

## 2018 AOG Chapter Presidents Conference

The 2018 AOG Chapter Presidents' Conference was held 29-31 Aug at Doolittle Hall at the US Air Force Academy. Much like the 2017 conference, the weather was outstanding and it was an excellent opportunity to meet with representatives from other regional AOG chapters and learn and improve our graduate community.

In attendance were 23 Chapter/Affinity group representatives. The conference was a mix of joint AOG chapter and Parents' Club events and AOG-only meetings.

Bill Preston and Karina Ross were again in charge of the overall event and repeated their stellar performances from last year. The conference opened with welcome and administrative remarks from Steve Simon, the AOG Executive Vice President. Steve shared that there are approximately 50 local AOG chapters and 25 are what is considered "very active."

After the opening remarks, Cathy McClain, AOG Board Chair addressed the conference. She provided an update on the vision and mission of the AOG and highlighted examples of grads and the grad community giving back to local communities. This is also tied to carrying on USAFA heritage including the Forged in Blue program linking current USAFA classes with the classes from 50 years before. This included donating grads' class rings to be worked into new class rings to further link the Long Blue Line.

There was also a long discussion regarding the AOG's current goal to convert the AOG and USAFA Endowment into a single-CEO model. The general thrust of the argument is that now is a good time for the AOG and endowment to have a single-CEO. The idea would be to reduce repetition and eliminate silos between these organizations. Ultimately, the desire is to have grads simply vote on the issue regardless of their position on the merits. The last time there was a vote, only 19% of eligible graduates voted; 25% is required for quorum on a vote.

Rick's summary of the debate *last year* accurately summarizes the discussion from this year:

A spirited discussion of the concept of a single CEO resulted. The majority of the attendees were upset with the way the vote was handled both before and especially after the vote was taken and did not receive a quorum. The real problem seemed to be on the Endowment side which has as many as 7 organizations gathering money for the academy with little or no coordination among them. There was no indication of the AOG and the Endowment having trouble working together.

After the single-CEO discussion, additional time for questions was allotted. Many of the questions focused on how AOG chapters can better reach out and get better involvement from their local grad communities. There weren't many success stories, but it was reassuring to learn that all chapters struggle with engagement and there is not one-size fits all. Suggestions included offer a wide variety of activities for different interest groups and consider community involvement opportunities as well.

The next speaker was Devin Bertelsen who spoke on Young Alumni Outreach. The young alumni are defined as graduates from 2003 (Strong and Mighty!) and beyond. Young alumni generally overlap with the millennial generation and share many of the same interests. Ms. Bertelsen spoke of using social media and again having a variety of activities. The AOG supports a number of social media platforms

and to reach young alumni, those platforms are useful. The AOG is also initiating a Young Alumni Excellence Award to recognize active members involved from that group.

We were then invited to attend lunch at Mitchell Hall. Eating with the cadets brought back some memories, but the experience certainly has changed. The focus of lunch is now on eating and training is significantly limited. Underclassmen eat first to emphasize servant leadership; upperclassmen take care of their people first and eat last. There was an ongoing discussion for the rest of the conference among the AOG representatives as to if this was an improvement, detriment or simply “now how we did it in *OUR* day!”

Following lunch there was a USAFA/AOG/Endowment Leaders Panel. The key speaker was the Superintendent, Lt Gen Silveria, he was joined by Mike Gould, USAFA Endowment President and Marty Marcolongo, USAFA AOG President and CEO. The sup spoke about some USAFA statistics; 50% of the class of 2019 will go to UPT and 60% (total) will go to a rated AFSC. The class 2022 had the highest retention throughout BCT and inprocessing was moved to the field house to accommodate the more than 2600 visitors who dropped off 1180 cadets.

After the sup finished speaking, the remainder of the panel answered questions, with the focus again on the common CEO issue. Many of the AOG members requested information on the value of the change and better communication on the topic.

That evening and AOG representatives and the presidents of the attending Parents’ Clubs were welcomed by a reception at the residence of the superintendent. Gen Silveria had invited most of his senior staff, several members of the cadet wing staff and the falcon handlers along with some falcons.

The next morning found us at Doolittle Hall having briefings from the staff of the academy. Again we were joined by the Parents’ Club presidents attending Parents’ Weekend at the academy. The short briefings were good. The sup spoke about 60% of the class of 2022 were the first in their family with any military experience. He reiterated how the AOG and Parents Clubs can be effective outreach for the new challenges the academy and the military present to families.

He also spoke about needing a sense of cultural innovation, stating “what got us here will not get us there.” Technological challenges and advancements have changed how the cadet wing (and the US Air Force) does business. The sup further shared how many cadets in-process already knowing their classmates and that he views the technological interconnectedness of the cadets as a benefit to the future of the Air Force.

The sup was joined by a panel of the rest of the USAFA leadership. The Commandant spoke about establishing a warrior ethos in USAFA cadets and developing a 47 month cadet development plan. The Dean talked about lifting academic performance for all cadets and mentoring and tutoring opportunities. The Athletic director shared [goairforcefalcons.com](http://goairforcefalcons.com) as a single-point site for all Air Force sports calendars. The 10 ABW/CC talked about ongoing construction and renovations to the 60+ year old facilities on the Academy grounds.

During the question and answer session, Academy leadership spoke about the need to help new parents or families without military experience understand the new process. They also shared the possibility of adding a “Space Operations” major to the curriculum.

Col Art Primus, Director of Admissions spoke both to the joint group and to the AOG delegates. He spoke to the diversity goals set by the AF and how that is achieved through data driven marketing. He stressed the need to present the academy to under-reached “opportunity districts.” One of the regions was western Minnesota.

Rick then gave his presentation on joint AOG-Parent’s Club activities. The presentation was very well received and many people asked a lot of questions and took notes on how to work with and integrate with the Parent’s Club. Additionally, I recently had one of the other Chapter Presidents reach out to me looking for insight and information to emulate what the TCA USAFA AOG has accomplished.

The Distinguished Chapter Banquet was held at the Eisenhower Golf Club that evening and the Twin Cities Chapter as again a Distinguished Chapter. We had received the second most points on our Distinguished Chapter submission; only the Washington DC chapter had more points.

Michele Bergman provided information on Alumni Services and the national AOG can provide to chapters. This included “email blasts,” rosters and other grad data and the use of CVENT for event registration.

Finally, Karina Ross presented on more Young Alumni Outreach opportunities. These activities tended to be focused on active duty alumni and their families. While there was limited applicability for the TCA-AOG, it further reinforced the need to consider a wide variety of activities that appeal to both grads and their families across a wide spectrum of interests.

The conference was an excellent opportunity to network with other AOG Chapters. It provided a great deal of quality information and opportunities to improve how the TCA AGO operates. I am very appreciative that our board gave me the opportunity to attend this conference.

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