
DISAM: State of the Institute - 2000

By

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The future cannot be known. The only thing certain about it is that it will be different from, rather than a continuation of, today.

Peter F. Drucker

“Peter Drucker on the Profession of Management,” 1998

In February 2000, the Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management (DISAM) held its annual curriculum review.¹ The Institute’s vision for 2000 and beyond was presented during this occasion. This purpose of this article is to expand upon the substance of that presentation.

With respect to the overall *DISAM Vision—2000*, the Institute will focus on education, applied research, and information dissemination (its traditional core mission elements), as well as automation technology (an expanding mission element since the early 1990s). Further, accreditation and professional certification are two initiatives that the Institute is exploring in the interest of promoting academic excellence and gaining greater visibility for DISAM student accomplishments. A “management-focused” curricula and academic program are instrumental to the goals of accreditation and professional certification. The DISAM academic program is intended to not only contribute toward better student awareness of defense security cooperation policies and procedures but, equally important, toward student understanding of the planning, organizing, decision making, controlling and other integrated functions associated with managing defense security cooperation programs.

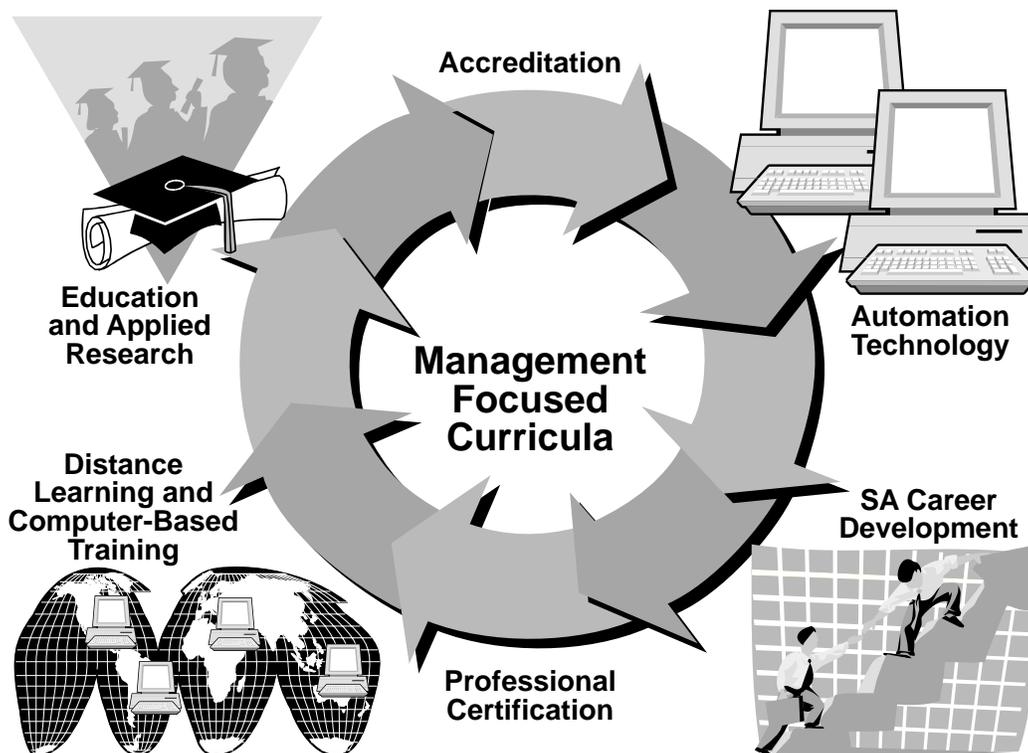


Figure 1 - DISAM Vision and Themes - 2000

Road Map For The Future

Major accomplishments worthy of note normally just don't happen; rather they are a consequence of careful, deliberate planning. So goes it with DISAM. Similar to other activities, we plan, plan, and then plan some more. Quite simply, planning may be viewed as preparing for tomorrow, and today. There are several types of plans to accommodate an organization's desired planning scope and time frames:

