FINAL REPORT

Critical Secondary Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) Study

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ES-1
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION 1-1
1.1 BACKGROUND 1-1
1.2 PURPOSE 1-2
1.3 OBJECTIVES 1-2
1.4 SCOPE 1-2
1.5 ASSUMPTIONS 1-2
1.6 FACTORS FOR CONSIDERATION 1-3
1.7 TASKS 1-3
1.8 SPONSOR 1-4
1.9 TERMINOLOGY 1-4
CHAPTER 2 METHODOLOGY 2-1
CHAPTER 3 RESULTS 3-1
3.1 CRITICAL MOS DETERMINATION 3-1
3.1.1 MOSs Considered 3-1
3.1.2 Determination of Critical MOS Criteria 3-2
3.1.3 Application of Criteria to Individual MOSs 3-3
3.1.4 Task 1 Observations 3-3
3.2 INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS OFFICER PROGRAM 3-5
3.2.1 Program Description 3-5
3.2.2 Program Assessment and Recommendations 3-8
3.2.3 Program Sponsorship/Management 3-8
3.2.4 Meeting Marine Corps Requirements 3-9
3.2.5 IAOP Selection Process 3-11
3.2.6 Training of IAOP Officers 3-12
3.2.7 Utilization of IAOP Officers 3-13
3.2.8 Career Impact of IAOP Participation 3-15
3.2.9 Other Program Aspects 3-20
3.3 SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM/ADVANCED DEGREE PROGRAM 3-21
3.3.1 Program Description 3-21
3.3.2 Program Assessment And Recommendations 3-26
3.3.3 Program Sponsorship/Management 3-27
3.3.4 Meeting Marine Corps Requirements 3-28
3.3.5 Program Selection and Participation 3-30
3.3.6 Education of SEP Officers 3-38
3.3.7 Utilization of SEP Officers 3-40
3.3.8 Cost-benefit of the Programs 3-43
3.3.9 Career Impact of SEP Participation 3-46
3.3.10 Other Program Aspects 3-50
3.4 ACQUISITION WORKFORCE PROGRAM 3-51
3.4.1 Program Description 3-51
3.4.2 Program Assessment and Recommendations 3-55
3.4.3 Program Sponsorship/Management 3-56
3.4.4 Meeting Marine Corps Requirements 3-57

3.4.5 APC Selection Process 3-59
3.4.6 Training of AWP Officers 3-60
3.4.7 Utilization of AWP Officers 3-61
3.4.8 Career Impact of AWP Participation 3-62
3.4.9 Other Program Aspects 3-63
CHAPTER 4 CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS 4-1

APPENDIX A STUDY CONTRIBUTORS A-1
APPENDIX B BIBLIOGRAPHY B-1
APPENDIX C ACRONYMS C-1
APPENDIX D MARINE CORPS MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY (MOS) SYSTEM D-1
APPENDIX E SKILL DESIGNATORS ASSIGNABLE TO UNRESTRICTED OFFICERS E-1
APPENDIX F PROBLEMS CITED WITH NON-CRITICAL MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTIES F-1
APPENDIX G POSSIBLE SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM PROBLEMS G-1
APPENDIX H SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM SURVEY RESULTS I-1
APPENDIX I CURRENT SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM PROCESS G-1
APPENDIX J CAREER IMPACT OF SEP/ADP PARTICIPATION J-1
APPENDIX K SEP OFFICER PROMOTION ANALYSIS K-1
APPENDIX L COMMENTS ON THE PROPOSAL FOR A PERMANENT CONTRACTING OFFICER MOS L-1

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The Marine Corps uses a system of Military Occupational Specialties (MOSs) to track the occupational skills of military personnel and to match those skills to billet requirements. Every Marine has one Primary MOS (PMOS) and may have one or more other MOSs designating additional qualifications and skills. An MOS used for additional skills that is not assignable as a PMOS is commonly referred to as a "secondary MOS," although the correct term is "skill designator MOS." The Marine Corps has struggled for years with the management of skill designator MOSs, particularly those that are granted to unrestricted officers after extensive and costly training and/or education at government expense.

At the inception of the study, 100 skill designator MOSs were available for assignment to unrestricted officers. (An additional 55 MOSs were created during the study to identify foreign language skills and those MOSs were not included in the study.) Three major programs cover 53 of the MOSs. The remaining 47 MOSs are associated with specific occupational fields or identify officers who have completed specialized training or have obtained a specific qualification apart from their PMOS. The three major programs are the International Affairs Officer Program (IAOP), Special Education Program (SEP)/Advanced Degree Program (ADP), and the Acquisition Workforce Program (AWP). These programs are characterized by extensive training requirements and a large number of officer participants. In order to meet operational requirements and conserve limited resources, the Marine Corps must realize the best possible return on investment from these programs. Management problems reduce this return. Volunteers are required for many skill designator MOSs in order to meet Marine Corps requirements. The ability to attract quality volunteers is reduced if officers believe that participation in the programs necessary to obtain the MOSs will adversely impact their career.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine the specific problems faced by the Marine Corps in managing critical secondary (i.e., skill designator) MOSs and to propose solutions to the problems. The management goal was to obtain the maximum return on investment for the Marine Corps, while maintaining a career pattern that will not adversely impact officers holding these MOSs.

Methodology

The study team determined the criteria that identify a critical skill designator MOS. The criteria were applied to all of the skill designator MOSs to arrive at a list of critical MOSs. The study team used prior studies and other written material, interviews, data sources, and a survey of SEP participants to generate a list of possible problems associated with the critical MOSs. The team then analyzed the possible problems to determine which were valid. Recommended solutions were developed for those problems.

Major Findings and Recommendations

Critical MOSs
After developing the criteria for identifying critical MOSs and interviewing MOS specialists for the skill designator MOSs, the study team determined that the critical MOSs were all contained within the three major programs listed above, i.e., IAOP, SEP/ADP, and AWP. While concerns and problems exist with some of the other skill designator MOSs, they do not present management challenges at the level of those in the major programs. Therefore, the remainder of the study addressed only the major programs.

IAOP
The current IAOP is working well, satisfying the Marine Corps requirement for officers with foreign area expertise at a reasonable cost. This program has made tremendous progress since the creation of a full-time IAOP Coordinator billet in Plans, Policies, and Operations (PP&O) Department. The IAOP Coordinator expressed concerns about possible negative promotion and retention trends within the community. The study team found no evidence that IAOP participants are doing worse than the general officer population in these areas. The study team identified the need for improvement primarily in the areas of identification of requirements and assignment of officers to IAOP billets. Recommendations include development of a formal billet requirement validation process resulting in identification of IAOP billets on Tables of Organization (T/Os) and formalization of officer assignments in order to reduce the informal coordination currently necessary.

SEP/ADP
These closely related programs have worked well for many years to provide graduate-educated officers for key billets. However, the study team believes that the programs are approaching a crisis point. The number of applications for the programs has been declining and it is becoming more difficult to fill program quotas and SEP billets. There is a widespread perception that participation in SEP will adversely impact an officer's career. The Marine Corps is not receiving the maximum return on investment from these programs, primarily because few officers serve more than one utilization tour. The comprehensive SEP billet validation effort has stalled leaving requirements out of date. Finally, the programs suffer from a lack of proactive program sponsorship. The study team found that the most critical need of these programs is proactive leadership and recommends that Training and Education Command (TECOM) immediately assume program sponsorship. TECOM should then develop and execute a plan to revitalize these programs. Additional study recommendations include:

- Complete the comprehensive SEP billet validation, including identifying new requirements
- Establish an objective, independent, periodic review of all SEP billets
- Senior Marine Corps leadership strongly endorse the program
- Change the assignment process to facilitate additional utilization tours
- Identify alternate training/education options where a graduate degree is not required
- Assign SEP billet functions to GS civilians or contracted specialists where no requirement for military personnel exists
- Allow officers to opt for an intervening PMOS tour between school and the SEP utilization tour in exchange for additional obligated service in order to maintain PMOS credibility

- Ensure that promotion and command selection boards recognize SEP officer contributions and value to the Marine Corps

AWP

The AWP differs from IAOP and SEP/ADP in that it does not depend entirely on volunteers. However, the greatest return on investment comes when acquisition officers apply for membership in the Acquisition Professional Community (APC) and serve additional acquisition tours. The study team found problems with the current officer structure in the AWP. There are far more officer billets requiring APC members (by billet MOS) than can possibly be filled. The Marine Corps comparatively low civilian-to-military ratio in the acquisition workforce exacerbates the problem. The study team recommends that the acquisition organizations review their current billet structure and consider converting non-critical acquisition positions from MOS 9958 to MOS 9957. Conversion of military positions to civilian positions should continue, where appropriate, in order to bring the Marine Corps civilian-to-military ratio more in line with the rest of DoD. A greater effort should be made to increase the number of eligible officers who apply for the APC by changing the selection process from a formal annual board to a more frequent or continuously running board and by encouraging officers to apply upon completion of an initial acquisition tour. Marine Corps Systems Command's (MCSC's) current means of training entry-level acquisition officers should be reviewed to determine if it is the best approach. If so, the courses currently used should be added to the official equivalency list. The Marine Corps needs senior officers with significant acquisition experience to fill critical acquisition positions and must take steps to ensure that officers who serve multiple acquisition tours and perform well are promoted and retained. A full-time military Acquisition Program Management Officer (APMO) position should be established in Manpower and Reserve Affairs (M&RA) Department to manage the military side of the acquisition workforce.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Two separate study nominations were submitted to the Fiscal Year 2002 (FY02) Marine Corps Studies Board addressing issues related to officer education programs. One nomination requested a review of Marine Corps contracting officer requirements with a view toward making the Contracting Officer Special Education Program (SEP) Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) a permanent, Primary MOS (PMOS). The other nomination requested a review of the promotion and retention trends for officers who participate in the International Affairs Officer Program (IAOP). Although these proposals were not closely related, the Studies Board recognized that a number of other officer education and training programs could benefit from an in-depth review. Therefore, the board combined the two nominations and broadened the scope of the study to look at the management and utilization of officer critical secondary MOSs in general.

The Marine Corps has struggled for years with the management of secondary MOSs, particularly those that are granted after extensive and costly training and/or education at government expense. Examples are the SEP MOSs, which are obtained through participation in SEP or the Advanced Degree Program (ADP), and those awarded in the IAOP. Typically, qualified volunteers are selected for these programs from virtually all unrestricted officer communities in the Marine Corps and are provided specialized training and education that may exceed 2 years in length. Following this education/training, they are awarded a secondary MOS and are assigned to a utilization (commonly referred to as "payback") tour for 3 years. Second or subsequent utilization tours are served by a limited number of officers, primarily on a volunteer basis. Back-to-back tours in a secondary MOS are rare, but do occur.

The Acquisition Workforce Program (AWP) is another program that utilizes secondary MOSs and impacts a significant number of Marine officers. This program is different from SEP and IAOP in that not all officers in the program are volunteers and, for most of the participants, the training associated with the program occurs after the officer is actually assigned to an AWP billet. AWP is similar to the other programs in that officers in the AWP obtain skills apart from their PMOS that make them a valuable resource to the Marine Corps. In order to meet critical mission requirements in defense acquisition, these officers must be managed and utilized effectively.

Together these three major programs cover 53 of the 155 secondary MOSs available to unrestricted officers. The newly created linguist occupational field (used to designate foreign language proficiency) contains 55 of the MOSs. The remaining 47 MOSs are scattered throughout the Marine Corps occupational fields and are not part of a major program. Typically, these MOSs indicate that Marines have completed specialized training or obtained a specific qualification apart from their PMOS.

Some commonly cited problems for these programs are:

- Adverse career impacts (e.g., reduced promotion opportunity)
- Lower retention

- Difficulty in obtaining a sufficient number of qualified volunteers
- Difficulty in assigning such personnel to second or subsequent utilization tours
- Loss of proficiency in the specialized area after returning to their PMOS
- Assignment of officers on their utilization tours to billets not commensurate with their newly acquired skills
- Failure to obtain a sufficient return on the significant investment by the Marine Corps in educating and training these officers

1.2 PURPOSE

The purpose of the Critical Secondary MOS Study was to determine the specific problems faced by the Marine Corps in managing critical secondary MOSs and to propose solutions to the problems. The management goal was to obtain the maximum return on investment for the Marine Corps, while maintaining a career pattern that will not adversely impact officers holding these MOSs.

1.3 OBJECTIVES

The study objectives were to:

- Determine the criteria for describing a secondary MOS as "critical" and identify the MOSs that fall in this category.
- Identify the problems associated with management of critical secondary MOSs and investigate methods to determine if management is successful.
- Identify and assess the impact (e.g., fiscal cost, force structure change) of options to improve the management of these MOSs. Consider MOS management practices of other Services, among the possibilities.
- Evaluate alternative means of performing the tasks and functions associated with the critical secondary MOSs.

1.4 SCOPE

This study addressed only MOSs and billets associated with active duty unrestricted Marine Corps officers. All MOSs available for assignment to officers as additional MOSs were initially considered, but the list was reduced to those deemed critical during the first phase of the study. Billets within the Marine Corps, as well as joint and external billets assigned to the Marine Corps, were considered, but not billets held by personnel from other Services.

1.5 ASSUMPTIONS

- The Marine Corps will continue to use a single board (i.e., competitive category) to consider unrestricted officers for promotion to a given grade.

- The tasks and functions currently performed by officers holding the critical secondary MOSs will not change significantly in the foreseeable future.

1.6 FACTORS FOR CONSIDERATION

- The other military Services have similar requirements and have taken steps to manage their personnel. This study needs to look at what they have done and see what works and what is applicable to the Marine Corps.
- The impact on Prisoners, Patients, Trainees, and Transients (P2T2[1]) must be considered.

1.7 TASKS

Task 1. Identify Critical MOSs. Determine the criteria by which a given secondary MOS should be classified as "critical." This task will involve research on the current population holding secondary MOSs, research on fill rates for billets requiring these MOSs, discussions with MOS sponsors, discussions with the monitor(s) responsible for assigning personnel to billets requiring these MOSs, and possibly communication with personnel currently filling these billets or those who have filled them in the past. This task will also involve literature search for any prior investigation in this area (the thesis referred to in the contacting officer study proposal being an example). Apply the criteria to identify the critical MOSs.

Task 2. Identify Current Management Challenges and Potential Management Measures of Effectiveness. Determine the specific problems involved in managing the critical MOSs and measures of effectiveness (MOEs) for the management of these MOSs. This task will involve research into current management policies and procedures, costs, job performance, fill rates, promotion rates, retention, and other areas identified during Task 1.

Task 3. Examine Potential Alternatives to Current MOS Management Practices. Determine feasible options for improving the management of the critical secondary MOSs and assess the costs and other impacts of implementing the options. This task will take the results of Task 2 and, in a cooperative effort with the manpower managers, develop options for improving management. The study team will then analyze these options using the measures developed in Task 2 and recommend improvements to current management practices. This task will include discussions with the personnel management offices of the other Services.

Task 4. Evaluate Alternative Means. This task will examine alternatives that include alternative education sources and civilianizing or contracting out the functions of certain critical secondary MOSs. The study team will not examine specific billets, but rather the functions performed by the specialty areas. The team will provide considerations for the Marine Corps to use in determining the most efficient and effective means of performing the functions.

[1] P2T2 encompasses active duty Marines during the time when they are not filling a T/O billet. For the purpose of this study, the pertinent members of this population are the Marines attending training that is not in a temporary duty status. Since an increase in P2T2 results in a lower fill rate for billets in the Marine Corps, every effort is made to keep P2T2 as low as possible while still accomplishing mission requirements.

1.8 SPONSOR

Manpower Plans and Policy (MP) Division, Manpower and Reserve Affairs (M&RA) Department, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps (HQMC) sponsored the study.

1.9 TERMINOLOGY

The authoritative source on MOS matters is the MOS Manual, MCO P1200.7X, which defines the terms used within the MOS system. The study proposals and plan include the terms "secondary MOS" and "additional MOS." During early study research, the study team discovered that both terms were incorrectly used. The term Primary MOS (PMOS) is generally used correctly. Only certain MOSs are valid as PMOSs for unrestricted officers. Marines often use "secondary MOS" when referring to an MOS held by a Marine which is neither the PMOS for that Marine nor a valid PMOS for any Marine. However, "secondary MOS" is not an official term in the MOS system. The correct terminology for such an MOS is "skill designator." The term "additional MOS" is often used to refer to any MOS other than a Marine's PMOS. The precise definition for additional MOS is "an existing PMOS awarded to a Marine who already holds another PMOS." For example, an infantry officer (MOS 0302) who is also qualified as an intelligence officer (MOS 0202) and a light-armored vehicle officer (MOS 0303) would have a PMOS of 0302, an additional MOS of 0202, and a skill designator MOS of 0303. The correct terminology was used for the study report; however, the official study title was not changed.

For those unfamiliar with the Marine Corps MOS system, Appendix D provides a synopsis and further definitions extracted from the MOS Manual (MCO P1200.7X).

CHAPTER 2 METHODOLOGY

The first task was to determine the criteria by which a skill designator MOS would be designated as "critical." The study team interviewed manpower personnel as well as MOS specialists for skill designator MOSs to determine what characteristics of an MOS indicated potential management problems with that MOS. The criteria were developed from this list of characteristics and were refined during a meeting with manpower personnel.

To determine which of the skill designator MOSs would be included in the study, the study team conducted a telephonic interview using a structured questionnaire with the MOS specialist for each skill designator MOS listed in the MOS Manual. In some cases, the MOS specialist could not be contacted directly, so the questionnaire was sent and returned via e-mail. The study team used the interview results and data from Marine Corps automated systems to compile a list of MOSs to be studied. The criteria and proposed list of MOSs to be studied were included in Interim Report #1. The skill designator MOSs for linguists did not exist when the study began and were not considered in the study.

In order to examine the programmatic issues with the SEP, IAOP, and AWP, all individual MOSs covered by these programs were automatically included, even if the individual MOS did not strictly meet the criticality criteria. In the end, this process eliminated all skill designator MOSs not covered by the three major programs. Therefore, the study team focused their resources and effort on the major three programs.

The study team collected data from a number of sources to assess the current state of the officer skill designator MOSs and associated management problems. Primary sources were literature and directives related to the programs, interviews with key program personnel, and Marine Corps automated data systems.

The study team performed a literature search to locate pertinent articles and prior studies dealing with the programs under study. A number of items were located and were considered. Marine Corps and Department of Defense directives and publications related to the programs were also used. The bibliography, Appendix B, lists the documents used.

The study team conducted detailed, structured interviews with the coordinators of the three major programs.

- Major Patrick Carroll was the full-time IAOP Coordinator located in Unified Command and International Issues Branch (PLU), Strategy and Plans Division within the Plans, Policies, and Operations (PP&O) Department, HQMC. He provided a wealth of information on his program as well as additional electronic and published resources.

- Major Jorge Esparza, located in the Officer Assignments Branch (MMOA), Personnel Management Division, M&RA, is the SEP Monitor. His primary responsibility is the management of SEP and ADP, although he also has responsibilities associated with IAOP and AWP.

- Marine Corps Systems Command (MCSC) coordinates the AWP for ground-related acquisition professionals while the Marine Corps Detachment at Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division (NAWCAD), Patuxent River, MD, provides coordination for aviation-related acquisition professionals. There is no single coordinator for AWP, so the study team interviewed four individuals at MCSC and one at NAWCAD. The MCSC personnel are: Mr. Richard Bates, Assistant Commander, Programs; Mr. Mark Camporini, Business Manager, Workforce Development; Mr. John Klemm, Business Manager; and Ms. Angela Fields, Management Analyst. The individual interviewed at NAWCAD is Major Tom Post.

The study team also conducted informal interviews with members of promotion boards, a member of a command selection board, officer career counselors, personnel from Promotions Branch, M&RA, a number of MOS specialists, and officers holding the MOSs.

The primary numerical data sources were the Table of Manpower Requirements (T/MR) System and the Marine Corps Total Force System (MCTFS). Promotions Branch, M&RA provided additional data on officer promotion boards for the past 11 years. The T/MR System, owned by Total Force Structure Division, Marine Corps Combat Development Command (MCCDC), was used to obtain billet information from current Tables of Organization (T/Os). MCTFS data obtained through the Operational Data Store Enterprise (ODSE) extract and the Total Force Data Warehouse (TFDW), both owned by M&RA, provided information on officers who held the skill designator MOSs. M&RA also provided data on Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) graduates for the past 20 years. The study team also used Marine officer career data contained in the Marine Corps Commissioned Officer Accession Career (MCCOAC) database developed by Center for Naval Analyses (CNA) for M&RA. Data not available through official automated systems, such as number of applicants and selection rates for special programs, were obtained from officers responsible for the specific programs.

Using data from official automated systems, the study team determined how many officers held each skill designator MOS and how many billets for the MOSs are on current T/Os. Data on promotions to the grades of lieutenant colonel and colonel for the past 11 years were obtained from Promotions Branch, M&RA, and were used in promotion rate analysis. In some cases, the data was incomplete or inaccurate, often due to automated system changes over time. For instance, MCTFS changes in 1999 caused the date of assignment for all skill designator MOSs held at that point to reflect 22 April 1999. Therefore, the study team had to rely on other sources, such as the NPS graduates list, to correct the data. Unfortunately, the billet information contained in MCTFS (MOS, T/O, and T/O line number) is incomplete and could not be used for analysis. The local commands are responsible for entering the information in these fields and many commands do not use them. The study team relied on the program coordinators and MOS specialists to provide an assessment of billet fill rates.

In order to address a number of significant issues regarding SEP, the study team developed and distributed an electronic survey to every SEP officer on active duty for whom a valid e-mail address could be located. Although the survey collected some objective data to validate data extracts from MCTFS and to provide factual data not available in MCTFS, the survey's primary

purpose was to collect subjective data regarding the program. Over 63% of the SEP officers on active duty returned the survey.

Based on the literature review, interviews, data analysis, and survey results (for SEP) the study team assessed the current condition of each of the three programs in a number of areas. The team developed a list of possible problems or opportunities for improvement and attempted to verify them and identify likely causes. Finally, the team developed recommendations to address the problems and improve the management of the programs.

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CHAPTER 3 RESULTS

3.1 CRITICAL MOS DETERMINATION

3.1.1 MOSs CONSIDERED

Based on the current MOS Manual (MCO P1200.7X), 155 skill designator MOSs are available for assignment to unrestricted officers. The MOSs are listed in Appendix E. Of the 155 MOSs, 66 were not considered by the study for the following reasons:

- MOSs 2711-2974. The 55 linguist MOSs did not exist when the study began. They were created to identify foreign language skills for both officers and enlisted personnel.

- MOS 2502 and MOS 4002. These MOSs are no longer being awarded and are retained as skill designators by officers previously holding these MOSs as PMOSs. Officers who previously held PMOS 2502 or PMOS 4002 have been reclassified with PMOS 0602, Command and Control Systems Officer.

- MOS 9973. This is a temporary skill designator to identify pilot and aircrew training during the introduction of the KC-130J aircraft. Specific officer PMOSs will be designated after sufficient aircraft fielding increases.

- MOSs 7527, 7551, 7552, 7553, 7554, 7559, 7592. These skill designators are used denote pilot qualification in specific aircraft variants and do not appear as primary billet MOSs.

- MOS 9905. This skill designator is assigned to officers who regularly perform duties of a highly specialized nature that are not covered by any other MOS. The assignment is only for the period the special duties are actually performed.

Two categories of MOSs were automatically included in the study based on the study nominations and subsequent decision to broaden the scope of the study. All SEP (96xx) MOSs, other than those that are no longer used, were included as a group because a specific focus of the study will be on the Special Education Program. All Foreign Area Officer (FAO) and Regional Affairs Officer (RAO) MOSs were also included because they were specifically requested in the original study nomination from PP&O.

The MOSs associated with the AWP were also added as a third major category due to the large number of billets in the program and the significant training investment in these officers.

The remaining skill designator MOSs fell into two categories; MOSs associated with a specific occupational field and identifying MOSs. The study team considered MOSs in these categories individually for inclusion in the study during the first study task.

3.1.2 Determination of Critical MOS Criteria

The objective of Task 1 was to determine the critical skill designator MOSs based on criteria developed in concert with personnel from M&RA. Thirteen criteria were identified as follows:

1. **Billet type.** Are the billets for this MOS predominantly excepted, priority or pro-share billets? A large number of excepted or priority billets increases the criticality of the MOS.

2. **Cost to train or educate.** What are the costs in terms of money and time to train or educate a Marine to obtain the MOS? Significant funding and/or lengthy time to train requirements increase the criticality of the MOS.

3. **Average grade level of billets for the MOS.** MOSs for which billets have a high average grade level require personnel who are from the more senior ranks where shortages in PMOS populations are more prevalent. It may also be more difficult to fill these billets due to competing career objectives and a reluctance to do an additional "payback" tour in a skill designator MOS. A high average billet grade level increases the criticality of the MOS.

4. **Billet fill rate.** Although billet fill rates vary over time, a historical fill rate for an MOS consistently below average may indicate management problems with the MOS.

5. **Qualifications to train or educate.** Many MOSs have prerequisite qualifications for the training or education required. If the prerequisites cannot be met by a majority of the officer population, as is the case for some of the technical SEP MOSs, it may be difficult to get an adequate number of qualified applicants to fill quotas for the MOS.

6. **Ratio of MOS population to billet requirement.** MOSs which have a low ratio of officers holding the MOS to the number of billets with that MOS require the officers with the MOS to fill billets for a longer period of time or return to the MOS for subsequent tours. This may lead to billet shortages.

7. **Career impact of MOS.** Some skill designators are perceived to have an adverse impact on the career of those who hold the MOS. In some cases, the perception may be true and in others, it may not. Even if it is not true, the perception may cause a shortage of candidates for the MOS.

8. **Perishability of skills.** The nature of some MOSs requires that personnel with that MOS work almost continuously in the field to maintain their skills. This may be due to the complex nature of the MOS or rapidly changing technology or practice in the field. This may preclude officers from doing subsequent tours in the MOS without significant retraining.

9. **Complexity of job functions.** Some MOSs have job functions that are so complex that an extended amount of time in the job in addition to training or education is required to master the functions and become fully productive. If an officer serves a single standard payback tour in the MOS, the Marine Corps may not be realizing the full benefits of their training and experience.

10. Alternate means available to perform the functions. If there is a shortage in an MOS and billets remain unfilled, there may be alternate means (often at significant cost or reduced effectiveness) to perform the functions of the billet. These may include civilian labor, contractor support, or assigning additional duties to other personnel. MOSs without alternate means available for most or all billets will be more critical.

11. Current management problems. If there are currently significant problems in managing the MOS, it may qualify as critical.

12. Required joint-fill billets. If the MOS has a large number of joint billets that must be filled by the Marine Corps, the MOS may be considered critical.

13. Percentage of second (or greater) payback tours. If the MOS has a large number of billets that require personnel who have already completed one or more payback tours, it may be difficult to fill the billets, making the MOS critical.

The fact that one or more of these criteria is true for a given MOS does not mean that the MOS is critical. The criteria only served as possible indicators that invited a closer examination of the MOS. They also helped to indicate areas of focus with the objective of improving the management of the MOS or increasing the benefit the Marine Corps receives from training or educating officers to obtain the MOS.

3.1.3 Application of Criteria to Individual MOSs

A member of the study team contacted the MOS specialist, when one could be located, for each MOS listed in Appendix E, other than the 66 MOSs eliminated from consideration. The MOS specialists were identified from the official list maintained by Total Force Structure Division. The purpose of the study was explained and a short questionnaire was completed on the MOS(s) for which that specialist was responsible. During the telephone survey, the listed MOS specialist for many of these MOSs denied knowledge of the MOS or responsibility for it. In other cases, the MOS specialist was aware of the MOS, but had little or no role in its management.

The results of the survey were recorded in a database and the study team examined each of the MOSs. Most of the MOSs that require significant attention on the part of the MOS specialist belonged to the three major categories—SEP, IAOP, or AWP. MOS specialists indicated that there were some minor problems with other MOSs including difficulty in obtaining sufficient school quotas, difficulty in finding volunteers to obtain the MOS, and T/O billets exceeding officers with MOS. The study team concluded that these problems did not rise to the level of the SEP, IAOP, and AWP MOS issues. Therefore, these MOSs were not deemed critical for the purposes of the study and were not pursued further. For completeness, Appendix F lists the MOSs for which the MOS specialist cited a problem and a brief summary of the problem.

3.1.4 Task 1 Observations

As part of the review process for the skill designator MOSs, the study team extracted information on each MOS and the number of active duty officers holding that MOS from the official Marine Corps systems. The personnel data were extracted from the MCTFS during March 2002. The T/O data were extracted from the T/MR System. It was based on official T/Os as of February

2002. A review of these data revealed some inconsistencies between MOSs held by officers and billet MOSs on the T/Os. These inconsistencies are noted below.

The following MOSs have no billets identified on current T/Os and no active duty officers holding the MOS in MCTFS:

Historical Officer, MOS 4330
Aeronautical Engineer, MOS 6005
Landing Signal Officer, MOS 7593
Joint Specialty Officer Nominee, MOS 9701
Special Services Officer, MOS 9913
Regional Affairs Officer – Peoples Republic of China, MOS 9823. (This MOS exists as a recommended MOS for billets on an unofficial list maintained by the IAOP Coordinator)
Vertical Takeoff Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (VTUAV) Officer, MOS 9974.
Information Computer Security Specialist (Officer), MOS 9975.
Helicopter Officer, AN-1Z/UH-1Y, MOS 9976.

No regular officer T/O billets exist for the following MOSs, although officers hold the MOS in MCTFS:

MOS Title	MOS Code	Officers with MOS	Note
Landing Signal Officer Trainee	7590	23	
Pilot VMAW	7592	10	
Leadership Development Specialist	9603	6	1
Master of International Law	9683	16	2
Master of Environmental Law	9684	16	2
Master of Labor Law	9685	5	2
Master of Procurement Law	9686	3	2
Master of Criminal Law	9687	19	2
Regional Affairs Officer – Latin America	9821	3	3
Regional Affairs Officer – Former Soviet Union	9822	4	3
Regional Affairs Officer – Middle East/N. Africa	9824	9	3
Regional Affairs Officer – Sub-Saharan Africa	9825	4	3
Regional Affairs Officer – Southwest Asia	9826	4	3
Regional Affairs Officer – Western Europe	9827	11	3
Regional Affairs Officer – Eastern Asia	9828	14	3
Regional Affairs Officer – Eastern Europe	9829	10	3
Special Technical Operations (Officer)	9935	1	
Substance Abuse Control Officer	9936	3	
Combatant Diver Qualified (Officer)	9952	50	
Tactical Data Systems Specialist (Officer)	9981	1	

Note 1: According to the sponsor, this MOS is supposed to be on company officer billets at the United States Naval Academy (USNA). It is a relatively new MOS.
Note 2: It appears that all billets for Masters of Law officers are on T/Os under Master of Law (General), MOS 9688.

Note 3: These MOSs do exist as recommended MOSs for specific billets on an unofficial list maintained by the IAOP Coordinator.

No active duty officers hold the following MOSs in MCTFS, although billets exist for the MOSs on current T/Os:

Civil Affairs Officer, MOS 0503. Regular Officer T/O Billets – 13.
Chemical Engineer, MOS 9622. Regular Officer T/O Billets – 1 (Supplemental).

As noted above, the designated MOS specialist for some of these MOSs had no knowledge of the MOS. Although it was not within the scope of this study to address these MOSs further, they should be reviewed to determine if they are still required.

3.2 INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS OFFICER PROGRAM

3.2.1 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

3.2.1.1 Purpose

The International Affairs Officer Program (IAOP) was established to provide a pool of well-trained and experienced international specialists to serve the Marine Corps in positions involving political-military affairs. The goal of the program is to identify, select, and train a corps of officers for future assignments to high-level Marine Corps, joint, or combined staffs in operations, planning, or intelligence billets; and for duty with the Defense Attaché System. The program is also mandated by the Department of Defense (DoD).

3.2.1.2 Directive/Sponsor

Marine Corps Order (MCO) 1520.11E dated 21 December 2000 governs the IAOP. The Deputy Commandant, PP&O, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, is the program sponsor. The Unified Command and International Issues Branch (PLU), Strategy and Plans Division, PP&O Department, provides oversight for the program. An officer in that branch fills the billet of IAOP Coordinator as a full-time duty.

3.2.1.3 FAO/RAO

The IAOP consists of two types of officers, FAOs and RAOs, which are further categorized by their geographical region of expertise. The primary difference between a FAO and RAO is that the FAO has language proficiency in at least one language (other than English) spoken within the region of expertise. The officers within this program fill a variety of billets including defense attachés, plans officers on joint and Marine Forces (MARFOR) staffs, liaison officers on Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) staffs, and regional desk officers at PP&O. Officers who participate in the program retain their PMOS; therefore, FAO/RAO tours are interspersed with PMOS tours.

3.2.1.4 Study and Experience Tracks

Officers become part of the IAOP by one of two tracks: study or experience. Study-track officers are trained at Marine Corps expense in all aspects of their assigned geographical region. The study-track FAOs are also provided language training in a strategically significant language within their geographical region. Experience-track officers demonstrate by education and

experience obtained apart from the IAOP that they have extensive knowledge of a geographical region, preferably including military service in that region. In addition, experience-track FAOs must demonstrate proficiency in at least one major language used within their geographic region.

Both study-track and experience-track officers are selected by board action. The study-track board is a formal board meeting annually (normally in July) to select officers to enter training the following year. Applications for the study tracks are solicited by MCBul 1520 and are issued by a Marine Corps Administrative (MARADMIN) message. By agreement between PP&O, M&RA, and the Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC), the maximum number of study-track selections per year is 10 for FAO and 8 for RAO. These limits were not determined by billet requirements, but rather by what the Marine Corps could "afford" (in terms of officers being taken out of their primary occupational fields for training as well as other considerations). Generally, the board receives enough qualified applicants to select alternates in case any of the primary selectees decline their selection. The experience-track board is an informal board held within PP&O (PLU) on a quarterly basis. Applications for the experience track are accepted at any time. Since the experience track does not require training, there is no restriction on the number of officers selected.

3.2.1.5 Olmsted Scholarship Program

The Olmsted Scholarship Program is a separate, but related, program that is an excellent source of officers for the IAOP. Officers selected for this program perform 2 years of graduate study at a foreign university. Foreign language training is provided, if required. Upon completion of the scholarship program, the officer is normally qualified for a FAO designation. The same formal board that selects study-track officers selects Olmsted scholars. Further information on the Olmsted Scholarship Program is in MCO 1500.41A.

3.2.1.6 FAO Training

The academic portion of the training for FAO study-track officers is normally provided by NPS, Monterey, and results in a master's degree in Regional Security Studies (awarded upon successful completion of language certification). This is followed by language training at the Defense Language Institute (DLI), Monterey, or at DLI East, Washington, DC. Upon successful completion of academic and language training, most officers will spend 1 year of in-country training (ICT) within their geographical region. During this year, they receive advanced language training and gain first-hand experience in the region.

3.2.1.7 RAO Training

The RAO study track officers also attend NPS and take the same curriculum as the FAOs with the added requirement of a thesis, unless the officer can demonstrate foreign language proficiency. They also receive a master's degree in Regional Security Studies. RAOs do not receive language or ICT. In addition, officers designated as FAOs (normally experience track) who have not earned a master's degree and have completed a FAO utilization tour are eligible to apply for the RAO study-track program.

3.2.1.8 Military Occupational Specialties

In the past, officers were awarded the SEP MOS 9676, International Affairs Officer, upon graduation from NPS and a FAO MOS (994x) specific to their region upon completion of

language training. Following the creation of the RAO program in 1997, the Marine Corps decided in 2001 to cease granting MOS 9676 at the completion of NPS studies. Study-track RAOs are awarded an MOS in the 982x series upon completion of their degree. Study-track FAOs are awarded a Basic FAO MOS (9940) upon commencement of academic training and a regional FAO MOS (994x) upon completion of ICT. Experience-track RAOs are awarded their RAO MOS upon selection by the board. Experience-track FAOs may be awarded a regional FAO MOS directly upon selection by the board or a Basic FAO MOS if they possess the requisite language skills but require additional regional experience to become fully qualified. The MOS codes associated with the IAOP are defined in MCO P1200.7X, MOS Manual. The awarding of the FAO MOS along with qualifying Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT) scores entitles the officer to receive foreign language proficiency pay (FLPP). Foreign language training is governed by MCO 1550.4D, Management of the Defense Foreign Language Program, a joint regulation used by all Services.

3.2.1.9 Utilization Tours

Utilization tours are required for all study-track IAOP officers and are 3 years in length. For RAOs, this tour is normally performed immediately after graduation from NPS. Due to the length of academic, language, and in-country training for FAOs, their utilization tour may be postponed to allow officers to serve an intervening PMOS tour after completion of training. FAOs are encouraged to serve this intervening tour in the operating forces in a command operationally oriented to the FAO's area of expertise. Since the total length of FAO training, an intervening PMOS tour, and a utilization tour can exceed 9 years, study-track FAOs are selected by their 11th year of service, and preferably with 3 to 6 years of service. Study-track RAOs are generally selected after achieving field grade rank with 9 to 15 years of service. Utilization tours are not required for experience-track officers, although these officers are encouraged to seek billets that utilize their regional expertise. They also must be available for assignment to an IAOP billet when not serving in their PMOS, based on the needs of the Marine Corps. Additional utilization tours, while not required, are encouraged, interspersed with PMOS tours. In reality, few study-track officers have the opportunity to fit additional tours into their career path prior to retirement. IAOP officers are encouraged to seek PMOS or staff billets that, although not formally designated as IAOP billets, utilize the officer's regional area expertise.

3.2.1.10 IAOP Billets

There is no formal procedure to document billet duties that require the assignment of an IAOP officer. Utilization tour billets for IAOP officers are listed in a spreadsheet maintained by the IAOP Coordinator. Current T/Os list 54 chargeable regular officer IAOP billets, 48 FAO and 6 RAO. There are also 4 reserve IAOP billets and 14 contingency billets. Seven other billets (plus three contingency billets) have a FAO MOS as an additional billet MOS. However, a large number of billets (approximately 160) do not reflect a FAO or RAO MOS in the official system and are identified as IAOP billets only by inclusion in the IAOP Coordinator's spreadsheet. The reasons for this will be discussed later. Because the IAOP billets are not all identified by billet MOS, the assignment of IAOP officers to utilization billets requires close coordination between the IAOP Coordinator and the primary officer monitors within Officer Assignments Branch (MMOA), M&RA.

3.2.2 PROGRAM ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.2.2.1 Overall Assessment

The current IAOP is working well, satisfying the Marine Corps requirement for officers with foreign area expertise at a reasonable cost. The study nomination related to the IAOP specifically addressed concerns about possible negative promotion and retention trends within the community. No other problems were identified in the nomination. Since the study nomination was incorporated into this broader scope study, the study team did not limit the investigation to promotion and retention, but looked at the overall program in an attempt to identify other problems or areas for improvement. Primary sources included the Marine Corps directives related to the program, a detailed interview with the IAOP Coordinator, review of official Marine Corps T/Os and personnel files, and other material provided to the team, including two master's papers on the program written by students at the Marine Corps Command and Staff College (Kaczmar, 1996 and Peters, 1997) and a paper by a student in the Senior Seminar, U.S. State Department (Lake, 2001). The team's assessment and recommendations in several program areas follow.

3.2.3 PROGRAM SPONSORSHIP/MANAGEMENT

3.2.3.1 Assessment

This area is a major strength of the IAOP. The program has an identified sponsor (PP&O) that is also a strong advocate for the program. The CMC issued a personal All Marine message (ALMAR 015/99) in May 1999 expressing the critical nature of the program and its tremendous contribution to warfighting capabilities. The IAOP Coordinator's billet in PP&O (PLU) is a full-time billet with the resources necessary to effectively manage the program. The governing directive is recent and current. The IAOP Coordinator interviewed by the study team (who recently transferred out of the billet) did an effective job of communicating with IAOP officers through a number of means, including a regular Marine Corps FAO Notes column in the FAO Journal. He coordinated closely with both Total Force Structure Division regarding billets and with MMOA regarding officer assignments to ensure that billets were appropriately designated and filled. Experience-track boards were held on a regular basis and added a large number of officers to the program. The coordinator maintains a detailed list of officers in the program, with a history of their qualifications and assignments. This is critical to management of the program, since the required information is not adequately maintained or is difficult to retrieve from official Marine Corps systems. Formal study-track boards generally attracted a sufficient number of qualified candidates to fill all quotas, with few shortfalls. Most of the management problems identified in Major Kaczmar's 1996 paper and Major Peters' 1997 paper have since been resolved and a number of their recommendations are now implemented (many of which were in the process of being implemented when the papers were written).

3.2.3.2 Recommendations

The study team has no specific recommendations in this area other than to continue the excellent efforts that have been made over the past few years. Much credit is due to the program sponsor and the IAOP Coordinator for improvements in the management of the program and its reputation has been enhanced as a result. The sponsor should continue to seek positive publicity

and support for the program, including endorsement by the current CMC similar to that given by the former CMC in ALMAR 015/99.

3.2.4 MEETING MARINE CORPS REQUIREMENTS

3.2.4.1 Assessment

Based on the interview with the IAOP Coordinator and lack of any evidence to the contrary, it appears that the IAOP is satisfactorily meeting Marine Corps requirements for foreign area expertise. The primary difficulty with the assessment is that there is no formal system for documenting specific billet requirements for this expertise. Some billets fall under the DoD FAO mandate, such as defense attachés, and have clearly defined requirements. However, these billets constitute only a small portion of the billets included on the IAOP Coordinator's list of billets. Colonel Richard Lake wrote a paper for the Senior Seminar, U.S. State Department, which made some pertinent comments regarding identification of requirements for foreign area expertise in the Marine Corps (Lake, 2001). Although his paper was focused on the Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) community, he stressed the importance of foreign area expertise and specifically foreign language capability. He observed that current budget-centered requirements process makes it extremely difficult to identify hard requirements in this area because "there are so many places Marines may be committed and so many missions they may be assigned, it is difficult to quantify what area, language, and cultural expertise is required." (Lake, 2001, p.19) Colonel Lake argues that language, cultural, and area expertise should be considered general competencies for all Marines, comparable to the requirement to make every Marine a rifleman, rather than being tied only to specific billets. Later in his paper, Colonel Lake specifically addresses the FAO program and lauds HQMC for beginning to add FAO/RAO MOSs to a number of billets.

As noted earlier, there are currently 54 chargeable officer billets with a FAO or RAO MOS as the primary billet MOS. Seven additional chargeable billets have a FAO MOS as an additional billet MOS. All but 7 of the 61 billets are on supporting establishment T/Os. However, the IAOP billet list maintained by the IAOP Coordinator contains over 160 additional billets for which FAO or RAO designation is desirable. When the study team asked the IAOP Coordinator why these billets were not formally identified with the FAO or RAO MOS, he stated that the formal designation of the additional billets would create two problems. First, if an IAOP officer was not available to fill a hard billet requirement, that billet would go unfilled, whereas coding the billet as MOS 9910, or another non-specific officer MOS, would at least make it more likely that the billet would be filled. Second, the assignment of FAO/RAO MOSs to the billets would generate additional training requirements that would adversely impact P2T2, cost, or other areas. In reality, these additional training requirements may not actually be necessary due to the existence of the experience-track officers who could fill the requirement without training. However, because the number and availability of experience-track officers cannot be reliably predicted, the system would generate study-track training requirements for all coded billets. While this process appears to be working adequately, it requires the use of an unofficial, informal system to track billets and close and constant coordination between the IAOP Coordinator and manpower assignment personnel to ensure that requirements are met. In addition, in the attempt to avoid generating excessive training requirements, the current approach provides virtually no assistance

in generating training requirements at all, to the point where the annual study-track quotas were set arbitrarily at their current levels.

Another issue regarding IAOP billets is the identification of the billets for which the expertise is required. Currently there is no formal requirement documentation process as there is for SEP billets. Other than DoD-mandated FAO billets, the subject area experts in PP&O determine appropriate billets through T/O review and knowledge of the mission and functions of the associated commands and organizations. The establishment of the RAO program was an important step forward because it acknowledged that foreign area expertise is desirable for many billets that do not require foreign language proficiency. A more formalized procedure of requirements determination, including a requirement for commands to document specific requirements for their billets, would lend further credibility to the requirements and provide additional information useful in tailoring training to better meet requirements.

3.2.4.2 Recommendations

The study team recommends that a formal requirement documentation process be established for designating billets for inclusion in the IAOP similar to that used for the SEP. This process is documented in MCO 5311.1C, Total Force Structure Process (TFSP) and involves preparation of a standard requirements document called the Billet Education Evaluation Certificate (BEEC) for SEP. This document could be easily tailored to reflect the requirements for IAOP billets to include education, language training, and geographical and cultural expertise and experience. A field should be added to the form to show the prior experience level required for the billet. The entries for the field would allow the submitter to indicate whether prior completion of an IAOP utilization tour is required or desired or if an officer who has just completed training is acceptable. The process should also include a periodic requirement revalidation to ensure that requirements have not changed. The validation process should be objective and thorough rather than just a “rubber stamp” of previous requirements. The commands owning the billets should be intimately involved in the requirements definition and validation process.

