              It was mentioned several times there are **seven** different fundraising organizations supporting USAFA and the Endowment is trying to get as many of them under one umbrella as possible.  In Sept 2019, the Endowment is expecting to finalize an agreement with the Air Force Academy Foundation, and in doing so will rename the Air Force Academy Endowment the Air Force Academy Foundation.  (Do not confuse this with the Falcon Foundation which is a different one of the seven fundraising organizations.)  It was also mentioned they would like to get the Air Force Academy Athletic Corporation, AFAAC, to coordinate with what is still called the Endowment.  General Mike Gould, the President of the Endowment, understands the confusion about all the different fundraising organization and a flow chart would be needed to explain who is who and who does what.  But there will be an article in the September or December Checkpoints magazine explaining the changes with the Endowment and other organizations supporting the Academy.

              Continuing the fundraising topic, the Endowment has raised $191 million dollars in the last 12 years funding the new Polaris Hall near the Chapel, new football locker rooms, and a new indoor football facility.  Unlike the Endowments for West Point, Annapolis and other prestigious schools, the USAFA endowment is quite small since USAFA is exceptionally young by comparison.  Many others are to the point where they are “self-funding” mostly living off the investment income of the endowment.  The USAFA Endowment is working toward that but currently mostly disbursing out what comes in to fill current needs of the Academy.  The Endowment is also trying to increase graduate participation in donations.  While Annapolis has a 24% participation rate, and West Point 35%, USAFA has only a 12% participation rate.

              Another big topic at the National level is how the AOG should increase national membership, possibly by eliminating membership fees.  They have found one of the biggest turn-offs to new graduates in their first interactions with the AOG have been the AOG to ask for money at a time when they don’t have much.  The AOG currently encourages parents to pay for their cadet’s AOG membership with some success, but they are considering ways to make all grads members in some way upon graduation as some other alumni groups have had success doing while being mindful of those who have already paid for life time AOG memberships and continuing memberships.  It is an on-going discussion.

              National level AOG membership and dues spilled over to the local chapter discussions when our own Ron Murray (’65) wondered how a non-graduate could be a local chapter member.  They cannot be a member of the parent organization, so how could they be a member of one of the parent organization’s chapters. Rita and I have been and are members of local chapters of other organizations and they do not allow membership without being a qualified member directly certified in that endeavor. He emphasized an Association of Graduates local chapter should be made up of GRADUATES, not folks off the street who are not graduates.  This got understanding, but the attitude from USAFA AOG seemed to encourage membership from others associated with USAFA members.  (Only grads are regular members of our chapter. We also have four affiliates associated with our chapter, 3 cadet parents and the Air Force Liaison Officer for Oklahoma who recruits Academy applicants)

              The subject of reunions was also discussed.  Currently, classes can pick, in seniority order, from different weekends made available by USAFA for each class’s reunions every five year.  It was suggested to make the 20, 40, and 60-year reunions, or another acceptable combination, get the first picks in seniority order, then all the other reunions could pick in seniority order.  This was suggested because the first reunion many graduates attend, the 20 year, has proven to be a turn off for some graduates thanks to getting less desirable dates just as they are getting re-engaged with USAFA near their Air Force retirement and creates a negative attitude toward the AOG at the start of their post Air Force life.  Predictably, graduates of more senior classes did not agree with this suggestion.  But it may get some consideration from the AOG.  It was also pointed out that hotel, banquet and meeting space in Colorado Springs is constrained since USAFA is no longer the main game in town for these types of events and constrains reunion planning.

**Other Academy and AOG Notes**

An AOG Career Center website will be standing up in September 2019.

A new Zoomie Link for all local chapters to be linked into is coming November 2019. (You may now join on our website.)

The Planetarium reopened in March 2019 after being closed for 15 years following a multi-million dollar renovation.

The Chapel is starting a comprehensive refurbishment September 2019 that will have it much dismantled and closed for four years.

USAFA Strategic Communications initiated with the AOG what is expected to be an annual tradition of a Jacks Valley Grad March back will be where graduates march back with the new cadets to the Cadet Area at the end of July.

The USAFA Strategic Communications Office will help coordinate local chapters speaker requests and cadet performances, such as the Cadet Chorale, through the Graduate Liaison Office at USAFA.graduateliaison@USAFA.edu or 719-333-8827.  Academy staff members such as the dean, commandant, director of admissions, and others are eager to come out when able.

Some cadet punishments have been replaced by community service requirements.

There is a Lance Sijan documentary that came out June 2018.

There are currently about 4250 cadets, 1197 or them women, and about 1000 cadets participate in D-1 sports.

1175 cadets entered as the class of 2023.  About 190 from the Prep School and 50 Falcon Scholars.

Approximately 1000 graduated in 2019, 528 assigned to UPT, about 25 to RPA’s, 2 Rhodes Scholars, and 110 went to graduate school.

The previous commandant was relieved in April 2019 and is going through an IG investigation and the Vice Commandant was removed in July 2019 for suspicion of DUI.  The Superintendent, Gen Silveria, emphasized they will be personally supported while being held accountable for their actions.

The US Space Force was officially authorized just before the AOG Presidents’ Conference and will be under the Department of the Air Force.  It could become like the Marine Corps is to the Department of the Navy, and USAFA grads may be able to go into the Air Force or the Space Force, as Annapolis does with the Navy and Marine Corps.  Details like these and others are in on going planning.

Ron Murray, ’65, and Curt Wagner, ‘90