- (1) strategic (long-term plan with organizational-wide goals);
- (2) tactical (shorter-term plan narrower organizational scope); and
- (3) operational (the here-and-now plan for executing daily, weekly, and monthly activities).²

Due to the pressure of day-to-day events, it is often difficult to look beyond the here-and-now into the tactical and strategic planning realms. While the DSCA Strategic Plan and the DISAM Business Area Plan focus on the strategic, long-term aspect, the annual DISAM curriculum review resembles a tactical facet of planning, since it projects the direction of the Institute over the next fiscal year. Operational planning and decision making regularly occur at DISAM, as depicted in such efforts as determining what we need to do to get ready to teach and host students during next month's international class.

DSCA Strategic Plan

The fundamental underpinning for DISAM's vision for tomorrow is the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) Strategic Plan, 1998-2003.³ Following the typical model used in government and industry, the DSCA Strategic Plan consists of the agency's mission, vision, values, trends and assumptions, key business drivers, goals, strategies, objectives, and action plans (see Figure 2). For sake of clarification, *strategy* is the means by which an organization moves to attain its long-term aims. *Strategic planning* is the detailed specification of both the long-term aims and the strategy for attaining them.⁴ Moreover, as an integrated extension of the DSCA Strategic Plan, DISAM has its own business area plan. In a larger sense, strategic planning falls under a more comprehensive umbrella term known as strategic management, which can be defined as "the art and science of formulating, implementing, and evaluating cross-functional decisions that enable an organization to achieve its objectives."

Strategic Vision

The DSCA vision is that of being "The premier Agency recognized and respected for leadership, expertise, innovation, and results in security cooperation . . .

- A highly qualified team of motivated professionals
- Vital to supporting U.S. interests and security relationships
- The international partner of choice

. . . mastering the challenges of a changing global environment."