The study team also recommends that the program sponsor work with Total Force Structure Division (TFSD), M&RA Department, and Training and Education Command (TECOM) to determine how to formally identify IAOP requirements in T/Os without generating excessive training requirements. The sponsor has made tremendous progress in this area within the past 2 years, but the efforts should continue and be expanded to include the large number of billets still on the IAOP Coordinator’s informal list that are not identified in the official system. The existence of the two tracks into the program may complicate the process of determining study-track quotas, but the study team does not feel that the number and qualification of experience-track officers is entirely unpredictable. By an analysis of experience-track applications for the past few years, the team believes an estimate can be made regarding the requirements that could be satisfied by experience-track officers with the remaining requirements left to study-track officers. This would remove the need to use arbitrarily established study-track quotas.

3.2.5 IAOP SELECTION PROCESS

3.2.5.1 Assessment

As noted earlier, officers become part of the IAOP through either the study-track or experience-track. An annual formal selection board conducted by MMOA selects the study-track officers. Applications are solicited by MARADMIN message, the most recent being MARADMIN 095/02 of 19 February 2002. The total number of quotas is currently fixed at 10 FAOs and 8 RAOs per year. The specific regional areas to be assigned each year are determined by PP&O based on anticipated requirements. Applicants may request consideration for specific program(s) and region(s). Both the solicitation and selection processes appear to be working well, although the IAOP Coordinator said that they would like to see more applicants, particularly for the less popular regions. Ideally, they would have enough high-quality applicants to select an alternate for every region for both FAO and RAO. This would reduce the risk of a lost quota if a selectee declines selection (which happens once or twice each year). There are fewer applicants for the RAO program than the FAO program, possibly because the RAO program is new, is looking for officers with more seniority, and does not offer language training (the study team did not attempt to determine the actual reasons).

The experience-track option has been attracting an increasing number of officers. This is partially due to the addition of the RAO opportunities, but FAO applications have also been increasing. The increase in FAOs may be at least partly attributed to an increase in FLPP that began in 2000. (Lake, 2001, p.38) Also, the release of ALMAR 015/99, in which CMC strongly endorsed the program, may have encouraged more officers to apply. The proactive efforts of the IAOP Coordinator may also have contributed to increased program visibility and interest. The potential for assignment to key staff billets, often overseas, is another inducement for many officers. The informal boards conducted quarterly by PP&O to select qualified officers based on experience seem to be working very well. Generally, a number of IAOP officers within PP&O are well qualified to assess the qualifications of the applicants.

In spite of the success of current efforts, there is room for improvement. The Marine Corps Officer Development Handbook (maintained on the Manpower Web site by M&RA) information on the program is out of date, citing the former IAOP Coordinator and the old directive. Additional opportunities to publicize the program are also not being exploited as much as possible.

3.2.5.2 Recommendations

The study team recommends that the current selection process for both study-track and experience-track officers be continued. The procedures for the internal board held within PP&O for experience-track officers should be documented in writing in a standing operating procedure. This will standardize the process and ensure that it continues to operate when key personnel rotate.

Although the study-track board receives a fair number of applications, an increase in the number of applicants would allow the board to be more competitive and would allow the selection of more alternates so that quotas are not lost. The study team recommends that more publicity be given to the program, particularly when the solicitation MARADMIN is released. “Press

releases" should be sent to public affairs offices at all Marine commands with a request to disseminate the solicitation and MARADMIN number in base papers and via broadcast e-mail. A similar request should be sent to the *Marine Corps Gazette* and *Marine Corps Times*. The information in the Officer Development Handbook on the M&RA (MM) Web site should be updated to reflect current information about the program. The IAOP Coordinator may want to consider accompanying the Manpower road show team when they visit Marine Corps commands and talk to officers about career opportunities. Finally, the program should be briefed at General Officer Symposia and the Commanding Officers Course, encouraging the Corps senior leadership to recommend participation to high-quality Marine officers. The program sponsor should also ensure that the monitors and career counselors in MMOA are also fully apprised of the opportunities available and are prepared to give officers an honest assessment of participation relative to their career path.

3.2.6 TRAINING OF IAOP OFFICERS

3.2.6.1 Assessment

The study team did not examine the IAOP training in detail. The training regimen has been established over a period of many years and the officers and the commands that receive them appear to be satisfied with their training. The outgoing FAO Coordinator was in the billet for 3 years and received only a few minor complaints regarding the training during his tenure. FAO training consists of three phases: graduate school at NPS, language training at DLI, and ICT in the region of specialization. The training appears to be comparable to that of the U.S. Army, which has the most extensive and highly structured FAO program. However unlike the Army, which plans for a 10% attrition of officers throughout training, the Marine Corps rarely has an officer fail to complete the training. The most difficult portion is the language study. The few officers who have difficulty in this phase can receive extra time, complete language certification following ICT, or as a last resort, be moved to the RAO program (although this has never been necessary). RAO training consists only of the NPS curriculum with the requirement of a thesis if the officer does not have qualifying language certification. Marine officers have had no difficulty completing this curriculum. Although the current training appears to be adequate, if actual billet requirements were more specifically defined the content of the training could be reviewed to ensure that officers are receiving the training they require.

3.2.6.2 Recommendations

The current training regimen also appears to be working well for both FAO and RAO study-track officers. The study team recommends that the program sponsor actively participate in curriculum reviews at NPS for the Regional Security Studies curriculum. If more specific requirements are developed for IAOP billets, this information could be used to influence the curriculum at NPS to better meet Marine Corps requirements. The sponsor should also require all NPS graduates to provide a written assessment of their educational experience immediately following graduation and should encourage officers who are on or have completed their utilization tour to make recommendations on how their education could have better prepared them for their duties. For the RAO study-track students who must write a thesis as part of their studies, the program sponsor should take an active role in assisting the students in topic selection and thesis research.

In his paper, Major Peters recommends expanding the academic portion of the training to include the opportunity to attend civilian universities as well as NPS. (Peters, 1997) Given the fact that sending officers to NPS involves little direct monetary cost to the Marine Corps and the education received there appears to be sufficient, it would require a compelling argument to suggest that the Marine Corps consider civilian universities at a significantly higher cost. Since NPS is colocated with DLI, where most of the FAOs will undergo language training, moving costs are lower and families experience less turbulence. The study team did not find Major Peters' argument for civilian education compelling enough to recommend that the Marine Corps consider it in lieu of NPS.

3.2.7 UTILIZATION OF IAOP OFFICERS

3.2.7.1 Assessment

Study-track officers are obligated to serve at least one utilization tour. RAOs generally serve their tour immediately following their training while FAOs are allowed to serve an intervening PMOS tour due to the length of their training. According to the IAOP Coordinator, virtually all study-track officers do serve a utilization tour. The study team asked the IAOP Coordinator whether the gap between training and utilization for the FAOs caused the newly attained skills to atrophy. The coordinator said that it is the individual officer's responsibility to maintain language and regional expertise skill and he has received few complaints about skills degrading due to the gap. FAOs are encouraged to seek PMOS assignments for the intervening tour that provide opportunity to apply regional expertise and the assignment monitors cooperate when at all possible. The IAOP Coordinator told the study team that he receives few complaints from IAOP officers about their utilization tour experience. The few who complain generally say that their capabilities were not fully utilized during the tour. In fact, those are the only complaints he has received about the program.

Experience-track officers are not required to serve a utilization tour, but a review of historical records provided by the IAOP Coordinator revealed that many have served in IAOP billets or related billets. Because the records did not indicate whether the tour preceded or was subsequent to the application for the FAO or RAO MOS, the study team could not determine how many of the officers received the designation as a result of the tour and how many actually served a utilization tour following their designation. Although they can be compelled to serve a utilization tour as a condition of receiving the FAO/RAO designation, the IAOP Coordinator indicated that almost all experience-track officers voluntarily serve in the billets and many actively seek them. These officers often consider possession of the FAO/RAO MOS as a ticket to highly desirable staff positions in headquarters, joint, or combined commands.

Actual assignment of personnel to IAOP billets is done by the officer's primary monitor. The IAOP Coordinator works closely with the monitors to make appropriate assignments. Because many of the IAOP billets are not officially identified in the system with an IAOP MOS, this one-to-one coordination is essential in making the assignment process work. The outgoing IAOP Coordinator stated that he had excellent working relationships with the monitors and found them cooperative. While this procedure has worked well recently, the study team is concerned that the possibility of a less proactive IAOP Coordinator or less cooperative monitor(s) in the future may create problems getting the right officers in the right billets.

Having officers serve subsequent utilization tours can be very beneficial to the Marine Corps. These officers require little or no additional training, thereby precluding the need to train a new officer, and they bring to the billet operational experience from earlier tours. However, the Marine Corps has not specifically identified any IAOP billets as requiring an officer who has already completed one utilization tour and they do not depend heavily on officers serving additional utilization tours in order to fill billet requirements. As noted earlier, although subsequent tours may not be in official IAOP billets, officers are encouraged to seek assignment to commands that have operational responsibility within their region of expertise. Assignment personnel are generally sensitive to this and accommodate the officer when possible. Unlike the Army, which has a significant number of FAO billets at the colonel level, most of the Marine Corps billets, such as defense attaché, that would be desirable as second tours are at the grade of major or lieutenant colonel. By the time most officers are available for a second tour they may be too senior for these billets. There are a few colonel and general officer billets on the list of billets for which FAO/RAO experience is desirable, but assignment to these billets is not normally contingent on the officer having the FAO/RAO designation.

3.2.7.2 Recommendations

Based on the situation in the past, as described by Majors Kaczmar (Kaczmar, 1996) and Peters (Peters, 1997), the utilization of IAOP officers has improved dramatically over the past 5 years. The study team concluded that much of this improvement is due to the assignment of a full-time IAOP Coordinator who works closely with the assignment monitors to ensure that the right officers are placed in the right billets. The current effort to identify IAOP billets and maintain an up-to-date database of IAOP officers greatly facilitates this process.

Implementation of the recommendations regarding the identification of requirements and formal designation of IAOP billets will also assist in the proper utilization of IAOP officers. Once the requirements are formally defined and documented, it will be easier to ensure that officers are properly trained for the billets to which they will be assigned and that the right officers are assigned to the billets. This may also reduce the level of personal coordination and manual intervention required between the IAOP Coordinator and the monitors since the official system will acknowledge that the requirements exist. It will also allow IAOP officers to identify those billets for which they might be eligible without having to rely on an unofficial list maintained by the IAOP Coordinator. While formal designation of more IAOP billets may reduce some of the flexibility currently enjoyed by the IAOP Coordinator in recommending assignments, it would help ensure that the assignment process would continue to work if, in the future, the working relationship between the coordinator and the monitors is not as cooperative.

One of Major Peter's recommendations was to give the IAOP Coordinator the authority to assign IAOP officers (Peters, 1997, p. 73), essentially making the coordinator the IAOP Monitor for IAOP officers much as the SEP Monitor is for SEP officers. The study team strongly recommends against this. As discussed in the SEP portion of this study, that arrangement creates many more problems than it solves and would almost certainly create an environment where the IAOP Coordinator and the primary monitors would compete rather than cooperate. The close coordination should continue, with more formalization of policies and procedures so that the cooperation is not personality dependent.

The study team recommends that projected utilization tours be identified for study-track IAOP officers as early as possible in their training. This may be more difficult for FAOs than RAOs due to the gap between training and utilization tour. RAOs, in particular, would benefit from knowing their potential assignment prior to selecting a thesis topic. They may be able to do research that could be of significant benefit in their utilization billet and choose course electives better suited to the billet.

The study team also recommends that efforts be expanded to assign experience-track officers to utilization tours and study-track officers to subsequent utilization tours. This would significantly increase the return-on-investment to the Marine Corps and potentially reduce training requirements (and thereby P2T2). For those serving subsequent tours, the Marine Corps would also benefit by having officers with operational experience in more billets. As recommended above, as requirements are documented for individual billets, a determination should be made regarding whether the billet should or must be filled by an officer who has completed a previous utilization tour. Billet requirements should also state whether a study-track officer is required (as there may be some that require the graduate degree). Increasing the utilization of these officers may make the assignment process more complex and priority in assignments must be given to study-track officers to ensure that they complete at least one utilization tour, but over time procedures could be developed to more effectively and efficiently manage the personnel assignments.

3.2.8 Career Impact of IAOP Participation

3.2.8.1 Assessment

This area specifically addressed the concerns raised in the study nomination regarding promotion and retention of IAOP officers. The significant amount of training time, particularly for FAOs, and the likelihood of serving in a utilization billet outside the officer's PMOS can present career path challenges for study-track officers. There is no indication that simply participating in the IAOP is considered detrimental to an officer's career. Assuming that the opinions of the senior Marine Corps leaders are in line with the CMC's views expressed in ALMAR 015/99, participation in the program is viewed very positively. However, study-track officers may find themselves in competition for promotion and command opportunities with fellow officers who have more time in their PMOS and/or operating force billets because they followed a more "traditional" career path that did not take them away as often or for as long a period. For this reason, the IAOP order and the solicitation MARADMIN clearly convey the importance of career timing in applying for the program and state that the selection board will consider career patterns during the selection process. Applicants are advised to apply while serving in an operating force tour and after achieving PMOS credibility. When consulted, monitors and career counselors in M&RA provide the same advice. If timed properly, the training and utilization tour can substitute for B-billets that an officer would serve outside his PMOS anyway. Depending on when they attend training, study-track officers will generally be precluded from attending resident professional military education (PME) at either company-grade or field-grade level. In the past, this may have been detrimental, but current policy and practice consider resident and non-resident PME equivalent for promotion and other purposes. IAOP participants are

responsible, as are all officers, for completing PME at all levels via resident or non-resident means.

With regard to promotion, the study team used the data available to compare the promotion rates of IAOP officers to the general population for the ranks of lieutenant colonel and colonel for the past 11 years. Every effort was made to identify all officers who were considered for promotion during that period and were designated as "international affairs officers." This included all officers who had a FAO MOS (994x) in their record, officers who had the International Affairs SEP MOS (9676), and those with the more recent RAO MOSs (982x). Changes in the official manpower data system in 1999 made it difficult to determine when the MOSs were first awarded, but use of historical data files allowed the study team to determine approximate dates for almost all officers. Unfortunately, the data available were not complete enough to determine whether many officers obtained the IAOP designation via the study track or experience track. This distinction would be useful since experience-track officers do not lose career time to training and may not have even served in an IAOP billet. Even if the distinction were possible, the study team was concerned that the relatively small number of officers who participated in the study track would make it difficult to arrive at supportable conclusions regarding promotion differences. The study team also did not attempt to control for differences in officers due to other factors such as PMOS or when training or utilization tours took place relative to consideration for promotion. This analysis was not possible due to lack of time and sufficient data and would also have produced numbers too small to draw meaningful conclusions. The study team's analysis showed that over the boards for FY1993 to FY2003, the selection rate of IAOP officers to both lieutenant colonel and colonel was marginally higher than that of the general population. Specifically, the in-zone selection rate of all officers to lieutenant colonel was 63.1% while the rate for those who had an IAOP designation when considered was 63.8%. For colonel, the in-zone selection rate for all officers was 45.2% compared to 51.7% for IAOP officers. The figures that follow show the results by board year.

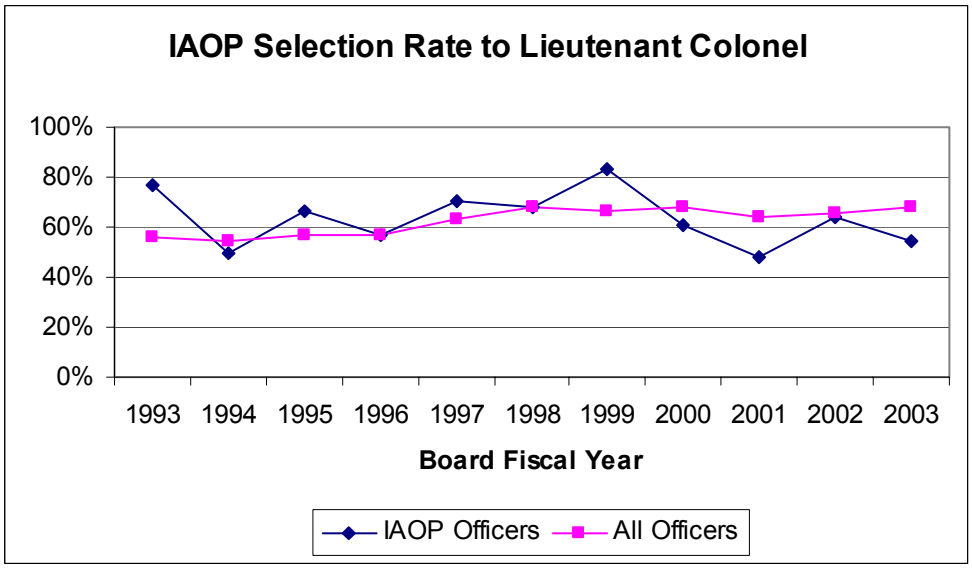


Figure 3-1: IAOP Selection Rate to Lieutenant Colonel by Board Year

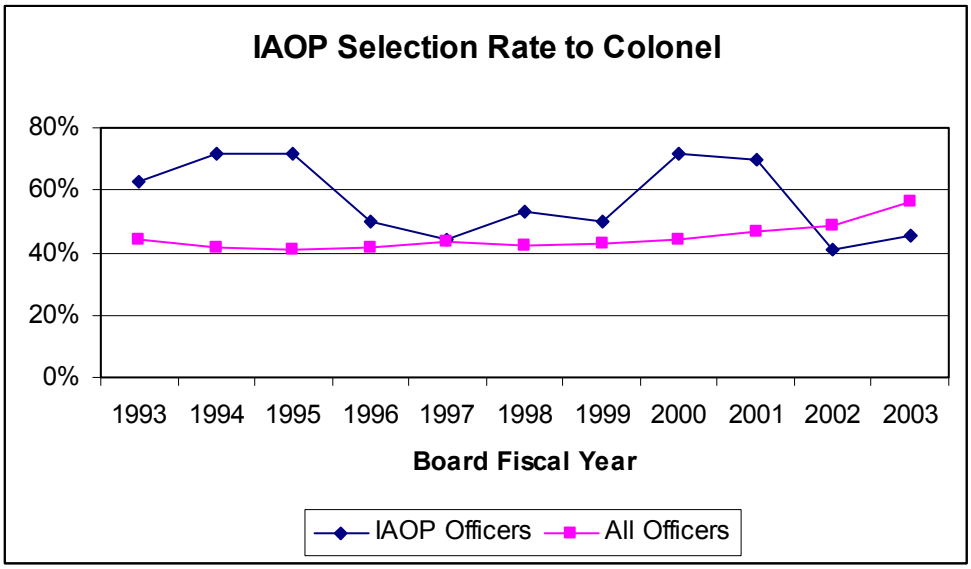


Figure 3-2: IAOP Selection Rate to Colonel by Board Year

The results by board year suggest that the promotion rates should be monitored closely as the rates for IAOP officers have dropped below the general population for 3 of the last 4 years for lieutenant colonel and the past 2 years for colonel. Due to the small number of IAOP officers in zone each year, particularly for colonel, this may not indicate that a problem is developing, but further analysis is warranted.

The study nomination also expressed concern regarding the retention of IAOP officers. This concern was echoed by the IAOP Coordinator who stated that while most officers who participate in the study-track program stay until retirement, many retire shortly after becoming retirement eligible, depriving the Marine Corps of valuable experience. Retention is a difficult area to assess. An officer's decision to remain in the Marine Corps until retirement eligible or to postpone retirement past the eligibility point depends on many factors. Study-track officers incur obligated service that often takes them to a point in their career where departure prior to retirement is rare. Therefore, when compared to the general population, these officers will have a much higher retention rate. Officers who receive their designation through the experience track incur no additional obligation, although their initiative in applying for the program often indicates a career focus. For these reasons, the study team did not attempt to compare retention rates prior to retirement eligibility.

The study team did compare average years of service at retirement for IAOP officers and for all regular officers from 1988 through 2002 (to 1 August 2002) to determine whether IAOP officers retire earlier. The comparison was done for the retirement grades of major, lieutenant colonel, and colonel. These were the only grades with enough IAOP retirees to allow valid comparison. Comparisons at the grade of major must take into consideration the fact that many of these officers are forced to retire when they do. Majors who fail twice to be selected for lieutenant colonel are generally forced to retire when first eligible. Based on the promotion rates cited above, this situation may apply to over 35% of all IAOP officers as well as the general population. Retirement point decisions are normally not imposed on lieutenant colonels and

colonels, although there are service limits for both grades. Therefore, a comparison of average years of service at the time of retirement for these grades is more meaningful.

Table 3-1, Comparison of Retirement Point for IAOP Officers to General Population

	Average years of service at retirement		
Grade at Retirement	General Population	IAOP Officers	Difference
Major	21.56	21.15	0.41 years
Lieutenant Colonel	23.64	23.44	0.20 years
Colonel	28.43	27.92	0.51 years

For all three grades, the average years of service at retirement was marginally lower for IAOP officers, but the maximum difference was only 0.51 years for colonel, a difference of less than 2%. For lieutenant colonel, the grade of greatest concern, the average for IAOP officers was only 0.2 years less, or less than 1%. Therefore, the study team concluded that, overall, IAOP officers do not retire significantly earlier than other officers do. As distressing as it may be to lose experienced IAOP officers, it does not appear that participation in the program means that IAOP officers retire earlier than their peers do.

The study team planned to compare the command screening/selection rates of IAOP participants with the general population, but the Marine Corps has not maintained sufficient data on command screening to make this analysis possible. Anecdotally, the study team was told that participation in the study-track program, particularly if the training and utilization tour consume a significant portion of the officer's time-in-grade as a major, could be detrimental to command screening because the officer's peers would be filling key billets in their PMOS and the operating forces during that time. An interview with a member of the most recent lieutenant colonel command screening board confirms that, at least on that board, PMOS time in the operating forces as a major was almost essential for command selection. He stressed the importance of timing in the decision to participate in programs such as SEP and IAOP, particularly for aviators who have limited opportunity to fill billets that are critical to their career development. He specifically mentioned the wisdom of serving a PMOS tour between school and utilization tour and said that officers who did so were generally more competitive.

3.2.8.2 Recommendations

Since the IAOP is a voluntary program, the officers who choose to participate must accept the career implications associated with participation. On the other hand, the Marine Corps has a vested interest in providing incentives for high quality officers to volunteer for the IAOP. The study team believes that the program sponsor, through the IAOP order, and M&RA personnel (monitors and career counselors) are providing the career planning information that officers need to make an informed choice. The study team recommends that the Officer Development Handbook on the M&RA Web site be updated to provide the same information.

As noted above, participation in IAOP will generally preclude attendance at resident PME at either company-grade or field-grade level. As noted by Major Kaczmar, this may have had an adverse career impact in the past, but current policy and practice consider completion of non-resident PME to be equivalent to attendance at the resident course. Interviews with members of

recent lieutenant colonel promotion boards and the lieutenant colonel command screening board indicate that this is indeed true; it is critical that all officers complete the PME for their grade, but it does not matter whether it is resident or non-resident. The study team recommends that those advising applicants for the IAOP continue to stress the importance of completing the non-resident PME appropriate for their grade.

Although the historical promotion rates for IAOP officers are comparable to other officers, some officers argue that that is not good enough. They argue that the fact that the IAOP participants are board-selected means that they have already been determined to be more competitive than many of their peers and their success in the program should be reflected in a promotion rate higher than the average. Therefore, the fact that they are being promoted at the same rate as the general population indicates that participation in IAOP has an adverse impact on one's career. This is very difficult to support or refute statistically. The prerequisites for the IAOP allow virtually any unrestricted officer to apply and the criteria for selection are different from those used for promotion. Some officers chose to participate at a point in their career that reduces their PMOS credibility. An officer may make this choice without being aware of the consequences or out of personal desire with full knowledge of the consequences. Others may derive such enjoyment and satisfaction in serving in IAOP billets that they seek continuous assignment to such billets in spite of detriment to their career. Therefore, the study team's only recommendation relative to promotion is that the Marine Corps take steps to ensure that IAOP participants are given fair consideration for promotion and due credit for their performance in IAOP billets. The Marine Corps can help ensure this by continuing to stress the importance of the program and the valuable contributions of the IAOP officers to the senior leaders who serve on the promotion boards. M&RA should also ensure that at least one member of each senior (lieutenant colonel and above) promotion and command selection board has an IAOP background.

The only study team recommendation relative to command screening, other than having an IAOP officer on the board, is that officers who aspire to command at the higher levels be advised to consider the potential impact of IAOP participation on their opportunity for selection. If they do choose to participate in the study-track program, they should do so as early as possible in their career so that they will still have the opportunity to serve in the operating forces in their PMOS as a major.

Outstanding performance in all assigned billets remains as the most important factor in selection for promotion and command. It is important that an officer's high level of performance be recognized in the official performance evaluation system. Many of the IAOP billets are in joint or combined commands or in diplomatic positions where the officer's immediate senior may not be a Marine. In these cases, the Marine Corps should make every effort to ensure that the reviewing officer for such officers is a Marine officer. The reviewing officer in such cases should make substantive comments that place the officer's performance in a context that will carry weight with the selection board. Selection board members interviewed by the study team indicated that this is critical in order to provide the board a true picture of the officer's performance.

3.2.9 OTHER PROGRAM ASPECTS

3.2.9.1 Assessment

During the review of personnel records for IAOP officers, the study team noted a significant number of reservists who are IAOP qualified. Some of these officers may have received their designation while on active duty and then resigned and joined the Marine Corps Reserve. Others may have received their designation while reservists through application via the experience track (reserve officers may apply for the experience track, but not the study track). There are a limited number of reserve (4) and contingency (17) billets carrying IAOP MOSs on current T/Os. It seems reasonable that many more reserve billets would benefit from designation as IAOP billets and would allow reservists with IAOP qualification to provide valuable support to the Marine Corps both in peacetime and during mobilization. The IAOP Coordinator is not directly involved with the Reserve and when reservists ask about billets, he refers them to the Civil Affairs Groups and Marine Liaison Elements (which have international affairs related missions and utilize reservists). This appears to be a largely untapped resource with significant potential benefits to the Marine Corps if exploited.

Foreign language skill identification, training, and utilization for Marine Corps personnel is broader than the IAOP, but is critical to the FAO portion of the program. The study team did not examine this aspect of the program in detail, but did review the Foreign Language Proficiency Pay directive and other information sources on the subject. The most thorough treatment of the subject found was Colonel Lake's paper (Lake, 2001). He points out a number of deficiencies in the area of foreign language identification and training in the Marine Corps that the study team did not attempt to verify.

3.2.9.2 Recommendations

The study team believes that officers associated with the Marine Corps Reserve constitute a tremendous untapped resource. The study team recommends that the program sponsor exploit this resource. The first step would be to assign an officer to develop a plan and coordinate its execution. The T/O for PP&O (PLU) contains Reserve individual mobilization augmentee (IMA) billets. An individual assigned to one of these billets would be an excellent choice for this assignment. Similar to the effort underway for regular billets, Reserve billets should be examined to identify those that would benefit from the assignment of an IAOP officer. T/Os should be then be modified to document the requirements. Applications for the experience-track should be actively solicited from Reserve officers, as many may not realize that the program exists or that they are allowed to apply. IAOP officers who choose to leave active duty should be encouraged to stay in the Reserve and seek assignment to IMA or other Reserve billets with IAOP MOSs. The knowledge of which Reserve officers have international affairs education and experience can be invaluable in a time of national crisis.

The study team has no specific recommendations pertaining to foreign language identification and training within the Marine Corps. In the context of the FAO program, it appears that the training is fully adequate. The study team recommends that the problems and recommendations in Colonel Lake's paper (Lake, 2001) be considered and action taken where it will improve the situation. With the identification of an entire new series of linguist MOSs (2711-2794) in the latest MOS Manual, MCO P1200.7X, it appears that this area is already receiving attention.

3.3 SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM/ADVANCED DEGREE PROGRAM

3.3.1 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

3.3.1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the SEP and Advanced Degree Program (ADP) is to provide qualified officers to fill over 300 Marine Corps officer billets that have a validated requirement for officers with postgraduate education. Although the programs are separate, graduates of both programs are considered SEP officers and fill SEP billet requirements based on their SEP MOS.

3.3.1.2 Directive/Sponsor

The SEP is governed by MCO 1520.9F. The ADP is governed by MCO 1560.19D. The Deputy Commandant, M&RA sponsors both programs. The MMOA within the Personnel Management Division, M&RA, administers the programs. The SEP Monitor is a full-time officer billet in MMOA-3 with management responsibilities for the programs. The orders set forth the policies and procedures governing the programs and provide background information and guidance for the submission of applications. The orders do not address the procedures related to the establishment and maintenance of SEP billets on unit tables of organization (T/Os) or the assignment of SEP MOS specialists. Those functions are addressed by MCO 5311.1C, TFSP. The MOS codes associated with SEP and ADP are defined in MCO P1200.7X, MOS Manual.

3.3.1.3 Program Disciplines, Differences, and Schools

The MOS Manual currently lists 32 SEP MOSs in the 96xx series, including 6 master's of law disciplines open only to judge advocate officers. The remaining 26 SEP MOSs are open to any unrestricted officer who meets the academic requirements. The MOSs are listed by title in Appendix E. The MOSs are available via the SEP, ADP, or both, as indicated in Table 3-2:

Table 3-2: Program Availability of SEP MOSs

SEP Only	ADP Only	SEP or ADP	SEP (Law)	Unused
9603	9602	9620	9683	9622
9625	9630	9624	9684	9632
9626	9674	9631	9685	
9634	9678	9640	9686	
9652	9680	9644	9687	
9656		9646	9688	
9657		9648		
9658		9650		
9666		9662		
		9670		

Two of the MOSs, while still valid, are currently unused. The principle difference between SEP and ADP, other than the disciplines offered, is that SEP participants attend a school designated by the Marine Corps with all tuition and fees paid by the Marine Corps and ADP participants attend a school of their choice (with a curriculum approved by the Marine Corps) and pay their

own tuition and fees. Most SEP participants attend NPS with a small number attending the Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT) and civilian universities. According to the SEP and ADP orders, the Marine Corps expects to fill approximately three-fourths of the annual postgraduate education quotas with SEP applicants and the remainder with ADP applicants. In reality, over the past 4 years, over 90% of the quotas have been filled by SEP applicants.

3.3.1.4 SEP MOS Management

An Occupational Field (OccFld) Manager and an MOS Specialist are assigned for each SEP MOS. The manager is an HQMC department or an organization at MCCDC that has the responsibility for the functional area supported by the SEP MOS. Many SEP MOSs are closely related to a primary OccFld. For example, MOS 9644, Financial Management Specialist, is related to OccFld 34, Financial Management. In such cases, the SEP MOS is assigned to the related OccFld Manager (for MOS 9644 it is Programs and Resources Department, HQMC). In other cases, the SEP MOS may not be related to a single OccFld. An example is MOS 9650, Operations Analyst. In those cases, the organization that makes primary use of the SEP officers is designated as the manager. For MOS 9650, the manager is Studies and Analysis Division, MCCDC.

The MOS Specialist is a designated officer within the manager's organization who is the point of contact for all matters related to the specific SEP MOS. Frequently that officer will hold the SEP MOS (or a related one), but that is not always the case, particularly if that officer is also responsible for the other MOSs within the occupational field. The MOS Specialist is the subject matter expert on the billet requirements and training/education requirements for the MOS and reviews all billet requests involving the MOS. The MOS Specialist is also responsible for ensuring that the academic curriculum for the MOS meets Marine Corps requirements. Therefore, the MOS Specialist represents the Marine Corps at curriculum reviews conducted by military graduate schools and approves curricula submitted by applicants for civilian universities. Other duties of the OccFld manager and MOS specialist are contained in the TFSP order, MCO 5311.1C.

3.3.1.5 Program Participant Selection

Officers are selected for SEP, SEP (Law), and ADP by formal boards conducted on an annual basis. All officers considered by the boards are voluntary applicants who choose the specific disciplines (up to four) they want to be considered for from the list provided in the solicitation message. All applicants undergo academic screening to determine if they are qualified. MMOA sends academic records for applicants for NPS and AFIT to the appropriate school for review. Officers applying for programs at civilian universities must submit their acceptance by the school with their application. The board does not consider applicants for any discipline for which they are not academically qualified. Solicitation of applications for the boards is by Marine Corps Bulletin (MCBul) 1560 distributed by MARADMIN messages. The SEP Board is held in October to select officers to attend school to following calendar year (CY) with a Supplemental SEP Board in February, if required. The SEP (Law) and ADP boards are held in April. The gap between the boards allows the quotas for the ADP board to be adjusted based on the results of the SEP board. Quotas for each board are established for each SEP MOS and are determined by MMOA based on projected SEP billet vacancies. The exception is the SEP (Law) board where

the quotas are based on available funding. See Appendix G for a summary of the current SEP selection process.

If the SEP board fails to fill all quotas, a supplemental board may be held. Supplemental SEP boards have been necessary for the past 6 years and one will be necessary for the CY2003 board. Even with the supplemental boards, the required quotas have not been filled in 5 of the past 6 years with an all-time low fill rate of only 79% on the CY2002 board. Table 3-3 shows the results by year.

Table 3-3: Results of SEP Selection Boards (including Supplemental Boards)

CY Board	Required SEP seats	Qualified Applicants	Selected	Fill percentage
1998	104	191	103	99%
1999	104	176	90	87%
2000	104	181	107	100%
2001	111	164	108	97%
2002	112	118	88	79%

3.3.1.6 Education

Officers selected for SEP and ADP attend graduate school fulltime, including summers. The courses of study take from 12 to 27 months depending on the curriculum and the school. Officers who complete the educational requirements for a given discipline receive the associated 96xx series SEP MOS as a skill designator MOS. Except for SEP (Law) officers, attainment of a master's degree is not required to receive the SEP MOS. Satisfactory completion of the course requirements is sufficient. Very rarely does a Marine officer fail to complete the academic program, although officers who are having academic difficulty are sometimes switched to less technical curricula. Most participants do complete their master's thesis (required in most curricula for the degree) and receive a master's degree.

3.3.1.7 Utilization Tour and Billets

SEP and ADP participants incur a 3 or 4 year service obligation, depending on the length of school, which begins at the completion of school. All officers who successfully complete the academic portion of the program are required to serve a utilization tour. This tour will be in a SEP billet with the officer's SEP MOS and, with rare exceptions, will be a 3-year tour. The utilization tour is normally served immediately following graduation, during the period of obligated service. Virtually all SEP utilization tours are served in the supporting establishment, with a large number at HQMC, MCCDC, and MCSC. The Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), the Joint Staff, and Unified Commands also have a number of SEP billets. The billets are staff billets in the grades of captain through lieutenant colonel, with the majority for majors. A few billets are coded with an additional required or desired MOS, which can complicate the assignment process. Many SEP billets, particularly those at MCSC, are also acquisition workforce program billets. Officers who attend NPS take acquisition courses to prepare them for these billets. In some cases, SEP billets within an organization are grouped together within one or more work sections, but many SEP billets are "one of a kind" within the work section. This may lead to a situation where the SEP officer works alongside other officers who are serving in

their PMOS. In some cases, the officer's immediate supervisor may be a civilian employee or an officer from a sister service.

3.3.1.8 SEP Billet Designation

Designation of a billet as a SEP billet is appropriate when a requirement is identified for a uniformed officer with postgraduate education to perform mission critical duties. The requirement must be documented and justified and the appropriate graduate education curriculum identified. This information is recorded on a standard form called the BEEC. A SEP MOS in one of the three billet MOS fields specifically identifies each SEP billet on unit T/Os. With few exceptions the SEP MOS is the primary billet MOS, thus facilitating the generation of staffing requirements.

According to the provisions of MCO 5311.1C, the creation of a new SEP billet or redesignation of an existing billet as a SEP billet requires the submission of a T/O Change Request (TOCR) along with a BEEC. Requests for changes involving SEP billets may be submitted by the command owning the billet or by the OccFld manager for the MOS. If the request is submitted by a command, the request is routed through the chain of command to the Total Force Structure Owner (TFSO) – the Commanding General, MCCDC. If the OccFld manager submits the request, it must be routed first to all affected commands for comments. Once at MCCDC, TFSD processes the TOCR. TFSD staffs the request (TOCR and BEEC) to the OccFld manager(s), if it did not originate there, and to CMC (MMOA) for comment and recommendation. Multiple OccFld managers may be involved if the request is to change an existing billet MOS (SEP or non-SEP) to or from a SEP MOS. Typically, the MOS specialist, representing the OccFld manager, will be concerned with the justification for the SEP MOS requirement and whether the requested curriculum can satisfy the requirement. MMOA is concerned with the ability to obtain additional qualified applicants for the MOS, the availability of school seats for additional requirements, the cost of training an additional officer (particularly if the requested school is not NPS), and the impact on P2T2. Comments and concurrence or non-concurrence by the OccFld manager and MMOA are returned to TFSD. The TFSO then approves or disapproves the BEEC. If the BEEC is approved, the TOCR will continue to be processed according to MCO 5311.1C.

MOS changes to existing billets are the most easily accommodated. Requirements for creation of new billets must compete with other uncompensated requirements before the billet can be created. Creating a new billet with a SEP MOS or changing an existing billet from a non-SEP to a SEP billet generates additional training requirements. Since school quotas are established based on the number of billets that exist at that time for each MOS, the SEP monitor may not be able to fill a new billet requirement for up to 3 years after approval, unless an officer is assigned to an additional utilization tour.

3.3.1.9 SEP Billet Validation

In order to ensure that the requirement for a SEP officer remains valid for designated SEP billets, a periodic revalidation is necessary. In the past, commands with SEP billets were required to renew the BEEC for each billet every 3 years. Current directives do not require this periodic renewal.

At a SEP Conference in February 2000, the need to validate all SEP billets became apparent. Therefore, in April 2000, CG, MCCDC (TFSD) and DC, M&RA (MMOA) jointly issued MARADMIN 214/00 requiring commanders to validate all BEECs and prioritize all SEP billets. Although there was no provision in the MARADMIN to identify new SEP requirements, some commands took the opportunity to do so and the result of the "validation" was a net gain in SEP billet requirements. At the M&RA Council of Colonels meeting held on 22 February 2001, the Council expressed concern regarding the requirement for an increasing number of officers in SEP during a period of constrained manpower resources. The Council called for a "top to bottom" review of SEP. It was clear that the recently concluded validation effort did not meet this requirement. A SEP Validation Working Group was formed and the billet validation plan was revised and briefed to the Council on 19 April 2001. The plan now had two phases. Phase I was the validation effort conducted the previous year, now called a "SEP billet/BEEC review." Phase II was to be a true billet validation effort with the responsibility for validation resting with the OccFld managers rather than the commands. The Phase II Effort is cochaired by MMOA and TFSD (Supporting Establishment).

Phase II of the validation process began on 26 April 2001. The first step was to create a common questionnaire to be used to validate billets. The questionnaire was to be administered by the OccFld managers to all billet incumbents in their assigned SEP MOSs and contained a written response portion as well as an interview portion. The preferred method of conducting the interviews was face-to-face, although the OccFld managers were allowed to do interviews by phone when necessary. The questionnaire addressed the specific tasks performed by the billet holder and asked the billet holder to submit actual work done that required the graduate education. It also addressed the possibility that other specialized training, short of a master's degree, could adequately prepare an officer to perform the duties. On 30 May 2001, the OccFld managers and MOS specialists were collectively briefed on Phase II and were presented copies of the questionnaire. On 19 July 2001, MARADMIN 335/01 was released providing details of Phase II, including a timeline for completion. By 1 September 2001, the OccFld managers were supposed to provide completed questionnaires and recommended SEP billet changes to MCCDC (TFSD). After consolidation of the results and presentation to the Council of Colonels, the Marine Requirements Oversight Council (MROC) would be briefed in November 2001 with the MROC decisions then implemented in the February 2002 troop list. This ambitious schedule was not maintained and the MMOA officer chairing the working group was transferred in June 2002 before all questionnaires were returned, leaving only a partial analysis of the results. M&RA recently assigned the SEP Monitor as the new action officer for the validation effort. No further progress has been made to date.

3.3.1.10 Assignment of Officers to SEP Billets

The Authorized Strength Report (ASR), generated from the T/Os, provides a total manning requirement by SEP MOS. Currently, there are 347 chargeable SEP billets on all T/Os, including 18 SEP (Law) billets. Not all SEP (Law) billets are filled with officers selected for SEP (Law) as the same MOSs may be earned by attendance at The Judge Advocate General's School, U.S. Army, in Charlottesville, VA. The current ASR total is 333 billets. The SEP Monitor in MMOA is responsible for assigning officers to SEP billets and controls the assignments of all SEP officers upon graduation from school. After a SEP officer has completed a utilization tour the SEP Monitor cannot assign the officer to another utilization tour unless the officer's primary

monitor agrees to the assignment. For this reason, and because the SEP school quotas are determined based on projected billet vacancies, most SEP billets are filled by officers who have just graduated from school. The SEP Monitor normally visits NPS each fall to discuss projected assignments with students. Orders are then issued approximately 3 months prior to graduation. If there are not enough graduates to fill the pending billet vacancies, the SEP Monitor solicits volunteers from SEP officers who have already completed a utilization tour. As noted earlier, even if the officer volunteers to fill the billet, the officer's primary monitor must approve the assignment. There is little incentive for primary monitors to release officers for additional utilization tours since the officer is then no longer available to fill other staffing requirements. If the SEP Monitor cannot fill all staffing goal requirements, the SEP MOS specialist for the MOS is normally consulted to determine which billet(s) to leave vacant. See Appendix G for a summary of the current SEP assignment process.

3.3.1.11 The Special Education Program (Law)

SEP (Law), although covered by the SEP directive, is a distinct program with a separate application and selection process as noted above. In addition, most staff judge advocate officers with a SEP (Law) MOS obtain the MOS through attendance at The Judge Advocate General's School rather than by participation in the formal SEP (Law). The study team spoke to the SEP Monitor and the legal occupational field specialist and they said that the only concern they currently have with the program is the limited number of quotas available. This is a funding issue and is beyond the scope of this study. For this reason, the analysis that follows excludes the SEP (Law) MOSs and the officers in the legal services occupational field.

3.3.2 Program Assessment And Recommendations

3.3.2.1 Overall Assessment

The SEP and ADP have served the Marine Corps well for over 50 years. Many highly successful officers, including the incoming Commandant of the Marine Corps, have participated in the program and have contributed significantly to the progress of the Marine Corps, particularly in the area of technology. In addition to the direct benefit of SEP officers filling specific SEP billets, the overall education level of the officer community has been increased. Numerous studies in both the civilian and military workplaces have shown that productivity and overall quality of work increases when leaders and managers have postgraduate education. However, after an extensive review, the study team concluded that the Marine Corps should be receiving much greater benefit from the programs based on the significant resources invested in them. The study team is also concerned that a downward trend in applicants over the past few years and widespread concerns regarding the adverse career impact of SEP participation could lead to a crisis situation if they are not dealt with soon. The study team compiled an extensive list of potential problem areas within the programs and attempted to verify the problems and their impacts through data analysis, interviews, and a survey of a significant portion of the active duty SEP population. Where it was determined that there was a reasonable basis for a problem, the team looked at possible causes and attempted to verify them. If a cause was found to be valid, the team addressed possible solutions. The assessments and recommendations that follow are a synthesis of the detailed problem analysis, which can be found in Appendix H. A summary of the SEP Survey results can be found in Appendix I.

3.3.3 PROGRAM SPONSORSHIP/MANAGEMENT

3.3.3.1 Assessment

There is no single sponsor for the SEP and ADP within the Marine Corps. Most of the responsibilities for the programs currently fall on the SEP Monitor located in MMOA. Each SEP MOS has an MOS manager, but the MOS managers are concerned only with their MOS(s) and requirements. Although SEP and ADP are education programs, TECOM does not exercise overall oversight and is involved only as a MOS manager for SEP MOS 9602 (Education Officer). The programs have historically had few management problems. There were sufficient applicants for school quotas and most SEP billets were filled. Prior to 1990 there did not appear to be significant concern about adverse career impact as the result of SEP participation. However, some recent trends within the programs have led to an examination of their management. SEP school quotas have risen while overall Marine Corps officer population has decreased. There have been shortfalls in the quotas filled by the SEP Boards the past few years requiring that supplemental boards be held. Even with the supplemental boards, not all quotas have been filled. There is a widespread perception in the officer community that SEP participation has an adverse career impact. With 170 to 190 officers in graduate school at any given time, the programs contribute significantly to P2T2 population, reducing the number of officer T/O billets filled. Finally, as evidenced by recent e-mail exchanges at the general officer level, the lack of a single sponsor leaves the Marine Corps at a disadvantage when graduate education matters are addressed at higher (Department of the Navy (DON) and DoD) levels.

3.3.3.2 Recommendations

The Commanding General, TECOM, should be designated as the sponsor for all graduate education programs within the Marine Corps and should have overall management responsibility for those programs. This recommendation is in line with TECOM's stated mission to "develop, coordinate, resource, execute, and evaluate training and education concepts, policies, plans and programs to ensure Marines are prepared to meet the challenges of present and future operating environments." The management responsibilities should include, but not be limited to:

- Establishing policy and publishing directives for the programs;
- Representing the Marine Corps in graduate education matters at higher levels;
- Coordinating the identification and validation of requirements for graduate education coded billets;
- Soliciting high-quality applicants for the programs; assisting MMOA in the conduct of the selection boards; coordinating with graduate education institutions to ensure that Marine Corps requirements are met by the curricula offered;
- Overseeing the utilization of SEP officers to ensure they are filling billets that require their skills;
- Monitoring the success of SEP participants in their careers to ensure that participation does not adversely impact their careers; and
- Educating the senior Marine Corps leadership on the value and contributions of SEP officers.