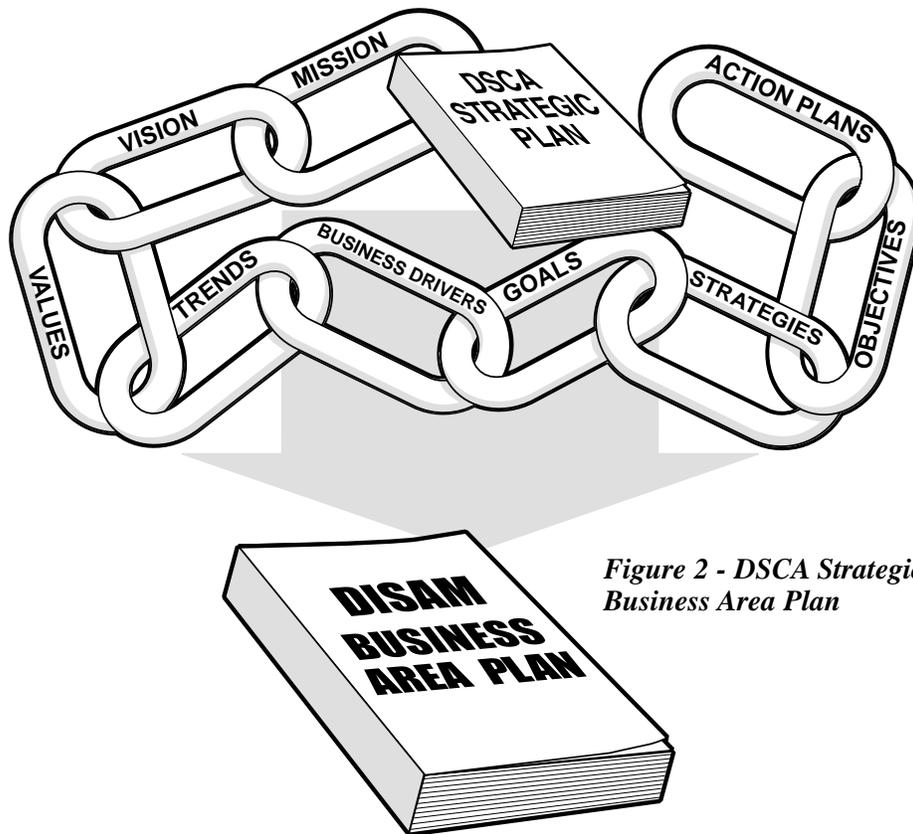


Figure 2 - DSCA Strategic Plan and DISAM Business Area Plan

Building on the DSCA vision and the DISAM mission as expounded in the applicable DoD directive,⁵ DISAM strives to *be the world's best in conducting education associated with international defense cooperation management*. According to *Webster's New International Dictionary*, "to educate" is to foster the growth and expansion of knowledge and wisdom. Thus, education is more than just teaching—it is seeking and acquiring knowledge, imparting knowledge, helping build new knowledge. In conjunction with DISAM's vision of striving for educational excellence, DISAM aspires to the following:

- To be an agent for change and a catalyst for the generation of innovative solutions to complex problems.
- To be the center of development for future defense security cooperation leaders and managers.
- To bring U.S. government, industry, and international customers closer together in a spirit of cooperation and mutual sharing of knowledge.
- To be on the cutting edge in using technology in advancing education, applied research, information dissemination, automation, and management processes.
- To have an academically accredited program respected for its unique contribution to international business management studies.

As noted in the Defense Reform Initiative Report, world-class organizations must aspire to world-class educational standards.⁶ In years past, colleges, universities, and other educational institutions may have taken a half-hearted approach toward the mundane elements of

planning and performance evaluation to cope with future environments. This often occurred due to inertia, because planning, evaluation, and responding to evaluation results naturally led to that dreaded word: *change*. Change is a rather disconcerting phenomenon since even eminent scholars like Peter Drucker remind us, “One cannot manage change. One can only be ahead of it.”⁷

Notwithstanding the cuts and bruises associated with the change management process, “business as usual” is no longer acceptable in public institutions. The Government Performance and Results Act has been taken to heart within the Department of Defense. This is most evident in the Secretary of Defense’s *Annual Report to the President and the Congress*. Evaluating annual performance is a major part of the process underlying the DoD vision of “[serving] as a model of effective, efficient, innovative management and leadership.”⁸ Current tendencies call for the examination of public institutional processes in terms of comparable commercial business practices and efficiencies. Hence, most governmental organizations, educational institutions included, are engaged in strategic planning and are striving to become agents for change.⁹

Stakeholders

As part of the academic excellence and change-agent process, DISAM has its stakeholders who cast a careful eye on the happenings of the Institute. In a public administration context, a stakeholder can be defined as individuals and groups with an interest in the consequences of administrative action.¹⁰ Said another way, stakeholders can include any parties that have a “stake” in the success or performance of an organization.¹¹ For DISAM, this first and foremost includes our parent organization, DSCA. The Director, DSCA, in turn, chairs the DISAM Policy and Advisory Council (P&AC), which collectively constitute a broader group of U.S. government stakeholders. In addition to DSCA, the P&AC has representation from the Office of the Secretary of Defense (Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics), the Defense Finance and Accounting Service, the Joint Staff (representing the unified commands and the overseas security assistance organizations), and the international secretariat components of the Army, Navy, and Air Force. The DISAM curriculum-review working group is a staff-level outgrowth of the P&AC, augmented by the unified commands and other interested organizations.

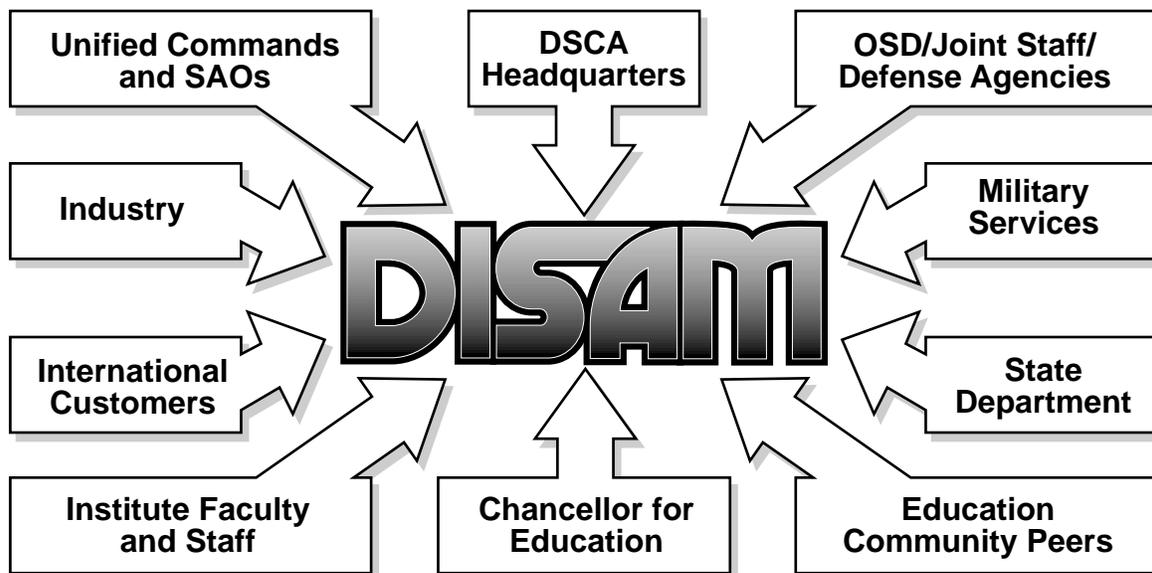


Figure 3 - DISAM Stakeholders

Within most organizations, multiple stakeholders are the norm. As reflected in the DSCA Strategic Plan and the DISAM Business Area Plan, other stakeholders, beyond U.S. government organizations, include international customer nations, industry, and DSCA/DISAM employees. Since the White House's National Security Strategy identifies defense security cooperation programs as catalysts in advancing peacetime engagement objectives, international customers constitute a very special group of stakeholders.¹² Industry is an obvious stakeholder in the sense that defense security cooperation is dependent upon products and services acquired from American firms, either through the foreign military sales program or direct commercial sales. Just as it does for U.S. government stakeholders, DISAM provides education to international customers and industry through various resident and non-resident courses. Finally, the employees of any organization have a definite stake in the organization's success. Borrowing a term from the business management world, DISAM employees take pride in providing service to their clients in a *supply chain management* context. Supply chain management places an emphasis on integrating business processes in a macro systems sense to add value for customers and stakeholders.¹³ The supply chain management concept, in many ways, resembles the *value chain* concept, addressed in the international business literature, that the firm or organization is a value chain composed of a series of distinct value creation activities.¹⁴ In the final analysis, the strategic purpose of an organization, such as DISAM, is to create value that meets the needs of its stakeholders.¹⁵

The concept of *governance* is pertinent to academic institutions such as DISAM. In this regard, governance relates to the institutions and processes by which policies are developed, operational decisions are made, and accountability is maintained. According to the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, higher education governance has historically included three principal stakeholders: governing boards, administrators, and the full-time faculty.¹⁶ Thus, as it relates to DISAM, governance issues are those concerned with the role of DISAM's governing board (i.e., the DISAM Policy and Advisory Council) as well as the role of the DISAM staff and faculty. The opportunity for stakeholder participation is central to the concept of governance. In this latter respect, the DSCA Strategic Plan and the DISAM Business Area Plan emphasize empowerment and encourage processes for employees to generate ideas and offer feedback. Employee "buy-in" is recognized as an essential prerequisite to constantly improved performance results.