These responsibilities will require close coordination with the SEP MOS managers for issues related to specific MOSs; MCCDC (TFSD) for billet requirements; M&RA (MMOA) for

selection, assignment, and career impact issues; and the SEP-officer community as the best promoter of the programs among peers and juniors. A full-time SEP Coordinator billet should be established within TECOM and should be filled with an officer from the SEP community (possibly an officer with SEP MOS 9602 on an additional utilization tour). The dramatic improvement in the IAOP following the assignment of a full-time coordinator supports this recommendation. If an additional billet cannot be created, the transfer of the current SEP Monitor billet from MMOA to TECOM should be considered, as many of the responsibilities of that billet would shift to TECOM. The recommendations that follow would shift most of the remaining SEP Monitor responsibilities to other personnel in MMOA.

3.3.4 MEETING MARINE CORPS REQUIREMENTS

3.3.4.1 Assessment

The Marine Corps requirement for postgraduate-educated officers is reflected in SEP billets. These billet requirements are supported by BEECs. The current process to create or modify, review, and approve individual BEECs is described in the program description. That process is primarily reactive and does not provide an overall review of Marine Corps requirements. In addition, although the process of routing and reviewing requirements is well defined, there are no criteria for insuring that the requested solution (i.e., creation of a billet requiring a postgraduate degree) is the best solution. Based on SEP/ADP survey results, many SEP billets may not require officers with postgraduate education. These billets could be filled by an officer with specific PMOS skills or by an officer with specialized training short of a postgraduate degree. Over 28% of survey respondents said that a graduate education was unnecessary or just helpful (but not required) to perform the duties of their utilization billet.

Because of the significant investment in the education of SEP officers and the potential value of their utilization to the Marine Corps, the proper identification and validation of legitimate billet requirements is critical. TFSD and M&RA are the principal organizations involved in the review and approval process. The MOS specialist advises them for the MOS(s) involved. TFSD is concerned primarily with structure issues and the completeness of the BEEC rather than the specific billet requirements. They assume that the appropriate signatures on the BEEC validate the requirement. MMOA is concerned primarily with the impact on their ability to fill SEP school quotas and SEP billets (as well as the P2T2 impact). TECOM is currently not directly involved in the validation process, other than acting as MOS manager for MOS 9602. The MOS specialist, who may not have a SEP background, is responsible for certifying that the stated requirement for graduate education is valid.

As noted in the program description, at one time there was a requirement for BEECs to be renewed every 3 years by the command owning the billet. Based on observations of the study team and others involved with SEP over an extended period of time, the triennial reviews, when accomplished, were often a “paper drill” that consisted of obtaining the current BEEC, checking to make sure the T/O number and billet line number were correct, and updating the signature and date. Rarely was an effort made to perform a thorough, objective assessment of the continued need for graduate education and it was left to the OccFld manager or MOS specialists to do so if they desired.

The Marine Corps recently recognized that the historical requirement validation and process for periodic BEEC review were inadequate. The validation effort that began in April 2000 is a start in the right direction, but it suffers from a couple shortcomings. The effort is being cochaired by MCCDC (TFSD) and M&RA (MMOA). The MOS managers are responsible for validating the education requirement and they have not all conducted a thorough and objective review. The study team reviewed partial results from the current validation effort and found that they reflected a varying degree of effort by SEP MOS managers to identify the true billet requirements. One MOS manager conducted face-to-face interviews with every current billet holder and provided significant recommendations for modifications to current requirements, including the removal of SEP designation for some billets and the use of alternate training means for others. Other MOS managers returned incomplete questionnaires or failed to return them at all.

Based on input received in the first phase of the validation effort, there appeared to be legitimate requirements for additional SEP billets (primarily due to the introduction of advanced technology in the Marine Corps) that are not currently met due to reluctance to increase the total number of SEP billets. Phase 2 of the validation effort does not specifically allow for the identification of new requirements, although some MOS managers took the opportunity to do so. The requirement for a new SEP billet directly impacts P2T2 since the assumption is made that virtually all SEP billets will be filled with officers who have just completed their training. The normal pattern for a SEP officer is approximately 2 years of school followed by a single 3-year utilization tour. Thus, one and two-thirds officers in the inventory are required to keep each SEP billet filled. Normally, the implementation of a billet MOS change must be delayed for 3 years in order to adjust school quotas, select an additional officer for the SEP MOS associated with the new billet, and wait for the officer to complete training. Also, MMOA is very reluctant to concur with requests that will increase the billet requirements for SEP MOSs that have experienced a shortage of qualified applicants in the past.

Some SEP billets either require or would benefit from an officer who has already completed one or more utilization tours. This may be due to the difficulty of the work involved (requiring experience as well as education), the seniority of the billet grade, or the requirement to supervise other SEP officers or equivalent level civilians. There is currently no direct means to indicate such a requirement on the BEEC.

3.3.4.2 Recommendations

As noted above, the SEP billet validation effort is currently stalled and the input received to date has been of varying quality. Also, the effort does not specifically address the possible existence of new requirements that may be more critical than existing requirements. The validation effort should be placed under the direction of TECOM and should be restarted. All input should be objectively reviewed with regard to justification of the education requirements of the billets and alternate training should be considered where appropriate.

Commands and MOS managers should also be allowed to identify new requirements and should prioritize their requirements. The current BEEC should be modified to require specific examples of the billet duties that require the graduate education. A field should be added to the BEEC to

indicate whether an officer who has already completed a utilization tour is required in the billet. This field should allow one of three entries: not required, desired, or required. The justification on the BEEC should also indicate why a uniformed officer is required to perform the billet duties that require the graduate education.

A periodic review requirement for SEP billets should be restored. Instead of conducting reviews on a fixed time cycle, the BEECs should be reviewed whenever an incumbent leaves the billet. All SEP billet holders should be required to complete a billet assessment at the conclusion of their utilization tour providing specific information on the relevancy of the graduate education requirement to the billet duties. This information should be provided sooner if the billet holder feels that the billet duties are significantly out of line with the BEEC and/or education received. This information should be provided to the MOS manager with a copy to the SEP Coordinator at TECOM. This assessment would provide the basis for the billet review and revalidation.

3.3.5 Program Selection and Participation

3.3.5.1 Assessment

The selection process for SEP participants was adequate for many years, but has had problems in recent years. Supplemental SEP boards have been required the past 6 years (and one will be required in 2003) in an effort to fill required quotas. Even with the supplemental boards, not all quotas were filled in 5 of the 6 years. In addition to producing a shortfall in the number of SEP officers, this situation also means that the board cannot be very selective in accepting applicants for hard-to-fill MOSs. This can lead to a reduction in the overall quality of the selectees. The situation is actually worse than the overall number of applicants indicates. For CY 1999 a new curriculum was added to SEP that consists of 1 year of study at the Naval Academy followed by a 2-year utilization tour as a company officer at the Academy. This curriculum has advantages over other SEP curricula since it entails only 3 years away from an officer's PMOS, requires no specific academic background, and has highly-regarded utilization billets that do not require an additional move. A large number of applicants apply for this MOS and many specify it as their only MOS choice. These applicants inflate the overall applicant numbers while competing for only three quotas.

Currently the only form of solicitation for SEP and ADP applicants is a MARADMIN message released by the SEP monitor providing the curricula for which applicants are sought and the deadline for submission. The message refers applicants to the SEP and ADP directives for additional information. Coincident with the release of the MARADMIN, the SEP monitor generally notifies the public affairs offices at major Marine Corps installations and requests that they publicize the opportunity. Information about the programs is also included in the Officer Development Handbook on the M&RA Web site, but the information on that site has not been kept up to date.

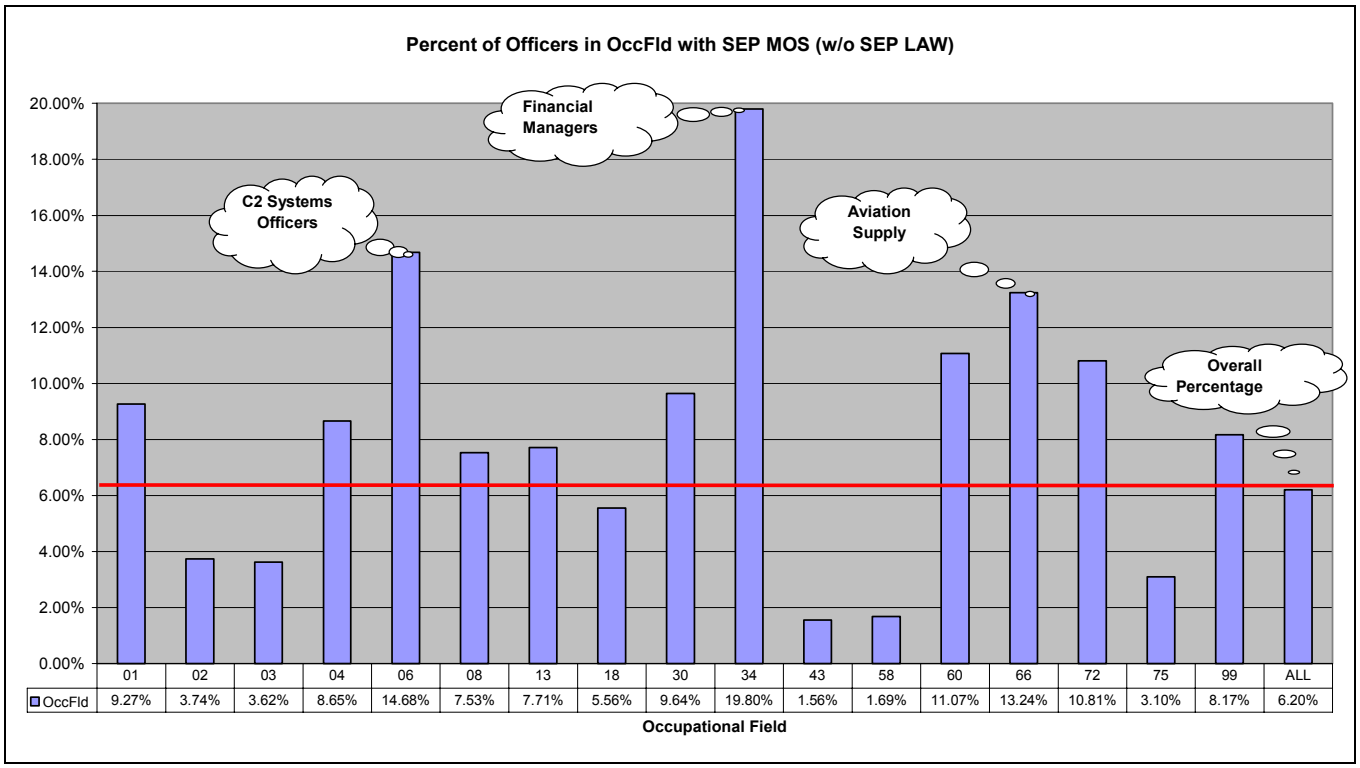
The SEP selection process is challenging for a number of reasons. First, all SEP applicants must be academically qualified for each MOS for which they desire consideration. The academic screening process eliminates many applicants, often for the hard-to-fill MOSs. Some of the current academic prerequisites may be too strict in view of the fact that Marines infrequently struggle academically at school (those who do are not usually dropped, but are merely shifted to

a less rigorous curriculum). Second, applicants must be selected to fill a specific number of quotas for each SEP MOS. Therefore, if the board selects the highest overall quality applicants without regard to their MOS choices, unnecessary shortfalls in some MOSs may result. Applicants are allowed to select a maximum of four MOS choices. The study team could find no reasonable explanation for this restriction other than limiting the necessary academic screening. Finally, MMOA has recently limited the number of applicants from specific PMOSs that the SEP board is allowed to select due to shortages in the population of those MOSs. This restriction has been in place for 3 years for MOS 0602 and 1 year for MOS 0202 causing the loss of 4 quota fills on the CY2002 board and 3 on the CY2003 board. The complexity of this selection process required the development of a computer model to ensure that the maximum number of possible quota fills is known and achieved by the board. This model has proven useful the past 2 years, but cannot make up for a shortage of applicants.

Quota fills may also be lost when some selectees decline their selection for the program. While rare in the past, the SEP monitor indicated that this is occurring more frequently in recent years. If the individual was selected on the initial board, the supplemental board may be able to fill the quota, but rejections by supplemental board selectees normally result in lost quotas. The ideal situation would be to select alternates who could take the place of selectees who decline, but the current shortage of applicants makes this impossible for many MOSs.

The study team can give no conclusive reasons for the shortage of applicants, but several reasons appear likely. Survey results indicated a trend in the advice given to prospective applicants toward fewer positive and more negative recommendations from those most often consulted (senior officers) and the career counselors (who the SEP and ADP directives recommend applicants consult). This may be related to the widespread concern over the possible adverse career impact of SEP participation. Unfortunately, a small applicant pool generally results in reduced quality among the applicants. This in turn will be eventually reflected in reduced promotion rates for program participants, further fueling the concerns regarding career impact. Unless the trend is reversed soon, a downward spiral may result. Analysis by the study team revealed a significant reduction in the past 8 years in the average years of commissioned service an officer has when first considered for promotion to lieutenant colonel. This makes it increasingly difficult to devote 5 years of a career to SEP while completing all the other training and duty assignments related to the officer's PMOS.

Participation in SEP and ADP is not consistent across occupational fields. Currently 6.2% of all unrestricted officers (excluding judge advocates) hold a SEP MOS. Percentages by occupational field range from less than 2% to nearly 20% as shown in Figure 3-3.



	01	02	03	04	06	08	13	18	30	34	43	58	60	66	72	75	99	ALL
OccFld	9.27%	3.74%	3.62%	8.65%	14.68%	7.53%	7.71%	5.56%	9.64%	19.80%	1.56%	1.69%	11.07%	13.24%	10.81%	3.10%	8.17%	6.20%

Figure 3-3: SEP Participation by Occupational Field

Unfortunately, many of the fields with a high level of participation in SEP are also underpopulated in the grades of major and lieutenant colonel. This is a problem since SEP participants are unavailable to fill billets in their PMOS for approximately 5 years while attending school and serving their utilization tour and most SEP officers are majors during a significant portion of this time. On the other hand, occupational fields (primarily combat arms) that are overpopulated in the field grade ranks have lower participation rates.

From the Marine Corps perspective, the most desirable candidates for SEP are officers in historically overpopulated MOSs who have PMOS credibility and operational experience that can be combined with their postgraduate education to bring value to their utilization tour billets. These officers generally must serve tours out of their PMOS anyway and some even use their SEP education and experience to laterally move to critically short MOSs later in their career. They make it possible to fill SEP quotas without placing an undue burden on under-populated PMOSs. Unfortunately, the number of applicants from the overpopulated MOSs has been decreasing, particularly for the more technical, hard-to-fill MOSs. Some have attributed this situation to a belief that officers on promotion boards do not look favorably on officers who stray too far from the traditional career path for their MOS. Recently, General Michael Williams, former Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, declared, “senior officers tend to encourage subordinates to follow their same career paths and favor these officers on promotion boards.” (Branigan, 2002) This mindset can lead senior officers to discourage SEP participation among their subordinates and to view SEP participation as less valuable than other career choices when serving on promotion boards. Survey results lend support to this explanation as the cumulative proportion of respondents who said that senior officers positively recommended SEP participation steadily declined from 1990 to the present as shown in Figure 3-4.

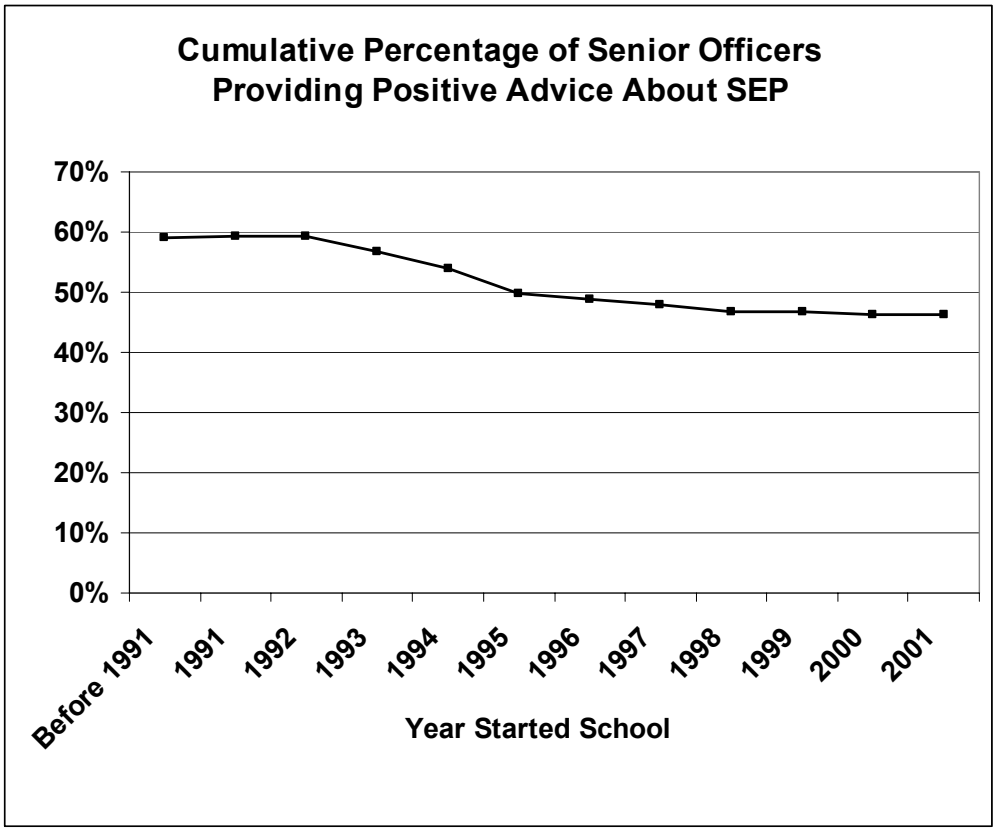


Figure 3-4: Cumulative Percentage of Senior Officers Providing Positive Advice about SEP Participation

In three occupational fields, officers hold SEP MOSs at more than twice the overall percentage. The fields and their participation rates are: Financial Management (19.8%), Command and Control Systems (14.7%), and Aviation Supply (13.2%). All three of these fields are critically short of officers at the grade of major and short or critically short at the grade of lieutenant colonel. The study team investigated two of these fields in an attempt to determine why the participation level is so high and what options are available to mitigate the impact on PMOS staffing. Aviation supply was not investigated due to the small population in that field.

Officers in the financial management field (PMOS 3402) initially serve in one of two functional areas, disbursing or comptroller, with each area receiving about one-half of the entry-level officers. Most of the senior billets in the field, however, are on the comptroller side. According to the MOS specialist for this field, many officers on the disbursing side view SEP participation as a path to the comptroller area. The MOS specialist also claims that the high proportion of prior-enlisted officers in the financial management field contributes to the high level of interest in SEP. According to him, many of these officers intend to obtain their master's degree, fulfill their obligation, and then retire (often at the rank of major). In general, they are not as concerned about the possible adverse career impact of SEP participation as officers who have most of their career ahead of them. The MOS specialist recently sent e-mail to all majors and below in the field informing them that SEP participation was not necessary to become a comptroller and strongly cautioning them to consider the impact of participation on their career. Another reason for the high level of participation may be that several SEP disciplines are related to their field

and thus SEP can be viewed as advanced education in their PMOS. Approximately half of the SEP participants in this field obtain the closely related financial management SEP MOS (9644), while the others generally choose other management-related disciplines. Survey results support this conclusion as over 50% of MOS 3402 respondents cited their desire to obtain advanced education related to their MOS as a reason for applying, compared to less than 40% overall.

Officers with PMOS 0602, Command and Control Systems Officer (which resulted from a merger of MOSs 2502 and 4002), not only participate in SEP at a high rate, but they also contribute more officers to the program than any occupational field other than aviation (a field with five times the number of officers). Their contribution would undoubtedly be higher were it not for the fact that MMOA has restricted the number of SEP selectees from this MOS for the past 3 years. Officers from this MOS are technically oriented and thus tend to be academically qualified for and request the hard-to-fill technical MOSs. The high number of applicants from this MOS can be attributed to at least two factors. First, two of the SEP curricula (Computer Science and Information Technology Management) are closely related to their occupational field. Second, the significant role of technology involved in their occupational field requires advanced training to remain professionally qualified. Advanced training opportunities within the Marine Corps schools for this occupational field have been limited in the past, forcing these officers to seek the necessary training and education through off-duty education, SEP, and ADP. Although SEP provides the education these officers require, participation makes them unavailable to fill critical MOS 0602 billets for a period of 5 years. The recent Status of the Force 06XX Working Group, sponsored by M&RA, addressed this situation. That group recommended the establishment of alternate advanced training and postgraduate education opportunities for officers in the occupational field that would allow them to maintain required proficiency while continuing to serve in MOS 0602 billets. This would be accompanied by limits on the number of PMOS 0602 officers selected for SEP and ADP. Unfortunately, the only portion of the recommendation implemented to date is the SEP restriction, thereby providing fewer of these officers with advanced education while causing SEP quotas to remain unfilled due to a shortage of other qualified applicants.

Another potential source of officers to fill SEP billets that has not historically been tapped by the Marine Corps consists of officers who have obtained postgraduate degrees on their own, either prior to joining the Marine Corps or through off-duty education. A few of the officers contacted during the survey indicated that they had been granted a SEP MOS upon their request based on education obtained on their own. Some of these officers had served in SEP billets, while others had not. There is no effort within the Marine Corps to encourage officers with graduate degrees to apply for SEP MOSs or to assign them to SEP billets once the MOS has been granted. Marine Corps records indicate that there are currently over 2,600 officers with a master's degree or higher on active duty, of which only 545 have a SEP MOS. These numbers are probably low, as approximately one-third of officers with a SEP MOS do not have a postgraduate degree reflected in their records.

3.3.5.2 Recommendations

An increase in the number of applicants for SEP and ADP is essential if these programs are to remain healthy. The solution to this problem will require a coordinated effort on a number of

fronts. Once again, the programs need a strong sponsor to spearhead the effort and TECOM is the recommended sponsor. Accurate information about the programs must be widely disseminated, especially to junior officers. Support for the programs must come from the most senior levels within the Marine Corps and senior officers must encourage their best subordinates to consider the programs. Current perceptions regarding the potentially adverse career impact of participation in the programs must be addressed. Where the perceptions are valid, corrective action should be taken. Where perceptions are invalid, they should be dispelled.

Increased support for the programs must start at the top. In 1999, the CMC personally issued an All Marine message (ALMAR 015/99) strongly endorsing the IAOP. In this message, he strongly encouraged officers to apply for the program and senior officers to recommend the program to their best officers. He also implied that promotion boards should favorably consider those officers who participate. The current (or incoming) CMC should issue a similar message regarding the SEP and ADP. In addition to senior officers, the sponsor and M&RA should encourage monitors and career counselors to recommend SEP when appropriate in an officer's career.

Concurrent with the release of the ALMAR, the sponsor should institute a widespread and on-going effort to make the officer community aware of the opportunities available through these programs. Many junior officers have no knowledge of the programs and many current participants told the study team that they would have applied sooner had they known about them. M&RA should immediately update the information in the Officer Development Handbook and keep it current. In addition to official Marine Corps channels, publicity should be sought in base newspapers and other publications (e.g., *Marine Corps Gazette, Marine Corps Times, Naval Institute Proceedings*, etc.) read by Marine officers. Survey results indicated that officers who have participated in SEP are overwhelmingly positive about the program and usually recommend it highly to others. The sponsor should employ this resource by sending a letter to SEP officers listing the positive changes being made to the programs and encouraging them to share this information with their peers and subordinates. Finally, the SEP Coordinator should consider accompanying the annual Manpower command visits ("Road Show") to promote the programs. This does not need to be done every year, but should be done once during the coordinator's tour of duty.

Dispelling misperceptions about the programs will be difficult. This study has attempted to separate fact from fiction in examining current perceptions. Monitors, career counselors, SEP MOS specialists, and others who advise officers on career options should present an objective assessment of the programs. Their advice on the timing of participation is particularly valuable. The information contained in this report should assist them in this effort. Implementation of many of the study recommendations related to career impact that follow should also have the side effect of making SEP participation more desirable.

The limitation of four MOS choices for each applicant is unnecessary and reduces the potential to fill quotas. An applicant should be allowed to apply for more MOSs or even "any MOS for which qualified." This would place a minimal additional burden on the selection process. The academic screening process at NPS (where most of the curricula are) merely consists of

computing an academic profile code for each student independent of the curricula and then comparing the code to a minimum value for each curriculum requested by the student.

Once the number of applicants has increased sufficiently, the SEP board should select alternates from qualified applicants for as many MOSs as possible. This will reduce the chance of a lost quota in the case a selectee declines selection.

One way to reduce the impact of an applicant shortage without increasing the number of applicants is to reduce the annual requirement for quotas to fill. The most obvious way to do this is to reduce the total number of SEP billets. The study team does not recommend that billets be reduced primarily for this purpose, but implementation of the recommendations above regarding billet validation may result in a net reduction of billets. Another way to reduce the requirement is to fill more SEP billets with officers who have already completed one utilization tour. This approach has a number of additional benefits that will be discussed below. Current assignment procedures actually discourage additional utilization tours. This problem and recommended solutions will also be discussed below.

Increasing the number of applicants from overpopulated and underrepresented occupational fields will be difficult. The support of senior Marine officers, as recommended above, would help, but until officers in these fields believe that participation in the programs will enhance (or at least not hurt) their careers, interest will likely remain low. Since the SEP curricula have little direct relationship with their PMOSs, SEP participation truly means 5 years "out of the field" for these officers. This problem and a recommended solution are discussed below. The Marine Corps benefits greatly when officers move laterally from overpopulated to underpopulated MOSs. As noted above, some officers participate in SEP with the express intent to request a lateral move to the associated occupational field following school. The Marine Corps should actively encourage officers in overpopulated fields to consider this career change, perhaps even "packaging" SEP participation with a pre-planned lateral move. The strongest candidates for such a move are officers with technical undergraduate degrees and they should be targeted for such a program. Promotion boards must consider the benefit derived from such officers and the value that their operational experience brings to their new occupational field and select them accordingly.

Occupational fields with high levels of participation in SEP present a challenge, particularly when the officers are most critically needed in PMOS billets at the same time they are in SEP. Limiting the number of officers allowed to participate in SEP when the number of applicants is already inadequate creates larger problems, particularly if officers denied the opportunity to participate choose to leave active duty in order to pursue their educational goals. A better solution would provide opportunities for these officers to realize their educational desires apart from SEP. Any attempt to reduce the number of officers accepted to the program from under-populated fields must be accompanied by an increase in the overall number of applicants in order to meet the SEP requirements or the requirements must be reduced.

For fields where the high level of interest in SEP appears to be related to obtaining advanced training in the officer's occupational field, as with MOS 0602, TECOM and the occupational field manager should investigate alternative means of providing the training. The study team

recommends that the proposals submitted by the Status of the Force 06XX Occupational Field Conference in March 2001 regarding the career progression training of MOS 0602 officers be implemented quickly. In addition, current SEP MOS 9646 and 9648 billets should be reviewed to determine if they would be better suited to an MOS 0602 officer who has received advanced training or education apart from SEP. This would reduce the SEP requirement and allow more of these officers to obtain the advanced training necessary while continuing to serve in their PMOS.

The situation in the financial management field is different because the MOS specialist insists that adequate training opportunities, apart from SEP, are available to meet the needs of the MOS. Officers within this field, particularly those on the disbursing side, should be given a clear career path to the senior grades, including necessary training and education to prepare them for more senior positions. The MOS specialist's observation that his field has a high proportion of prior-enlisted officers is correct. This is true of many other support fields as well. In addition, the SEP population from all fields has had a higher proportion of prior-enlisted officers compared to the general unrestricted officer population in recent years. These facts combine to produce severe shortages in officers available to fill senior billets in the PMOS since many of the prior-enlisted officers retire with few years in the field grade ranks and others spend the few years they do have as a field grade officer in SEP. If more prior-service officers cannot be persuaded to stay past retirement eligibility (a difficult proposition), the only solution is to reduce the opportunity for these officers to participate in SEP. This can be done by increasing the applicant pool so fewer of these officers are chosen, by reducing the number of SEP billets, or by reducing the number of SEP school quotas through greater use of officers on subsequent utilization tours. These options will be explored in greater detail in the cost-benefit section below.

The Marine Corps should implement an "experience track" option for obtaining a SEP MOS similar to that used to designate IAOP officers. Officers who currently hold postgraduate degrees obtained outside of SEP should be encouraged to apply for a SEP MOS in a related discipline. The appropriate MOS manager would review the curriculum and transcripts of each applicant and determine whether the SEP MOS should be awarded. Relevant work experience, both within and outside the Marine Corps, should also be considered as a factor. Officers who receive an MOS in this manner would be subject to assignment to a utilization tour, as required, but would not be guaranteed such an assignment. No additional service obligation would be associated with the MOS assignment. An argument could be made that officers who obtain their postgraduate education through tuition assistance and other government-funded programs should be required to receive a SEP MOS, if applicable. The study team recommends this be done only as a last resort, as a voluntary program would create fewer morale problems and should still accomplish the intended purpose. The initial incentive to participate in this program would be for officers to gain practical work experience in their chosen field of study while still on active duty. As the Marine Corps emphasizes the value and contributions of SEP officers, the reputation of the program should improve. Officers may then seek to fill SEP billets to enhance their professional career.

3.3.6 EDUCATION OF SEP OFFICERS

3.3.6.1 Assessment

Overall, the survey respondents indicated that the education received through SEP and ADP was outstanding. Over 90% of program participants attend NPS where most of the curricula are targeted toward Naval officers and, for some courses, specifically toward Marines. In spite of the overall satisfaction, officers in some MOSs indicated that the education they received was not sufficient and/or not applicable to their billet duties. Overall, 38% of survey respondents said that 50% or less of their SEP education was relevant to their utilization tour duties. Table 3-4 lists those MOSs where the percentage of respondents in this category was higher than the overall average (only MOSs with at least 5 respondents are included).

Table 3-4: SEP MOSs with higher than average low education relevancy responses

MOS	Total Respondents	% with low relevancy response
9634	9	56%
9640	27	56%
9658	21	52%
9646	45	51%
9666	8	50%
9644	39	49%
9624	31	48%

There are a number of reasons much of the education may be irrelevant and further comments on the surveys allowed the study team to identify many of them. In some cases, their SEP billet has the wrong MOS or does not require graduate education. This indicates an error in the requirement identification rather than a deficiency in the officer's education. In other cases, the student had a number of electives from which to choose and did not choose those most applicable to the utilization billet. In some cases, particularly the Contracting and Acquisition curricula, the respondents indicated that the instruction was targeted toward other Service procedures and was focused on higher levels than most officers deal with in Marine Corps billets. Finally, there were cases in which the officer felt that the education was appropriate for the billet duties, but either through misunderstanding or by choice, the officer's supervisor or command directed the officer to perform unrelated duties that did not utilize the education received. There was no indication from survey results or personal interaction with numerous SEP officers that the quality of the education and faculty was deficient.

Most, if not all, of the curricular offices at NPS conduct periodic curriculum reviews to evaluate the applicability and effectiveness of the individual curricula. Marine Corps MOS managers are invited to participate in these reviews and many do. However, participation is not mandated, nor is it consistent among all MOSs. In addition, the individual attending the review is not always the best-qualified person to speak for the Marine Corps. Particularly in those curricula with a large number of Marine students, the Marine Corps is able to influence the curriculum to better meet Marine Corps requirements. The Marine Corps should take better advantage of this opportunity.

Many of the curricula at NPS offer elective courses to students, particularly near the end of their studies. In addition, virtually all curricula require the student to do research and prepare a thesis

in order to receive a master's degree. The elective courses and thesis work are an excellent opportunity for students to focus their efforts in areas that will be most applicable to their utilization tour. The thesis research may even provide an opportunity to become familiar with, and begin work in, the specific area in which they will eventually work. In order to take full advantage of this opportunity, the students need to know their projected utilization tour assignments approximately 1 year prior to graduation. While this is not always possible, and projected assignments are subject to change, the current procedure of filling most SEP billets with graduating students facilitates it. The current SEP monitor is doing a good job of making projected assignments as early as possible and survey responses indicated a positive trend toward earlier notification. However, one-third of survey respondents who graduated within the last 4 years indicated that their elective choices and thesis topic choice would have been affected if they had known their projected assignment even earlier.

An issue related to education is the ability of the Marine students to successfully complete their assigned curricula. In this regard, the Marines have done extraordinarily well. The Marine Corps liaison officer at NPS could not recall the last time a Marine was dropped altogether from the school due to academic problems. Occasionally students will be transferred from a highly technical curriculum to a less technical one due to academic difficulties, but they still complete their studies. Not every Marine student completes a master's degree at NPS, even though they complete all their course studies. This is actually of little concern to the Marine Corps since completion of coursework is sufficient to be awarded the SEP MOS. Students who do not complete their thesis while at school are given a period in which to do so after leaving and many eventually complete it. Historically, Marine students have received academic awards at NPS above what would be expected based on their proportion of the population. This success may be due in large part to the fact that all Marine students are not only volunteers but also have taken the initiative to apply for the program, while students from other Services may receive involuntary orders to attend school.

3.3.6.2 Recommendations

The goal of the Marine Corps should be to have every SEP officer fully prepared to fulfill the duties of the utilization billet assigned. This requires that the requirements of the billet be properly identified and matched to the proper curriculum. The extent to which this is currently done depends primarily on the command owning the billet and the MOS manager. Survey results indicate that a small, but significant, number (9.2%) of respondents felt that their billet was coded with the wrong MOS while a number of others (10.4%) felt that graduate education was not required for the billet. The recommendations presented earlier regarding billet validation should help prevent these situations. One of those recommendations was that all SEP billet holders should be required to complete a billet assessment at the conclusion of their utilization tour. That assessment should include specific information on the relevancy of the education received to the billet duties and any additional education or training required for the billet. In addition to their value in validating billet requirements, the assessments can be used to ensure that the education that Marine officers receive is appropriate for the functions they must perform.

TECOM, as the SEP sponsor, should track the curriculum reviews at NPS (and AFIT, if appropriate) and require the MOS manager to send a qualified representative (preferably a graduate of the curriculum) to the review. A trip report should be prepared and provided to

TECOM and a formal Marine Corps response should be prepared and sent to the school, if necessary. This response may request modifications to the curriculum to better meet the needs of Marines, oppose proposed modifications that would reduce the value for Marines, or make recommendations for specific course requirements for Marine students. The end-of-utilization-tour reports recommended above would be invaluable in preparing for the curriculum reviews.

The efforts of the current SEP monitor to notify students of their projected utilization tour assignment as early as possible in their schooling should be formalized. Students should also be required to notify the receiving organization (ideally the current billet incumbent) of their projected assignment and seek advice from that organization. Survey responses indicate that the earlier students learn of their assignment, the greater impact it has on their elective and thesis choices. This in turn results in a greater percentage of their education being relevant to their billet duties. The monitor should continue to make an effort to notify students of projected assignments as early as possible, while warning them that the final assignment may change.

NPS student research and thesis work is a valuable resource largely untapped by the Marine Corps. Depending on the interest of the MOS specialist, students in some curricula may be provided a list of potential thesis topics for consideration. Many students receive no assistance from the Marine Corps in selecting a topic and pursue research unrelated to Marine Corps issues. The SEP sponsor should coordinate submission of proposed thesis topics from the advocates and require the Marine Corps Representative at NPS to approve all Marine student thesis proposals.

As noted earlier, each applicant for SEP receives an academic review by the school for each requested MOS. The academic screening is accomplished at NPS by computing a three-character academic profile code for each applicant based on transcripts provided with the application. Each curriculum has a minimum code that must be met for qualification. Applicants who fail to meet the minimum code, but are close, are reviewed for a possible waiver by the department offering the curriculum. The SEP sponsor should review the academic thresholds, as they apply to Marines, and ensure that they are reasonable for Marine Corps requirements. For example, the minimum code for Operations Analysis requires college-level physics. This background was necessary for a course that is no longer required in that curriculum.

3.3.7 Utilization of SEP Officers

3.3.7.1 Assessment

Currently officers who have just graduated from school fill the majority of SEP billets. Virtually all SEP officers serve their utilization tour immediately after graduating and survey results indicate that almost all serve in a billet with their SEP MOS. In the few cases where a utilization tour was in a different MOS (7%), it was closely related (most often MOS 9646, Computer Science, and MOS 9648, Information Technology Management). The current SEP process facilitates assignments in this manner as school quotas are based on knowledge of when SEP billets will become vacant. Because the SEP monitor assigns all SEP officers immediately following graduation, there is little chance that they will be diverted to a non-SEP billet. The current process maintains a high fill rate for SEP billets (currently 94%).

One consequence of the current process is that it discourages second or later utilization tours by SEP officers. This has implications for both effectiveness and cost. Effectiveness will be addressed here and cost will be addressed in the following section. Additional utilization tours can increase an officer's effectiveness in a billet because the officer has the advantage of prior work experience as well as education in the SEP discipline. However, as noted earlier, officers can only be assigned to additional utilization tours if their primary monitor releases them, usually at the cost of the monitor not being able to fill another billet as a result. Not all billets are appropriate for officers serving additional tours, primarily due to the billet grade. However, such officers would be at an advantage in senior billets (particularly those where the incumbent supervises other SEP officers) and high profile billets in joint and other Service organizations. The survey respondents indicated a strong desire among SEP officers to serve additional utilization tours with nearly half indicating that they would volunteer for such a tour under the right circumstances while only 6% stated that they would be unwilling to serve another utilization tour under any circumstances.

The location of utilization billets, virtually all of which are in the supporting establishment, was a cause of concern to many survey respondents and other officers the study team talked with. Many officers expressed an interest in seeing more SEP billets in the operating forces. The study team understands this desire, as operating force tours are generally considered more career enhancing than those in the supporting establishment, but the mission requirements of the organization must determine the requirement for postgraduate education. It is possible that valid requirements for SEP billets exist in the operating forces, particularly in view of the increased use of technology in the Marine Corps, and only the unofficial cap on the number of SEP billets has prevented them from being created.

The survey addressed the extent to which SEP graduates actually utilize their education in their utilization tour billets with 38% of respondents stating that 50% or less of their SEP education was relevant to their billet. This issue is related to the education area discussed above and many of the comments made there apply, but there are some additional reasons that officers may use little of their education in their billet. One key reason may be that the billet does not actually require a postgraduate education. Over one-fourth (28%) of the survey respondents stated that the postgraduate education was unnecessary or just helpful in their billet. Of those who said that 50% or less of their education was relevant, 27% said it was because a SEP education was not required for the job. Another reason may be that the billet duties are narrowly focused, with only a small portion of the education actually used on the job. Of those who said that 50% or less of their education was relevant, 39% said that their job requirements were covered by the courses taken, but many other courses did not apply to the job. In many cases, survey respondents also indicated that the SEP billet duties required their education, however, the command assigned them duties inconsistent with those billet duties. This may indicate a lack of understanding on the part of the command of the skills and abilities of the SEP graduate or may simply be the result of using a "smart officer" to perform challenging action officer duties with high command priority. While it is the commander's prerogative to use his officers as he sees fit, the persistent use of a SEP officer for non-SEP related duties represents a waste of resources obtained at significant cost and adversely impacts the morale of the SEP officer. Unfortunately, 55% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: "I feel that my SEP education was not or will not be fully utilized by the Marine Corps."

3.3.7.2 Recommendations

Some of the problems noted in the assessment of SEP officer utilization are related to the areas of requirements and education and the recommendations for improvement in those areas would help alleviate associated problems in utilization. In particular, insuring that the billet actually requires a SEP graduate and that it has the proper MOS will improve the satisfaction and effectiveness of officers serving in the billet. Informing officers of their projected utilization tour assignment as early as possible in their schooling will allow them to take elective courses to better prepare them for their duties and may make it possible for them to do thesis research related to those duties.

While the current method of assigning officers to SEP billets fills a high percentage of the billets, it generates quota requirements that are higher than necessary and fails to take full advantage of the significant investment in the education of SEP officers. The assignment of a greater number of officers to second or later utilization tours can reduce quota requirements and increase both performance and cost effectiveness. There appears to be sufficient willingness among SEP officers to serve additional tours to make this possible. However, the current assignment process makes it difficult to do so. The study team recommends that the responsibility for the assignment of officers to SEP billets be given to primary monitors just as it is for virtually all other billets. The billets could be distributed to monitors much as B-billets are and appropriate staffing goals will ensure that the billets are filled. The determination of school quotas would be complicated, but an analysis of the requirements and available SEP officer population could generate appropriate quotas (perhaps through the development of an automated model). If some officers are not assigned to a utilization billet immediately after graduating (per the recommendations in the Career Impact section below), the primary monitor is in a better position to make the necessary assignments. Strict procedures would be imposed to ensure that all officers who attend school complete at least one utilization tour. The removal of the requirement for a separate monitor to assign SEP graduates as well as the assumption of many of the current SEP monitor's duties by a SEP Coordinator in TECOM may free the current billet for transfer to TECOM.

The purpose of the SEP and ADP is to provide postgraduate-educated officers wherever the mission requires. In the past, this has resulted in SEP billets located primarily in the supporting establishment. The study team is not in a position to recommend that more SEP billets be created in the operating forces, but they should be free to document, justify, and submit requirements which will be then approved and filled if determined valid and of sufficient priority. The study team believes that new requirements can be accommodated without increasing P2T2 if the recommendations in this report are implemented. SEP billets in the operating forces would almost certainly be among the most desired and the opportunity to serve in such billets could provide further incentive for officers to apply for the programs.

Requiring officers to complete an assessment at the completion of their utilization tour, as recommended above, will not only help refine the educational curricula, but will help identify cases in which the billet duties are not appropriate for the SEP MOS or the officer in the billet was misused. Officers should be encouraged to provide such information to the SEP Coordinator prior to the conclusion of the utilization tour, if warranted. This may help preclude assignment of a replacement officer who would also be poorly utilized.

Commands have the prerogative for the occasional use of a SEP officer for duties unrelated to the officer's education. However, a pattern of such misuse may be an indication that the SEP billet has the wrong MOS or a SEP officer is not required. In some cases, the command may not understand the capabilities that the officer brings to the billet by virtue of graduate education. In those cases, the SEP officer should be encouraged to educate his supervisor and organization on the skills that he possesses and how those skills can benefit the organization. Newly graduated junior officers may find this to be a difficult task. The SEP Officer should seek the assistance of the MOS manager in such cases.

3.3.8 COST-BENEFIT OF THE PROGRAMS

3.3.8.1 Assessment

The possibility that the Marine Corps is not fully utilizing SEP officers raises the question of whether there is an adequate return on investment for the programs. The study team addressed the "cost" of educating a SEP officer and the benefit derived from that investment. The direct monetary cost to the Marine Corps for SEP officers attending NPS or AFIT and for ADP officers is actually quite low. The costs of operating NPS are borne by the DON and do not impact the Marine Corps budget. Currently, NPS is below maximum capacity and can accommodate additional students at a nominal marginal cost. ADP officers pay their own tuition and fees. The cost for SEP officers attending civilian universities is much greater as the Marine Corps must pay tuition and fees, but very few participants go this route. The Marine Corps directly reimburses students a limited amount for the cost of textbooks and thesis preparation, but the amount is minimal ($400 per year for books and $200 one time for thesis preparation). The Marine Corps must pay for a permanent change of station (PCS) move to school, but officers receive only the pay and allowances they would receive in any other duty assignment. The true cost of SEP and ADP lies in the increase in P2T2 because of time spent in school. This cost is directly related to the number of students in school at any given time, which is in turn related to the total number of SEP billets, and those filled by officers on initial utilization tours. It is also related to the length of the curricula. A reduction in P2T2, while it does not provide direct monetary savings to the Marine Corps, makes it possible to fill more T/O billets resulting in an increase in effectiveness and productivity and potentially in combat readiness.

One means of reducing P2T2 is to reduce the number of SEP billets. This study team did not address potential savings in this area as the determination of actual requirements was beyond the scope of the study. As noted earlier, some current SEP billets may not require postgraduate education. However, when mission-essential functions and tasks require personnel with postgraduate education, there may be alternatives other than using uniformed personnel. Many of these requirements are currently met by government civilian employees and contractor personnel. These alternatives may provide the added advantage of utilizing personnel whose careers are focused on the billet responsibilities and who can provide continuity in the organization. On the other hand, uniformed personnel bring operational experience and a unique perspective to the billet. In addition, while conversion of billets to civilian personnel and contracting functions may decrease P2T2, it does not produce the funding necessary to hire civilians or to fund contracts. SEP billets can also be reduced if it is determined that the duties of the billet can be performed by providing specialized training short of a postgraduate degree to the billet holder. A uniformed officer may still be required to fill the billet, but the cost of

sending an officer to school for up to 2 years could be saved by sending the officer to shorter, more focused training. As an example, some of the survey respondents in computer-related billets indicated that an individual with a professional certification such as Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer (MCSE) could perform the duties of the their billet. In addition, during the billet validation process, the MOS manager for MOS 9650, Operations Analysis, determined that an officer who had completed a 3-month Army course vice the 2-year curriculum at NPS could perform the duties of a number of billets with that MOS.

Another means of reducing P2T2 is to fill more SEP billets with officers who have already completed at least one utilization tour. As noted earlier, the current process discourages second or later utilization tours by SEP officers. Additional utilization tours reduce P2T2 because officers already educated can be fill SEP billets without sending additional officers to school. If a graduating officer fills every SEP billet, 1.62 officers are required to fill each SEP billet due to time spent in school (an average of 22.2 months). With the current ASR of 333 SEP billets, this means that 539 officers must be "in SEP' (i.e., in school or a utilization billet) at all times. If officers serving an additional tour fill one-fourth of the billets, this number is reduced to 488 officers. This would allow 51 non-SEP officer billets that are currently empty to be filled.

Finally, shortening the time a SEP officer spends in school can also reduce P2T2. The master's degree curricula at NPS require 18 to 27 months of school and the students complete a number of course hours far exceeding the number required for a master's degree at most civilian universities. A recent article by a Navy officer who graduated from NPS (Graham, 2000) addressed this issue and recommended educating officers at civilian universities through a public-private arrangement in order to save money and shorten the time in school. A rebuttal from NPS (Mauz, 2000) challenged the author's cost analysis, but primarily stressed the superior value of a graduate education in a military environment. The NPS rebuttal states that the typical NPS student receives 786 hours of instruction per year compared to 486 hours for civilian-sector students. However, it is not clear that this additional classroom time is required to produce an effective graduate. It was not within the scope of this study to address this issue directly; however, the study team noted (as did the NPS rebuttal) that refresher courses are often required at NPS to allow students to renew academic skills and to provide necessary fundamentals to students who may be in curricula not closely related to their undergraduate studies. If an alternative means can be used to bring students up to the required level prior to their arrival at school, there is potential to reduce the time spent in school.

3.3.8.2 Recommendations

The continued use of NPS and AFIT for SEP participants and the ADP for disciplines not available at those schools provides the least direct monetary cost to the Marine Corps. The Marine Corps should continue to meet education requirements primarily through those programs. In addition, reducing the number of officers sent to school can save PCS costs and costs for books and thesis preparation. Many of the recommendations in this report could produce that result. The study team identified few other cost-saving measures related to the programs and some of the recommendations that follow, while reducing P2T2, could actually increase the direct monetary cost.

The study team recommends that reducing the number of SEP billets not be a primary objective of any program revision. Rather, the efforts should focus on determining the true Marine Corps requirements for postgraduate education and the best means to satisfy those requirements. The recommendations above related to billet validation apply here as well. In addition, alternative means of accomplishing tasks and functions that do not absolutely require uniformed officers should be investigated. If current funding constraints preclude using alternatives when a uniformed officer is not required, additional funding should be sought to free up the military billet(s). As noted above, if a military SEP billet is actually eliminated (as opposed to just removing the SEP MOS), up to 1.62 otherwise empty billets could be filled. Analytical assistance is available to organizations seeking alternatives to the existing means of accomplishing these functions. Dr. George Akst (Akst, 2001) performed such an analysis for MCSC investigating the possibility of converting military acquisition professional billets to civilian billets. The same methodology can and should be applied to SEP billets, where appropriate.

Alternate training means should be sought when a uniformed officer is required but the billet duties do not require a postgraduate degree. If the duties are common to a large number of billets closely related to an occupational field, existing procedures to review PMOS duties and training should be followed to ensure that officers in that field are fully qualified in their PMOS. Placing SEP sponsorship under TECOM will facilitate this, as determination of PMOS training requirements is a TECOM responsibility. A good example of a situation where this applies to SEP is the MOS 0602 situation described earlier. In that case, the Status of the Force 06XX Working Group found that SEP was being used to provide advanced training to meet requirements related to PMOS 0602. If the billet functions require advanced training not specific to a particular occupational field, few alternatives to SEP and ADP have been available. That should no longer be the case. Numerous military and civilian training programs exist to meet specialized needs. The Army Logistics Management College (ALMC) provides training in logistics and acquisition related areas. The Defense Acquisition University (DAU) provides training in acquisition and contracting related areas. The Information Resources Management College (IRMC), National Defense University (NDU), provides training in information technology related areas. The U.S. Department of Agriculture Graduate School has a Certified Defense Financial Manager Program. These are only a few examples of alternative training programs available that may meet billet requirements. The study team recognizes that graduate education provides benefits to both officers and the Marine Corps beyond qualification for a specific billet. However, due to the significant cost and time involved, full-time graduate education programs should only be used when billet duties absolutely require postgraduate education.

Recommendations made in the utilization section that will lead to increased assignment of SEP officers to additional utilization tours should be implemented to further reduce the SEP quota requirement and thereby P2T2. A side benefit of filling senior billets with officers serving additional utilization tours is that fewer senior officers (senior majors and lieutenant colonels) must be selected for school. Fewer quotas, combined with an increase in the number of applicants, can reduce the need to select other, more junior, officers nearing retirement eligibility (normally as a result of prior-enlisted service). While many officers with significant time in service have done well at school and have served satisfactorily in utilization billets, the Marine

Corps does not receive the same return on investment from these officers that it does from officers with less time in service. These officers often only serve one utilization tour and may retire at the end of their obligation. There is little chance for the Marine Corps to benefit from additional utilization tours or from the value their education brings to other, non-SEP tours. The criticism that SEP is being used as an "exit strategy" is often associated with such officers. These officers are also at greater risk of academic difficulty since most of them have been away from the academic environment for many years. That said, there are billets that benefit from officers with more seniority, even on an initial utilization tour, and some of these officers may remain on active duty longer than they would have otherwise due to their participation in SEP. Highly qualified applicants should not be rejected merely because of their time in service, but, all other things being equal, an applicant with 6 to 8 years time in service represents more potential value to the Marine Corps than an applicant with 14 to 16 years.

Reduction of time spent in school, specifically NPS, should be investigated, although it does not have the potential to reduce P2T2 as much as other recommendations. TECOM and the individual MOS managers should look at the course requirements of each curriculum and determine if savings can be made while still producing graduates fully qualified for Marine Corps billets. Currently most Marine students are expected to complete refresher courses regardless of prior academic background and time since graduation from college. Students with a strong academic background in the graduate discipline, especially those who graduated from college within the past few years, may not require these courses. If the number of qualified applicants can be increased, the SEP board may be able to select students with stronger academic backgrounds, thereby reducing the need for academic waivers and lower level courses. When required, refresher courses frequently can and should be taken on-line or by correspondence prior to arriving at school.

3.3.9 Career Impact of SEP Participation

3.3.9.1 Assessment

A major concern of officers in both the SEP and ADP, and those considering participation, is the possible adverse impact that participation in the programs may have on their career. Adverse career impact generally applies to three areas: retention, promotion, and command selection. Because of the importance of this area, the study team did a detailed analysis, primarily focusing on promotion. The results are presented in Appendices J and K. A brief synopsis and recommendations follow.

Retention refers to an active duty officer obtaining a regular commission in lieu of the reserve commission awarded when first commissioned; a process referred to as augmentation. Once an officer obtains a regular commission, that officer is retained on active duty indefinitely barring non-selection twice for the next grade or reaching statutory service limits. Those officers who are promoted to major are invariably continued until retirement eligible even if they fail selection for lieutenant colonel twice or more. Since the SEP and ADP directives require an officer to be augmented before selection, this is not an issue for participation in these programs.

Selection for promotion is the major concern of many SEP officers. Survey respondents clearly demonstrated this concern and it has been the subject of extensive discussion over the years. As

noted in Appendix J, determining the impact of any single factor on promotion is extremely difficult. Although SEP participants have done as well as non-participants in overall promotion to lieutenant colonel for the past 11 years and only slightly worse for colonel, survey responses indicated that many officers still believe that SEP is a "career killer." The results of the most recent lieutenant colonel board (for FY03) only fueled the concerns as SEP officers, particularly those who had not completed their utilization tour, were selected a rate well below the general population. Officers in consideration by this board also had the lowest "average years of commissioned service at consideration for promotion to lieutenant colonel" since the end of the Vietnam War. As noted earlier, this meant that the time in SEP represented a greater portion of the officers' careers. Due to the early consideration, many SEP officers did not have the opportunity to return to their PMOS before consideration as they had expected when they applied. Only time will tell if the FY03 board was an anomaly or whether it reflects a trend. In any case, perceptions must be dealt with, even if not based on solid evidence, because the success of any voluntary program such as SEP or ADP depends on the reputation of that program.

Not all concerns regarding adverse career impact are based on false perceptions. As important as the timing of SEP participation was in the past, it is even more critical today. The time that officers have to establish MOS credibility at all grades and to serve in the operating forces prior to consideration for promotion to lieutenant colonel has shrunk to a new low. Because of the lengthy initial training required by aviators, pilots find it nearly impossible to meet required flight gates, serve a department head tour in the operating forces, and also participate in SEP. Ground combat arms officers are in a similar situation as they are generally expected to serve as a company/battery commander as a captain and in the operating forces as a major. Combined with the fact that SEP officers in these groups have historically been promoted to lieutenant colonel at lower rates than their non-SEP peers, it is not surprising that their interest in SEP is declining.

Survey respondents cited a number of other factors not unique to SEP as having an influence on promotability. These included "not observed" fitness reports while at school, fitness reports written by civilian supervisors, utilization billets in low visibility commands, and fitness reports where the officer is not evaluated against peers (commonly referred to as "one-on-one" reports). Interviews with promotion board members confirmed that these factors alone will not cause an officer to fail selection if the officer's record demonstrates overall outstanding performance, but they can make the difference when the officer is on the borderline. Board members indicated that "not observed" reports are not held against an officer, but make other reports in the record carry more weight. Under the current performance evaluation system (MCO P1610.7E), the academic reports received at school are now observed reports. The performance evaluation order specifies that fitness reports will be written by an officer's immediate supervisor and reviewed by the supervisor's immediate supervisor. This could lead to situations where the reporting senior and reviewing officer are both civilians. Board members indicated that fitness reports written by civilians are not generally as well written and are not given as much weight by the board as those written by Marine officers. With the new evaluation system, "one-on-one" reports do not present the problem they once did since the officer is compared to all the officers the reporting officials have written reports on, not just current peers. On the issue of fitness reports, the study team was concerned to hear from multiple sources, as discussed in Appendix J, that reports written on

officers in supporting establishment staff billets (including almost all SEP billets) were not as well written as those on officers in the operating forces and that this affects those officers during promotion consideration. It was beyond the scope of the study to confirm these observations, but if true, they may help explain some of the SEP officer non-selections.

Many Marine officers aspire to command at senior levels. Since the Marine Corps began to use board selection for lieutenant colonel and colonel command billets a decade ago, officers have become keenly aware of the impact of various career decisions on their competitiveness for these billets. The limited number of command billets available makes command selection more competitive than promotion to colonel. Unlike promotions, an officer's MOS is a key factor in command selection since most command billets have specific MOS requirements. This means that officers competing for command will be compared directly with their peers in the same MOS and deviations from the "typical" career path for that MOS may place them at a disadvantage. For many MOSs, including ground combat MOSs and aviation MOSs, SEP participation is not considered part of the typical career path and SEP officers in those MOSs generally do not have the PMOS time or operating forces time of their non-SEP peers, particularly in the field grade ranks. Participation in SEP may also preclude officers from commanding at lower grades, which is also an important factor in command selection. Unfortunately, as noted in Appendix J, insufficient historical data exist on the command selection process to evaluate the success of SEP officers. Therefore, the observations above are based on interviews with command selection board members and a career counselor in MMOA. The important fact is that officers considering SEP are often told that they must choose between SEP participation and future senior command.

3.3.9.2 Recommendations

In seeking solutions to the problems associated with perceptions of adverse career impact, it is important to distinguish between those relating to perceptions not based on fact (i.e., false perceptions) and those relating to actual adverse career impact. Both types of problems must be addressed, but the methods will be different.

The best way to deal with false perceptions is to disseminate credible evidence to dispel the perceptions. The primary false perception involved in this case is that SEP participation is a "career killer." Publication of actual promotion statistics combined with support for the program from the senior leadership of the Marine Corps (starting with the Commandant) should help correct this. One consequence of the FY03 lieutenant colonel promotion board was that SEP officers were generally viewed as having done much worse than they actually did. The reason for this is that in-zone officers currently "in the SEP program" (i.e., in school or on their first utilization tour) were selected at a 43% rate compared to 68% overall. The fact overlooked is that SEP officers who had completed their utilization tour were selected at an 83% rate. It is natural to focus on an officer's current situation when forming perceptions, so the response is understandable. The solution is to publicize the full results and emphasize again the importance of career timing in SEP participation. It is also helpful to note, as the career counselors do, the importance of maintaining the "must haves" of PME completion, a good photograph, and a high level of physical fitness; areas apparently neglected by some of the SEP participants who were not selected. Sometime there is a tendency to jump to the conclusion that "SEP did it" rather than root out the real reason for non-selection.

The situation discussed above with aviation and ground combat officers is very real and must be dealt with immediately in order to increase the number of SEP applicants from these MOSs. These officers are especially important to the success of SEP as they represent the MOSs most likely to be overpopulated in the field grade ranks, thereby reducing the impact of removing them temporarily from the assignable population in their PMOS. For the same reason they become more available for additional utilization tours. To provide greater incentive for these officers to participate in SEP, while maintaining required credibility in their PMOS, the study team recommends establishing a new option for participation in SEP and ADP. Specifically, if an officer so requests, he should be given the opportunity to return to his PMOS for a 2-year tour immediately following graduation from school to be followed by a 3-year SEP utilization tour. This option would require the officer to commit to a 5-year vice 4-year service obligation following school completion. Officers would request this option when making application to the board to allow for manpower planning. There would be a limited number of quotas for officers requesting this option.

The study team believes that the issues related to fitness reports must be addressed if the selection rate of SEP officers is to improve. Although academic fitness reports are now supposed to be observed, recent reports from NPS are still marked non-observed, although comments are included in Section I on some reports. While school reports will never have the weight of an observed report in a regular billet, officers who excel at school should receive appropriate, personalized recognition in their fitness reports and the board should consider such comments. With regard to fitness reports written by civilian supervisors, although reports where both the reporting senior and reviewing officer are civilians follow the letter of the performance evaluation directive, the study team recommends that at least one of the two reporting officers be another Marine officer.

As critical as fitness reports are to an officer's career, the Marine Corps must give greater attention to ensure that reports written on SEP officers while serving their utilization tour adequately reflect the value and contributions of those officers to the Marine Corps as well as their overall officer qualities in a way that the promotion board can understand. The study team recommends that the Marine Corps conduct a comparative review of fitness reports for officers in SEP billets and officers in staff billets in the operating forces. If the review concludes that the reports being written on SEP officers are deficient, the Marine Corps should provide training for reporting seniors and reviewing officers and additional review of reports, if necessary, to ensure that these officers are being fairly evaluated.

Some survey respondents stated that they felt that promotion boards were biased against SEP participants. Board members from the last three lieutenant colonel boards assured the study team that this was not the case. However, they indicated that it was very helpful to have board members present who were SEP officers and could explain the program when a question came up regarding the record of a SEP officer. While most boards generally have at least one SEP officer as a board member, this occurs by chance. The study team recommends that every promotion board for unrestricted field grade officers (major, lieutenant colonel, and colonel) and all command screening boards have at least one SEP officer as a member (in addition to a SEP

(Law) member, if one is included). It may also be helpful to have the SEP Coordinator brief the board on the unique characteristics of the SEP and ADP before deliberations begin.

The study team does not have any specific recommendations for improving the selection rate of SEP officers for command other than continuing to emphasize to potential applicants the importance of career timing. As long as the current criteria for command selection apply, officers who are away from their PMOS and the operating forces for 5 years will be at a disadvantage when compared with many of their peers. However, participation in SEP does not automatically preclude command selection, as a number of SEP officers have discovered. The implementation of the recommendation to allow officers to opt for a PMOS tour between school and their utilization tour may allow more officers to get the experience that the command selection boards are looking for while still participating in SEP. The fact remains that most Marine Corps officers do not have the opportunity to command at senior levels and participation in SEP may affect an officer's chances of selection to command. Officers should consider their personal career aspirations when making the decision to apply for SEP.

The best way to improve the career record of SEP officers is to improve the quality of the officers who participate in the program. That is not to say that current participants are not of high quality, but it is clear that when the SEP board has limited applicants to select from for most MOSs (with no extra applicants for some) their ability to select the highest quality officers is limited. If implementation of other recommendations in this report successfully increases the number of applicants relative to the quotas available, then the ability of the boards to discriminate on the basis of overall quality rather than academic qualification only will improve the quality of selectees and eventually the reputation of the programs.

3.3.10 OTHER PROGRAM ASPECTS

3.3.10.1 Assessment

A master's thesis by a recent Marine Corps graduate of NPS, Captain Eric Corcoran, recommended a radical restructuring of the uniformed contracting field in the Marine Corps, which is populated by officers with SEP MOS 9656, Contracting Officer (Corcoran, 2000). A key element in his recommendation was the conversion of SEP MOS 9656 from a skill designator MOS to a PMOS. Officers graduating from the contracting curriculum at NPS would have their PMOS changed to Contracting Officer and would serve the remainder of their career in this MOS. A more detailed assessment of Captain Corcoran's recommendations is included in Appendix L, but the issue of making a SEP MOS a PMOS will be briefly addressed here.

The idea of creating PMOSs from some SEP MOSs is not new. It has been discussed informally for many years, but the study team could not find evidence that manpower officials have ever seriously considered it. There are potential benefits to be gained by having officers who have been trained at significant government expense followed by 3 years of on-the-job experience continue to serve in their SEP field for the remainder of their career. One could argue that this would present an even greater return on investment than increasing the number of individuals serving subsequent utilization tours, as proposed by this study.

3.3.10.2 Recommendation

The designation of a SEP MOS as a PMOS would be a radical departure from the traditional Marine Corps unrestricted officer philosophy and structure. While the Marine Corps may benefit by some SEP officers serving the remainder of their career in their SEP MOS, the Marine Corps has never established a firm requirement for such a move. The MOS manager for MOS 9656, in the Contracts Division Campaign Plan 2001, specifically investigated the feasibility of a permanent contracting officer MOS and concluded that it was not viable. At this time, the study team recommends that the Marine Corps not consider the creation of a PMOS for SEP MOS 9656 or any other SEP MOS.

3.4 ACQUISITION WORKFORCE PROGRAM

3.4.1 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

3.4.1.1 Purpose

The DON established the Acquisition Workforce Program (AWP) to meet the statutory requirements of Chapter 87, Title 10 U.S. Code, the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA), and the regulatory requirements of DOD Instruction 5000.58, Defense Acquisition Workforce. The purpose of the program is to attract, select, develop, and retain a highly qualified workforce capable of performing current and future DON acquisition functions. The AWP encompasses both military and civil service employees.

3.4.1.2 Directive/Sponsor

In addition to the DAWIA, there are a number of DoD directives governing the AWP. For the Navy and Marine Corps, The DON Acquisition Workforce Program, SECNAV Instruction 5300.36, published 31 May 1995, currently governs the program. The Marine Corps has not issued a directive specifically covering the AWP.

According to DAWIA, overall responsibility for the acquisition workforce in each military department belongs to the Service Acquisition Executive (SAE). The SAE for DON is the Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Research, Development, and Acquisition). The Director, Acquisition Career Management (DACM), assists the SAE in managing the AWP. Although the DAWIA legislation authorizes separate DACMs for the Navy and Marine Corps, the Secretary of the Navy has chosen to have a single DACM for both Services. There is no single sponsor or overall manager for the AWP within the Marine Corps. The DON handles the centralized management of the program and responsibility for administration of the program is delegated to acquisition organizations within the Services, rather than the service headquarters. Acquisition organizations within the Marine Corps, as listed in SECNAVINST 5200.36, are HQMC and MCSC. There is also a Marine component at the Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIRSYSCOM) working on acquisition of aviation assets.

SECNAVINST 5300.36 requires CMC to “identify a senior officer to the DACM for liaison and coordination.” That officer is currently the Acquisition Program Management Officer (APMO) in MMOA, who is also the SEP monitor. The APMO is involved only in military personnel AWP matters and frequently defers to the MOS managers for specific program issues. The MOS manager responsibilities for the two MOSs associated with the AWP are split between MCSC,

for ground acquisition, and the Marine Administrative Detachment, Patuxent River (at NAVAIRSYSCOM), for aviation acquisition.

3.4.1.3 Acquisition Workforce

The acquisition workforce consists of all permanent civilian employees and military members who occupy acquisition positions, who are members of an Acquisition Corps, or who are in acquisition development programs. “Acquisition Corps” is a DoD term; the DON Acquisition Corps is called the Acquisition Professional Community (APC). The AWP differs from the other officer programs addressed in this study in that it applies to both military (uniformed) personnel and civilian employees. Although most of the military personnel in the program are unrestricted officers, certain enlisted personnel and restricted officers are also included. This study only addresses the Marine Corps unrestricted officer portion of the workforce.

3.4.1.4 Military Occupational Specialties

Two officer MOSs are associated with the AWP. MOS 9957, Acquisition Professional Candidate, is both a billet MOS and a skill designator MOS. Billet MOS 9957 designates entry-level acquisition workforce positions that do not require an officer assigned to the billet to hold MOS 9957 prior to assignment (in fact, the majority do not). Per the MOS Manual, skill designator MOS 9957 is assigned to officers who have completed at least 2 years in an acquisition billet. MOS 9958, Acquisition Management Officer, is also a billet MOS and a skill designator MOS. Billet MOS 9958 designates billets where the incumbent should be a member of the APC. Skill designator MOS 9958 is assigned to officers who have applied for and been accepted into the APC. A third AWP MOS, Acquisition Manager (MOS 9959), existed in the past but has been discontinued. It was used for program managers at the rank of colonel and above. Although this MOS has been eliminated, and the billets redesignated as 9958 billets, a few active duty officers still hold the MOS. There are also two SEP MOSs closely related to the AWP. MOS 9657 is for the Systems Acquisition Management (SAM) Officer. SAM officers attend a 21-month curriculum at NPS and receive an M.S. degree in Management. MOS 9656 is for the Contracting Officer. Contracting Officers attend an 18-month curriculum at NPS and also receive an M.S. degree in Management.

3.4.1.5 AWP Billets

There are currently 561 unrestricted officer billets with a billet MOS of 9957 or 9958 in one of the three billet MOS positions. Of these, only 159 billets, or 28% of the total, are MOS 9957 billets; the other 402 billets are MOS 9958 billets. There are also 5 MOS 9657 billets and 23 MOS 9656 billets. Nine of the MOS 9656 billets do not have an AWP billet MOS associated with them; the other 14 reflect MOS 9957 or MOS 9958 in addition to MOS 9656. All of the MOS 9657 billets are also coded as AWP billets. Virtually all of the billets (543 of 561) are in the supporting establishment, with MCSC, NAVAIRSYSCOM, and MCCDC possessing the majority of the billets. A few billets are joint billets and/or have a SEP MOS (9656, 9657, or other) requirement. Billets are further designated as senior critical, critical, or non-critical. Senior critical billets include the Program Manager/Deputy Program Manager of major and significant non-major programs and are normally colonel billets. Critical billets include all other acquisition billets with a billet grade of lieutenant colonel or above. All other billets are non-critical. Senior critical and critical billets are designated critical acquisition positions (CAPs) as that term is used

in the statutes and regulations. Based on the T/O billet grades, 170 of the 402 MOS 9958 billets are critical or senior critical billets.

3.4.1.6 AWP Structure

Within the AWP, each position (billet) belongs to 1 of 13 position categories corresponding to the area of expertise required in the billet. Furthermore, members of the Marine Corps acquisition workforce are qualified (or working toward qualification) in one or more of nine career fields. There is a correspondence (not one-to-one) between position categories and career fields that indicates which workforce members are qualified to fill each billet. Each career field has three levels for the purpose of establishing certification standards. The levels are: I – entry level, II – intermediate level, and III – senior level. For Marine Corps officers, these levels generally correspond to the grades of captain, major, and lieutenant colonel and above, although an officer of any grade can enter the program at Level I. Certification at each level requires a combination of education/training and experience in acquisition billets. Acquisition billets are also assigned one of the three levels based on the billet grade. An "ideal" assignment to an acquisition billet would be an officer of the billet grade with certification in the career field corresponding to the billet's position category at the level assigned to that billet. CAPs require incumbents to have level II or III certification.

3.4.1.7 Selection for the Acquisition Professional Community (APC)

In order to become a member of the APC, an officer must apply to and be selected by an annual board held by the Marine Corps. MCBul 1210, normally issued in December by a MARADMIN message, solicits applications from qualified officers for the board to be held the following March. To be selected, an applicant must meet the qualifications for the APC as stated in SECNAVINST 5300.36 or receive a waiver, where allowed. There are no quotas or limits on the number of selectees; all applicants deemed qualified by the board may be selected. Applicants may apply in one or more career fields within the AWP. Applicants selected by the board receive MOS 9958 and become members of the APC. The board may also grant MOS 9957 to applicants who have some acquisition experience, but who do not meet the requirements for MOS 9958 and do not currently hold MOS 9957. However, board action is not required for an officer to receive MOS 9957. The APMO in MMOA assigns this MOS automatically to officers serving in MOS 9957 billets after they have completed a specified period in the billet. The APMO enters the MOSs in the system upon receipt of a list of names from the MOS manager. Application for the APC is voluntary. An officer may be fully qualified for membership by training and experience, but will not receive MOS 9958 without applying. Technically, such an officer would not be qualified to fill a CAP.

3.4.1.8 AWP Training and Education

Officers in the AWP have very specific training and education requirements that depend on their career field and level. DoD publishes these training requirements in the DAU catalog. Training is accomplished through completion of DAU courses, other courses that have been certified as equivalent to DAU courses, or through the "mandatory course fulfillment program" described in SECNAVINST 5300.36. The course equivalencies are listed in the DAU catalog. Workforce members can request course fulfillment when they believe they have met course competencies through experience, education, or attendance at an alternate training course. Each member of the AWP has a personalized career development plan that identifies career goals and outlines the

education, training, and developmental activities needed to achieve the goals. Unlike the IAOP and SEP/ADP programs, an officer may enter the acquisition workforce with no specialized training or experience. Once in the acquisition billet, the officer will then receive the training necessary for that billet. Normally the Level I training requirements are met as soon as possible on the first acquisition tour. Level II requirements may also be accomplished during the first tour, thereby making the officer eligible to apply for APC membership upon completion of the tour (assuming grade requirements are met). The officer will then be qualified to serve a later acquisition tour in an MOS 9958 billet.

Some officers, primarily those who participate in SEP, begin their first acquisition tour with the majority of their training and education completed (sometimes as high as level II). Once in the acquisition billet, they may receive additional training specific to their career field and/or billet. Since up to 12 months of time spent in acquisition training/education may be substituted for an equal amount of the experience requirement, SEP graduates are normally eligible for Level I certification immediately upon assuming an acquisition billet.

3.4.1.9 AWP Data Management

The systems used by the Marine Corps to maintain personnel information on all Marines and billet information on all Marine Corps billets do not contain the data fields necessary to manage the AWP. Therefore, MCSC maintains the Acquisition Workforce System of Management (AWSOM) to collect, retain, and report the information on the AWP required by law and regulation. AWSOM contains information on acquisition workforce personnel, both military and civilian, as well as all acquisition positions within the Marine Corps structure. The MCTFS contains only the acquisition MOS, if any, held by the Marine. The T/MR System contains only the billet MOS and grade of acquisition billets. There is a rudimentary interface between MCTFS and AWSOM, but most of the data in AWSOM must be manually entered. Military personnel managers must utilize both systems when making personnel assignments.

3.4.1.10 AWP Assignments

With the exception of officers completing school through SEP or ADP, the primary monitors in MMOA assign officers to acquisition billets. Since no prior training or education is required for MOS 9957 billets, the monitor can assign any officer to these billets, subject to grade requirements and additional billet MOSs on some billets. The actual priority of fill for billets is determined by the priority given to the command owning the billet. MCSC, where most of the billets are located, is now a pro-share command, so fill rates are not as high as they were in the past when it was a priority command. MOS 9958 billets are supposed to be filled by an officer holding the 9958 MOS. Critical acquisition positions (MOS 9958 billets at the grade of lieutenant colonel or above) must be filled with a member of the APC, unless a waiver is granted.

3.4.1.11 AWP Career Path

As noted above, officers may serve an initial acquisition tour in any grade, but most entry-level billets are at the captain level. Many officers will serve a single acquisition tour and never apply for the APC (i.e., MOS 9958). These officers retain MOS 9957 (if it was ever assigned to them) and may be considered for another acquisition tour in the future, if MMOA must fill MOS 9958 billets with officers holding only MOS 9957 due to a shortage of APC members. If assigned to a

subsequent acquisition tour, the officer is encouraged to apply for MOS 9958 as soon as possible (normally within 18 months). Some officers who serve an initial acquisition tour or enter the AWP through SEP decide to apply for the APC. The officers who are accepted by the board receive the skill designator MOS 9958 but retain their PMOS. They normally return to their PMOS for at least one assignment before serving in another acquisition position. Depending on the circumstances such as the officer's grade, the health of the officer's PMOS, and AWP billet requirements, an officer selected for the APC may not serve another acquisition tour. Ideally, these officers would alternate tours in their PMOS and in acquisition positions thus serving in acquisition billets at each rank. By the time these officers reach the rank of colonel, they would have extensive acquisition experience at all levels, full DAWIA Level III certification (possibly in multiple career fields), and would be excellent candidates for senior critical acquisition positions.

3.4.2 Program Assessment and Recommendations

3.4.2.1 Overall Assessment

The fact that defense acquisition is the most highly structured and tightly controlled occupational field within DoD reflects its critical importance. Law and regulation specify every aspect of the management of the acquisition workforce. Waivers are available for many requirements in the AWP and the Marine Corps makes liberal use of them, particularly on the military side. To understand why, it is necessary to review the background of the AWP in the Marine Corps.

Although MOS 9958 was created in 1986, the AWP as it exists today has its roots in the DAWIA legislation passed in November 1990 and in the DoD and DON regulations that followed. MOSs 9957 and 9959 were created in 1992 when the current program was implemented, but MOS 9959 was subsequently deleted as unnecessary. Although a number of changes have occurred over the past decade, the program remains much the same as initially implemented.

The Marine Corps is unique within DoD with respect to the acquisition workforce for a number of reasons. First, although the Marine Corps is the smallest military service (apart from the Coast Guard), the acquisition workforce is much smaller than any other service in proportion to the overall population. The Marine Corps acquisition workforce constitutes only 4% of the DON acquisition workforce. Second, the Marine Corps has no primary acquisition occupational field for officer personnel. Military members of the APC retain their PMOS and rarely serve exclusively in acquisition positions after joining the APC. Third, the ratio of civilian to military members in the acquisition workforce is much lower in the Marine Corps than any other service. For DON, the overall acquisition workforce is 88% civilian and 12% military compared to the Marine Corps where the workforce is 56% civilian and 44% military. Overall, the DoD workforce is approximately 89% civilian. Fourth, a significant portion of the Marine Corps acquisition workforce actually operates within a Navy acquisition organization because NAVAIRSYSCOM is responsible for all Naval aviation acquisition, including programs unique to the Marine Corps.

Although the overall size of the acquisition workforce in the Marine Corps is small compared to the other Services, the high percentage of military members places a burden on the relatively small officer community. The Marine Corps simply does not have the required number of

officers to devote to acquisition in order to build the experience base needed to fill all non-entry-level positions with fully qualified officers. Therefore, waivers are frequently required when filling military positions.

An assessment of the entire AWP in the Marine Corps is beyond the scope of this study. Therefore, the study team focused on those issues directly related to unrestricted officers and MOSs 9957 and 9958. Overall, one of the biggest problems facing this program is the shortage of officers with MOS 9958 compared to the number of 9958 billets. In spite if this, most MOS 9958 billets are eventually filled (although not necessarily by officers holding MOS 9958), but doing so requires a lot of time and effort within MMOA and the acquisition organizations. Implementation of specific recommendations that follow could help alleviate this problem. Unfortunately, it is difficult to separate the issues related to unrestricted officers in the acquisition workforce from the AWP as a whole. Therefore, the recommendations below should be considered in light of their overall impact on the program.

3.4.3 PROGRAM SPONSORSHIP/MANAGEMENT

3.4.3.1 Assessment

Sponsorship and management of the AWP is fragmented within the Marine Corps. When the study team attempted to locate the person or organization in Marine Corps with overall responsibility for unrestricted officers within the AWP, the answer was that there was no single sponsor or manager. The Marine Corps "senior officer [identified] to the DACM for liaison and coordination" per SECNAVINST 5300.36 is a major in MMOA who has that responsibility as an additional duty. He is not even an acquisition professional and is concerned primarily with the administrative conduct of the two boards associated with the AWP (the NAVAIR Acquisition Major Program Management - Command Slating Board and the APC Selection Board), entering officer MOSs in the personnel system, and assisting the primary monitors in filling acquisition billets. The career development aspects of the program are handled by the acquisition organization to which the officer is assigned. In contrast, his counterpart in the Navy is an O-6 in the Bureau of Personnel serving as a full-time acquisition workforce manager for Navy officers. He is an APC member and is much more involved in the career management of Navy acquisition professional officers.

3.4.3.2 Recommendations

The Marine Corps should establish a full-time APMO with primary duties related to management of the military personnel within the acquisition workforce. The officer filling this billet should have acquisition experience. APMO responsibilities should include, but not be limited to:

- insuring that all appropriate data on military acquisition workforce personnel are entered into appropriate systems (including MOSs),
- overseeing the application and selection process for the APC (military only),
- acting as liaison between the acquisition organizations with Marine Corps billets and the monitors regarding military assignments,
- coordinating with Total Force Structure Division and acquisition organizations to ensure proper coding of acquisition billets on T/Os, and

- coordinating with the SECNAV DACM office to ensure that AWP requirements relating to military billets and workforce personnel are met.

Because there are a number of acquisition organizations within the Marine Corps, this individual should be located in M&RA Department, and should work closely with the acquisition organizations.

3.4.4 MEETING MARINE CORPS REQUIREMENTS

3.4.4.1 Assessment

Military members of the acquisition workforce exist to perform military-specific functions related to defense acquisition. The DAWIA legislation and the DoD Directives that implement it are very specific in stating that positions are to be reserved for military members only when absolutely essential. Clearly, the intent is that civilian personnel are to be the primary means of accomplishing the defense acquisition function. The high civilian-to-military ratio of acquisition workforce members in the other Services reflects this intent. On the other hand, as noted above, the Marine Corps still has a relatively low civilian-to-military ratio of personnel in the acquisition workforce. This may be attributable to the fact that the Marine Corps overall has historically had a lower civilian-to-military ratio than the other Services.

The disadvantage of using military personnel in acquisition positions is two-fold. First, acquisition is not their primary occupation and most officers do not serve continuously in acquisition positions. When an officer fills an entry-level acquisition position with no prior training or experience, the officer does not become fully effective for at least 18 months. After an additional 18 months, the officer returns to his PMOS and another inexperienced officer arrives. Most officers do not serve an additional acquisition tour in their career. Civilian employees may also require an initial period before becoming effective, but most will then serve continuously in acquisition throughout their career. Even if an experienced civilian leaves, it may be possible to hire an experienced replacement from another service or agency. Second, every officer used in an acquisition position means there is one less officer to fill billets in the operating forces or in joint or service staff billets. With officer staffing in the operating forces at approximately 85%, any opportunity to return officers to the operating forces should be pursued.

The use of military personnel in acquisition positions does have some advantages. They bring operational experience to the process and help ensure that the systems being developed will be appropriate for Marine forces. The study team believes that having more officers return for subsequent acquisition tours in key billets would be more valuable for this purpose than having a large number of officers serve only one acquisition tour. Between acquisition tours, while they are serving in the operating forces, these officers will also be able to use their acquisition experience to more effectively communicate operating force requirements to the acquisition organizations. However, the current high level of military positions within the acquisition workforce is not required to realize these benefits.

Concern over the ratio of civilian to military personnel at MCSC has existed for some time. In September 2000, the Commander, Materiel Command (MATCOM) developed a position paper recommending that the ratio of civilian to military personnel be increased to 70:30. Subsequent analysis by Dr. George Akst, Studies and Analysis Division, MCCDC, indicated that while such

a move would still leave the Marine Corps well below the DON and DoD ratios, it was a step in the right direction. He concluded that increasing the ratio should result in increased effectiveness in the acquisition workforce while returning a sufficient number of officers to the operating forces to make a difference, particularly in the field grade population. The only drawback would be an additional civilian labor cost of approximately $5.2M per year (based on a conversion of 61 billets). The proposal was subsequently approved and MCSC is in the process of converting 62 acquisition workforce billets from military to civilian.

Marine Corps requirements in the acquisition workforce can still be met, potentially with an overall increase in effectiveness, by reducing the number of military positions and increasing the number of civilian positions. This conversion comes at a cost (an average of $86K per year for each civilian employee in FY01 dollars). However, it may be possible to convert military to civilian positions at less than one-for-one replacement. Although Dr. Akst used a one-for-one replacement in his cost computations, he estimated that civilian employees devote about 17% more working hours to job-related activities than Marines (due to military training requirements and other differences). He also showed that a greater proportion of civilian employees are certified acquisition professionals and their average certification level is higher than that of military personnel. These differences should result in greater effectiveness of civilians on the job. If the substitution of billets was based on working hours rather than a one-for-one replacement, the 61 military billets could have been replaced by 51 civilians–reducing the annual cost to $4.4M.

The number of MOS 9957 and MOS 9958 billets on T/Os defines the requirement for Marine officers in the acquisition workforce. As noted above, there are currently 561 such billets of which 28% are MOS 9957 and 72% are MOS 9958. With rare exception, an officer cannot obtain MOS 9958 without serving first in an MOS 9957 billet. Hypothetically, if the average tour length in an MOS 9957 billet is 36 months and the average length in a MOS 9958 billet is 48 months and all officers who complete an MOS 9957 tour apply and are accepted for the APC, each officer would have to remain on active duty and serve two tours in MOS 9958 billets for the Marine Corps to meet current requirements. This is clearly unrealistic. Therefore, the current number of MOS 9958 billets is unsupportable. In reality, officers with MOS 9957 who are not members of the APC fill many of the MOS 9958 billets and officers with no previous acquisition experience fill others. However, not all MOS 9958 billets are CAPs. Only 170 of the 402 MOS 9958 billets have a billet grade of lieutenant colonel or above and are automatically CAPs. According to MCSC, there are a few additional CAPs with a billet grade of major. The regulatory requirement states that APC members must fill CAPs, but they are not required for non-critical positions. Since MOS 9958 is equivalent to being a member of the APC for Marine officers, the Marine Corps has placed a requirement on approximately 230 billets that is more stringent than required. When a major with MOS 9958 is not available to fill an MOS 9958 billet, the current practice is to assign a major with MOS 9957 (if one is available) with the intent that the officer will obtain MOS 9958 within 18 months of assuming the billet. While that approach is currently working, it requires additional manual intervention in the manpower assignment system because officers are being assigned to billets with a billet MOS they do not hold.

3.4.4.2 Recommendations

The Marine Corps should continue efforts to reduce the number of MOS 9957 and MOS 9958 billets. At the same time, the officers who do serve an acquisition tour should be encouraged to apply for the APC and serve additional acquisition tours. Officers with acquisition experience will then be available to fill more of the remaining billets, thereby reducing the time required for training and making them fully effective earlier in their tour. Funding is obviously a major impediment to billet conversion, but the benefits derived from increasing the staffing in the operating forces make it worthwhile to vigorously pursue the required funding.

The imbalance between MOS 9957 and MOS 9958 billets can be reduced significantly by recoding the majority of current MOS 9958 billets with the grade of major as MOS 9957 billets. This will allow MMOA to assign more officers holding the MOS to the billets. Officers assigned to such billets should still be encouraged to become members of the APC and obtain MOS 9958 while in the billet. Unlike the MOS 9957 billets with the grade of captain, MMOA should attempt to fill the majors' billets with officers who already hold MOS 9957 or MOS 9958. The acquisition organizations should also review their MOS 9958 billets to determine if any can be downgraded to entry-level positions with a billet grade of captain. In addition, conversions from military to civilian billets should be focused on MOS 9958 billets to further reduce the number of MOS 9958 billets.

3.4.5 APC Selection Process

3.4.5.1 Assessment

SECNAVINST 5300.36 states that "membership in the APC is voluntary." This does not mean that only officers who volunteer are placed in acquisition positions, but rather that officers will not be given MOS 9958 unless they request it and are approved by the selection board. Unlike IAOP and SEP/ADP, there are no limits on the number of qualified officers who can be selected for the APC. Unfortunately, the number of officers who apply and are selected is insufficient to fill the MOS 9958 billets. Many potentially eligible officers never apply because they do not foresee filling another acquisition billet in the future or they choose not to apply. The MARADMIN message soliciting applications for the annual board is released in December. By that time, most of the officers who completed acquisition tours in the past year (constituting the bulk of the eligible population) are well into their follow-on tour and may not even see the message. As noted above, even if all eligible officers apply and are accepted, there will still be a shortfall. However, increasing the number of officers in the APC will reduce the number of waivers required to fill acquisition positions at the higher grades.

SECNAVINST 5300.36 currently requires that an annual selection board be held to select Marine Corps military members of the APC. Navy officers, on the other hand, must apply to and be screened by an administrative board, but no specified time frame is given for the board. The study team suspects that the annual requirement for the board was based on the Marine Corps practice at the time and that it could easily be changed upon request. The current timing of the board creates problems in the assignment process. Often the monitor will identify a potential candidate for a CAP who is not an APC member but appears to possess the qualifications for membership. The monitor may encourage the officer to apply for membership and the officer

may agree, but the timing of the board may mean that the officer must assume the billet before being accepted, thus requiring a waiver.

3.4.5.2 Recommendations

Although membership in the APC is voluntary, it is in the Marine Corps interest to have as many officers in the APC as possible. Currently the primary means of soliciting applicants is the annual MARADMIN message. Occasionally a monitor may recommend that an officer apply for the APC so that the officer can fill a 9958 billet. Some officers are encouraged to apply as soon as the necessary requirements are satisfied after assuming an MOS 9958 billet (normally a major's billet). There does not appear to be a concerted effort to convince officers to apply for the APC immediately following completion of an acquisition tour. As noted above, one reason may be that the selection board does not meet until March while most Marines transfer during the summer months. The Marine Corps should abandon the annual board and replace it with a more frequent board (as is done for IAOP experience-track applicants) or with a continuously running board. The board members could review each application and vote electronically. Since there are no quotas, this should not cause any problems. If discussion is required, it could be done electronically or in short meetings held more often. The study team understands that MCSC is already considering such a change. If this is done, it should be possible to approve an officer for MOS 9958 at or shortly after departure from an acquisition position.

At some point, the Marine Corps may want to consider involuntarily assigning MOS 9958 to officers who meet the qualifications. Although membership in the DON APC is voluntary, this does not appear to be a requirement of either the DAWIA legislation or DoD regulations. Therefore, the Marine Corps could request a change in DON policy. The study team recommends that this step be taken only if implementation of other recommendations does not sufficiently increase the number of APC applicants. As an alternative, the Marine Corps could assign MOS 9958 to officers it considers qualified without placing them in the APC (i.e., unlink MOS 9958 and APC membership). These officers would then be available to fill non-critical MOS 9958 acquisition positions.

3.4.6 Training of AWP Officers

3.4.6.1 Assessment

Training requirements for AWP officers are established by law and regulation. Except for SEP and ADP graduates, who receive at least some training in graduate school, most officers receive the mandatory training after they have assumed an acquisition billet. This system appears to be working well, although some SEP officers indicated that they were required to attend training after arriving at MCSC that they felt duplicated training received at NPS. According to MCSC, that is no longer the case. NPS graduates are given full credit for courses completed prior to arrival. The entry-level training currently used for most officers reporting to MCSC is through the Florida Institute of Technology (FIT) Project Management Certificate program in Alexandria, VA. This is an 8-week course of instruction that covers all of the material in the entry-level and intermediate acquisition courses (DAU courses ACQ 101 and ACQ 102) and a substantial part of the material in Advanced Program Management (DAU Course PMT 302). Although the FIT courses used are not included in the DAU catalog list of equivalencies, MCSC is using the mandatory course fulfillment program to grant the required training credit. Marine

officers reporting to NAVAIRSYSCOM who have not already had the acquisition training at NPS or Test Pilot School generally take the required courses through DAU.

3.4.6.2 Recommendations

Although the current MCSC entry-level training fulfills the letter of the regulations through the mandatory course fulfillment program, that program was designed to handle exceptions, not to be the standard means of training. The study team believes the use of actual DAU courses or courses included in the equivalency list would be preferable to remove any doubt about the legitimacy of the training. If the FIT training is adequate (and it appears that MCSC is satisfied that it is), the process required to add the courses to the equivalency list should be initiated. If it is FIT's responsibility to initiate the process, MCSC should encourage them to do so.

3.4.7 Utilization of AWP Officers

3.4.7.1 Assessment

Current Marine Corps manpower records indicate that 633 Marine officers (including 5 chief warrant officers) hold acquisition MOSs (9957, 9958, or 9959). Of these officers, 263 have MOS 9958 or 9959 indicating that they are members of the APC. The remaining 370 officers hold MOS 9957. Some MOS 9957 billets are always filled by officers who do not yet have an acquisition MOS, since it typically requires at least 1 year of experience in the billet to get the MOS. Since the billet MOS field in the manpower system is not reliable, it is not clear how many of the officers with acquisition MOSs are actually filling acquisition billets.

From the number of MOS 9958 billets and the number of officers currently holding MOS 9958 or 9959, it is clear that not all MOS 9958 billets can be filled with an officer with that MOS. Therefore, officers with MOS 9957, or occasionally officers with no acquisition MOS, fill many of the billets. Clearly, all MOS 9958 billets should be filled with officers who have completed a prior acquisition tour. Since the primary monitors assign officers to acquisition billets, it should be less difficult to get a subsequent assignment to an acquisition billet than to a SEP billet. However, the monitors still must balance the needs of other occupational fields with those of acquisition. Therefore, it may be more difficult to assign an officer to additional acquisition tours if that officer's PMOS is short in the senior grades. The need to match the career fields within the AWP to the position categories assigned to acquisition billets further complicates the assignment process. When an officer is assigned to a MOS 9958 billet, the officer is supposed to be certified in the career field associated with the position category of the billet and the monitor must attempt to meet this additional requirement. The career field information is not available from the manpower systems normally used by the monitors. They must access AWSOM to obtain that information.

As noted in the program description section, ideally, a number of Marine officers who are assigned to an acquisition tour as a captain would alternate tours in their PMOS and in acquisition positions thus serving in acquisition billets at each rank. Unfortunately, this ideal situation rarely occurs. The acquisition field is generally not highly sought after, particularly since officers must also maintain competency and competitiveness in their primary career field to be promoted. Serving in the acquisition workforce does not require leaving one's PMOS for as long as participation in SEP, for example, and many acquisition billet MOSs will reflect the

officer's PMOS as well as the acquisition MOS. However, repeated acquisition tours preclude the officer from serving in other career-enhancing B-billets or staff billets. The Marine Corps needs to attract high-quality officers to the acquisition workforce and retain more of them for additional acquisition tours in order to effectively meet current requirements.

3.4.7.2 Recommendations

The Marine Corps receives maximum benefit from officers who participate in the AWP when those officers serve multiple tours in acquisition. Unfortunately, such a career path is not desirable for most officers. As noted below, the requirement that APC members be promoted at a rate equal to or above the overall officer population should help alleviate concerns that acquisition is a "career killer." However, the career goals of many officers include more than regular promotions. Many officers feel that multiple acquisition tours may reduce their chances for senior-level command or other prestigious billets. Other officers view acquisition as "civilian work," not suitable for a warfighter. Unfortunately, necessary efforts to increase the civilian-to-military ratio in the acquisition workforce will only reinforce that view.

The Marine Corps must make a concerted effort to publicize the importance and contributions of service by military officers in the acquisition workforce. Officers who serve in acquisition positions with distinction should be recognized and should be assigned to choice billets within their PMOS between acquisition tours. Such officers should also be given opportunity for top-level school attendance and competitive senior fellowships. Specific recommendations related to promotion and command selection are presented below. However, if quality performance in acquisition positions is recognized and rewarded by selection boards more than just following a traditional career path, more high quality officers will be attracted to the workforce.

3.4.8 Career Impact of AWP Participation

3.4.8.1 Assessment

The DAWIA legislation states, "The Secretary of Defense shall ensure that the qualifications of commissioned officers selected for an Acquisition Corps are such that those officers are expected, as a group, to be promoted at a rate not less than the rate for all line (or the equivalent) officers of the same armed force (both in the zone and below the zone) in the same grade." This places a responsibility on the Services not only to promote acquisition corps (i.e., APC) members at a rate at or above the overall population, but more importantly to select officers for the acquisition corps whose quality will ensure that the required selection rate is achieved.

The promotion requirement for the Marine Corps applies only to lieutenant colonel and higher promotion boards for unrestricted officers since an officer must be at least a major (select) to apply for the APC. Although Marine Corps promotion boards are made aware of the DAWIA requirement and the officers who are members of the APC, the officers are considered along with the general unrestricted population and there is no official selection quota for APC members (with the possible exception of flag-level boards). According to Promotion Branch personnel, individual boards do not always meet the DAWIA requirement and this does not reflect well on the Marine Corps in DoD's eyes. However, on average over time, the Marine Corps appears to be meeting the requirement. Over the past 11 years (encompassing the entire period of the current AWP), the average selection rate of APC members to lieutenant colonel was 70.0%

compared to 63.2% for the entire population. The selection rate to colonel over the same period was almost identical with 45.4% for APC members and 45.2% for the overall population.

As noted in the discussion of IAOP, SEP, and ADP, the career aspirations of many officers go beyond merely being promoted when eligible. Retention and command selection are the two other areas most often cited when discussing career impact. Retention is not an issue for active-duty APC members since the grade requirement for membership ensures that the officers are already augmented. Command selection, however, is a legitimate concern. Unfortunately, as noted previously, the lack of data maintained by M&RA relative to the command selection process precludes analysis of the relative success of APC members in being selected for command. Much of the discussion relative to SEP officers and command selection applies to APC members, with the exception that filling acquisition billets does not necessarily take officers out of their PMOS and they do not have a lengthy period in school. However, it is clear that multiple tours in acquisition billets, particularly for officers in aviation and ground combat arms, mean that the officer will not have held some of the billets more highly favored by the command board.

3.4.8.2 Recommendations

On average, the Marine Corps is meeting the letter of the law by promoting APC members at a rate at or above that of the overall population. However, the rates have been close, particularly for colonel, and some boards have had a shortfall. The study team believes that fulfilling the intent of the DAWIA law requires the Marine Corps to assign high quality officers to acquisition positions, to encourage them to apply for the APC, and to consider an officer's overall quality as a factor when making selections for the APC. The APC selection board should consider promotion potential in addition to whether the applicant meets the acquisition training and experience requirements. With the current shortage of officers with MOS 9958, it may be difficult to reject otherwise qualified candidates, but the board must consider past performance and determine whether the candidate has the potential to fill a CAP in the future.

In addition, the Marine Corps must ensure that service in acquisition billets does not diminish an officer's value in the eyes of promotion boards. Instructions given to promotion and command selection boards should indicate that multiple acquisition tours should not be held against officers. Each selection board for lieutenant colonel and colonel, as well as command selection boards, should have at least one member who is an APC member.

3.4.9 Other Program Aspects

3.4.9.1 Assessment

Another issue that arose during the study team's review of the AWP was the fact that most acquisition billets have the acquisition MOS as the primary billet MOS. In many cases, there is another MOS associated with the billet designating a PMOS requirement or at least an officer category (air or ground). This system of designating billets can create problems in the manpower planning and assignment process because the primary billet MOS is used to determine overall requirements and for comparison against the actual officer inventory. Since almost all officers serving in an MOS 9957 billet are assigned to that billet prior to obtaining MOS 9957 and there is a severe shortage of officers with MOS 9958 compared to the T/O requirement, use of the

acquisition MOSs as primary billet MOSs produces an inaccurate picture of the true situation. MCSC is currently in the process of switching MOSs on many acquisition positions to show the occupational field MOS as the primary billet MOS with the acquisition MOS as an additional billet MOS.

3.4.9.2 Recommendations

M&RA and TFSD should investigate the feasibility and inherent advantages of designating all acquisition billets with a non-acquisition primary billet MOS. For positions without a specific occupational field requirement, the generic "any officer" (e.g., 9910, 9911, etc.) MOSs could be used. This would provide consistency in defining acquisition billets and allow manpower models to consider prior qualification (i.e., PMOS) requirements rather than qualification (i.e., acquisition MOS) that may not be held prior to assignment to the billet. If combined with the earlier recommendation to change non-CAP MOS 9958 billets to MOS 9957, this would produce a structure where all captain billets and some major billets would reflect "MOS 9957 Desired" as an additional billet MOS, other major billets might reflect "MOS 9958 Desired," and all CAP billets would reflect "MOS 9958 Required."

CHAPTER 4 CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The Marine Corps invests a significant amount of time and resources to train and educate the unrestricted officer community. TECOM closely controls and manages PMOS training in accordance with the systems approach to training. Education Command oversees PME and ensures that it remains efficient and effective, providing graduates who meet the requirements of the operating forces. Training Command manages training associated with skill designator MOSs that belong to specific occupational fields, particularly when that training is done by Marine Corps formal learning centers. Training and education for MOSs in the IAOP, SEP, and AWP do not receive the same level of management oversight.

The study team found that the officers who participate in the IAOP (study track) and SEP are receiving a high quality education, albeit at significant government expense. These officers fill billets that are critical to the Marine Corps mission and perform well in those billets. In spite of this, the Marine Corps does not receive the maximum return on investment from these programs and the officers who participate in them sometimes experience negative career impact due to their participation.

The IAOP has made tremendous progress in the past few years, primarily due to the assignment of a full-time IAOP Coordinator in PP&O Department and CMC-level interest in and support for the program. The study team found that deficiencies in the program are primarily associated with requirements identification. There are also opportunities for improvement in the utilization of experience-track officers and the recruitment of Reserve officers for the program. Specific conclusions and recommendations are in chapter 3. The study team recommends that the near-term efforts be focused on continued requirements identification and formalization of the assignment process for IAOP officers.

SEP and ADP have a long history of producing officers with postgraduate degrees who tackle some of the Marine Corps toughest jobs. For many years, these programs attracted high-quality officers who competed for the limited number of program quotas. In recent years, while the quality of program participants has remained high, the number of applicants has dropped to the point where not all quotas are filled. This trend means that some SEP billets cannot be filled with SEP officers and the quality of the participants may begin to suffer as the selection boards choose from a smaller pool of officers. With the exception of the applicants who requested only MOS 9603 and a few PMOS 0602 applicants who could not be selected due to the limitation on selectees with that MOS, a school quota was available for every academically qualified applicant to the recent CY 2003 SEP board. For quality reasons, the board did not select all the applicants, but every rejection resulted in an unfilled quota. Widespread perception that SEP participation is harmful to an officer's career may be a primary cause of the reduced number of applicants. Unfortunately, the FY03 Lieutenant Colonel Selection Board results validated this perception in the eyes of many officers. If the results of the pending FY04 board again reflect a low selection rate for SEP officers, the situation will only become worse. On the requirements side of the program, the recognition more than 2 years ago that a comprehensive SEP billet validation was needed led to the initiation of a major validation effort. Unfortunately, that effort fell behind schedule and stalled.

The study team believes that proactive leadership is the primary need for SEP at this time. The SEP Monitor in MMOA is doing a good job with the day-to-day management of the program, along with his myriad other duties, but he has neither the authority nor the time needed to reinvigorate the program. As an education program, SEP should be managed by TECOM and the resources devoted to its management should be commensurate with the significant investment in the program. Specific conclusions and recommendations are in chapter 3. The study team recommends that TECOM take responsibility for the program immediately and develop a plan to implement the specific recommendations of this study.

The AWP is another program critical to the Marine Corps. The personnel in this congressionally mandated program develop and acquire the combat systems that the operating forces will use to win our nation's battles in the future. Unrestricted officers form only a portion of this program and this study focused only on them. Although officers serving an initial tour in the program receive valuable training and experience, they are only truly effective for approximately half of a 3-year tour. The greatest return on investment for the Marine Corps occurs when officers become part of the APC and serve subsequent acquisition tours. The billet structure supports this assertion since over two-thirds of the officer acquisition billets are designated for APC members (i.e., have BMOS of 9958). Unfortunately, the actual population of officers with acquisition MOSs reflects just the opposite with two-thirds of the officers holding only the entry-level acquisition MOS (MOS 9957). Specific conclusions and recommendations regarding AWP are in chapter 3. The study team recommends that efforts to civilianize billets that do not require uniformed personnel continue and that Marine Corps acquisition organizations redesignate MOS 9958 billets that are not critical acquisition positions in order to reduce the requirement for APC members. Additional measures should be taken to increase the number of acquisition officers who apply for APC membership and serve subsequent acquisition tours.

The study team's analysis efforts were hampered by incomplete data in Marine Corps systems and the lack of data in areas such as command screening. The study team recommends that the Marine Corps take the following steps to ensure that accurate data is available for future analysis in this area:

- Require commands to use the individual billet fields within MCTFS and keep the data in these fields current. The billet MOS, T/O number, and T/O line number fields exist within MCTFS, but are currently useless for analysis due to incomplete and inaccurate content.
- Collect and maintain data, in automated form, on the command selection process and any other processes that impact a Marine officer's career. Without this data, it is impossible to determine the impact career decisions such as SEP or IAOP participation may have on command selection.
- Continue to add records to the MCCOAC database for officers graduating from TBS and update the records currently in the database. This database is invaluable for analysis regarding officer career management.
- If feasible, retroactively update the MOS assignment date fields in MCTFS to reflect the actual date an MOS was awarded. MOSs awarded prior to 1999 all reflect the same date and make it impossible to determine when an officer actually qualified for the MOS.

Although this study investigated the impact on promotion rates of participation in the IAOP and SEP, that was not the primary focus of the study. Limited time and resources precluded the study team from studying this area as thoroughly as desired. There are widespread differences of opinion regarding the career impact of participation in the programs studied, as well as other career decisions that officers must make. Therefore, the study team recommends that a follow-on promotion study be conducted to objectively identify the factors that lead to success in selection for promotion. The results of such a study would be valuable in dispelling false perceptions regarding promotion and could be used to better advise officers in their career planning. The results could also be used to refine the performance evaluation system and adjust promotion board guidance, as necessary.

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APPENDIX C ACRONYMS

ACRONYM	DEFINITION
ADP	Advanced Degree Program
AFIT	Air Force Institute of Technology
ALMAR	All Marine Message
ALMC	Army Logistics Management College
APC	Acquisition Professional Community
APMO	Acquisition Program Management Officer
ASR	Authorized Strength Report
AWP	Acquisition Workforce Program
AWSOM	Acquisition Workforce System of Management
BEEC	Billet Education Evaluation Certificate
CAP	Critical Acquisition Position
CG	Commanding General
CLS	Career Level School
CMC	Commandant of the Marine Corps
CNA	Center for Naval Analyses
CY	Calendar Year
DACM	Director, Acquisition Career Management
DAU	Defense Acquisition University
DAWIA	Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act
DC	Deputy Commandant
DLI	Defense Language Institute
DLPT	Defense Language Proficiency Test
DoD	Department of Defense
DON	Department of the Navy
FAO	Foreign Area Officer
FIT	Florida Institute of Technology
FLPP	Foreign Language Proficiency Pay
FY	Fiscal Year
GCT	General Classification Test
GRE	Graduate Record Examination
HQMC	Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps
IAOP	International Affairs Officer Program
ICT	In-Country Training
ILS	Intermediate Level School
IMA	Individual Mobilization Augmentee
IRMC	Information Resources Management College
M&RA	Manpower and Reserve Affairs Department, HQMC
MARADMIN	Marine Administrative
MARFOR	Marine Forces
MATCOM	Materiel Command
MBA	Master of Business Administration
MCBul	Marine Corps Bulletin
MCCDC	Marine Corps Combat Development Command

ACRONYM	DEFINITION
MCCOAC	Marine Corps Commissioned Officer Accession Career
MCO	Marine Corps Order
MCSC	Marine Corps Systems Command
MCSE	Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer
MCTFS	Marine Corps Total Force System
MEF	Marine Expeditionary Force
MMOA	Officer Assignment Branch, Manpower Management Division, M&RA
MOE	Measure of Effectiveness
MOS	Military Occupational Specialty
MP	Manpower Plans and Policy Division, M&RA
NAVAIRSYSCOM	Naval Air Systems Command
NAWCAD	Naval Air Warfare Command Administrative Detachment
NDU	National Defense University
NPS	Naval Postgraduate School
OccFld	Occupational Field
ODSE	Operational Data Store Enterprise
OSD	Office of the Secretary of Defense
P2T2	Patients, Prisoners, Trainees, and Transients
PAO	Public Affairs Office; Public Affairs Officer
PCS	Permanent Change of Station
PLU	Unified Command and International Issues Branch, Strategy and Plans Division, PP&O Department, HQMC
PME	Professional Military Education
PMOS	Primary Military Occupational Specialty
PP&O	Plans, Policy, and Operations Department, HQMC
RAO	Regional Affairs Officer
RO	Reviewing Officer
RS	Reporting Senior
SAE	Service Acquisition Executive
SAM	Systems Acquisition Management
SECNAVINST	Secretary of the Navy Instruction
SEP	Special Education Program
SEP (Law)	Special Education Program (Law)
T/MR	Table of Manpower Requirements
T/O	Table of Organization
TBS	The Basic School
TECOM	Training and Education Command
TFDW	Total Force Data Warehouse
TFSD	Total Force Structure Division, MCCDC
TFSO	Total Force Structure Owner
TFSP	Total Force Structure Process
TOCR	Table of Organization Change Request
VTUAV	Vertical Takeoff Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
WWW	Worldwide Web

APPENDIX D MARINE CORPS MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY (MOS) SYSTEM

The following information was extracted from MCO P1200.7X and provides a brief synopsis of the Marine Corps Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) System. For further details, refer to the MOS Manual (MCO P1200.7X), which is available through the publications section of the official Marine Corps web site (http://www.usmc.mil).

D.1 MOS Background

MOSs are assigned to all Marines to identify the skills of the individual Marines and enable the efficient classification, assignment, and utilization of manpower resources. MOSs are also assigned to billets in Tables of Organization (T/Os) to identify the skill requirements of the billet. An MOS is a four digit numeric identifier where the first two digits specify the occupational field (OccFld) and the last two describe a group of related duties and job performance tasks within the OccFld that extend over one or more grades. Both the OccFld and the individual MOSs have descriptive titles. For example, OccFld 03 is Infantry and MOS 0302 is an Infantry Officer. Every Marine has a Primary MOS (PMOS) and may hold one or more other MOSs as well.

D.2 MOS Terminology

Because the official terminology regarding MOSs has changed over time, Marines commonly misuse many of the terms. For example, "secondary MOS," is not an official term in the MOS System. Marines often use "secondary MOS" when referring to an MOS held by a Marine which is not the PMOS for that Marine, nor is it assigned as a PMOS to any Marine. The correct terminology for such an MOS is "skill designator." The term "additional MOS" is often used to refer to any MOS held by a Marine other than the Marine's PMOS. Officially, only an MOS authorized for assignment as a PMOS can be an "additional MOS."

The following definitions (as applied to unrestricted officers) are from the current edition of the MOS Manual:

- **Primary MOS (PMOS):** Identifies the primary occupational classification (MOS) of a Marine. (Example: 0302, Infantry Officer)

- **Additional MOS (AMOS):** Any existing PMOS awarded to a Marine who already holds another PMOS. (Example: 0202, Intelligence Officer, awarded to an officer with PMOS of 0302)

- **Skill Designator:** A non-primary MOS. May be an identifying MOS (see below) or within a regular OccFld. Skill designators within OccFlds are usually low density MOSs that reflect possession of additional OccFld-related skills beyond the skills associated with a PMOS in that OccFld. A skill designator MOS within an OccFld begins with the two digit number for that OccFld. For example, MOS 9985, C4I Planner, is an identifying MOS while MOS 0303, Light-Armored Vehicle Officer, is a skill designator within OccFld 03 related to MOS 0302.

- **Billet MOS (BMOS):** The MOS associated with a billet in a Table of Organization (T/O). A Marine will also have a BMOS (only one at a time) that corresponds to the billet to which the Marine is currently assigned. The Marine's BMOS may or may not correspond to an MOS actually held by that Marine. Personnel in transit or who are students in a permanent change of station (PCS) school should have a BMOS of 0000.

- **Reporting MOS:** An MOS in the series 9700-9999 assigned to a billet and not an individual (except as a BMOS). Reporting MOSs are a subset of Billet MOSs representing those MOSs which are not assigned as individual MOSs. (Example: MOS 9910, Unrestricted Officer) Reporting MOSs are also called billet designators.

- **Identifying MOS:** An MOS in the series 9700-9999 that is used to identify the skills of an individual or, in the case of MOS 9901, to identify an officer who has yet to be assigned a PMOS. Some identifying MOSs are PMOSs and others are skill designators. The only unrestricted officer PMOSs in this series are for Basic Officer (9901), General Officer (9903), and colonels (9904, 9906, 9907, and 9914).

- **Special Education Program (SEP) MOS:** An MOS in OccFld 96 that identifies an officer who has completed postgraduate education requirements for the specific MOS. SEP MOSs are a subset of skill designator MOSs.

D.3 Individual MOSs

Until recently, Marine officers could carry a maximum of three MOSs in their Marine Corps Total Force System (MCTFS) record with a separate field to record the officer's BMOS. When an officer had three MOSs in the system and earned a fourth, one of the three was dropped to add the new MOS. MCTFS was modified in October 1998 to remove this restriction, but no attempt was made to reenter the MOSs previously dropped. Therefore, the current automated system does not accurately reflect all MOSs awarded to officers currently on active duty. Each MOS also has a date associated with it to indicate the date the MOS was awarded. When the new fields were added to MCTFS, all existing MOSs at that time were given an assignment date of 12 April 1999 so that field is not a reliable indicator of how long the Marine has held the MOS.

MOSs are normally awarded to Marines based on successful completion of training or education specific to that MOS (this is particularly true for PMOSs). Some MOSs also require a period of practical experience in the skill area and a few (non-PMOSs) are awarded based on experience alone. With few exceptions (noted in the ACTS Manual, MCO P1000.6G) unrestricted active duty officers' MOSs are entered in the MCTFS by CMC (MMOA) after qualifications for the MOS have been certified.

D.4 Billet MOSs

Although every T/O billet has a principal MOS associated with it, many billets also have a second MOS and sometimes a third requirement. The second and third requirements, when they exist, are either necessary (denoted by a N) or desired (denoted by a D). For example, a billet with the MOS combination 9650/N9958/D9911 requires an Operations Analyst (9650) who is also an Acquisition Management Officer (9958) and a ground officer (9911) is desired. A billet

with the MOS combination 9646/D0602 requires a Data Systems Specialist (9646) with a desired PMOS or AMOS of Command and Control Systems Officer (0602).

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APPENDIX E SKILL DESIGNATORS ASSIGNABLE TO UNRESTRICTED OFFICERS

According to the MOS Manual, MCO P1200.7W, the following military occupational specialties (MOSs) are appropriate for assignment to unrestricted Marine officers. The MOSs are listed by category. The first three categories contain the MOSs associated with the three major programs addressed by the study. MOSs in these categories were automatically included in the study.

Special Education Program (SEP) and Advanced Degree Program (ADP)

MOS Title	MOS Code
Education Officer (ADP)	9602
Leadership Development Specialist (SEP at Naval Academy)	9603
Aeronautical Engineer (SEP/ADP)	9620
Chemical Engineer (Not currently available)	9622
Electronics Engineer (SEP/ADP)	9624
Modeling And Simulation Officer (SEP)	9625
Ordnance Systems Engineer (SEP)	9626
Industrial Engineer (ADP)	9630
Environmental Engineering Management Officer (SEP at AFIT/ADP)	9631
Nuclear Engineer (Not currently available)	9632
Electronic Warfare Systems Officer (SEP)	9634
Manpower Management Officer (SEP/ADP)	9640
Financial Management Specialist (SEP/ADP)	9644
Data Systems Specialist (SEP/ADP)	9646
Management, Data Systems Officer (SEP/ADP)	9648
Operations Analyst (SEP/ADP)	9650
Defense Systems Analyst (SEP)	9652
Contracting Officer (SEP)	9656
Systems Acquisition Management (SAM) Officer (SEP)	9657
Command, Control, Communications, Computers, and Intelligence (C4I) Systems Officer (SEP)	9658
Material Management Officer (SEP/ADP)	9662
Space Operations Officer (SEP)	9666
Statistics Officer (SEP/ADP)	9670
Public Affairs Management Officer (ADP)	9674
Historian (ADP)	9678
Human Resources Management Specialist (ADP)	9680
Master Of International Law (SEP at Civilian School/ADP)	9683
Master Of Environmental Law (SEP at Civilian School/ADP)	9684
Master Of Labor Law (SEP at Civilian School/ADP)	9685
Master Of Procurement Law (SEP at Civilian School/ADP)	9686
Master Of Criminal Law (SEP at Civilian School/ADP)	9687
Master Of Law (General) (SEP at Civilian School/ADP)	9688

International Affairs Officer Program (IAOP)

MOS Title	MOS Code
Regional Affairs Officer - Latin America	9821
Regional Affairs Officer - Former Soviet Union	9822
Regional Affairs Officer - Peoples Republic Of China	9823
Regional Affairs Officer - Middle East/North Africa	9824
Regional Affairs Officer - Sub-Saharan Africa	9825
Regional Affairs Officer - Southwest Asia	9826
Regional Affairs Officer - Western Europe	9827
Regional Affairs Officer - Eastern Asia (Excluding Peoples Republic Of China)	9828
Regional Affairs Officer - Eastern Europe (Excluding Former Soviet Union)	9829
Basic Foreign Area Officer	9940
Foreign Area Officer-Latin America	9941
Foreign Area Officer-Former Soviet Union	9942
Foreign Area Officer-Peoples Republic Of China	9943
Foreign Area Officer-Middle East/North Africa	9944
Foreign Area Officer-Sub-Saharan Africa	9945
Foreign Area Officer-Southwest Asia	9946
Foreign Area Officer-Western Europe	9947
Foreign Area Officer-East Asia (Excluding Peoples Republic Of China)	9948
Foreign Area Officer-Eastern Europe (Excluding Former Soviet Union)	9949

Acquisition Workforce Program (AWP)

MOS Title	MOS Code
Acquisition Professional Candidate	9957
Acquisition Management Officer (AQMO)	9958

The following category contains skill designator MOS that are associated with specific occupational fields. These MOSs indicate additional training or qualifications in that occupational field beyond those for PMOSs in that field.

Occupational Field Skill Designator MOSs

MOS Title	MOS Code
Light-Armored Vehicle (LAV) Officer	0303
Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) Plans/Operations Officer	0502
Civil Affairs Officer	0503
Naval Surface Fire Support Planner	0840
Naval Gunfire Spotter	0845
Facilities Management Officer	1330
Planning, Programming, And Budgeting System (PPBS) Officer	3450
Historical Officer	4330
Aeronautical Engineer	6005
Weapons And Tactics Instructor-Air Control	7277
Mission Commander	7315
Forward Air Controller/Air Officer	7502

Occupational Field Skill Designator MOSs

MOS Title	MOS Code
Weapons And Tactics Instructor	7577
V/STOL Landing Signal Officer	7589
Landing Signal Officer Trainee	7590
Landing Signal Officer	7593/7594
Test Pilot/Flight Test Project Officer	7595
Aviation Safety Officer	7596

The following category contains skill designator MOSs not associated with a specific occupational field. Most of these MOSs are available to officers in any occupational field. The MOS Manual contains the specific MOS requirements.

Identifier MOSs

MOS Title	MOS Code
Joint Specialty Officer Nominee	9701
Joint Specialty Officer (JSO)	9702
Special Services Officer	9913
Special Technical Operations (Officer)	9935
Substance Abuse Control Officer	9936
Combatant Diver Qualified (Officer)	9952
Parachutist/Combatant Diver Qualified (Officer)	9953
Hazardous Material/Hazardous Waste (HM/HW) Officer	9954
Psychological Operations Officer	9955
Ground Safety Specialist (Officer)	9956
Parachutist Officer	9962
Vertical Takeoff Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Officer, VTUAV	9974
Information Computer Security Specialist (Officer)	9975
Helicopter Officer, AN-1Z/UH-1Y	9976
Surveillance Sensor Officer	9980
Tactical Data Systems Specialist (Officer)	9981
C4I Planner	9985

The following skill designator MOSs were eliminated from consideration for the reasons noted in the body of the study report.

Skill Designator MOSs Not Considered by Study

MOS Title	MOS Code
Communication Officer	2502
Linguist (55 separate MOSs and languages)	2711-2794
Data Systems Officer	4002
Pilot VMFA F/A-18D Qualified	7527
Pilot C-9 Qualified	7551
Pilot TC-4C Qualified	7552
Pilot C-20 Qualified	7553

Skill Designator MOSs Not Considered by Study

MOS Title	MOS Code
Pilot UC-35 Qualified	7554
Pilot CT-39 Qualified	7559
Pilot VMAW	7592
Special Assignment Officer	9905
Fixed-Wing Transport Aircraft Specialist, KC-130J (Officer)	9973

APPENDIX F PROBLEMS CITED WITH NON-CRITICAL MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTIES

The study team determined the following military occupational specialties (MOSs) to be non-critical for the purposes of this study. However, during the initial MOS survey, the MOS specialist cited some management problems with the MOS. The information on the problems is listed here in case further investigation is warranted.

MOS	Problem(s) cited
0502	Many more T/O billets than officers holding MOS. MOS specialist indicated difficulty in getting officers to obtain MOS.
0503	OccFld 05 MOS specialist claimed that this MOS should not be in OccFld 05.
1330	MOS specialist stated there is a shortage of officers to fill billets, although current population does exceed T/O requirement.
7315	Number of officers holding MOS is less than T/O billets. Listed MOS specialist had no knowledge of the MOS. An officer in VMU with the MOS was contacted and stated that they would like to get more help from HQMC on managing the MOS.
7595	MOS specialist has some concerns with adequate number of school seats, number of officers to fill billets, and promotion opportunity. This MOS is tied closely to the acquisition program (aviation) as most MOS 7595 billets are also acquisition billets.
9955	T/O billets exceed population. MOS specialist stated that MOS is not currently used and should be redefined for a different purpose.
9980	T/O billets exceed population. MOS specialist is concerned.

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APPENDIX G CURRENT SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM PROCESS

Time (Approx.)	Action/Decision	Made by	Product	Goes to	Comments
May-June	Solicit applications	SEP Monitor	MCBUL 1560 (by MARADMIN)	Entire USMC	Quotas determined by SEP monitor.
May-June	Send request to publish info on applying to SEP	SEP Monitor	E-mail	Base/Station PAO	Non-required action. Current monitor uses to get word out.
August	Applications due	Applicant	Application by mail	SEP Monitor	
August	Eligibility review	SEP Monitor	None	N/A	SEP monitor eliminates applicants who do not meet eligibility criteria per SEP order.
August	Applications sent for academic review	SEP Monitor	Applications	School to attend	Review on basis of transcripts and experience.
August	Primary monitor review	Primary monitor	Recommendation	SEP Monitor	Primary monitor can recommend non-selection, but can't veto.
September	Academic approvals and disapprovals	School	Results of academic review	SEP Monitor	Disapproval will remove from consideration for that MOS.
September	Selection Board Precept	MMOA	Precept	Selection Board	May provide selection limits for PMOSs.
October	SEP Selection	Selection Board	Selection list	SEP Monitor	May or may not assign selectees to individual MOSs.
October	Assign MOS to selectees	SEP Monitor	Selection list with MOSs	N/A	Only if board does not assign MOSs.
November	Announce results	SEP Monitor	MCBul 1520 (by MARADMIN)	Entire USMC	
November	Accept/Decline	Selectee	AA Form or e-mail	SEP Monitor	
November	Solicit applications for supplemental board (if required)	SEP Monitor	MCBUL 1560 (by MARADMIN)	Entire USMC	Need determined by SEP monitor based on regular board results and selectees accepting.
February	Supplemental board applications due	Applicant	Application by mail	SEP Monitor	
February	Supplemental board eligibility review	SEP Monitor	None	N/A	SEP monitor will eliminate applicants who do not meet eligibility criteria per SEP order.
February	Supplemental board applications sent for academic review	SEP Monitor	Applications	School to attend	Send only those not reviewed by regular board. Review on basis of transcripts and experience.
February	Supplemental board primary monitor review	Primary monitor	Recommendation	SEP Monitor	Primary monitor can recommend non-selection, but can't veto.

Critical Secondary Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) Study

Time (Approx.)	Action/Decision	Made by	Product	Goes to	Comments
February	Supplemental board precept	MMOA	Precept	Supplemental board	May be different from precept for regular board.
February	Supplemental selections	Supplemental Board	Selection list	SEP Monitor	May or may not assign MOSs.
February	Assign MOS to supplemental selectees	SEP Monitor	Selection list with MOSs	N/A	Only if board does not assign MOSs.
March	Announce results	SEP Monitor	MCBul 1560 (by MARADMIN)	Entire USMC	
March	Accept/Decline	Selectee	AA Form or e-mail	SEP Monitor	
Jan-Jun	Issue orders to school	SEP Monitor	Orders	Selectees	Orders written depending on school start date.
As ordered	Report to school	Selectee	N/A	N/A	Will be sometime in CY following regular board.
October	Visit students at school	SEP Monitor	N/A	N/A	Talk to students who will graduate within a year to get duty preferences.
October	Provide duty preferences	Student	Duty preferences	SEP Monitor	Based on billets provided by monitor.
Jan-Jun	Issue orders to utilization tour	SEP Monitor	Orders	Student	Orders written based on graduation date.
As ordered	Report to utilization tour	SEP graduate	N/A	N/A	Standard 3-year tour in specific billet.
3 years after tour start	Reassign to non-SEP billet	Primary monitor	Orders	SEP officer	Officer normally has 1 year of obligated service left.
End of obligated service	Resign/Retire or stay in	SEP officer	Resignation/Retirement request, if applicable.	MMOA	No action required if officer is staying in.
After 1 or more post-SEP tours	Request to serve another utilization tour	SEP officer	Any form of communication	Primary monitor	Almost always a voluntary request.
Receipt of request	Release to SEP monitor, if approved	Primary monitor	Verbal or memo	SEP Monitor	At discretion of primary monitor with few exceptions.
When appropriate	Issue orders to 2nd or later utilization tour	SEP monitor	Orders	SEP officer	

Additional Comments:

Rarely do students fail to complete the school. If they have academic problems, there are three courses of action available: Additional time in the same course of study, move to another (less technical) course of study, or drop from the program. The second option is the one usually taken.

Students who successfully complete the course work but are not granted a master's degree due to failure to complete a thesis are still granted the SEP MOS and are assigned to a utilization tour.

APPENDIX H POSSIBLE SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM PROBLEMS

This appendix provides detailed documentation of the study team's analysis of possible problems associated with the Special Education Program (SEP) and Advanced Degree Program (ADP). The material in this appendix supports the assessments and recommendations made in the main body of the report. The study team developed the list of possible problems through interviews, review of existing literature, analysis of data from Marine Corps personnel systems, and SEP/ADP Survey results.

The following categories are used to assess the possible causes noted:

Rejected – Evidence/facts indicate this is not a cause.
Unlikely – No evidence that this is a cause and it does not seem reasonable.
Possible – A possible cause not supported by hard evidence.
Likely – Some evidence indicates this is a cause.
Verified – Evidence or facts establish this as a cause.

1. Problem: There is no single advocate in the Marine Corps for the Special Education Program (SEP) and Advanced Degree Program (ADP).

a. Basis for problem and verification: This is a known fact. A recent series of e-mails at the three-star general/ACMC level has highlighted the problem. Most of the responsibilities for the program currently fall on the SEP Monitor located in MMOA. Although these are education programs, Training and Education Command does not have overall oversight and has very little to do with them. Specific SEP MOSs have MOS managers (typically the HQMC or MCCDC department with cognizance over the functional area), but they are concerned only with their MOS and requirements.

b. Possible causes/discussion: It is unclear why Training and Education Command does not have a more significant role in these programs. The programs have existed for a long time (at least 40 years) and historically have had few management problems. There were sufficient applicants for school quotas and most SEP billets were filled. Prior to 1990 there did not appear to be significant concern about adverse career impact as the result of SEP participation. Recently problems have arisen with the programs that have led to an examination of their management. SEP school quotas have risen while overall Marine Corps officer population has decreased. There have been shortfalls in the quotas filled by the SEP Boards the past few years requiring that supplemental boards be held. Even with the supplemental boards, not all quotas have been filled. There is a widespread perception in the officer community that SEP participation has an adverse career impact. Reduced officer promotion flow points leave little time in a career to pursue a graduate degree with a utilization tour that takes an officer away from his PMOS for a period of 5 years or more. With 170-190 officers in graduate school at any given time, the programs contribute significantly to the "Prisoners, Patients, Transient, and Training (P2T2)" population, reducing the number of T/O billets filled. The remainder of this document contains a number of specific problems (some possible and some confirmed) related to these programs. The

solution of many of these problems will depend on having a strong advocate for the programs with the authority to make changes to them.

c. Possible solution: Designate a single advocate for graduate education programs in the Marine Corps and give that advocate the authority to implement changes to the programs to better meet the needs of the Marine Corps while keeping costs down. Because these are education programs, the recommended advocate is Commanding General, Training and Education Command, or his superior, Commanding General, Marine Corps Combat Development Command.

2. Problem: There are an insufficient number of available SEP-qualified officers to fill all SEP billets.

a. Basis for problem and verification: Currently the SEP Monitor plans to fill virtually all SEP billets with officers graduating from school and school quotas are generated based on this assumption. Historically, applications by qualified officers for some MOSs have fallen short of requirements. When this happens, there will be a future shortfall in available graduates to fill billets. SEP officers who have already completed one utilization tour may fill these billets, but this is difficult because the SEP Monitor does not control assignments for these officers and must request their release by their primary monitor. The primary monitor is usually reluctant to release officers for subsequent utilization tours because they are needed to fill PMOS or B-billets and the monitor does not receive another officer to assign in their place when they are released. Current (December 2002) fill rates for SEP billets are 94% of staffing goal and 92% of ASR. This includes a few SEP billets that are filled by non-SEP officers.

b. Possible causes

(1) There are insufficient qualified applicants to fill quotas for some MOSs.
Assessment: Verified.
Discussion: According to the SEP monitor, many applicants for the more technical MOSs fail to achieve the required Academic Profile Code for the curriculum requested. In some cases, this has resulted in the number of quotas for an MOS exceeding the number of qualified applicants. Even if each individual MOS has enough qualified applicants, those applicants have generally applied for more than one MOS causing an overall shortfall in the number of school quotas that can be filled.

(a) The officer population does not contain sufficient qualified individuals.

1. Requirements are too stringent.
Assessment: Likely for some MOSs.
Discussion: This appears to be the case for MOS 9631 (Environmental Management), currently offered through SEP at AFIT. The AFIT curriculum is for Environmental Engineering and their academic acceptance requirements are significant. Of the 18 survey respondents with MOS 9631, eight attended AFIT and 10 attended other schools through ADP. In the FY02 SEP boards, there were six MOS 9631 quotas and no qualified applicants.

Possible solutions: Review requirements for MOS 9631 billets and determine if engineering is a requirement or if an environmental management curriculum, as offered at many civilian institutions will suffice. Also, investigate whether AFIT offers a less technical curriculum in this area leading to a management vice engineering degree.

2. There are too many quotas compared to candidate population.
   Assessment: Unlikely.
   Discussion: The Marine Corps currently has over 10,000 officers eligible by grade for participation in SEP/ADP. Less than 1,000 officers on active duty currently have a SEP MOS. There are normally around 100-120 SEP quotas to fill each year, requiring less than 2% of the eligible officers to apply.

(b) Qualified applicants are not applying.

1. Officers do not know about the program.
   Assessment: Possible.
   Discussion: Survey responses indicated that some officers would have applied earlier had they known about the program. In addition, a majority of survey respondents indicated that career counselors and primary monitors had a neutral or negative view of SEP suggesting that they are not informing officers about the program. Information about the program is currently disseminated through a Marine Corps order and the annual MARADMIN message soliciting applications. The current SEP Monitor does notify base PAOs when the MARADMIN is released so that they can publicize it if they desire, but it is unknown how many actually do.
   Possible solutions: Establish a more proactive advertising effort for the SEP program. Consider sending letters to individual officers with high potential for success (strong performance in PMOS, high GCT, high graduate at TBS, technical undergraduate degree, etc.) informing them about the program and inviting them to apply.

2. The program or available MOSs does not suit their interests.
   Assessment: Possible.
   Discussion: This is a personal preference issue, although SEP/ADP cover a wide range of graduate study areas. A popular area that has not been available in the past is Master of Business Administration (MBA), but NPS has just started an MBA curriculum. Many officers are not interested in pursuing a master's degree on a full-time basis.
   Possible solutions: Better publicity about the curricula available may help, but the Marine Corps must accept the fact that the SEP/ADP is not for everyone.

3. They have misperceptions about the program.
   Assessment: Likely.

Discussion: Survey responses indicate that many misperceptions regarding the SEP/ADP continue to exist. Most of the misperceptions relate to the career impact of participation in the program. This problem will be addressed in detail later.
Possible solutions: Use the vehicles read by most officers (*Marine Corps Gazette, Marine Corps Times, Marines Magazine*, etc.) to pass the truth about the programs. Consider having CMC publish a White Letter or ALMAR highlighting the value and contribution of the programs to the Marine Corps and encouraging senior officers to recommend them to highly qualified subordinates.

4. They do not believe they are eligible to apply when they actually are (e.g., tuition assistance participants).
   Assessment: Possible.
   Discussion: One officer mentioned this problem, but there is no evidence that it is widespread.
   Possible solutions: Disseminate more complete and accurate information about the programs.

5. It is too difficult to apply.
   Assessment: Unlikely.
   Discussion: Other than MOS 9631, which requires taking the GRE, application to SEP is not difficult. Application to ADP is harder because the applicants must apply for acceptance to the school first, but it is still not onerous.

6. They do not think they will be selected for the program.
   Assessment: Possible.
   Discussion: Competition for some MOSs, mostly non-technical, is high and some officers may not feel they are competitive. Officers interested in the more technical curricula may feel that they are not technically qualified.
   Possible solutions: Encourage officers to apply anyway since the application process is not difficult. Those who apply for technical curricula and do not have strong technical undergraduate background should also include non-technical choices (the chances are they will get the more technical choice if academically qualified). The programs should be competitive since that generally attracts better-qualified officers. Recommend that interested officers talk to the SEP Monitor and/or SEP MOS Specialist about the program.

7. They are advised not to apply for SEP.
   Assessment: Likely.
   Discussion: Survey responses indicated that students who attended school in the past 5 years were provided the most negative advice regarding SEP by career planners followed closely by primary monitors. Only 23% and 50% of these respondents, respectively, sought advice from these sources. Of the same respondents, 95% sought advice from senior officers regarding SEP and they were evenly divided on whether the advice was negative or positive. These results reflect the experience of only those officers who applied and were selected. One can only surmise that many officers who received similar advice chose not to

apply. The respondents overwhelming cited "adverse career impact" as the negative advice they received.
Possible solutions: Analysis of promotion statistics and interviews with promotion board members indicated that SEP need not have an adverse impact on promotions if the officer plans participation to ensure that PMOS credibility is maintained. When career counselors advise officers regarding program participation, they should consider the officer's career aspirations and proper career timing in order to avoid adverse career impact. Primary monitors in the current system have a vested interest in officers NOT going to SEP, and this may bias their advice. Senior officers are also prone to pass on the common misperception of SEP as a career killer. Senior officers also need to be educated about the pros and cons of SEP participation and advise the potential SEP applicant based on his or her personal career aspirations. To maintain PMOS credibility, officers should be advised to select a SEP specialty as closely related to their PMOS as possible. The attitude of primary monitors may change if they are responsible for filling SEP billets rather than a separate SEP monitor.

8. They do not want to incur the service obligation.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: The 6-year commitment (2 years of school plus a 4 year obligation) is significant for officers who have not decided to make the Marine Corps a career. However, the study team feels that there are enough career-oriented officers in the Corps that this is not a major impediment. Less than 10% of the survey respondents would not have applied for the program if the service obligation had been 5 years rather than 4.
Possible solutions: No solution proposed.

9. They prefer other means to obtain master's degree or already have one.
Assessment: Likely.
Discussion: This cause may have impact on the number of officers who apply for SEP based on the significant number of Marine Corps officers (2,633 of which 545 have a SEP MOS) whose records currently reflect a master's degree or higher education level. This data is somewhat suspect, however, as the records for approximately one-third of officers with a SEP MOS reflect an education level below master's degree. If this is characteristic of the overall population, than even more officers hold a master's degree than the data indicate. Assuming that most officers who already hold a master's degree would not be interested in SEP (although they are not automatically excluded from participation), the size of the potential applicant pool would be reduced.
Possible solutions: Inform the officer population that possession of a master's degree does not necessarily preclude participation in SEP. If the master's degree already held meets the criteria for a SEP MOS, encourage the officer to apply for the SEP MOS and possible assignment to a SEP billet. This may save sending another officer to school.

10. They think it will adversely affect their career.

Assessment: Likely.
Discussion: See comments in paragraph 2b(1)(b)7. This view is a common perception, based on survey responses. However, it is not necessarily true. The truth of this depends on the individual's career aspirations. While participation in SEP may have some impact on command screening and the potential to eventually become a flag officer, if timed right it should not adversely impact promotion to lieutenant colonel or colonel. The discussion in Paragraph 10 provides a more detailed analysis of this problem.
Possible solutions: Get the word out better to dispel misperceptions and provide better advice to potential applicants regarding career planning. See also the solutions listed in paragraph 2b(1)(b)7.

(c) Ground combat arms and aviation OccFlds have relatively low number of applicants compared to other OccFlds.
Assessment: Verified.
Discussion: Infantry officers and aviators have the lowest SEP participation rate of all OccFlds. The artillery and tank and amphibious assault vehicle OccFlds have participation rates close to the overall average. Since MOSs in these OccFlds generally have no shortage in the field grade ranks or fewer shortages than many support MOSs, an increased participation in SEP by these officers would reduce the burden on other OccFlds. It would make the more senior officers in these MOSs more available for additional utilization tours.

1. SEP is considered an undesirable non-PMOS tour.
Assessment: Likely.
Discussion: Survey respondents from combat arms and aviation fields indicated that this was true for several reasons. First, the SEP MOSs do not relate closely to their PMOS (unlike some of the support MOSs); therefore, they get no PMOS credibility from SEP participation. Second, the 5-year period that they are out of their PMOS is too long and puts them behind their peers. Aviators, in particular, feel they are disadvantaged when they are out of the cockpit for that long. Third, other "B-billet" tours are considered more career enhancing for combat arms MOSs.
Possible solutions: Offer an option to SEP applicants to commit to a 5-year vice 4-year service obligation following school and allow them to return to their PMOS for 2 years before performing the utilization tour.

2. SEP education is viewed as having little or no benefit for PMOS.
Assessment: Likely.
Discussion: Fewer survey respondents from the combat arms and aviation OccFlds indicated that they applied for SEP to advance their knowledge in their PMOS than other OccFlds. This reason was listed by 11% of the ground combat arms officers and 18% of the aviators compared to 40% by all respondents.
Possible solutions: There is little that can be done to modify SEP curricula to be more aligned with these PMOSs; although, some curricula may provide education that is very valuable to skills required by field grade officers in these fields. A

good example is Operations Research. It covers analytic reasoning and decision-making skills that can improve the effectiveness of high-level decision makers. This information should be disseminated to potential applicants in these fields as well as senior leaders who advise and evaluate these officers.

(2) Quotas are higher than necessary.

(a) Most officers complete only one utilization tour in a career.
Assessment: Likely.
Discussion: The Marine Corps has not historically tracked the number of SEP officers who have completed more than one utilization tour in a career, but the current system is not designed to depend on or even accommodate additional utilization tours. Quotas for SEP selection boards are computed based on filling all billets with newly graduated officers. SEP officers are assigned by the SEP Monitor immediately upon graduation from school for one 3-year tour and are then returned to the primary monitors for subsequent assignments. If an the SEP Monitor desires to assign an officer to an additional utilization tour (normally at the officer's specific request), he/she must ask the officer's primary monitor for permission. If the primary monitor releases that officer, the SEP Monitor rarely has another officer to "trade," so the primary monitor has one less officer to fill allocated requirements. Less than 16% of survey respondents who have completed their initial utilization tour are serving in or have served in more than one utilization billet. There is a desire among SEP officers to serve more than one utilization tour. Less than 7% of the respondents who have graduated from school indicated that they would not want to serve another SEP tour under any circumstances while over 65% indicated a desire to serve at least one more tour (if it would not adversely impact their career).
Possible solutions: Determine which SEP billets require or would benefit from the experience and seniority of a second utilization tour officer. Make primary monitors responsible for assignment to these billets, or preferably to all SEP billets, so they have an incentive to assign officers. Based on the level of interest shown, volunteers may be available to serve most, if not all, second tour billets.

(b) Some billets do not really require a SEP degree.
Assessment: Likely.
Discussion: Survey respondents were asked whether a graduate degree was necessary to perform the duties of their utilization tour billet. Seven percent of respondents said it was unnecessary and 21% said it was helpful, but not required. The recent billet validation survey conducted by Manpower attempted to determine which specific billets do not require a SEP MOS. The results of that survey are not yet available, but preliminary results indicate a potential reduction of over 37 SEP billets (i.e., billets which would be deleted or converted to a non-SEP MOS).
Possible solutions: Complete the SEP billet validation and implement the results. Future billet validation efforts should also look closely at the billet requirements and not just require resubmission of the BEEC.

3. **Problem: SEP participation exacerbates shortages in some PMOSs.**

a. Basis for problem and verification: Manpower planners have verified this problem. MOS 0602 is the best example of this problem. It is critically short in all field grade ranks, yet it contributes the most officers (by percentage of PMOS) to SEP. The problem has become so acute that the SEP selection boards for the past 2 years were given a limit on the number of MOS 0602 officers who could be selected. On the most recent board, this limit reduced the total number of quotas that were filled by four officers. Other under-populated MOSs (e.g., 0202) have the same problem to a lesser extent.

b. Possible causes

(1) The PMOS has shortage problems apart from SEP.
Assessment: Verified.
Discussion: This is true for a number of PMOSs. SEP participation by officers in these MOSs exacerbates the problem by removing them from their PMOS for 5 years. Reducing the number of officers selected for SEP reduces, but does not eliminate, the shortage problem.
Possible solutions: Shortage problems not caused by SEP are beyond the scope of this study. However, the Status of the Force 0602 review conducted recently identified some possible solutions which would provide alternate means of advanced training for MOS 0602 and potentially reduce the number of related (MOS 9646 and 9648) billets.

(2) A disproportionate number of officers apply from some PMOSs.
Assessment: Verified.
Discussion: In two OccFlds (06 and 34) the percentage of SEP officers on active duty is more than twice the Marine Corps average of 5%. This reflects only the officers actually selected rather than those who have applied, but the study team expects that the number of applicants from those OccFlds would also be higher.

(a) SEP is viewed as advanced training for their PMOS.
Assessment: Verified.
Discussion: Survey results clearly indicate that this is the case. When asked their reasons for applying to SEP, 76% of respondents with PMOS 0602 listed "to improve PMOS skills," compared to an overall average of 40%. Respondents in four other OccFlds (Supply, Admin, Finance, and Logistics) also listed this reason over 50% of the time.
Possible solutions: Alternate training for PMOSs is beyond the scope of this study, but the aforementioned SOF 0602 review addressed this problem for MOS 0602. If advanced training is required to meet the requirements of a PMOS, it should not be accomplished directly through SEP (although SEP education can obviously enhance many officers' PMOS skills). The purpose of SEP education is to prepare officers to fill SEP billets.

(b) Officers in that MOS are technically oriented.
Assessment: Likely.

Discussion: Officers from more technical OccFlds are more likely to apply for SEP in general and technical SEP disciplines in particular. This is not surprising since their interests lie in the areas that SEP encompasses. (Aviators are an exception because their lengthy training and the flying demands of their MOS make it more difficult to participate in SEP).
Possible solutions: This by itself is not necessarily a problem, as these officers are needed to fill the quotas for technical MOSs that have fewer qualified applicants. The problem arises when these officers begin to consider SEP as THE advanced training for their PMOS (See paragraph 3b(2)(a) above). One solution is to identify other sources of advanced training for these officers and more encourage officers in non-technical MOSs who have technical undergraduate education to apply for technical SEP disciplines.

(c) Other duty alternatives are less desirable.
Assessment: Unlikely.
Discussion: A related question was asked on the survey and officers in MOSs with low participation rates actually listed this reason more frequently than officers in MOSs with high participation rates.

(d) Their OccFld views SEP participation as beneficial to career.
Assessment: Likely.
Discussion: Although this question was not asked directly on the survey, two questions were asked about the attitude of the respondent's peer and senior officers towards SEP participation (one dealt with advice prior to application and the other with current attitude). Assuming that respondents based their answer primarily on seniors and peers within their own OccFld, a generally positive attitude would indicate that SEP is considered more beneficial to officers in that field. Responses were somewhat mixed (the current attitude towards SEP overall tends to be more negative than the advice received when applying), but the responses to these questions by support MOSs were positive (or less negative), while those by combat arms officers and aviators were very negative. Based on the slightly lower than average promotion rates to lieutenant colonel for combat arms and aviator SEP officers, there is some validity to this negative view.
Possible solutions: As noted earlier, if the combat arms officers and aviators have an opportunity to return to their PMOS for a period before doing the utilization tour, this should help maintain MOS credibility. Officers in combat arms who are interested in moving to a different career field often use SEP as a vehicle to do so and this should be encouraged as the combat arms fields are generally overpopulated in the field grade ranks.

(e) SEP participation is more "acceptable" in their OccFld than in others.
Assessment: Likely.
Discussion: The data that support 3b(2)(d) also apply here, as do the possible solutions.

4. Problem: Some SEP selectees decline their selection causing unfilled quotas.

a. Basis for problem and verification: A SEP Monitor verified that this was a minor, but growing, problem. Of particular concern are officers who decline their selection by a supplemental board.

b. Possible causes

(1) Some officers apply to multiple programs using the "shotgun" approach.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: The SEP Monitor indicated that some officers apply to multiple programs simultaneously and choose from among those for which they are selected.

(2) Changed mind due to influence from other officers.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: As noted earlier, many officers are receiving negative advice regarding SEP. While this may cause many not to apply, it may also cause some who have applied and been selected to decline their selection. This could not be verified, as the study team did not attempt to contact officers who declined selection.

(3) They got orders they liked better.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: Sometimes officers who apply for SEP are issued orders to other assignments after applying but prior to the selection announcement. If they prefer these orders, they may decline SEP. This could not be verified, as the study team did not attempt to contact officers who declined selection.

(4) They put down a choice they had no intention of accepting.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: Officers applying for SEP are allowed four MOS choices. Some officers apparently feel obligated to put down four choices even if they do not want their lower choices. If they receive a lower choice, they may decline their selection. The SEP Monitor confirms that this occasionally happens, in spite of the fact that the SEP Order states that they should only include choices that they are interested in pursuing and they do not have to list four choices.

(5) Miscellaneous personal reasons.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: Sometimes the personal circumstances and plans of officers change between application and announcement of selection. Some officers may have decided to separate and choose not to incur the service obligation.

c. Possible solution: There is a solution to all the possible causes of this problem. Alternates should be selected for all SEP MOSs whenever possible and they should be used to fill quotas of those who decline. The problem with this solution is getting enough qualified applicants in some

MOSs to pick alternates. The solutions to the problems related to insufficient applicants noted earlier should solve this. See paragraph 2b(1).

5. Problem: Officers fail to successfully complete assigned educational program.

a. Basis for problem and verification: This problem is very rare, but the study team verified that officers occasionally must transfer from more technical to less technical curricula due to academic difficulties. Rarely does a Marine drop out altogether. In fact, there is no record of any Marine officers dropping out of NPS due to academic failure in the past 8 years. Changing curricula may cause slight problems in assignments to utilization tours since quotas are based on projected billet vacancies, but the SEP Monitor indicates that it is manageable, so no further action is necessary.

b. Possible causes

(1) The officer is academically unprepared.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: This may be true from some technical curricula, especially if the officer has been out of college for a lengthy time. However, NPS offers refresher courses that Marines are encouraged to take and the first couple of quarters at school often include classes at the undergraduate level.

(2) The officer has insufficient aptitude.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: This is a possibility, primarily in curricula that are more technical. The possession of a bachelor's degree, even with good grades, does not indicate that an officer can handle graduate level courses. Since the officers who attend NPS take no entrance tests (such as the GRE), there is no other predictor of success. However, this occurs so rarely, if at all, that adding additional entrance requirements would be counterproductive.
Possible solution: None identified. Current procedure is adequate.

(3) Lack of effort on the officer's part.
Assessment: Unlikely.
Discussion: This would be very uncharacteristic for a Marine officer and the study team could find no evidence that it has occurred.

6. Problem: SEP graduates are not adequately prepared for the assigned utilization tour billet.

a. Basis for problem and verification: Based on survey responses, this may be true for some SEP billets. One-third of survey respondents said that additional training or education was required to perform the duties of the assigned billet. In most cases, this did not mean that they could not perform the duties, but they were less than fully effective or had to get additional training after assuming the billet. When asked what percentage of their graduate education was

relevant to the billet, 38% of the respondents indicated 50% or less. This may indicate that the officer was "overeducated" for the billet or it may mean that the education or training needed was not received. Fifteen percent of respondents indicated that 50% or less of their SEP education was relevant AND they required significant additional training and/or education to perform the billet duties. These responses cause the greatest concern.

b. Possible causes

(1) Billet coded with wrong SEP MOS.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: While less than 10% of overall survey respondents cited this problem, 24% of those who said that 50% or less of their education was relevant did.
Possible solutions: Completion of a thorough, objective billet validation should solve this problem.

(2) Supervisor/command does not understand what officer was educated to do.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: Seventeen percent of the respondents who said that 50% or less of their education was relevant said that they were assigned work inconsistent with the SEP billet duties. Survey responses do not indicate whether that was because the command did not understand the capabilities of the officer or merely had higher priority tasks for which they used the SEP officer. A few survey text comments, however, indicated that the command did not understand the capabilities of the officer and misused him/her as a result.
Possible solutions: It is incumbent upon the SEP officer to educate his/her supervisor and command on the capabilities provided by the SEP education and how they apply to the billet. If the command then chooses to use the officer for other purposes, it is their prerogative (no matter how wasteful it may be). See paragraph 7b(6) for a discussion of that cause.

(3) The officer did not take necessary courses (electives) in school.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: Less than 10% of the officers surveyed said that 50% or less of their education was relevant AND that it was due to taking the wrong courses. However, 36% of respondents indicated that they would have chosen different electives had they known their utilization tour assignment earlier.
Possible solutions: If possible (and it should be since officers fill school quotas based on projected billet vacancies) students should be told their projected utilization tour assignment prior to the point at which elective course choices must be made. This will ensure that they have the opportunity to take electives that will better prepare them for the duties of their billet.

(4) Duties are beyond the capabilities of the newly graduated officer.
Assessment: Unlikely.
Discussion: While this may be true in some isolated cases, there is no evidence that it is a significant problem.

(5) The billet duties require specialized training/experience rather than or in addition to a graduate degree.
Assessment: Likely.
Discussion: Survey respondents who indicated that significant additional training or education was required for their billet were asked to note by text response what the additional training or education was. Many responses indicated that more acquisition training was needed (although many of these may be from non-recent graduates, since most NPS students do receive acquisition training now). Many of the computer-related MOS (9646 and 9648) holders indicated that specific computer software and hardware certifications were required or would have been more useful than the graduate education. Others cited the lack of Marine Corps-specific information in the NPS courses.
Possible solutions: A thorough, objective billet validation should indicate shortfalls in this area. In some cases the SEP education will still be required and additional training and education not available at NPS will be required. The individual will have to receive this training after assuming the billet, if not already qualified. In other cases, noting which NPS electives should be taken may satisfy the requirements. As noted above, this will require that the officer be advised of the projected utilization tour assignment in time to select appropriate electives. It will also require someone to advise the student of the billet requirements. The student should be directed to contact the incumbent in the billet to obtain this information.

(6) The billet requires prior work experience in the SEP MOS in addition to the graduate degree.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: The survey did not address this issue and it is probably not the case for most billets. However, there are potentially sensitive and critical billets, especially at more senior ranks, where the successful completion of a previous utilization tour would be beneficial or even necessary.
Possible solutions: These billets should be identified during the billet validation process and identified as requiring officers who have completed one or more previous utilization tours. Filling these billets routinely may require a change in the current assignment process. See paragraph 2b(1)(d)1 for more information.

7. Problem: The assigned utilization tour billet does not fully utilize the officer's graduate education.

a. Basis for problem and verification: Based on the survey responses, 38% of respondents indicated that 50% or less of their SEP education was relevant to their utilization tour billet. Some of the possible causes and solutions are similar to those in paragraph 6.

b. Possible causes:
(1) The billet is coded with the wrong SEP MOS.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: See paragraph 6b(1).

(2) The billet duties do not require graduate education.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: Of the officers who said that 50% or less of their education was relevant, 27% said that it was because the billet duties did not require a graduate education. This equates to 10% of the total respondents. Another question asked to what degree a graduate education was required for the officer's billet and 28% said that it was unnecessary or only helpful, but not required.
Possible solutions: A thorough, objective billet validation should solve this problem.

(3) The officer took wrong courses (electives) in school.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: See paragraph 6b(3).

(4) The billet involves duties with very narrow scope.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: Sometimes a SEP billet has duties that definitely require a SEP education, but the duties associated with that billet are so narrow that only a portion of the education is directly applied. This is occasionally the case with disciplines such as Operations Research and Computer Science that have multiple tracks or areas of specialization. Fifteen percent of the officers surveyed said that their SEP education was essential or highly desirable, yet 50% or less of it was relevant to the billet duties. Many of these respondents indicated the reason was that the job requirements were covered by courses taken, but many other courses did not apply to the job.
Possible solutions: A thorough, objective billet validation should indicate whether alternate training, short of a graduate education, would satisfy the requirements of the billet. In some cases, the graduate education will be required even though only a portion of the education is directly used. If the individual has the opportunity to serve additional utilization tours, more of the education may be eventually put to direct use.

(5) The supervisor/command does not understand what the officer was educated to do.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: See paragraph 6b(2).

(6) The officer is used for higher command priorities.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: See discussion of this possible cause in paragraph 6b(2).
Possible solutions: If this is a recurring problem with the same billet, the command may need to reclassify the billet as a non-SEP billet. The billet holder should apprise the SEP MOS Specialist and SEP Monitor of the situation and that information should be considered during the billet revalidation process.

(7) The officer is unable or unwilling to apply what was learned.
Assessment: Unlikely.
Discussion: The survey provided no useful information on this possible cause and no evidence could be found that this is a significant problem. In cases where it is true, it is a leadership problem.

8. Problem: Officers resign/retire at end of SEP service obligation.

a. Basis for problem and verification: It is a fact that some officers do elect to leave the Marine Corps at the end of their service obligation. There is nothing inherently wrong with this, as these officers have fulfilled their commitment. However, there is a perception among some that officers are using SEP as an "exit strategy." If this is true, the retention rates for SEP officers should be lower than the general population. A prior analysis done by M&RA showed the retention of SEP officers to be greater than that of the general population and, in one year group, found that SEP participants when compared to career-oriented officers (those who complete 6 years of commissioned service) were twice as likely to stay until retirement. Only 107 (18.8%) of the 568 officers who graduated from NPS since 1989 and have finished their obligation left active duty prior to retirement. What about those officers who apply for SEP with the intent of retiring at the end of their obligation? Of the 157 NPS graduates who graduated after 1989 and retired after completing their SEP obligation, only 27 (17%) retired less than 4.5 years after graduating. However, only 6 of the 27 retired at the rank of lieutenant colonel suggesting that many of the other 21 were forced to retire having been passed over at least twice for the next higher grade.

b. Impact: Because of the way SEP billets are currently filled (primarily through first utilization tours), the fact that some officers do leave after their obligation should not have an adverse impact on SEP billet fill rates. An argument can be made that the Marine Corps should make a concerted effort to retain SEP officers after they complete their utilization tour because of the significant investment in their education and their increased value to the Marine Corps in any billet because of that education. Unfortunately the study team could find no exit data that addressed SEP participation as a reason for leaving and the survey was only sent to officers still on active duty, but some conclusions can be drawn from responses to questions related to retention, particularly from those officers who have not completed their service obligation. Of the survey respondents who have graduated from school, 44% have not completed their SEP service obligation. Of those respondents, 7% said they intend to resign at the end of their obligation, 10% said they intend to retire, and 23% are undecided.

c. Possible causes

(1) Departure is unrelated to SEP participation.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: Since the survey respondents were all on active duty, it was difficult to ascertain future intentions relative to leaving and the possible reasons. Officers were asked whether they planned to leave the Marine Corps for reasons unrelated to SEP and about 25% agreed. There was no indication, however, that this represented "early" departures. The primary concern is over those who leave earlier due to SEP participation than they would have otherwise. That concern is addressed below.

(2) Officer was passed over for promotion before end of SEP obligation.
Assessment: Possible.

Discussion: Of the survey respondents who have not completed their service obligation and who do not intend to resign or retire, 37% said they will leave the Marine Corps if not promoted at the next opportunity. This was slightly greater than the 35% who indicated they would stay even if passed over. The rest were undecided. Captains were obviously much more likely to leave (49%) than majors (30%) if not promoted and were more undecided (43% vs. 17%). Further discussion, including actual results of the promotion of SEP officers, is in paragraph 10.
Possible solutions: See the solutions presented in paragraph 10.

(3) Greater opportunities exist outside the Marine Corps due to SEP education.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: When survey respondents were presented with the statement "My SEP degree provides greater opportunities in the civilian community than the Marine Corps," 73% responded "agree" or "strongly agree." This doesn't mean that they will leave early because of it, since the decision to stay in is often made based on other factors, but it is one indication that SEP participation does not encourage officers to stay in.
Possible solutions: Giving more SEP officers the opportunity to do additional utilization tours without adversely affecting their career may help alleviate this problem. While 48% of the respondents cited preparation for post-Marine Corps employment as one reason (albeit not the only one) for applying, there is clearly interest in more fully utilizing their education within the Marine Corps rather than leaving to do so.

(4) Officer does not want to go back to PMOS.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: The survey asked the respondents to agree or disagree with the statement "I want to continue working in my SEP field outside the Marine Corps rather than returning to my PMOS." Only 17% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. However, 42% of respondents indicated that they would like to serve permanently in their SEP MOS (if it did not have an adverse career impact). Since the Marine Corps rarely gives officers an opportunity to serve additional utilization tours, this may cause some who prefer their graduate field to leave earlier than they would have otherwise.
Possible solutions: Change the assignment system to allow more SEP officers to serve additional utilization tours if they desire. This would have the added benefit of reducing the number of officers sent to school (assuming the total number of SEP billets remains constant), which would reduce P2T2 and the possibility of unfilled quotas.

(5) Officer views future opportunities in USMC limited due to SEP.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: Current SEP officers were presented two statements on the survey that shed some light on this possible cause. The first was "I am concerned about future promotion opportunities based on my SEP participation." Agreement with the statement varied by current rank with the following percentage of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing: captain – 60%, major – 69%, lieutenant colonel – 45%, and colonel – 19%. Clearly, promotion to lieutenant colonel causes the greatest concern. The second statement was "My time in SEP has put me too far behind my peers in my PMOS to be competitive." Those agreeing or strongly agreeing, by rank, were: captain – 28%, major – 24%,

lieutenant colonel – 36%, and colonel – 9%. The higher level of agreement may be due to lower command screening rates for SEP officers (as yet unconfirmed).
Possible Solutions: For concerns about promotions and proposed solutions, see paragraph 10. As far as impact on competitiveness, proposed solutions for promotion should help. In regard to command screening, the officer who spends a significant portion of his/her time as a major in school and/or a utilization tour risks

(6) No choice due to service limits or other statutory reasons.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: Because of the ranks at which officers attend SEP, this would generally only be true for those officers who are passed over twice for major or lieutenant colonel. This is particularly a problem for those passed over for major since they are sometimes discharged before completing their utilization tour. However, since the selection opportunity for major is now at 90%, this should not be a significant problem. If a SEP officer is passed over for major, chances are that SEP participation was not a key factor.
Possible solutions: As noted earlier, increasing the pool of applicants will allow the board to be more selective in their choices, reducing the chance that a marginal officer will be selected for SEP and then subsequently passed over for major. The other solutions related to promotability apply for promotion to lieutenant colonel (see paragraph 8b(2)).

(7) Disillusioned about SEP and its employment in USMC.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: Two statements were included on the survey to assess the opinions of SEP officers regarding the attitude of the Marine Corps toward SEP and how well SEP officers are utilized. Respondents who had already graduated from school were asked to agree or disagree with the statements. The first statement was "The Marine Corps does not sufficiently value my SEP education/contributions." Over 65% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. The second statement was "I feel that my SEP education was not or will not be fully utilized by the Marine Corps." Agreement with this statement was slightly lower with 55% agreeing or strongly agreeing. On the other hand, 86% of the respondents agreed with the statement "My SEP education and experience were positive and they make me more valuable to the Marine Corps." These responses indicate that many SEP officers, while very pleased with their experience, feel that the Marine Corps does not fully appreciate the value and actual and potential contributions of SEP officers. Although the respondents are still on active duty, this "gap" in attitudes may cause some officers to choose to leave the Marine Corps and seek employment where they feel they would be able to better utilize their graduate education and their contributions would be more valued. Numerous survey text responses regarding retention support this conclusion.
Possible solutions: Most SEP officers enjoy their experience and would be very happy to continue to serve in the Marine Corps and use their graduate education and experience to benefit the Corps, if their skills will be used and their contributions recognized. Many of the possible solutions regarding promotion and subsequent utilization tours would help accomplish this. A Marine Corps advocate for SEP would also help educate all officers, particularly those in senior positions, about the value the graduate-educated officer brings to the Marine Corps.

9. Officers cannot be freely reassigned at end of utilization tour due to intent to resign/retire.

a. Basis for problem and verification: Based on interviews with the SEP monitor and a primary monitor this is occasionally a problem. Because the service obligation following school graduation is typically 4 years and the utilization tour is 3 years, officers who intend to resign or retire at the end of their obligation have a year of service remaining at the end of their utilization tour. In many cases, these officers would prefer to serve an additional year in the SEP billet rather than going back to their PMOS or a B-billet for 1 year. This could also benefit the Marine Corps because the officer knows the job and has experience in it. However, this situation creates difficulty for the SEP Monitor because there is often a school graduate slated to fill the billet at the 3-year point. In addition, if the officer has formally requested separation, he/she cannot be given PCS orders. This requires the primary monitor to find a billet in the geographical area that the officer will only fill for a year. This does not appear to be a widespread problem, but when it occurs, it requires much manual effort to resolve and the separating officer is often disappointed with the outcome.

b. Possible causes: The reasons Marines separate at the end of their service obligation are discussed in paragraph 7. This problem occurs because the service obligation is only 1 year longer than the utilization tour.

c. Possible solutions: If fewer Marines separate at the end of their service obligation, this problem will obviously be reduced further. The possible solutions in paragraph 7 apply. The obligation could be increased to 5 years to allow a PCS transfer at the end of the utilization tour and more time in the follow-on billet. If the obligation were changed, 23% of the survey respondents said it would be a disincentive to apply and 7% said they would not have applied. If the proposed option to allow a 2-year PMOS tour following school and prior to the utilization tour is implemented, there would not be a problem for officers selecting that option as the end of their utilization tour would coincide with the end of their service obligation. Finally, if the system is changed so that the monitor does not depend on school graduates to fill almost all SEP billets, there will be more flexibility available in approving extensions.

10. SEP participation has a negative impact on career (promotability, command selection).

a. Basis for problem and verification: Based on previously published articles and discussions with many SEP officers there is a long-standing perception that participation in SEP can have an adverse impact on an officer's career, specifically in promotability and command screening at the lieutenant colonel level. The survey responses confirm that this perception is still widely held with 25% of respondents stating that participation reduces promotability and 56% stating that it can impact promotability depending on other factors. The highest percentage of those stating that participation reduces promotability was from majors (29%), indicating that promotion to lieutenant colonel appears to be the greatest concern. But is this perception accurate? The study team looked at promotion rates for NPS graduates for the past 11 years and overall could not support a conclusion that promotability to major and lieutenant colonel is lower than the general officer population for NPS graduates. (NPS graduates were used as a surrogate for all SEP

officers because they constitute over 90% of the SEP population and detailed data were available for them.) The promotion rate to colonel is only slightly less. Many studies and NPS theses have been done on this subject the past few years and all have reached the same conclusion. So why does the perception persist? Many argue that the SEP officers should have higher promotion rates since they have already been "screened" by the SEP board, which should ensure that those selected are above average officers. While it is true that SEP participants are board selected, the board only looks at those who apply so comparisons to the overall officer population are not valid. The selection board for SEP uses different criteria than a promotion board, focusing largely on academic performance. Finally, SEP selection may not be highly competitive for some SEP MOSs in some years if there are few academically qualified officers for the MOS in that year. This has occurred more frequently in recent boards. After reviewing the results of the survey and discussing the promotion situation with SEP officers (including some passed over for lieutenant colonel), the SEP Monitor, a primary monitor, an officer career counselor, and members of two recent lieutenant colonel promotion boards, there does appear to be a reasonable basis for the perception, especially in the past few years. Virtually all officers we spoke to cited PMOS credibility and overall outstanding performance at the primary keys to promotion. All acknowledged that SEP participation could affect PMOS credibility depending on when the officer attends school and what the officer's PMOS is. Those officers with PMOSs that are not closely related to a SEP discipline (primarily ground combat arms and aviators) do not earn PMOS credibility for school or their utilization tour while their peers, even if not in the operating forces, are in billets that are considered PMOS related. This is one possible explanation of the fact that promotion rates to lieutenant colonel for NPS graduates who are in combat arms or aviation are lower than the general population while the rate for all NPS graduates in all other MOSs is greater. The point at which the officer attends school is also important since promotion boards look for PMOS proficiency at the grade currently held (major for the lieutenant colonel board). If an officer's entire time as a major prior to the lieutenant colonel's board is spent in school and a utilization tour, that proficiency has not been demonstrated. Officers can still be competitive if they have a strong record and PMOS and operating force credibility prior to attending school (as well as outstanding performance in their utilization billet), but an officer who attends school immediately following a B-billet is in serious jeopardy. Another factor that may contribute to the perception is that NPS graduates who have completed their utilization tour prior to the lieutenant colonel's board have a higher promotion rate than those who have not. (This may be a result of their ability to establish at least some PMOS credibility as a major immediately prior to the board.) The SEP officers who get passed over are much more likely to attribute their non-selection to SEP participation than those who are passed over after returning to their PMOS. (Most SEP officers the team talked to noted the non-selection of SEP officers currently in school or utilization billets when discussing adverse career impact.)

b. <u>Possible causes</u>

(1) Insufficient experience in PMOS.
Assessment: Likely.
Discussion: As noted above, a key factor in promotion is credibility in one's PMOS. If participation in SEP precludes important PMOS experience, particularly in the operating forces, the officer will be at a disadvantage when compared to peers.

Possible solutions: Counsel officers to establish PMOS credibility prior to application for SEP. Also, advise them to time their application so that they attend school following a PMOS tour, preferably in the operating forces. Publish this information in the SEP order and any other information vehicles that reach Marine Corps officers.

(a) Went to SEP too early in career.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: This problem would appear to apply primarily to aviators who have not attained their flight gates. Since Marine Corps officers must serve an initial tour in their PMOS, they should be able to go to school following that initial tour, particularly if it is in the operating forces, without adversely affecting their career.
Possible solutions: Officers interested in SEP should consult the career counselors at MMOA to determine the best time to apply for SEP since there is no "ideal" time. The SEP order currently recommends this (added in a 1998 change), but only 21% of survey respondents talked to the career counselors prior to applying. This percentage is increasing as 23% of the officers who attended school in the past 10 years talked to the career counselors compared to 11% prior to that time.

(b) Went to SEP after non-PMOS tour.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: The only data available to assess this were from the survey respondents. Since officers passed over for promotion tend to leave active duty earlier than those selected, the data are skewed. Therefore, the study team looked at officers who graduated in the past 4 years separately (since they are still serving out their obligation). Looking at majors considered for promotion to lieutenant colonel, based on their tour prior to school, the results were:

	Selected		Passed	
Grad. Year	PMOS tour	Non-PMOS tour	PMOS tour	Non-PMOS tour
1998-present	24 (55%)	0 (0%)	20 (45%)	4 (100%)
Prior to 1998	46 (79%)	7 (88%)	12 (21%)	1 (12%)

This limited data suggest that recent promotion boards have been hard on officers who did not have a PMOS tour prior to school. In the past this may not have been the case, although many of the officers who graduated prior to 1998 are were passed over are no longer on active duty. The members of recent lieutenant colonel promotion boards interviewed by the team said that going to school from a B-billet significantly reduced the chances of promotion unless the officer had returned to his PMOS prior to the board and excelled.
Possible solutions: Advise officers interested in participating in SEP to apply while on a PMOS tour, particularly if they expect to be in zone for promotion to lieutenant colonel before the end of their utilization tour. The SEP selection boards should also consider this in selecting between otherwise equal candidates.

(c) Went to non-PMOS tour after SEP utilization.
Assessment: Possible.

Discussion: The study team did not have the data to assess this situation. However, after 5 years out of the PMOS, the officer needs to regain credibility in that MOS. Members of recent lieutenant colonel promotion boards confirmed that this would be expected of almost all officers. The only exception may be a PME or PMOS school, which should then be followed by a PMOS tour.
Possible solutions: Advise SEP officers on utilization tours to request assignment to a PMOS billet, preferably in the operating forces, following their utilization tour (or PME/PMOS school, if appropriate). Provide guidance to monitors to grant these requests unless extraordinary circumstances dictate otherwise. Officers who are passed over for promotion on their utilization tour should be assigned as their situation dictates.

(d) Went to SEP while peers had key PMOS billets.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: The study team did not have the data to assess this possible cause. The career counselor interviewed by the team did indicate that SEP participants would probably be at a disadvantage compared to peers who had more PMOS time and typical B-billets when considered by the lieutenant colonel command screening board, particularly if most of their time in SEP was as a major. Missing command opportunities due to SEP participation was also cited by the career counselor as a detractor for command screening and possibly for promotion.
Possible solutions: This cannot always be overcome by timing the participation in SEP. In many cases, particularly with combat arms and aviation MOSs, the officer must make a decision based on his career aspirations whether graduate education via SEP or future lieutenant colonel command is more important. This becomes much less of a problem if the officer's SEP MOS is closely related to his PMOS.

(2) Institutional bias against SEP participants.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: See subparagraphs.

(a) By RS/RO.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: The study team could not confirm this problem, although a number of survey respondents indicated that senior officers they knew had made comments indicating that SEP participants were disloyal to the Marine Corps, just looking out for themselves, using SEP as an exit strategy, or trying to avoid tough assignments in their PMOS. While some officers may hold one or more of these views, it does not appear to be widespread. In addition, an officer holding this opinion would not necessarily reflect the opinion in a SEP officer's fitness report.
Possible solutions: Continual education of the senior officers in the Marine Corps regarding the need for and value of SEP may help change some negative attitudes, where they exist. It is also incumbent upon SEP officers to demonstrate by their job performance and conduct that their loyalty is unquestionable.

(b) By promotion board.
Assessment: Unlikely.
Discussion: The fact that there are a large number of officers on a promotion board makes it less likely that one or two who may have some bias against SEP participation could actually influence the selection of SEP officers. Interviews with members of recent lieutenant colonel selection boards (neither of whom was a SEP officer) support this conclusion. They said that SEP participation, in and of itself, was not seen as negative by their boards.
Possible solutions: Brief the promotion boards on the value of SEP and the Marine Corps investment in SEP officers.

(3) SEP precludes participation in other, more career-enhancing positions.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: See subparagraphs.

(a) Resident PME.
Assessment: Unlikely.
Discussion: Current policy precludes SEP attendance until the service obligation for resident PME is complete (MCO 1520.9F). It also precludes resident PME attendance in the same grade that the officer holds when beginning graduate school (MARADMIN 303/02). In addition, since SEP officers normally serve their utilization tour following graduation, they would not be able to attend resident PME until after that tour. In most cases, this means that a SEP participant will not be able to attend either CLS or ILS or possibly both. In the past, resident attendance at PME schools was an indication of increased promotion potential. However, recent changes in Marine Corps policy (ALMAR 034/99) and the selection procedures for resident PME (CLS and ILS) direct that non-resident completion of appropriate-level PME will be considered equivalent to resident PME by promotion boards. An interview with the member of the most recent lieutenant colonel promotion board said that this was indeed the case on his board.
Possible solutions: Unless there is another change in policy, this should not be a factor. In fact, most SEP participants would be better served by spending the year back in their PMOS than by attending resident PME. SEP participants need to make sure that their non-resident PME is completed prior to the promotion board.

(b) Advanced PMOS training.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: The study team did not examine this possibility. For some MOSs, participation in a related SEP MOS will provide training beyond that available through advanced MOS training.
Possible solutions: Proper timing of SEP attendance should allow the officer to attend necessary MOS training.

(c) Joint duty.
Assessment: Possible.

Discussion: The study team did not examine this possibility. Joint duty only becomes critical when an officer is considered for flag rank. If participation in SEP is done early in an officer's career, there should be ample time to complete a joint tour. Some SEP billets are also classified as joint billets.
Possible solutions: Proper timing of SEP attendance should allow the officer to complete a joint tour, if desired.

(d) Other B-billet assignments.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: SEP participation will, and should, take the place of other B-billet assignments. For some MOSs, SEP may not be considered as career enhancing as normal B-billet assignments, but the officer cannot do both and maintain MOS credibility.
Possible solutions: Senior officers should be educated to consider SEP billets equal to or even superior to B-billet assignments. SEP billets, with the requirement for graduate education, should be challenging and provide opportunity for the officer to demonstrate his capabilities.

(e) Command.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: Command opportunities are important for most Marine officers, particularly those in the ground combat arms MOSs. While command at every rank is not essential for promotion, promotion boards view a successful command tour at the current rank very favorably. Previous command experience is a primary consideration on the lieutenant colonel and colonel command screening boards as success in prior command billets is a good indicator of command potential at higher levels. SEP participation may very well preclude the opportunity to command at some level, particularly since the reduction of promotion flow points in the past few years have reduced the time spent as a junior officer significantly. Precise timing of SEP attendance and cooperation by the monitor in assigned the officer to appropriate commands prior to and after SEP participation can provide the command opportunities for some officers. Unfortunately, MMOA has not maintained sufficient historical data on command screening boards to assess the success of SEP officers in command screening compared to the general population. Survey results and the interview with the career counselor suggest that SEP officers are at a disadvantage when compared to officers following a more typical career path when considered for command at the lieutenant colonel level, particularly if they did not have much PMOS time as a major. Officers in support MOSs generally do not have the disadvantage in this area that ground combat arms officers and aviators have.
Possible solutions: This problem can sometimes, but not always, be overcome by timing participation in SEP. In many cases, particularly with combat arms and aviation MOSs, the officer must make a decision based on his career aspirations whether graduate education via SEP or future lieutenant colonel command is more important. This becomes much less of a problem if the officer's SEP MOS is closely related to his PMOS. Another alternative that may help officers get the experience needed to successfully screen for command is to offer the option of a 2 year PMOS

tour following school graduation prior to the 3 year utilization tour in return for a 5-year vice 4-year service obligation. This may allow the officer to fulfill a key PMOS or command assignment that might otherwise be missed. This solution would require the cooperation of the primary monitors in making the necessary assignments during the 2-year gap.

(4) Miscellaneous impacts of SEP participation.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: Interviews and survey results provided some other possible impacts of SEP participation on an officer's career. They are discussed in the following subparagraphs.

(a) Utilization billet duties do not match graduate education.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: This problem occurs when the SEP billet MOS is incorrect or the billet does not require the graduate education received by the incumbent. The possible causes and solutions are discussed in paragraph 6. If the officer's performance in the billet suffers as a result, it can have a negative career impact. The study team did not have the data to determine whether performance suffered when this was the case.
Possible solutions: See paragraph 6.

(b) Fitness reports for SEP officers are sometimes written by civilians.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: This problem can occur because some SEP billets are located in organizations (e.g., MCSC) where civilians supervise and evaluate many military personnel. A number of survey respondents identified this as a problem and interviews with promotion board members confirmed that fitness reports written by civilians are often either discounted by the board or hurt the officer because they are poorly written (when compared to reports written by senior Marine officers). The study team did not have the data to verify that this is a significant problem.
Possible solutions: Whenever possible, the reporting senior for an officer report should be another officer rather than a civilian. Even if the report is well written, promotion boards will never give the same weight to a report written by a civilian. When this situation is unavoidable, the reviewing officer should always be a Marine officer who should pay particular attention to reports written by civilians. If the civilian is not writing the report in such a way that it will be fair to the officer, the reviewing officer should take corrective action.

(c) Officers in school receive not-observed fitness reports.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: Many survey respondents cited this problem and interviews with promotion board members confirmed it. Observed fitness reports are the primary means by which promotion boards evaluate an officer's suitability for promotion. An officer who attends NPS will generally have 27 months of "not observed" time during that period. This places a greater weight on the other observed reports and may reduce the confidence of the board that they are getting a true picture of the officer. Not observed reports may also give the impression that the officer is doing nothing of

value during that period. In reality, most officers at NPS work very hard and Marine officers have traditionally out-performed those in other Services. In addition, many Marines do thesis research that has direct benefits to the Marine Corps.
Possible solutions: The provisions in the current Performance Evaluation order allow for academic reports to contain far more information about the student than was previously the case. Reports on students at NPS should include grade and academic standing results. In addition, they should include some comparative measure of how the officer is performing relative to peers (including level of effort as well as academic performance). The report should also address thesis and other work that provide value to the Marine Corps, perhaps by including a statement from the Marine Corps organization that benefited. Promotion boards should be advised on the importance of graduate education and the level of effort required to earn a graduate degree so that they have the proper perspective on the time spent in school. Officers who report to their utilization tour before the promotion board meets should make sure they get an observed report in the billet prior to the board if at all possible.

(d) Location of utilization tour is undesirable.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: Some survey respondents cited this problem and an interview with one promotion board member revealed that his promotion board had a bias against a geographical location where many SEP billets were located (promotion board results do not contradict this). There is nothing that can be done if a single board truly has a bias toward being stationed at a geographical location. If it is determined that there is a trend over time in significantly lower selection rates for officers stationed in a particular area (a determination that is outside the scope of this study), then the reason needs to be determined. It may be that lower quality officers are being sent to that area. Once a command or area gets a reputation as bad for promotions, the situation often becomes worse as the best officers (who generally get more voice in their assignments) tend to avoid it. It usually takes general officer intervention to correct the situation. Some officers have suggested that there should be more SEP billets in the Operating Forces. However, this should not be the criterion for the location of SEP billets. They should only be located where graduate education is necessary for the billet.
Possible solutions: Any solutions to this problem are beyond the scope of this study. Historically, officers who have performed well in their assignments, wherever they are located, have done well on promotions.

11. The Marine Corps does not obtain sufficient benefit for cost of educating SEP officers.

a. Basis for problem and verification: Based on the cost analysis performed by the study team, the primary cost for SEP is increased officer P2T2, with the added cost of tuition for students who do not attend NPS or AFIT. Since the officer pays tuition and fees, the only cost for ADP is P2T2. The cost analysis showed that the current procedure of filling most SEP billets with officers graduating from school reduces the overall efficiency of the process.

b. Possible causes

(1) Most officers serve a single utilization tour.
Assessment: Likely.
Discussion: As noted above, additional utilization tours by officers already educated significantly reduce the cost to the Marine Corps and can improve effectiveness since the officer has practical experience in the field in addition to schooling.
Possible solutions: Revise the assignment system to not only make additional tours easier to get, but also to encourage monitors to use more officers for additional SEP tours. If possible, utilize officers who volunteer to serve additional tours and afford them the opportunity to maintain PMOS credibility.

(a) There are few hard USMC requirements for additional tours.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: Currently, SEP billets are not designated as requiring an individual who has already completed one tour. There are billets that, due to seniority or a requirement for prior work experience, would benefit from an officer on an additional tour. The SEP monitor, SEP MOS Specialist, and the command owning the billet only know these informally.
Possible solutions: Include a field on the Billet Education Evaluation Certificate (BEEC), NAVMC 11345, to indicate if an officer who has already completed a tour is required. This field should allow three entries: not required, desired, or required. Justification would be required for a desired or required entry. The need would be validated as part of the approval process.

(b) Officers are unwilling to do additional utilization tours.
Assessment: Unlikely.
Discussion: Based on survey responses, there is a desire among many SEP officers to serve more than one utilization tour. Less than 7% of the respondents who have graduated from school indicated that they would not want to serve another SEP tour under any circumstances while over 65% indicated a desire to serve at least one more tour (if it would not adversely impact their career).
Possible solutions: None required.

(c) Officers retire/resign before possibility of second tour.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: While some officers do get out before they would have the opportunity to do a second tour, most of them know that the chances of a second tour are slim. It is possible that some would actually stay in if they knew they would be able to serve another utilization tour. On the survey, 19% of respondents said they were staying in with the hope of doing another utilization tour before retirement. In addition, if more officers serve additional utilization tours, there will be a reduced need to select officers with more seniority to go to school. This can reduce the number of individuals who retire shortly after their obligation is up.
Possible solutions: The solution is to make it easier to serve additional utilization tours. See paragraph 2b(1)(d)1. This may actually reduce the loss of officers.

(d) Monitors will not release officers for second tour.

1. The officer's PMOS is short.
   Assessment: Likely.
   Discussion: Unfortunately some MOSs, including PMOSs that contribute a large number of officers to SEP (e.g., 0602), are short or critically short at the field grade ranks. This makes it difficult to assign officers from that MOS to an additional SEP tour. This may be done more easily when the occupational field sponsor for the PMOS is also the SEP MOS sponsor, but when they are different, the individual rarely gets to serve another utilization tour. This was confirmed through an interview with the SEP Monitor.
   Possible solutions: A detailed solution to this problem is beyond the scope of this study, but some solutions that have been suggested include: restricting additional tours to PMOSs that are not short, offering additional utilization tours to those who have announced their intention to retire or resign rather than filling a billet in the PMOS, and limiting the number of officers from short MOSs selected for SEP in the first place. This last "solution," which is already being done for MOS 0602, only works well if there are enough qualified applicants so that quotas are not left unfilled. Unfortunately, this has not recently been the case.

2. There is no incentive for primary monitor to release individual.
   Assessment: Likely.
   Discussion: There is currently no incentive for a primary monitor to release an officer to do an additional utilization tour. This was confirmed in interviews with both the SEP Monitor and a primary monitor. For additional information, see paragraph 2b(1)(d)1.
   Possible solutions: See paragraph 2b(1)(d)1.

(2) Some SEP billets do not require graduate education, but have requirements that can be satisfied by alternative, less lengthy training.
Assessment: Likely.
Discussion: Survey respondents were asked whether a graduate degree was necessary to perform the duties of their utilization tour billet. Seven percent of respondents said it was unnecessary and 21% said it was helpful, but not required. One SEP MOS Sponsor (Studies and Analysis Division, MCCDC) identified an alternative training program for some MOS 9650 billets that would allow the officer to fulfill the duties after completing a 3-month technical training course conducted by the Army. The Army had used a combination of NPS and the technical training course for many years to train their officers who are equivalent to MOS 9650 with good results. Survey responses indicated that 38% of the respondents used 50% or less of their graduate education in their utilization billet. Of these respondents, 27% said that a SEP education was not required and others, particularly in the computer-related MOSs, said that professional certifications (e.g., Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer) were what the job required. The recent billet validation survey conducted by Manpower attempted to determine which specific billets do not require a SEP MOS. The results of that survey are not yet

available, but preliminary results indicate a potential reduction of over 37 SEP billets (i.e., billets which would be deleted or converted to a non-SEP MOS).
Possible solutions: Complete the SEP billet validation and implement the results. Future billet validation efforts should also look closely at the billet requirements and not just require resubmission of the BEEC. The submitting command should justify why alternative training will not suffice and the SEP MOS Sponsor for the MOS should validate the submission and assist the command in identifying alternative training, if appropriate.

(3) SEP billet duties for some billets would be better served by a different curriculum and SEP MOS.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: Survey results indicated that of the 38% of total respondents who indicated that 50% or less of their graduate education was used, 24% said that another SEP discipline would be more appropriate for the billet. Miscoded billets create inefficiency and reduced effectiveness because the officer takes many courses that are not used and fails to take courses that are.
Possible solutions: Complete the ongoing billet revalidation and ensure the all billets receive a periodic, thorough, and objective revalidation.

(4) Current time in school is longer than necessary.
Assessment: Possible for some curricula.
Discussion: Officers who attend NPS earn a significant number of graduate credits beyond what is normally required for a master's degree. While NPS will argue that there are very good reasons for the additional courses, the requirements of the billet should dictate how much education is actually needed. If the average curriculum length were reduced by one academic quarter, the cost for an officer completing a single utilization tour would decline by over 5%.
Possible solutions: Ensure that billet requirements are accurately documented for all SEP billets. Actively participate in curriculum reviews at NPS and present Marine Corps requirements. Provide guidance to Marine students on which courses to take in each curriculum. If appropriate, negotiate with NPS regarding the curriculum length of curricula where Marines are being overeducated for the billet requirements.

(5) The officer did not take the best courses (electives) in school for the billet.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: Less than 10% of the officers surveyed said that 50% or less of their education was relevant AND that it was due to taking the wrong courses. However, 36% of respondents indicated that they would have chosen different electives had they known their utilization tour assignment earlier. Additionally, 33% of respondents indicated that they required significant additional education or training to do their job. The selection of electives in school that best meet the education and training requirements of the utilization billet make the officer more effective.
Possible solutions: Students should be told their projected utilization tour assignment prior to the point at which elective course choices must be made. This will ensure that they have the opportunity to take electives that will better prepare them for the duties of

their billet. During curriculum reviews, Marine Corps representatives should ensure that Marine Corps needs are being met and recommend new courses if necessary to do so. Marine students should be provided a core curriculum and recommended electives that best meet Marine Corps requirements, regardless of utilization billet, and knowledge of the utilization billet should narrow the choices further.

12. Documented requirements for additional SEP billets exist, but they cannot be created.

a. Basis for problem and verification: The current "zero-sum growth" policy for SEP billets has led to complaints that legitimate requirements for new billets cannot be satisfied. It is beyond the scope of this study to confirm this problem (although it seems reasonable to assume it is true as technology requirements have been growing), but the process should allow valid new requirements to be satisfied.

b. Possible causes

(1) There is a policy of zero-sum structure growth.
Assessment: Likely.
Discussion: If the requirement is for a new billet, not just the redesignation of an existing billet as a SEP billet, then additional officer structure is required. This requires that the billet go on the list of new billet requirements maintained by TFSD to be created only when compensation is available. The fact that the billet also requires school makes the burden even greater.
Possible solutions: This problem is outside the scope of this study and is part of a larger problem dealing with insufficient structure.

(2) There is a lack of available school seats.
Assessment: Rejected.
Discussion: For disciplines available at NPS, the school confirmed that they have significant excess capacity at present due to reduced attendance by the Navy and they can accommodate any reasonable increase in Marines for the foreseeable future.
Possible solutions: None required.

(3) The Marine Corps is unable to fill current quotas for the SEP MOS.
Assessment: Possible.
Discussion: The SEP Monitor comments on any new requirements submitted. He does not have veto authority, but will point out when it is difficult to fill the current quotas for the SEP MOS requested. If the billet is subsequently approved anyway, it (or another billet with the same MOS) may remain unfilled for lack of school graduates.
Possible solutions: A number of previously mentioned solutions could solve this problem, including implementing measures to attract more qualified applicants, using more SEP officers for additional utilization tours, and completing the billet revalidation with the possibility of reducing the requirement for the MOS in other billets.

(4) There is insufficient support from the command hierarchy.
Assessment: Possible.

Discussion: There is a lack of understanding regarding the value and use of SEP assets in some commands. Although not directly confirmed through the survey, 70% of respondents indicated that their SEP education and contributions were not sufficiently valued and 55% said they did not feel their SEP education was fully utilized by the Marine Corps.
Possible solutions: The designation of a SEP advocate who will educate the senior leadership of the Marine Corps on the value of SEP should increase understanding of the program. Commands with additional SEP requirements should enlist the help of the SEP MOS Sponsor in justifying the need for the billet. Commands should require SEP billet requirements to be fully justified due to the cost associated with them, but should support legitimate requests.

(5) The P2T2 increase is unacceptable.
Assessment: Likely.
Discussion: One for not allowing existing non-SEP billets to be redesignated as SEP billets is that the P2T2 will be increased, further exacerbating existing officer shortages.
Possible solutions: Implement other recommendations, such as utilization of officers for more additional tours, that will reduce P2T2 and allow additional billets when justified.

APPENDIX I SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM SURVEY RESULTS

The Special Education Program (SEP) survey was conducted from 22 May 2002 to 11 June 2002 as part of the Critical Secondary Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) Study. The survey was created and distributed by Studies and Analysis Division, Marine Corps Combat Development Command (MCCDC). Solicitations to complete the study were sent by e-mail and all responses were collected over the Internet via the worldwide web. The survey was anonymous, but respondents were provided the opportunity to supply their names so that they could receive the results of the survey.

The survey included mostly multiple-choice questions with the opportunity for the respondent to answer "other" for many questions and then fill in a text box with a response not listed. There were also free-form text questions. Respondents included a large number of text responses that are not reflected in this summary, but were considered in the analysis of the results. A few of the text responses are summarized where a large number of respondents provided similar responses.

The target audience for the survey was all Marine Corps unrestricted officers on active duty who currently hold a SEP MOS or are in school in the SEP or Advanced Degree Program (ADP). SEP (Law) officers were initially solicited and a few submitted responses. However, responses from officers with SEP (Law) MOSs indicated that most of these officers received their SEP MOS through attendance at the Army Staff Judge Advocate General's School rather than through SEP (Law). Therefore, most of the survey questions were not applicable to their situation. For this reason, their responses were excluded from the survey results and subsequent analysis.

Valid e-mail addresses were obtained for 709 officers with SEP MOSs out of 738 reflected in Marine Corps Total Force System (MCTFS) and 15 NPS/ADP graduates with no SEP MOS in MCTFS. These numbers do not include current students. A total of 499 surveys were returned for a 70.4% return rate from those contacted. The overall return rate was 66.3%. These returns rates were outstanding for an anonymous survey of an entire population and indicate that the population felt strongly about expressing their views on SEP and ADP.

Students were not counted in the return rate since not all students have been assigned a SEP MOS in MCTFS, so the total number is unknown. Students returned 84 surveys for an ***estimated*** 50% return rate. Student response data is included below, where appropriate.

The following results are based on all 583 respondents.

The ranks of the respondents were:

Rank	Number	Percent
1st Lt	5	1%
Capt	113	19%
Maj	287	50%
LtCol	135	23%
Col	43	7%
TOTAL	583	100%

Twenty-six PMOSs were represented with 75xx (15%) and 0602 (14%) providing the greatest number of responses.

The program attended was: SEP – 94%, ADP or off-duty education – 6% (many who received a SEP MOS as a result of off-duty education did not complete the survey.)

For SEP participants, 97% went to NPS, 2% to AFIT, and 1% to other schools. For ADP/Off-duty participants, 33 schools were represented.

The SEP MOS of the respondents compared to the surveyed population was:

SEP MOS	Respondents	Population (est.)	% Responded
Missing	2	N/A	N/A
9602	4	12	33%
9603	5	6	83%
9620	8	19	42%
9624	38	64	59%
9625	1	3	33%
9626	5	11	45%
9630	2	3	67%
9631	18	25	72%
9632	2	3	67%
9634	12	16	75%
9636	2	6	33%
9640	28	50	56%
9644	42	61	69%
9646	51	81	63%
9648	103	155	66%
9650	76	102	75%
9652	30	48	63%
9656	47	66	71%
9657	12	18	67%
9658	23	37	62%
9662	31	43	72%
9666	13	24	54%
9670	4	7	57%
9674	0	1	0%
9676	12	27	44%
9678	10	12	83%
9680	2	7	29%
TOTAL	583	909	64%

Note: This table includes all students who responded and students with SEP MOSs in MCTFS at the time the survey was distributed.

Participants received their MOS choices as follows: 60% – 1st choice, 13% – 2nd choice, 11% – 3rd choice, 3% – 4th choice. Others did not recall or it did not apply.

Respondents were in these phases of SEP:

- School – 14%
- Graduated, but no utilization tour yet – 2%
- First utilization tour – 36%
- Post-utilization tour (non-SEP) – 39%
- Second or later utilization tour – 9%

The following reasons for applying for SEP were cited by the percentage of respondents noted (totals more than 100% because respondents could select more than one reason):

Reason	% of Respondents Citing Reason
To gain advanced education related to my PMOS	40%
To gain knowledge outside my primary USMC career field	52%
To continue study in my undergraduate field	16%
To broaden my education beyond previous studies	80%
To have more control over non-operating force assignments	18%
To be eligible for challenging billets in special staff positions	37%
To prepare for post-Marine Corps employment	48%
To obtain a master's degree	84%
To provide family stability	21%
To increase my promotability	25%
To increase my overall value and effectiveness as a Marine Corps officer	77%
Other reason	10%

Among the other reasons cited,

- Eleven respondents wanted to influence Marine Corps systems being developed.
- Nine respondents saw SEP as a better alternative to other duty possibilities.
- Six respondents applied because of geographical location/desire to attend NPS.

Respondents first applied for SEP at the following point in their career:

Rank		Years of Commissioned Service	
1stLt	26%	2	2%
Capt	60%	3	13%
Maj	14%	4	13%
LtCol	1%	5	8%
		6	11%
		7	10%
		8	7%
		9	9%
		10	10%
		11	5%
		12	5%
		13 or more	10%

Before applying for SEP, respondents talked to the following person(s):

Person(s)	% Who talked to that person
Career Counselor at MMOA	21%
Primary Monitor	45%
SEP Monitor	40%
SEP MOS Sponsor	15%
Senior officer(s)	93%
Another SEP officer(s)	72%
Peers (non-SEP)	86%

The advice given by those consulted was distributed as follows:

Person(s) consulted	No position/ mixed	Strongly negative	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Strongly positive
Career Counselor at MMOA	7%	16%	28%	33%	16%	2%
Primary Monitor	12%	13%	22%	34%	15%	3%
SEP Monitor	6%	3%	2%	23%	47%	18%
SEP MOS Sponsor	8%	2%	5%	15%	52%	18%
Senior officer(s)	10%	11%	23%	14%	28%	13%
Another SEP officer(s)	3%	0%	1%	7%	52%	38%
Peers (non-SEP)	11%	4%	11%	29%	37%	8%

Respondents applied the following number of times:
Once – 87% Twice – 12% Three or more – 2%

Respondents said that changes to SEP would have impacted their decision to apply as follows:

Hypothetical Change	Further incentive	No impact	Disincentive	Would not have applied
5-year vice 4-year service obligation	2%	68%	23%	7%
Second utilization tour required	19%	46%	30%	6%
Voluntary option to remain in SEP MOS	52%	41%	5%	2%

Respondents had the following Billet MOSs and commands prior to school:

Billet MOS		Command	
PMOS	89%	USMC Operating forces	73%
MOS 9910/9911	8%	Non-operating forces	22%
Another MOS	4%	Joint	2%
		Other service	3%

35% of the respondents had command as a captain or higher rank before going to school.

The distribution of the respondents' status upon entering school was:

Year Started School		Rank		Years of Commissioned Service	
2002	1%	1stLt	12%	4	18%
2001	8%	Capt	62%	5	10%
2000	11%	Maj	26%	6	9%
1999	14%	LtCol	1%	7	13%
1998	10%			8	8%
1997	9%			9	7%
1996	9%			10	12%
1995	7%			11	8%
1994	6%			12	6%
1993	6%			13	3%
1992	3%			14	3%
1991	3%			15	2%
1990	3%			16	0%
1989	2%			17	1%
1988	1%				
1987	2%				
1986	1%				
1985	2%				
1984	1%				
1983	1%				
1982	1%				
1981	0%				
1980	1%				
Before 1980	1%				

The following results are based on 542 respondents (those who knew their utilization tour).

Projected utilization tour assignments was known at the following times before graduation:

0 – 3 months	25%
4 – 6 months	40%
7 – 9 months	17%
10 – 12 months	9%
13 – 15 months	4%
16 – 18 months	2%
Greater than 18 months	3%

Respondents indicated their elective course choices were/would have been affected by their projected utilization tour assignment as follows:

My projected utilization tour assignment affected my choices.	17%
Had I known my projected utilization tour assignment earlier it would have affected my choices.	36%
Had I known my projected utilization tour assignment earlier it would NOT have affected my choices.	27%
I know my projected utilization tour assignment and it did not affect my elective choices.	12%
I did not have any elective course choices.	9%

Respondents indicated their thesis topic selection was/would have been affected by their projected utilization tour assignment as follows:

My projected utilization tour assignment affected my thesis topic.	15%
Had I known my projected utilization tour assignment earlier it would have affected my thesis topic.	33%
Had I known my projected utilization tour assignment earlier it would NOT have affected my thesis topic.	31%
I know my projected utilization tour assignment and it did not affect my topic selection.	16%
I did not have to do a thesis.	4%

The following results are based on 499 respondents (those who have graduated from school).

Respondents' actual utilization tour was the same as they were told in school 74% of the time.

A total of 61 respondents (12%) indicated that the billet MOS of their utilization tour was not the same as their SEP MOS (including 4 who have not done a utilization tour yet). The most common mismatch occurred with between MOSs 9646 and 9648, which are closely related.

Respondents indicated the graduate degree requirement for their billet was:

Essential (would not be able to perform duties without it)	39%
Highly desirable (would have difficulty performing duties without it)	33%
Helpful (would be able to perform duties without it, but it helped)	21%
Unnecessary (would be able to perform duties satisfactorily without it)	7%

Respondents indicated the following percentages of their SEP/ADP education were relevant to their utilization tour duties:

% of Education Relevant	% of Respondents
None	3%
Less than 25%	12%
26 - 50%	23%
51 – 75%	32%
76 – 100%	30%

When 50% or less of respondent SEP/ADP education was relevant the following reasons were cited: (192 respondents – more than one reason was possible for each respondent)

Another SEP discipline would be more appropriate for the job.	24%
The SEP discipline was correct but different courses should be taken to prepare for the job.	23%
The job requirements were covered by the courses taken but many other courses did not apply to the job.	39%
A SEP education is not required for this job.	27%
The billet was appropriate, but I was assigned work inconsistent with the billet.	17%
Other reasons.	41%

Thirty-three percent of the respondents indicated they required/should have had significant additional education or training to perform the duties of their utilization tour.

The following statements described respondents' desire/willingness to do a second or later SEP utilization tour as indicated (more than one choice was allowed):

I am serving on (have served) a second or later SEP tour that I volunteered for.	7%
I am serving on (have served) a second or later SEP tour that I did not volunteer for.	2%
I would like to do a second or later SEP tour after returning to my PMOS.	37%
I would like to serve in my SEP MOS for the remainder of my career, even if it means staying at my current rank.	10%
I would like to serve in my SEP MOS for the remainder of my career, if I will have a reasonable expectation of promotion with my peers.	36%
I would volunteer for another SEP tour only if I could choose the billet and/or location.	49%
I would be willing to serve another SEP tour, but would not volunteer to do so.	14%
I do not want to serve another SEP tour under any circumstances.	6%

Fifty-six percent of the respondents had completed their SEP/ADP service obligation.

Of those respondents who have completed their service obligation their stated career plans were distributed as follows (280 respondents):

I intend to resign before retirement. My participation in SEP was a significant factor in this decision.	1%
I intend to resign before retirement. My participation in SEP was not a significant factor in this decision.	0%
I intend to remain on active duty at least until I am retirement eligible.	52%
I am retirement eligible. SEP participation was a factor in my decision to remain on active duty.	16%
I am retirement eligible. SEP participation was not a factor in my decision to remain on active duty.	26%
I am undecided about my future service in the Marine Corps at this time.	5%

Of those who have not completed their service obligation their stated career plans were distributed as follows (219 respondents):

I intend to resign at the end of my SEP service obligation.	7%
I intend to retire at the end of my SEP service obligation.	10%
I will remain in the Marine Corps only if I am promoted at the next opportunity.	31%
I will remain in the Marine Corps even if I am passed over for promotion.	29%
I am undecided about my future service in the Marine Corps at this time.	23%

Sixty-five percent of the respondents had completed their utilization tour or knew their assignment following their first utilization tour.

Of respondents who had completed their utilization tour or knew their follow-on assignment, their follow-on assignments were distributed as follows (321 respondents):

Operating forces in my PMOS.	59%
Operating forces in another MOS.	3%
Resident PME or MOS-related school.	8%
Non-operating forces billet in my PMOS.	17%
Non-operating forces billet in another MOS.	9%
Not applicable; I will retire or resign at the end of my utilization tour.	4%

Respondents' expressed the following opinion of their follow-on assignments (321 respondents):

It is a career-enhancing assignment that I am pleased with.	56%
It is not exactly what I wanted but it is good for my career.	8%
I am satisfied with it and do not think it will have significant career impact.	12%
It is not the best assignment for my career, but it is what I wanted.	5%
It had (will have) a negative impact on my career and I am unsatisfied with it.	5%
Other (includes N/A due to retire/resign).	14%

Respondents expressed differing levels of agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Neutral/ No opinion**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
My SEP degree provides greater opportunities in the civilian community than in the Marine Corps.	3%	10%	14%	35%	38%
The Marine Corps does not sufficiently value my SEP education/contributions.	2%	12%	17%	36%	34%
I want to continue working in my SEP field outside the Marine Corps rather than returning to my PMOS.	20%	35%	27%	11%	6%
I am concerned about future promotion opportunities based on my SEP participation.	8%	17%	18%	29%	28%
I feel that my SEP education was not or will not be fully utilized by the Marine Corps.	8%	26%	11%	32%	23%
My time in SEP has put me too far behind my peers in my PMOS to be competitive.	15%	39%	19%	17%	10%
I applied for SEP with the intention of leaving the Marine Corps at the end of my obligation.	58%	26%	9%	5%	1%
I am planning to leave the Marine Corps for reasons other than SEP, but my SEP degree and experience make it more attractive to do so.	31%	26%	22%	13%	7%
I am planning to leave the Marine Corps for reasons unrelated to SEP.	31%	21%	24%	15%	9%
Because of my SEP participation, I plan to retire earlier than I otherwise might have.	37%	35%	18%	7%	3%
I am staying in with the hope of doing another SEP utilization tour before I retire.	20%	29%	33%	13%	6%
My SEP education and experience were positive and they make me more valuable to the Marine Corps.	2%	5%	7%	37%	50%

At school graduation, respondents' ranks were distributed as follows:

Col	0%
LtCol	1%
Maj	38%
Capt	61%
1stLt	1%

Seventy-two percent of respondents have been considered for promotion since completing school for SEP.

Respondents were first considered for promotion after completing school at the following times (based on 361 responses):

During first utilization tour.	74%
After first utilization tour.	26%

The amount of time until consideration for respondents considered during their utilization tour was distributed as follows (based on 266 responses):

Less than 1 year	28%
1 – 2 years	41%
2 – 3 years	28%
More than 3 years	3%

The amount of time until consideration for respondents considered after their utilization tour was distributed as follows (based on 95 responses):

Less than 1 year	29%
1 – 2 years	38%
2 – 3 years	19%
3 – 4 years	8%
More than 4 years	6%

Eighty-six percent of respondents (352) were selected for promotion the first time they came in zone. (Note: This is higher than the overall SEP promotion rate since many passed over officers are no longer on active duty.)

Respondent's feelings about an officer's participation in SEP are distributed as follows:

Reduces promotability	25%
Has minimal impact on promotability	11%
Enhances promotability	8%
May impact promotability	56%

Among the factors that may impact promotability many respondents listed timing of SEP attendance and PMOS/Operating Force credibility. Several also mentioned the closeness of the relationship between the individual's PMOS and SEP MOS.

The respondent's indicated perception of SEP by others is distributed as follows:

	Mostly Negative	**Somewhat Negative**	**Mixed / Neutral**	**Somewhat Positive**	**Mostly Positive**
Juniors	5%	13%	33%	29%	20%
Seniors	17%	31%	27%	16%	9%
Peers	7%	22%	35%	25%	11%

Respondents would recommend SEP to peers and junior officers as follows:

Yes, without qualification	36%
No, not under any circumstances	2%
Maybe, with the following conditions/reservations	62%

Among the conditions/reservations cited, the most common was timing of participation. Respondents also noted that the applicant should consider possible career impact and future reduced chances for promotion. Other respondents would advise the officer to pick a SEP MOS closely related to PMOS and establish PMOS credibility before applying.

If respondents could make their SEP selection decision again, they would:

Not apply	4%
Apply, but at a different point in their career	13%
Apply when they did	83%

Among those who would apply at a different time, the responses were mixed. Many would have applied earlier to get back to their PMOS as a major. Others would have applied later after "checking more blocks" in their career. Several said they should have applied immediately after a tour in their PMOS.

APPENDIX J CAREER IMPACT OF SEP/ADP PARTICIPATION

J.1 Background

The potential for adverse career impact related to participation in the Special Education Program (SEP) or Advanced Degree Program (ADP) has long been a concern of the Marine Corps officer community. In 1996, when the SEP Monitor at that time submitted an article on graduate programs for publication in the *Marine Corps Gazette*, the editorial board specifically requested that the author address "the perceived career risks associated with these educational programs." (Reilly, 1996) The board asked for statistics related to promotion to major, lieutenant colonel, and colonel, as well as command selection and selection for top level school. Based on the SEP/ADP survey results as well as informal discussions with many officers during the course of this study, the study team concluded that this concern is stronger than ever. The concern was further heightened when the FY03 Lieutenant Colonel Board produced in an in-zone selection rate of 62.9% for SEP/ADP participants compared to 68.3% overall.

J.2 Adverse Career Impact Defined

Adverse career impact generally applies to three aspects of an officer's career: retention, promotion, and command selection. Retention is related to augmentation, the process by which an officer converts from reserve status, with an end of active service (EAS) date, to regular status, with an indefinite EAS. Augmentation has varied over time from highly competitive to almost automatic, with the latter the current situation. Since SEP applicants must augment prior to attending school, SEP participation has no impact on augmentation. Once an officer augments, future retention is based on selection for promotion, which is the second aspect in view. The possible impact of SEP participation on promotion is discussed at length below. Finally, Marine officers are selected by a board for command at the lieutenant colonel and colonel levels and competition is high. Officers who aspire to command at these levels tend to avoid any career decision that may decrease their competitiveness. The impact of SEP participation on command selection is also discussed below.

J.3 Dealing with Perceptions

J.3.1 The Importance of Perceptions

Whether or not the actual data over time reveals that SEP participation has an adverse career impact, the widespread perception that it does has a negative impact on the programs. Since the programs depend on voluntary applicants, any perception that reduces the number of highly qualified applicants is a cause for concern. Although a cause and effect relationship cannot be confirmed, the fact that supplementary SEP boards have been required for the past 6 years lends credence to the argument that growing negative perceptions about the program have reduced the number of applicants.

J.3.2 Current Perceptions

Before looking at actual statistics, it is important to understand the prevailing perceptions more clearly. Several questions on the SEP/ADP survey were designed to assess these perceptions. While the survey was only given to officers who are SEP/ADP participants, they disclosed their

own perceptions, both before they applied for the program and currently. They also reported the perceptions of fellow officers with whom they have discussed the program. Most of these officers discussed their intent to apply for the program with other officers prior to applying and the advice they were given was a good indicator of prevailing opinions at that time. A brief summary of the survey results related to career impact perceptions follows.

J.3.2.1 Advice received prior to application

Survey respondents were asked whom they had talked to prior to applying and what was the nature of the advice (positive, neutral, or negative) they were given. The respondents most often consulted senior officers (93%), other non-SEP peers (86%), and SEP officers (72%). Overall, senior officers and peers gave slightly more positive than negative advice, while other SEP officers were strongly positive. The SEP and ADP orders specifically advise officers to talk to the career counselors and their primary monitor before applying. Only 45% of respondents talked to their primary monitor and 21% to the career counselors, although these percentages have increased in recent years. Primary monitors and career counselors were more negative than positive about the programs. Of greater concern, however, is the trend in the nature of the advice given. When comparing the advice given to those who applied prior to 1990 to the advice given to those who applied within the past 5 years, the advice given by career counselors has moved from balanced to negative while the advice given by senior officers has moved from positive to balanced (balanced being almost equally positive and negative). This trend may help explain the reduction in the number of applicants. Respondents were asked to provide the specific positive and negative things they were told about the program. Overwhelmingly, respondents given negative advice listed the potential adverse career impact of SEP participation and many also listed reduced PMOS credibility. When asked what positive things they were told, very few respondents said that they were advised that SEP participation could enhance their career.

J.3.2.2 Respondents' views on impact on promotability

Survey respondents who had graduated from school were asked whether they felt that SEP participation reduced, enhanced, or had no impact on promotability. They were also given an option to give a response qualified by conditions that might affect promotability. Overall, 8% felt promotability was enhanced, 25% felt that it was reduced, and 11% felt that there was minimal impact. The remaining 56% gave the qualified answer, "it may impact promotability depending on…" and listed their conditions. The respondents overwhelming cited career timing of participation and establishing credibility in one's PMOS and the operating forces as the conditions that most impact promotability. A distant third condition cited was the closeness of the SEP MOS to the officer's PMOS. Since this question did not specify the rank under consideration for promotion, it was not clear what the respondents had in mind when they answered it. Some respondents specifically said that they felt that SEP participation enhanced promotability to major while reducing promotability to lieutenant colonel. Categorization of responses by the grade of the respondent upon graduation from school showed a similar trend. Those who graduated as majors marked "reduces promotability" more often and "enhances promotability" less often than those who graduated as captains.

J.3.2.3 Perceptions of other officers toward SEP

Survey respondents who had graduated from school were also asked how SEP is perceived among their juniors, seniors, and peers. This question was designed to gauge current perceptions

across the spectrum of officer grades. Overall the responses indicated that juniors were much more positive than negative, peers were slightly more positive than negative, and seniors were much more negative than positive. Even more telling were the results when the responses were broken out by rank of the respondent (thus providing perspective as to who the juniors, peers, and seniors are). In this case the highest negative perception percentages (about 50% in each case) were given by majors and lieutenant colonels for their seniors and by colonels for their peers. Ranks below colonel felt that their juniors and peers were more positive than negative. The Captains were equally divided on whether their seniors were positive or negative. These results indicate that the more senior the officer, the greater the possibility that he will be negative toward SEP.

J.3.2.4 Perceptions by senior leadership and promotion boards

During the study, the study team was told by a number of officers that they had heard senior officers (i.e., colonels and generals) make statements to the effect that SEP participants were only looking out for themselves, were using SEP as an exit strategy, or had already gotten their "good deal" by attending the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS). The implication was that these officers, who make up the promotion boards, are biased against SEP officers on the boards. While the study team does not question the veracity of these officers, interviews with other officers, including members of three recent lieutenant colonel boards, led to the conclusion that these views are not widely held among the Corps senior leadership. Rather, the more common concern expressed was that many in the senior leadership ranks do not fully understand the value of the programs and the contributions made by the participants. All of the promotion board members interviewed stated that there was no overt bias against SEP officers on their board, but that the side effects of SEP participation sometimes worked against an officer. These effects are discussed below.

J.4 Impact on Promotion

J.4.1 Potential Effects of SEP Participation on Promotability

The most common effects of SEP participation on promotability cited by promotion board members were non-observed fitness reports from school, time spent away from one's PMOS, and lengthy time out of the operating forces. The location and nature of many utilization tours may also create difficulties. Many of the utilization billets are unique within the owning organization where the officer's performance is not compared to peers (commonly referred to as "one-on-one" situations). Virtually all SEP billets are in the supporting establishment, and in some cases, civilians write the fitness reports for SEP officers. Even if well written, which many are not, these reports do not carry the weight of those written by Marine officers. The situation is even worse if the reviewing officer is also a civilian. Finally, although all career officers generally serve in staff billets in the supporting establishment at some point in their career, a staff tour in some organizations with many SEP billets (e.g., MCCDC) is not considered by some as career-enhancing as a staff tour in other commands (e.g., HQMC).

J.4.2 Performance Evaluation

When all factors affecting promotability are considered, documented performance in the billets held still has the greatest weight. The qualifier "documented" is critical because when it comes to promotion, it does not matter how outstanding an officer's performance actually was if that

performance is not adequately reflected in the officer's fitness reports. The study team did not look at individual fitness reports, but did discuss the quality of the written fitness reports with a career counselor, promotion board members, and a staff member in Promotions Branch, M&RA. They all said that, based on the reports they had seen, in general the reports written on officers in staff positions were not as well written as those on officers in the operating forces. It is not clear whether this is because some reporting seniors in the supporting establishment do not know how to write an effective fitness report or they just do not put in the time and effort to produce a quality product. One commonly cited problem with fitness reports on staff officers, particularly those in specialized billets (like SEP billets), is that the officer's accomplishments are written in technical language that makes sense to the officer, reporting senior, and reviewing officer, but does not make sense to board members unfamiliar with the specific field. A well-written fitness report will reflect the officer's performance in terms that a layman can understand and allow board members to compare the officer's quality to peers who have more commonly understood duties.

J.4.3 PROMOTION BOARD ANALYSIS

J.4.3.1 Data analyzed

In addition to the qualitative assessment of career impact, the study team looked specifically at the promotion results for SEP officers for the past 11 years to determine how well they actually fared. This period was used because Promotions Branch was able to provide detailed board results for Fiscal Year (FY) 1993 to 2003 boards. Detailed, accurate information on SEP officers was only available for NPS graduates, so they were used as a surrogate for all SEP officers. This was considered reasonable since they constitute over 90% of SEP participants, excluding SEP (Law) participants. SEP (Law) officers were intentionally excluded since their program is directly related to their PMOS and the number of participants is small. Since the majority of SEP participants are majors when they graduate from school and most of the rest are senior captains, the study team focused the analysis on promotion to lieutenant colonel and colonel. Officers who were in their first year of school when considered for promotion were not considered SEP officers since their time in the program was not considered sufficient to have an impact on their selection.

J.4.3.2 Summary of results for lieutenant colonel selection

The detailed promotion analysis can be found in Appendix K. Selection to lieutenant colonel was addressed first. For the past 11 years, in-zone SEP officers were selected for promotion to lieutenant colonel at a rate nearly identical to non-SEP officers (just over 63%). During this period 513 SEP officers were considered in zone out of 4,701 total officers in zone constituting 10.9% of the officers considered. When individual years are considered, the size of the total in-zone population and proportion that SEP officers constituted varied considerably. The selection opportunity also changed, going from 60% for the first 4 years to 70% for the last 7 years. These factors combine to make year-to-year comparisons difficult. However, with the exception of the FY03 board, the SEP selection rate has been very close to the non-SEP rate. As noted earlier, the FY03 board raised concerns because SEP officers were selected at a rate of 61% compared to 68% overall (the SEP selection rate differs slightly from that shown above because only NPS officers are included). That board represents a departure from the past. Future boards will reveal whether this was an anomaly or the start of a trend.

J.4.3.3 Summary of results considering occupational field

The study team also looked at selection rates to lieutenant colonel relative to the officer's occupational filed (OccFld). This was done because of the concern expressed by many survey respondents and other officers that ground combat officers and aviators were hurt more by SEP participation that officers in support MOSs. The possible reasons expressed were that the SEP MOSs were unrelated to the PMOS of officers in these categories and that SEP was not part of the typical career path in these fields. For the OccFld analysis, the team grouped the officers in three groups: ground combat arms (OccFlds 03,08, and 18), aviators (OccFld 75), and all others. Few, if any, SEP curricula are closely related to PMOS skills for ground combat arms officers and aviators while many officers in support MOSs have a closely related SEP MOS. The thought was that time spent in SEP for officers in the "Other" group may not hurt and, in some cases, may even enhance PMOS credibility. This may in turn be reflected in a higher selection rate for the SEP officers in this group when compared to non-SEP officers. That was exactly what the actual data showed. Combat arms SEP officers were selected at a rate 7.4% below their non-SEP peers and SEP aviators were selected at a rate 4.4% below non-SEP aviators. On the other hand, SEP officers in the "Other" group were promoted at a rate 5.6% higher than non-SEP officers in that group.

J.4.3.4 Summary of results considering time of participation

Based on the concerns regarding the impact of the timing of SEP participation, the study team looked at selections to lieutenant colonel based on whether the SEP officers had completed their utilization tour prior to consideration for promotion. Many survey respondents felt that SEP officers who were considered for promotion prior to returning to their PMOS were at a disadvantage compared to the general population and the SEP officers who had completed their utilization tour. To evaluate the importance of career timing in SEP participation, the study team compared the selection rates to lieutenant colonel for SEP officers who had completed their utilization tour (and had an opportunity to receive a fitness report in their follow-on assignment) to those who were in school, still on their utilization tour, or had just completed the tour prior to the board. The analysis results supported the view that it is better to be considered for promotion after SEP completiong as SEP officers in the post-utilization tour group were selected at a rate 8.4% higher than those who had not completed their utilization tour and 3.4% higher than the entire population. Although this distinction showed up in the overall statistics, it was not the case in every individual board. When it did occur, however, the difference was often dramatic. For the FY03 board, officers who had completed their utilization tour were selected at an 83% rate compared to 43% for those who had not.

J.4.3.5 Impact of reduced promotion flow point to lieutenant colonel

Based on concerns noted by survey respondents and other officers regarding the difficulty of fitting SEP participation into their career, the study team looked at the trend in the promotion flow point to lieutenant colonel. Since the FY96 board, the average years of commissioned service for unrestricted officers in zone for lieutenant colonel has declined by almost 2 years from 16.5 years to 14.6 years. This reduced time occurs primarily in the company grade ranks as time in grade as a major has remained relatively constant. The reduced promotion flow points have a significant impact on SEP officers. Officers participating in SEP today achieve field grade rank sooner than in the past and are more likely to be considered for promotion to lieutenant colonel during or immediately after their utilization tour. They have less time to establish MOS

credibility and fill billets in the operating forces. This is particularly true for aviators who have a longer initial training requirement and must meet flight gates to remain competitive. As one senior officer put it, "there just isn't enough time before consideration for lieutenant colonel to do all the things we expect our officers to do and still participate in SEP." Many officers feel that the reduced promotion flow point is a major cause of the reduced number of SEP applicants and may have contributed to the difference between promotion rates to lieutenant colonel for SEP and non-SEP officers on the FY03 board. The study team could not verify these opinions.

J.4.3.6 Summary of results for colonel selection

The study team also looked at promotion to colonel, although not in as much detail as promotion to lieutenant colonel. Since almost all SEP officers have completed their utilization tour and generally one or more additional tours before consideration for promotion to colonel, SEP participation should not be as significant a factor in their selection. In addition, the smaller number of officers involved makes it more difficult to draw conclusions when looking at individual boards or subgroups in the population. With this said, overall the SEP officers were selected at a slightly lower rate to colonel than non-SEP officers (43.9% for SEP compared to 45.3% for non-SEP). As expected, individual colonel boards showed far more variance from the overall average than did the lieutenant colonel boards. One possible impact of SEP participation on selection for colonel is related to command screening and selection. Although command at the lieutenant colonel level is not essential for promotion to colonel, those who successfully complete command at that level are more competitive for promotion. As noted in the discussion of command selection below, many SEP officers may not be as competitive for command selection as their peers who have more PMOS and operating forces time, especially as a field grade officer.

J.4.3.7 The issue of "prescreening" and promotion rates

The fact that SEP officers do no worse than non-SEP officers in promotion to lieutenant colonel and only slightly worse in promotion to colonel is not sufficient to dispel the perception in the minds of many that SEP participation reduces promotability. Many argue that the SEP officers should have higher promotion rates than the overall population because they have already been "screened" by the SEP board, which should ensure that SEP officers are above average officers. They have also proven their worth by completing a rigorous academic program and serving in a challenging utilization billet. This argument raises the issue of self-selection bias and sample selection bias when comparing promotion rates for SEP and non-SEP officers. If officers were randomly chosen from the entire officer population and given orders to SEP, then an equal selection rate would be an indication that SEP participation does not adversely affect promotability. However, SEP participants volunteer for the program (self-selection) and then are selected by a competitive board (sample selection). This means that they are not representative of the entire population.

J.4.3.8 Analytical efforts to remove selection bias

Statistical techniques exist that attempt to remove selection bias and determine the direct effect of SEP participation. Application of those techniques was beyond the scope of this study, but a number of students at NPS have done thesis research in this area. The most recent thesis was done by Major Branigan and was published in March 2001. (Branigan, 2001) He used data from the FY98 through FY01 lieutenant colonel promotion boards and attempted to isolate the effect

of graduate education on the selection rate (as well as retention). He separated officers with graduate degrees into two groups, NPS graduates and non-NPS graduates (this is important because many more officers have graduate degrees than those who have attended NPS or have participated in SEP or ADP). After controlling for a number of other variables, he concluded that graduate education was positively related (i.e., increased the chances) to both promotion and retention for both NPS and non-NPS officers. He also found that non-NPS graduate education had a much greater positive effect than NPS education. He suggested that the presence of officers who had completed their degree through resident PME (which was still very selective during the years he looked at) might explain the difference. The study team believes that officers who did not receive their degree through NPS may also have had an advantage since they did not have 2 years of school with non-observed fitness reports and a utilization tour outside their PMOS. Major Branigan did attempt to correct for sample selection and self-selection bias. His results showed a slight upward bias on the promotion rate (i.e., the selection process itself did contribute to the higher promotion rate), but found that the rate for officers with graduate education was still positive even after adjusting for that bias. However, his quantitative results in this area could not be considered conclusive as they generated infeasible estimates. As Major Branigan noted, any attempt to correct for selection bias requires discovery of some data element(s) that can predict whether an officer possesses a graduate degree that are unrelated to promotion. Such elements may not even exist or, if they do, may not be captured by Marine Corps data systems.

J.4.3.9 The issue of quality

Lacking formal analysis, the study team believes that arguments that SEP participants are higher quality officers and should have a higher promotion rate than the general population are not compelling. While it is true that SEP participants are board selected, the board only looks at those who apply so quality comparisons to the overall officer population are not valid. A SEP applicant who appears above average in quality when compared to other SEP applicants may be below average when compared to the entire population. In addition, the selection boards for SEP use different criteria than promotion boards, focusing largely on past academic performance. Therefore, the very concept of quality may be different than that used for promotion boards. Finally, SEP selection is not highly competitive for some SEP MOSs in years when there are few academically qualified officers for those MOSs. The decreasing number of academically qualified applicants, particularly for the more technical curricula, means that the board cannot be as discriminating in making selections without leaving unfilled quotas. In many cases, the board may select a marginally qualified officer for the MOS rather than lose a quota. Therefore, some of the officers selected for SEP may have been at risk of failing selection for promotion regardless of their participation in SEP. Because time spent in school and the utilization tour is time away from an officer's PMOS, marginal performance prior to SEP participation cannot normally be overcome by superior performance in SEP. The study team discussed this possibility with the officer career counselors in MMOA who have recently reviewed the records of a number of SEP officers recently passed over for lieutenant colonel. In their opinion, the records of some of these officers placed them at risk for non-selection for promotion apart from their participation in SEP.

J.5 Impact on Command Selection

J.5.1.1 Analysis of command selection

Failure to select for command (particularly at the lieutenant colonel level) is often cited by Marine officers as another adverse career impact potentially caused by SEP participation. The study team intended to do a comparative analysis of command selection similar to that done for promotion selection, but unfortunately the Marine Corps has not maintained sufficient data on the command selection process to do so. In addition, the rules for eligibility for selection for command have changed over the years, making year-to-year comparisons difficult.

J.5.1.2 Views of command selection board members

Lacking the data to do a statistical analysis, the study team interviewed officers involved in the command selection process. According to a member of the most recent lieutenant colonel command selection board, officers who spent the majority of their time as a major in SEP (school or utilization tour) do not compete as well for command as those who did a tour as a major in their PMOS. Officers familiar with past boards have expressed the same view. Selection rates for lieutenant colonel command vary from year to year based on the number of available commands and eligible officers, but it is far more competitive than promotion to colonel. The most recent lieutenant colonel command board selected 14% of the eligible officers as primaries and 20% as alternates.

J.5.1.3 Command selection criteria

Three of the primary criteria for command selection are PMOS credibility, operating forces experience, and prior command experience (especially for ground combat officers). Additional factors are performance in leadership billets (non-command) and recommendations for command on fitness reports. It is clear that a 5-year period spent out of an officer's PMOS, out of the operating forces, in a staff billet with little or no leadership responsibilities, can place a SEP officer at a relative disadvantage in these areas when compared to peers. Also, reporting seniors (especially if civilian) in organizations where SEP billets exist may be less likely to provide a strong recommendation for command on fitness reports and even if they do, it may not be given as much weight by the board.

J.5.1.4 SEP participation and command selection

Given the criteria for command selection, it would not be surprising if SEP officers do not compete as well for command as their peers. Of course SEP participation does not automatically preclude command selection. Many SEP officers have been selected for command, but they have generally timed their participation to ensure that they have the career experience necessary to remain competitive. Unfortunately, the reduced promotion flow points discussed earlier make it increasingly difficult to participate in SEP and obtain the necessary experience. Career counselors are appropriately advising officers, particularly ground combat officers and aviators, interested in applying for SEP that it may reduce their command opportunities in the future. These officers must then make the decision to apply or not based on their personal career aspirations.

J.6 Conclusions and Recommendations

In summary, the widespread perception that SEP participation has adverse career impact has some basis in fact, although not to the extent believed by many officers. Specifically, it is not an automatic "career killer" and in many cases may even enhance an officer's career. The key to minimizing or even eliminating any adverse impact is the timing of participation. This is generally within the individual officer's control. Another important factor is the officer's SEP curricula. Officers should request SEP curricula as closely related to their PMOS as possible. The individual officer has some control over the curriculum assigned, as the board will only consider an officer for the curricula requested on the application. Factors generally beyond the officer's control include the utilization tour billet, the officer's reporting senior, and the lengthy non-observed fitness report time while attending school. The Marine Corps should take steps to reduce the possible adverse impact of these factors. Finally, superior performance in all assignments, as well as the important details of completing required PME, submitting a good photograph, and maintaining a high level of physical fitness and professional appearance, are the factors that most improve an officer's chances for promotion. According to the career counselors, many otherwise outstanding SEP officers have neglected these details and have paid the price.

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APPENDIX K SEP OFFICER PROMOTION ANALYSIS

K.1 Purpose

The purpose of this analysis was to determine if a relationship exists between participation in the Special Education Program (SEP) and promotion selection rates.

K.2 Data Sources

Major Gillis of Promotions Branch (MMPR), M&RA, provided selection data from lieutenant colonel and colonel promotion boards for fiscal years (FY) 1993 to 2003. Captain Kaiser of Manpower Plans and Policy Branch (MPP), M&RA, provided data on all Marine graduates of the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) for FY1980 to FY2001. Ms. Connie Ray of Promotions Branch (MMPR), M&RA, provided selection opportunity data and time in grade data. Data from the Total Force Data Warehouse (TFDW) were used to calculate the years of commissioned service for selection to lieutenant colonel.

K.3 Methodology

Unrestricted lieutenant colonel and colonel promotion boards for FY1993 to FY2003 were analyzed. NPS graduates were used as a surrogate for all SEP officers because detailed data were available for these officers and they comprise over 90% of the SEP population. Selection statistics were compiled for in-zone officers only. Officers passed over while in zone and later selected were counted as passed over for the purposes of this analysis.

Selection rates for lieutenant colonel were analyzed three ways. First, selection rates for SEP majors in-zone for lieutenant colonel were compared to selection rates for in-zone non-SEP majors. Second, selection rates for SEP and non-SEP officers were compared between three occupational groups: combat arms (03, 08, 18), aviators (75), and all other officers. Third, selection rates for in-zone SEP majors who were in school or serving their utilization tour at the time of consideration were compared to selection rates for in-zone SEP majors who had completed their utilization tour.

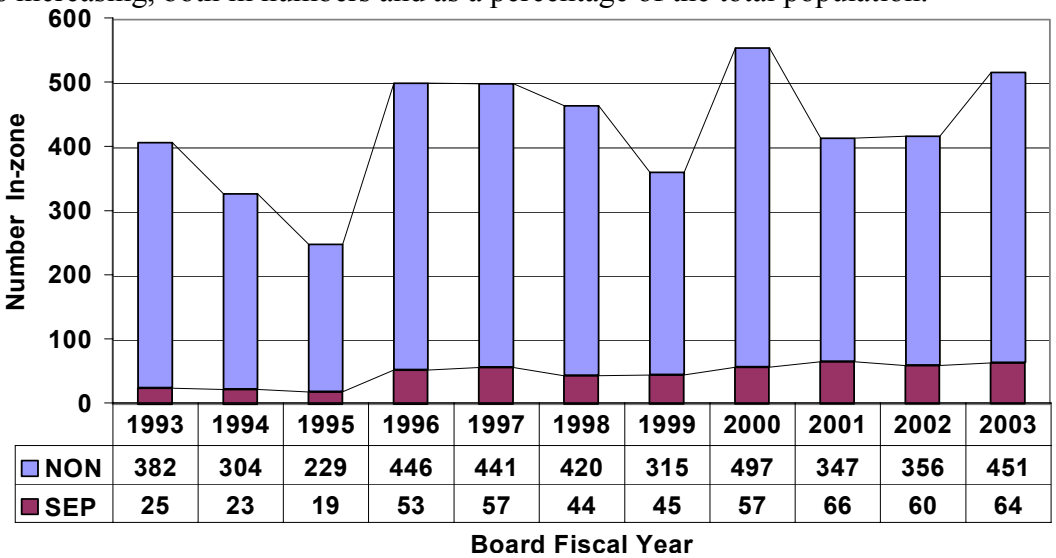
Because of the smaller population and the fact that few, if any, officers are considered for colonel while serving their initial utilization tour, the analysis of selection rates for colonel compared only SEP officers to non-SEP officers.

Time in grade at the time of consideration for promotion was calculated by subtracting the date of rank from promotion board date. Years of commissioned service were calculated by subtracting the first commission date of rank from the corresponding promotion board date.

K.4 Lieutenant Colonel Promotion Analysis

SEP participation has the greatest impact on selection to lieutenant colonel for three reasons. First, most officers go to school as majors or are promoted to major during school or soon after graduation. Second, time spent in SEP (school and utilization tour) is time spent away from the operating forces and out of an officer's PMOS. Third, many SEP officers are first considered for promotion to lieutenant colonel during their utilization tour or during their subsequent tour.

Figure K-1 shows the number of majors in zone for lieutenant colonel from both the SEP officer and non-SEP officer populations for FY1993 to FY 2003 boards. The trend over time shows SEP officers increasing, both in numbers and as a percentage of the total population.

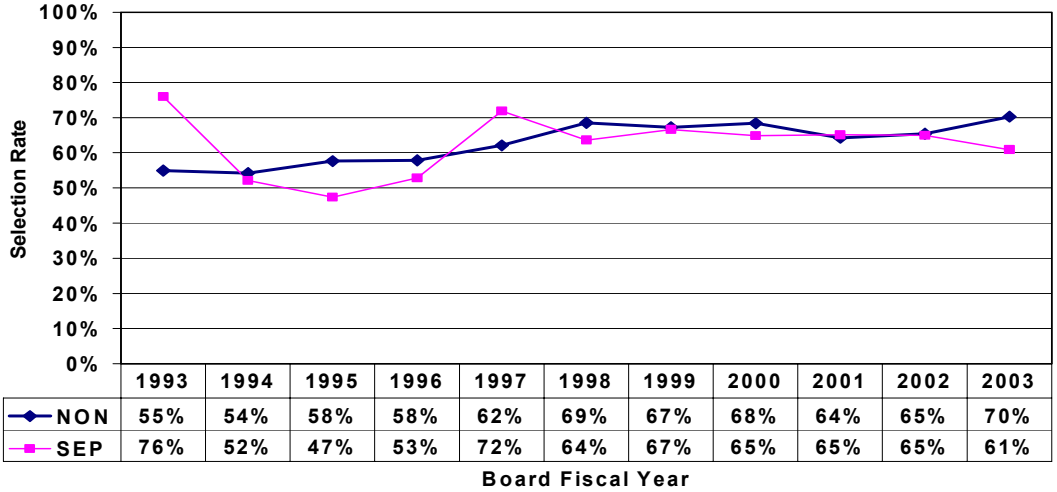


	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
NON	382	304	229	446	441	420	315	497	347	356	451
SEP	25	23	19	53	57	44	45	57	66	60	64

Figure K-1: Population of Majors In-zone for Lieutenant Colonel

Overall, the selection rate to lieutenant colonel for all in-zone majors was 63.33% over the past 11 boards. Selection rates were virtually identical between SEP (63.35% selected) and non-SEP officers (63.32% selected).

Differences between SEP and non-SEP officer selection rates surface when the data is divided by board fiscal year, as shown in Figure K-2. For example, for FY1993 SEP officers were selected at a rate of 76%, while non-SEP officers were selected at a rate of 55%. This is the most significant difference in selection rates between the two groups over the past 11 boards. In contrast, for FY2003, SEP officers were selected at a rate of 61%, while non-SEP officers were selected at a rate of 70%. This difference represents a departure from the previous five boards where the SEP and non-SEP selection rates were very close.



	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
NON	55%	54%	58%	58%	62%	69%	67%	68%	64%	65%	70%
SEP	76%	52%	47%	53%	72%	64%	67%	65%	65%	65%	61%

Figure K-2: Selection Rates to Lieutenant Colonel

Since the number of in-zone SEP officers fluctuated from board to board, a comparison of the percentage difference in selection rates between years can be misleading. For example, for FY1995 SEP officers were selected at a rate 11% below non-SEP officers while for FY2003 SEP officers were selected at a rate 9% below non-SEP officers. However, if only two more SEP officers had been selected for FY1995 the SEP selection rate would have been equal to the non-SEP rate while five more SEP officers would have had to be selected for FY2003 for the SEP rate to equal the non-SEP rate.

To put the differences in perspective, the numeric deviation of officers selected was calculated to show the absolute magnitude of the difference between selection rates of SEP and non-SEP officers. The numeric deviation is the difference between the number of officers actually selected and the expected number of officers selected if the promotion rates were equal. The percent deviation is the numeric deviation expressed as a percentage of the expected number of officers selected. The example below illustrates the numeric deviation and percent deviation:

Actual Numbers			
	SEP	Non SEP	Total
Selected	10	32	42
Passed	40	68	108
Total	50	100	150

Expected Numbers			
	SEP	Non SEP	Total
Selected	14	28	42
Passed	36	72	108
Total	50	100	150

In this example, 42 officers were selected out of 150 for an overall selection rate of 28%. If SEP and non-SEP officers had been selected at the same rate, then 14 SEP officers (50*0.28) and 28 non-SEP officers (100*0.28) would have been selected. However, the actual selection numbers were 10 SEP and 32 non-SEP officers. Therefore, SEP officer selections had a numeric deviation of –4 (10 – 14), while non-SEP officer selections had a numeric deviation of +4 (32 – 28). In other words, 4 fewer SEP officers were selected and 4 more non-SEP officers were selected than would have been the case had the selection rates been equal.

The percent deviation provides a means of standardizing numeric deviations. A numeric deviation of –4 for SEP officers translates to a percent deviation of –29% while a numeric deviation of 4 for non-SEP officers translates to a percent deviation of 14%.
When this methodology was applied to the selections to lieutenant colonel, the results shown in Figures K-3 and K-4 were obtained. As illustrated in Figure K-3, SEP officer numeric deviations ranged from –5 in 1993 to 5 in 2003. Zero deviation existed for 1994, 2001, and 2002.

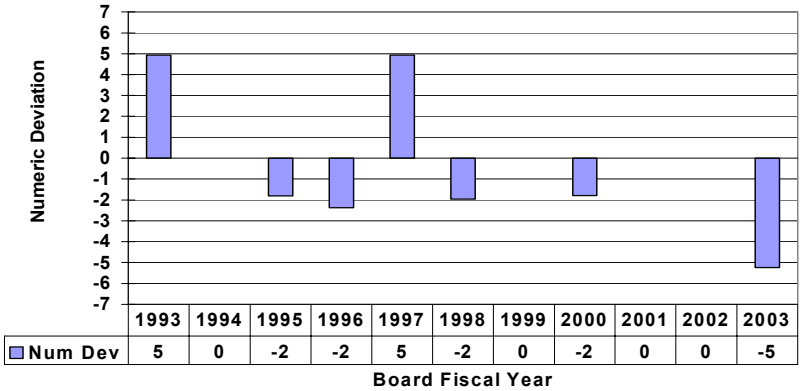


Figure K-3: Numeric Deviation of SEP Majors Selected

Although the numeric deviations have been zero or negative for the past six boards, it is too early to identify a trend. Differences of only two officers, as was the case for FY1998 and FY2000, could be caused by any number of factors apart from SEP participation. While the FY2003 board results cause concern, this board may be an anomaly.

Comparison of the percent deviation in Figure K-4 provides another perspective. The difference in promotion rates in years with a small number of SEP officers in-zone (e.g., FY1993 and FY1995) is highlighted on this chart.

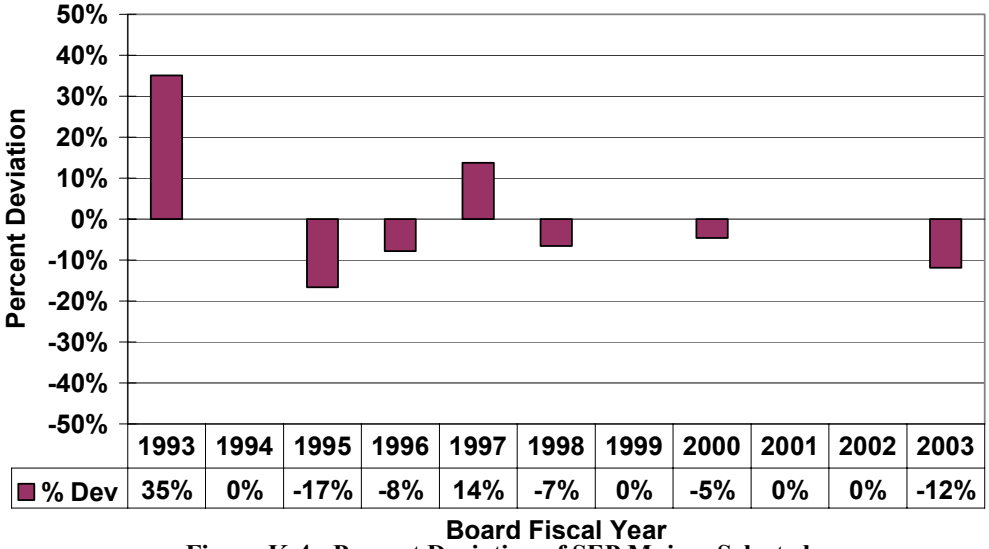


Figure K-4: Percent Deviation of SEP Majors Selected

The next comparison of selection rates was between occupational groups. Figure K-5 provides selection results for majors in-zone for selection to lieutenant colonel for SEP and non-SEP officers divided into three occupational groups: Combat Arms (03, 08, 18), Aviators (75), and all Others.

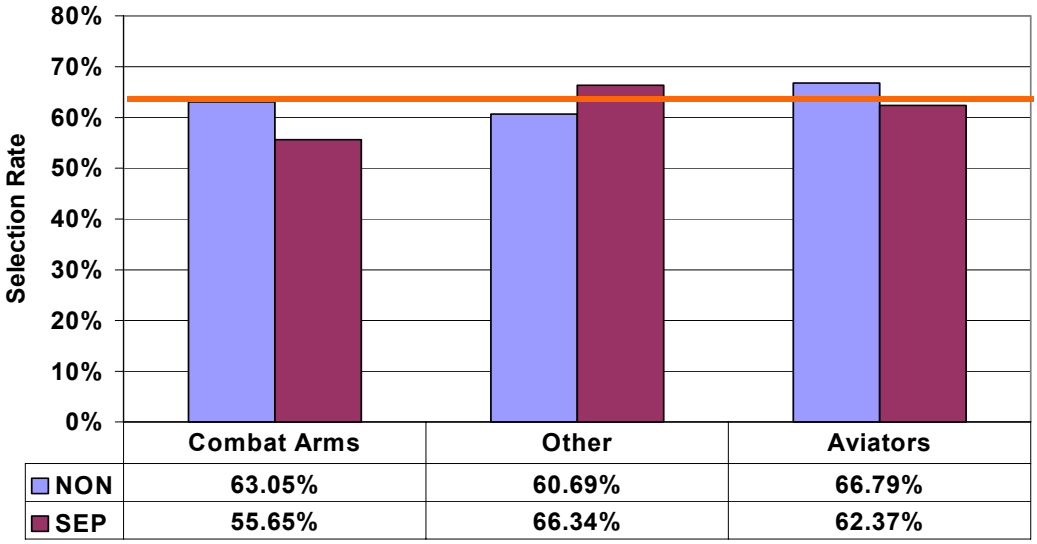


Figure K-5: Selection Rates to Lieutenant Colonel by Occupational Group

The horizontal line in Figure K-5 represents the overall selection rate for all majors in-zone for lieutenant colonel (63.33%). This rate was used as the benchmark when comparing selection rates for each occupational group.

SEP officers in the Combat Arms group were selected at a rate lower than their SEP peers in the Aviator and Other groups. SEP combat arms officers were also selected well below the benchmark rate. SEP officers in the Other occupational group were selected at a rate higher than their SEP peers in the Aviator and Combat Arms groups. This was also the only group for which the SEP officers had a higher selection rate than the non-SEP officers. Officers in the SEP Aviator group were promoted at a higher rate that their SEP combat arms peers and lower than their peers in the Other group. The SEP aviator selection rate (62.37%) was very close to the benchmark rate (63.33%).

These results indicate that officers in the support fields may actually benefit from SEP participation while those in the ground combat arms and aviation fields may be adversely affected. The most probable cause of this disparity is that the SEP curricula and utilization tours assignments are more closely related to the primary specialties and billet assignments of officers in the support fields than those in the combat arms and aviation fields. Therefore, the boards may conclude that SEP participation increases the PMOS credibility of officers in support fields.

The third area of comparison addressed the career timing of SEP participation. In order to determine the possible impact on selection due to the point at which an officer participates in SEP, the study team computed the difference in selection rates for SEP officers who were considered for promotion after having completed their utilization tour compared to those who were in school or still on their utilization tour. The SEP officers considered by each lieutenant colonel promotion board were divided into two groups: in-zone SEP majors who had completed their first year at NPS or who were serving in their utilization tour (Util Tour) and in-zone SEP majors who had completed their utilization tour and had been in their follow-on tour long enough to receive a fitness report (Post Util). Students in their first year of school were considered to be non-SEP officers since their time at school was not considered sufficient to impact their competitiveness. The results are shown in Figure K-6.

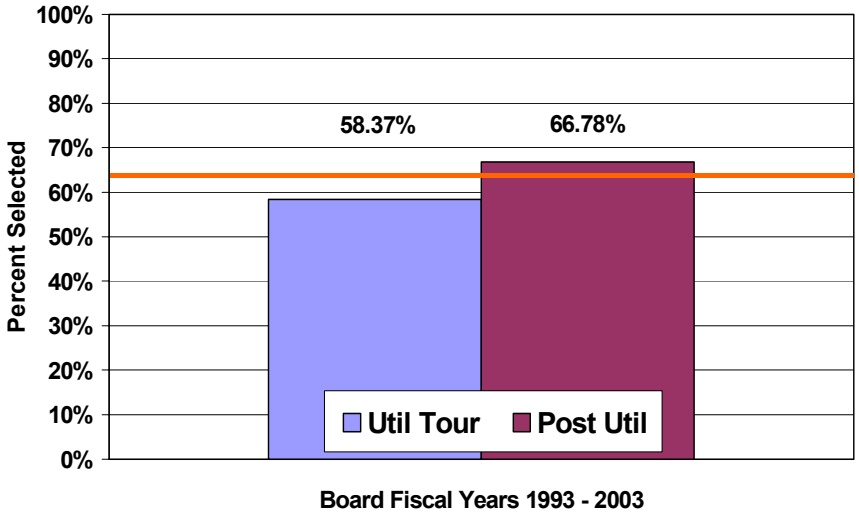
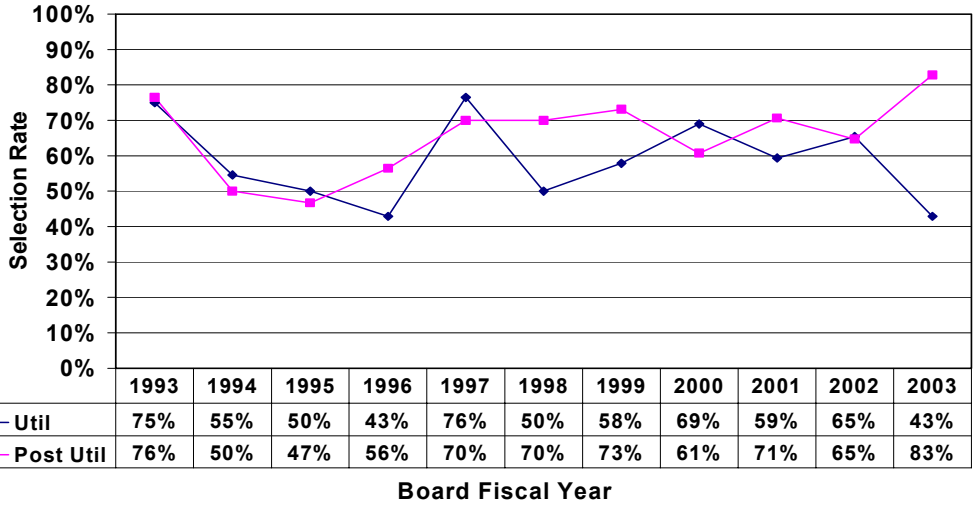


Figure K-6: Selection Rates To Lieutenant Colonel By Timing

Based on these results, timing has an impact on selection to lieutenant colonel. Majors in school or on a utilization tour were selected at a 58.37% rate compared to a selection rate of 66.78% for majors who had completed their utilization tour. The horizontal line in Figure K-6 represents the selection rate for all in-zone majors (63.33%).

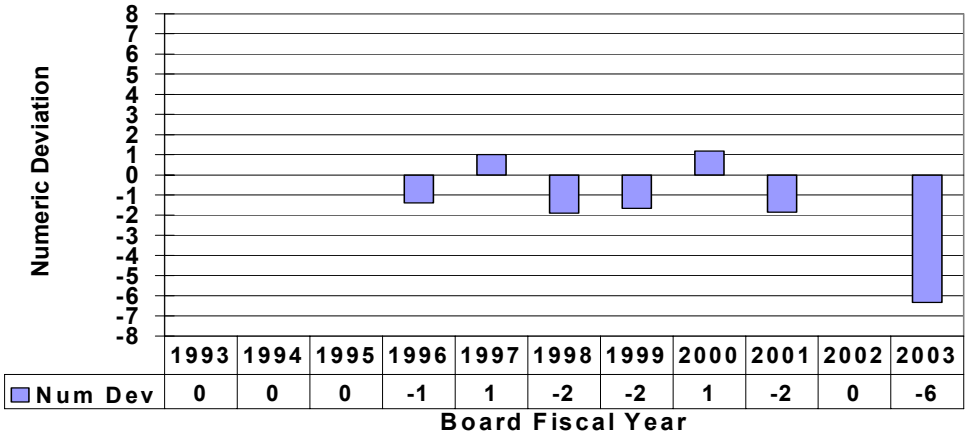
The impact of timing on selections varies when the data are analyzed by board fiscal year as shown in Figure K-7. For example, for FY2003, SEP majors who had completed their utilization tour had a selection rate of 83% as compared to a rate of 43% for SEP officers considered after their first year at NPS or serving in a utilization tour. This reflects the largest difference in selection rates between the two groups over the past 11 board fiscal years.



	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Util	75%	55%	50%	43%	76%	50%	58%	69%	59%	65%	43%
Post Util	76%	50%	47%	56%	70%	70%	73%	61%	71%	65%	83%

Figure K-7: Timing By Board Fiscal Year

The numeric and percent deviation of SEP majors selected during their utilization tour were calculated to show the magnitude of the difference in selection rates between SEP majors selected during their utilization tour and SEP majors selected after completing their utilization tour. Figure K-8 shows the numeric deviation results and Figure K-9 shows the percent deviation results.

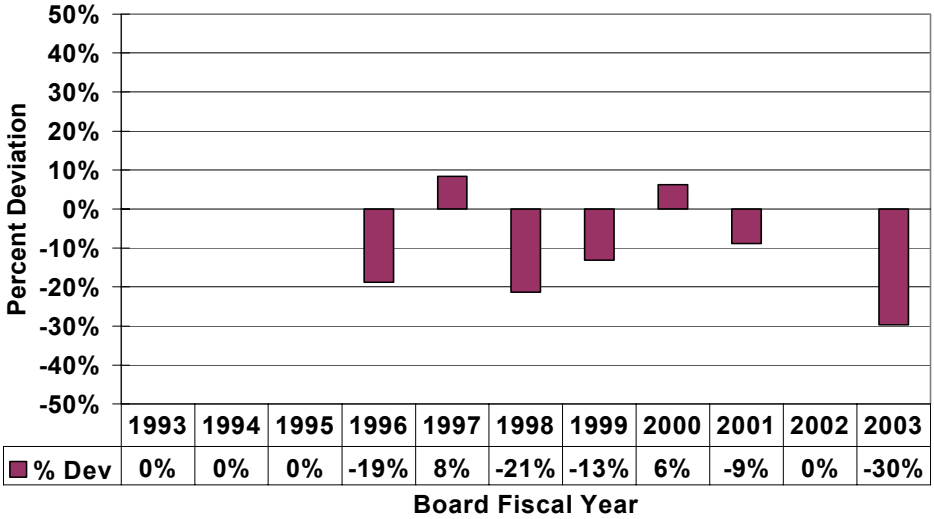


	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Num Dev	0	0	0	-1	1	-2	-2	1	-2	0	-6

Figure K-8: Numeric Deviation of SEP Majors Selected During Their Utilization Tour

The numeric deviations illustrated in Figure K-8 are relatively small until the FY2003 board when six fewer officers currently in SEP were selected than the expected number (assuming equal selection rate).

As illustrated in Figure K-9, a numeric deviation of 6 translates into a negative deviation of 30% for 2003. Thirty percent fewer in-zone majors currently in SEP were selected for lieutenant colonel than expected.



	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
% Dev	0%	0%	0%	-19%	8%	-21%	-13%	6%	-9%	0%	-30%

Figure K-9: Percent Deviation of SEP Majors Selected During Their Utilization Tour

The study team was concerned about the number of SEP officers said they were considered for promotion to lieutenant colonel 1 to 2 years before they had expected. These officers had hoped to return to their PMOS before consideration, but were still on their utilization tour when their board met. As noted above, this may have placed them at a competitive disadvantage compared to their non-SEP peers and their SEP peers who had completed their utilization tour. In order to determine why their consideration for promotion was unexpected, the study team looked at the average years of commissioned service at time of consideration for each lieutenant colonel board.

The average years of commissioned service at the time consideration for lieutenant colonel has decreased steadily from FY1996 to FY2003 as shown in Figure K-10. Compared to the peak in FY1996, officers in zone for lieutenant colonel for FY2003 had nearly 2 fewer years of commissioned service. The reduced time before consideration means that SEP officers have less time to serve in their PMOS before consideration and are more likely to be considered for promotion prior to returning to their PMOS. This may reduce their MOS credibility and place them at a disadvantage when compared to their peers.

Some SEP officers who found themselves in zone for consideration earlier than expected mistakenly assumed that it was because they spent less time as a major than officers did in the past. As the analysis of time in grade trends shown below revealed, the reduced flow point to lieutenant colonel is the result of less time spent in the company grade ranks.

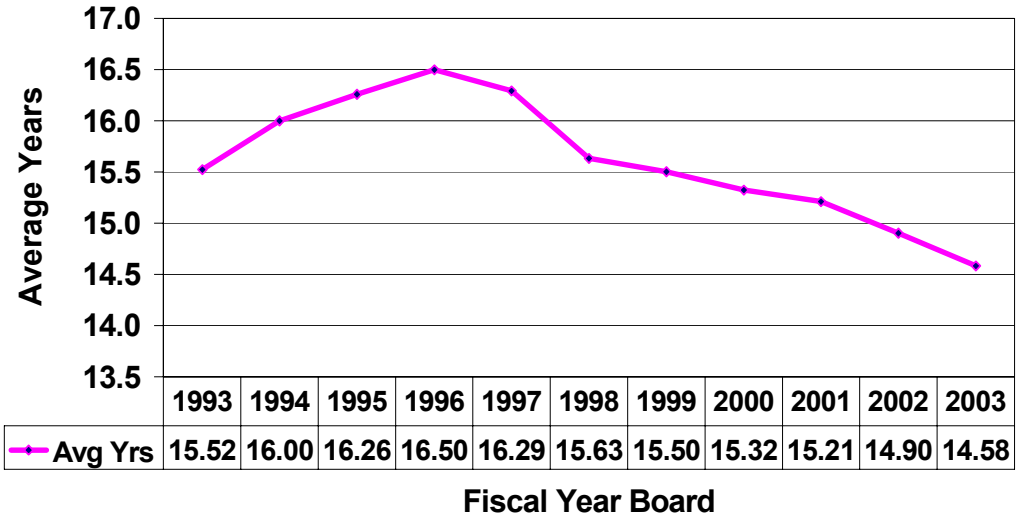


Figure K-10: Average Years of Commissioned Service for Consideration to Lieutenant Colonel

K.5 Colonel Promotion Analysis

SEP participation should less of a direct impact on selection to colonel for two reasons. First, almost all SEP officers have completed their utilization tour and generally one or more subsequent tours before consideration for colonel. Second, time spent in SEP constitutes a smaller portion of the in-zone lieutenant colonel's career than it did when the officer was an in-zone major.

Figure K-11 shows the number of lieutenant colonels in zone for colonel from both the SEP officer and non-SEP officer populations for FY1993 to FY 2003 boards. No surprisingly, the number of SEP officers in zone fluctuates based on the number of SEP officers selected for lieutenant colonel approximately 4 years earlier.

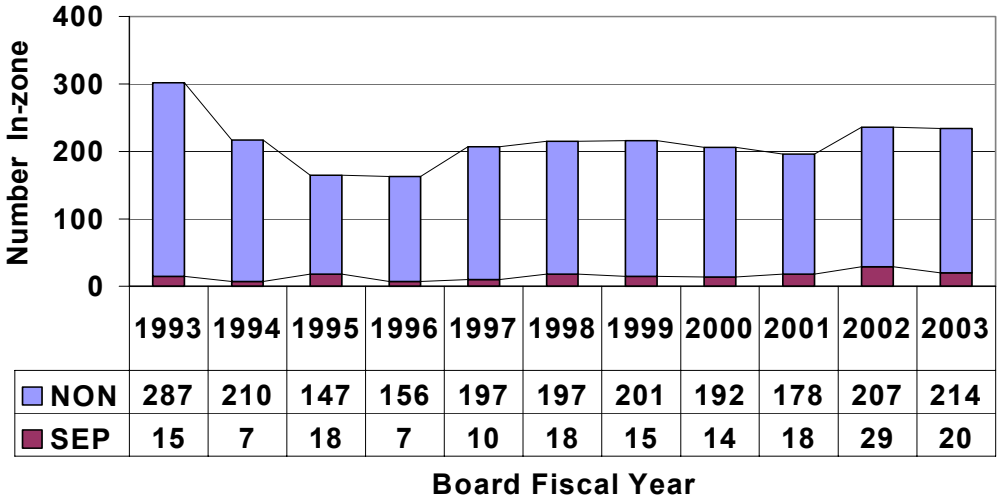
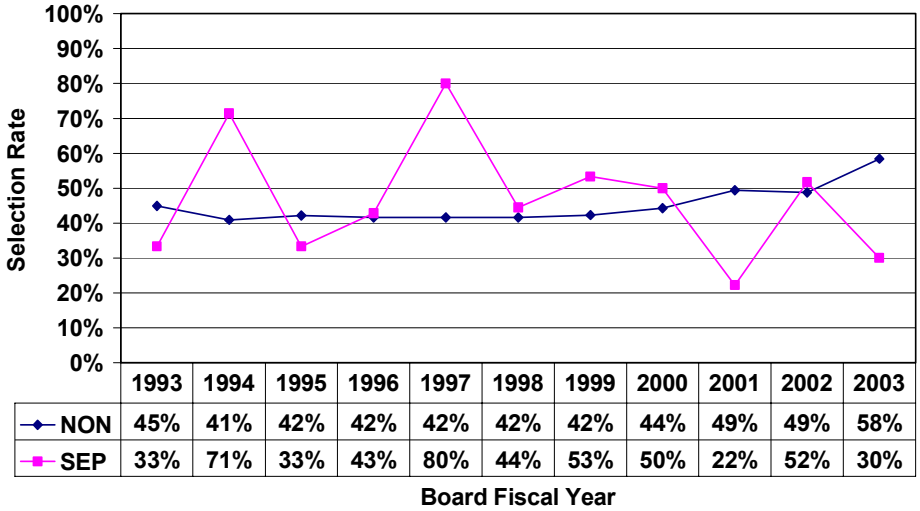


Figure K-11: Population of Lieutenant Colonels In-Zone for Colonel

In-zone SEP lieutenant colonels were selected for colonel at a rate of 43.86% over the past 11 boards compared to their non-SEP peers who were selected at a rate of 45.29%. The benchmark

selection rate for all in-zone lieutenant colonels was 45.18%. For the reasons noted above, it is difficult to attribute such a small difference in promotion rates to the impact of SEP participation.

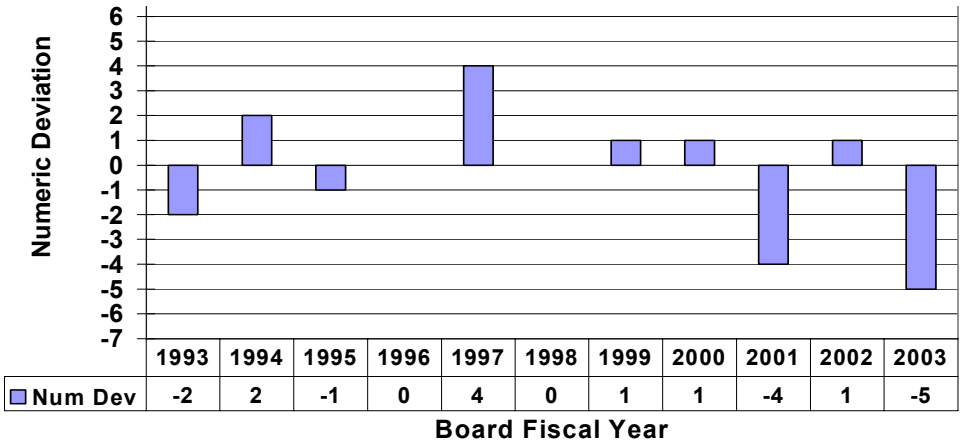
The most notable differences between selection rates of SEP and non-SEP in-zone lieutenant colonels surface when the data are divided by board fiscal year as shown in Figure K-12. The selection rates for SEP officers are significantly higher than the selection rate for their non-SEP peers for two boards and significantly lower for two others. The significant annual deviations when compared to the lieutenant colonel boards reflect the lower number of SEP officers in consideration as well as the reduced impact of SEP participation on selection at this level.



	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
NON	45%	41%	42%	42%	42%	42%	42%	44%	49%	49%	58%
SEP	33%	71%	33%	43%	80%	44%	53%	50%	22%	52%	30%

Figure K-12: Selection Rates to Colonel

The numeric deviation and percent deviation of officers selected was calculated to determine the magnitude in the difference between selection rates of SEP and non-SEP officers. The results are shown in Figures K-13 and K-14.



	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Num Dev	-2	2	-1	0	4	0	1	1	-4	1	-5

Figure K-13: Numeric Deviation of SEP Lieutenant Colonels Selected

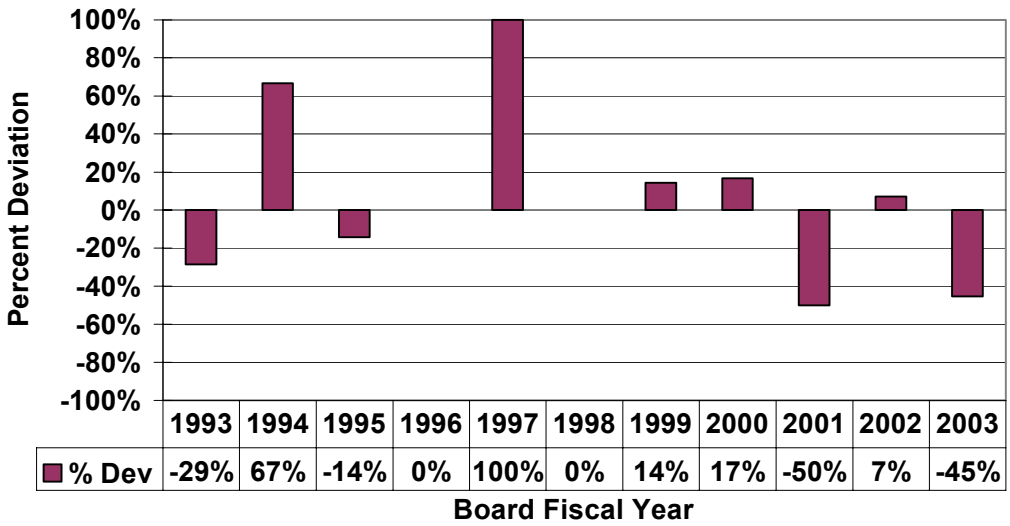


Figure K-14: Percent Deviation of SEP Lieutenant Colonels Selected

Figures K-13 and K-14 also reflect the wide variability of the SEP officer selection rates when viewed by individual board. Based on these results, there is no indication that SEP participation is a good predictor of selection to colonel.

K.6 Time in Grade at Consideration for Promotion

Figure K-15 provides the average time in grade from date of rank to board date for consideration for promotion to the grades of major through colonel. Time in grade for selection to major steadily decreased for the FY1993 to FY2000 boards before increasing slightly from FY2000 to FY2002. The reduced time in grade as a captain means that more SEP participants go to school as majors or are promoted to major earlier in the program. The result is that more of the officer's time in SEP is as a field grade officer, reducing the amount of PMOS time the officer has as a field grade officer.

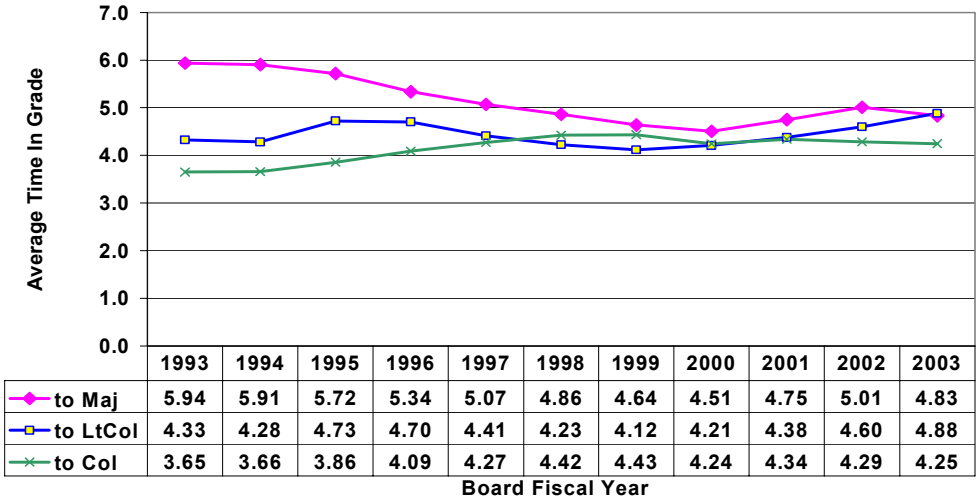


Figure K-15: Average Time in Grade

K.7 Field Grade Officer Population Trends

Figure K-16 provides the ratio of the officer population in each year to the annual average for each officer grade (major through colonel) and overall for field grade officers and all officers. While the total officer population declined, the number of majors and lieutenant colonels increased significantly during this period. The number of colonels did not change significantly. Therefore, the population reductions have come from the company grade ranks. This explains why the time in grade to major decreased until the past 3 years.

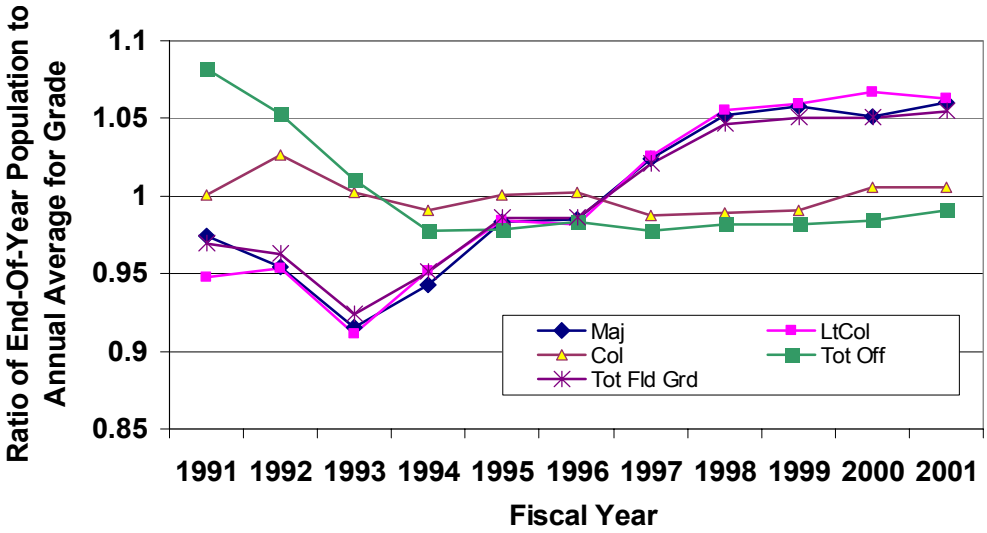


Figure K-16: Field Grade Officer Population Trends

K.8 Summary and Conclusions

This analysis shows that participation in SEP by itself is not a career killer. An officer's occupational group, timing of SEP participation, and promotion board all play a role in selection to lieutenant colonel. Some SEP programs complement an officer's PMOS, while some do not. For example, a computer science degree enhances a command and control systems officer's PMOS credibility, while the same degree may detract from an infantry officer's PMOS credibility. This explains why SEP officers in the Other (i.e., support fields) occupational group are promoted at a higher rate than their SEP peers in the combat arms and aviator occupational groups.

The timing of SEP participation may play a role in selection for lieutenant colonel. Overall, SEP officers who came in-zone while at NPS or during their utilization tour were promoted at a lower rate than SEP officers who had completed their utilization tour. However, the results varied by promotion board and the overall result should not be considered definitive for any particular board.

Finally, promotion rates for SEP officers are largely a function of each promotion board. Boards promote SEP officers at a lower rate in some years than in others. Boards also determine the number of officers to promote above or below zone. These promotions can impact SEP officers. For example, the board may choose to promote a relatively large number of above-zone officers

in a given year. This may give some previously passed-over SEP officers a better chance at promotion, especially if they have completed their utilization tour and returned to their PMOS.

Promotion rates of SEP officers to colonel fluctuate from year to year. Although the overall promotion rate of SEP officers is slightly below that of non-SEP officers, there is no consistent trend. It appears that factors apart from SEP participation have a much greater influence on promotion to colonel.

APPENDIX L COMMENTS ON THE PROPOSAL FOR A PERMANENT CONTRACTING OFFICER MOS

L.1 Background

The Southwest Regional Contracting Office/Western Recruiting Region submitted one of the two nominations that eventually led to this study. Their submission was based on thesis work performed by Captain Eric Corcoran while a student at the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) (Corcoran, 2000). The primary recommendation in the thesis was to restructure the Marine Corps contracting field and make the Contracting Officer SEP MOS 9656 a permanent MOS (PMOS). Under this proposal, all officers who successfully complete the contracting curriculum at NPS would automatically be laterally moved to a Contracting Officer PMOS.

L.2 Discussion

Implementation of Captain Corcoran's proposal would require a number of other changes in order to create a manageable PMOS and he addresses these changes in his thesis. The most significant change would be the creation of a billet structure that would provide a career path for contracting officers. Specific comments follow:

L.2.1 DEPARTS FROM CURRENT OFFICER STRUCTURE

As noted in the main body of this report, designation of any SEP MOS as a PMOS would be a radical departure from the traditional Marine Corps unrestricted officer structure. Currently the only unrestricted officer PMOSs that are not open to entry level officers are those where specialized junior officers merge into a more general PMOS in the same occupational field as they increase in rank (the Air Command and Control, 72xx, field being one example). Implementation of a SEP MOS as a PMOS would create a situation where the lowest grade in the MOS would be captain (O-3), or possibly higher. Individuals with such an MOS would become quasi-"limited duty officers."

L.2.2 CREATES SIGNIFICANT ADDITIONAL STRUCTURE

Currently there are 24 MOS 9656 regular officer billets in the Marine Corps structure, all with the grade of captain or major. All of the billets are in Marine Corps organizations. As Captain Corcoran correctly noted, the number and grade of these billets cannot support a PMOS. Therefore, he recommended the creation of a significant number (an exact number was not provided) of additional military contracting officer billets both within the Marine Corps and in joint and external (primarily Defense Contracting Management Agency) commands. The grades of these billets would range from captain to brigadier general. There are currently no validated requirements for additional contracting officer billets. Any new billets, even if fully justified, would have to compete with the 162 approved but uncompensated officer billets currently awaiting space in the structure.

L.2.3 ASSUMES MILITARY OFFICER REQUIREMENT

Captain Corcoran deliberately excludes consideration of civil service employees in his study except to note that the draft Marine Corps Contracting Campaign Plan included a strategy to

develop "a contracting career track for civilian Marines." He bemoans the fact that a similar strategy was not included for military contracting officers. This raises the legitimate question of the necessity for uniformed officers to fill contracting billets that require extensive experience. As noted in the main body of this report, billets requiring specialized training and education should be filled by officers only when there is a clear requirement for a uniformed individual (since all contracting officer billets are acquisition workforce positions, this is also a Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) requirement for those billets). Clearly there is a uniformed requirement for some MOS 9656 billets, particularly the contingency contracting billets in the operating forces. However, most of the contracting effort in the Marine Corps occurs in the supporting establishment where civilian employees who serve continuously in the contracting field may be as effective as a uniformed officer or even more so.

L.3 Recommendations

Rather than create a PMOS based on a SEP MOS, as proposed by Captain Corcoran, the study team recommends that the requirement for uniformed contracting officers with graduate degrees be more closely examined. Specific recommendations are:

L.3.1 VALIDATE UNIFORMED OFFICER REQUIREMENT

Validate the requirement for a uniformed officer in each of the current MOS 9656 Contracting Officer billets.

L.3.2 INVESTIGATE TRAINING ALTERNATIVES

For those billets that do require a military contracting officer, the NPS curricula may not be the best means of training. Many MOS 9656 survey respondents found the contracting curriculum at NPS to be improperly focused for Marines, particularly those going to contingency contracting billets. The NPS curriculum emphasizes contracting for large procurements, typically acquisition category (ACAT) I and II, which few Marine contracting officers work on. The survey respondents stressed the need for training in contingency contracting, completing required forms, and the Standard Procurement System and they felt that they were inadequately prepared in these areas. Captain Corcoran cited these same deficiencies in his thesis. Many officers took courses from Defense Acquisition University (DAU) after graduation to gain these skills. A postgraduate degree is not required to obtain a contracting officer warrant. The minimum requirement is for a 4-year college degree with at least 24 hours of business courses and the requisite contracting officer training. This training is available from DAU and can be completed in much less time than a master's degree at NPS. The MOS manager should review the MOS 9656 billets and determine if this alternate training is adequate for the duties performed. If so, Marine officers with undergraduate business degrees could receive the required contracting officer training from DAU and satisfactorily fill those billets at far less cost than SEP.

L.3.3 CONSIDER BILLET CONVERSION

For those billets that do not require a military officer, the billet owner should consider the possibility of converting the billet to a civil service position. The potential benefits of this conversion are discussed in the AWP portion of the main body of this report.

L.4 Conclusion

The creation of a permanent contracting officer MOS may provide some benefit to the Marine Corps in terms of return on investment for NPS graduates and increased effectiveness as a result of serving continuously in a complex field. However, the study team did not find that this potential benefit justified the significant changes that would be required to implement Captain Corcoran's proposal. Specifically, implementation of the proposal would require a departure from the Marine Corps concept of the unrestricted officer. In addition, creating the additional structure spaces that would be required would adversely impact the Marine Corps in many other areas.

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