Since the advent of the Defense Reform Initiative (DRI), DISAM has an additional DoD stakeholder. In this regard, the DRI established the Office of the Chancellor for Education and Professional Development to serve as the principal advocate for the academic quality and cost-effectiveness of all DoD civilian education and professional development activities.¹⁷ In light of this, DISAM's educational programs are viewed through the broader prism of not only what DISAM is doing but what other DoD educational institutions are doing as well. Comparative analysis and cooperative sharing of best practices among institutions are at the root of *benchmarking*—identifying the best product of service to meet or beat in terms of design, performance, or service.¹⁸ Said another way, benchmarking involves making comparisons of processes, practices, and performance with other organizations or even within sections of an organization.¹⁹ A recent management book, titled *Six Sigma*, emphasizes benchmarking as a tool for the identification of best practices, as an effective approach for guiding improvement, as a formalized way to manage change, and so forth.²⁰ At the present time, DISAM participates in the Chancellor Office's recently established Task Group on Metrics of Excellence; in fact, DISAM is assigned to three groups—the Senior Steering Group, the Academic Quality Working Group, and the Academic Resource Management Working Group. Together with task force working groups, DoD schools are placed into peer groups with other schools of similar size and relatively comparable processes. In essence, the working group and peer group networks present an opportunity for a variation of consortium benchmarking discussed in the professional education literature.²¹

Looking at Performance

Doing The Right Things, Not the Wrong Things Right

How does DISAM measure performance? Several ways. Similar to several other peer organizations (e.g., other DoD schools), DISAM is gradually developing and refining its performance measures. When people talk about performance, they very often think about productivity. Briefly defined, productivity is the ratio of work produced to resources consumed (or, more simply, output to input).²² However, performance measurement is not really that simple in today's times. The current management literature suggests that the performance measurement focus should go beyond input-output efficiency analysis, to looking at effectiveness as opposed to efficiency.²³ Effectiveness focuses on results whereas efficiency focuses on activity. However, to fully look at effectiveness, one must also consider efficiency since costs must be justified in terms of benefits received. The contemporary *Six Sigma* management model would even have companies focus on the process rather than the outcome, because final outcomes or results are determined by what happens during the process.²⁴ The author of another book, *Keeping Score*, reinforces the importance of process measurements as well, in that the cause of a problem is usually found by looking at the process data.²⁵ Bottom line: results, outcomes, outputs, processes, inputs are all important in their own way. True, the Government Performance and Results Act still places the key emphasis on outcomes instead of processes.²⁶ However, as the literature suggests, several of these measurement-related terms tend to blend together. In my humble view, performance measurement would seem to require a "systems approach" when it comes to successful adoption.

While DISAM is getting its performance measures into order within the evolving world of performance metrics, a more fundamental issue is whether DISAM is really doing the right things—that is, are the Institute's courses and services relevant and responsive to the needs of DISAM's clients? Management case studies have shown that organizations are quite capable of doing the wrong things with great efficiency, but to little avail in terms of adding value to the process.²⁷ This is a trap that the Institute wants to avoid. Thus, DISAM has a variety of performance evaluation methods, ranging from curriculum reviews to student questionnaires to academic peer reviews. While we always want to do things better, we can never lose sight of continuous identification and validation of the right things.

Formal Curriculum Review Assessment

Based on the participants' feedback during the curriculum review in February 2000, it appears that DISAM is, for the most part, doing the right things. However, the participants also wanted DISAM to do more in certain areas and take an innovative role in finding the proper balance and mix among DoD general and military service-unique topical areas. In the future, DISAM will need to be flexible in continuing to present educational concepts, while doing more specialized, task-oriented training as well. Some of this is already happening. The DISAM Security Assistance Management—Case Management (SAM-CM), Financial Management (SAM-CF), Training Officer (SAM-TO), and Advanced (SAM-A) courses have military service-unique seminars in addition to the standard student-wide subject blocks. The new DISAM Case Reconciliation Course (SAM-CR) is similarly organized, with workshops relating to Army, Navy, and Air Force systems and procedures.

The unified command representatives indicated that they want to get even more value-added results from the Overseas (SAM-O) Course. One initiative to be implemented in the future in a Security Assistance Organization (SAO) Chiefs' track, focusing on SAO management activities and paralleling the tracks on Training Program Management, International Armaments Cooperation Programs, and Security Assistance Automated Resource Management Systems.

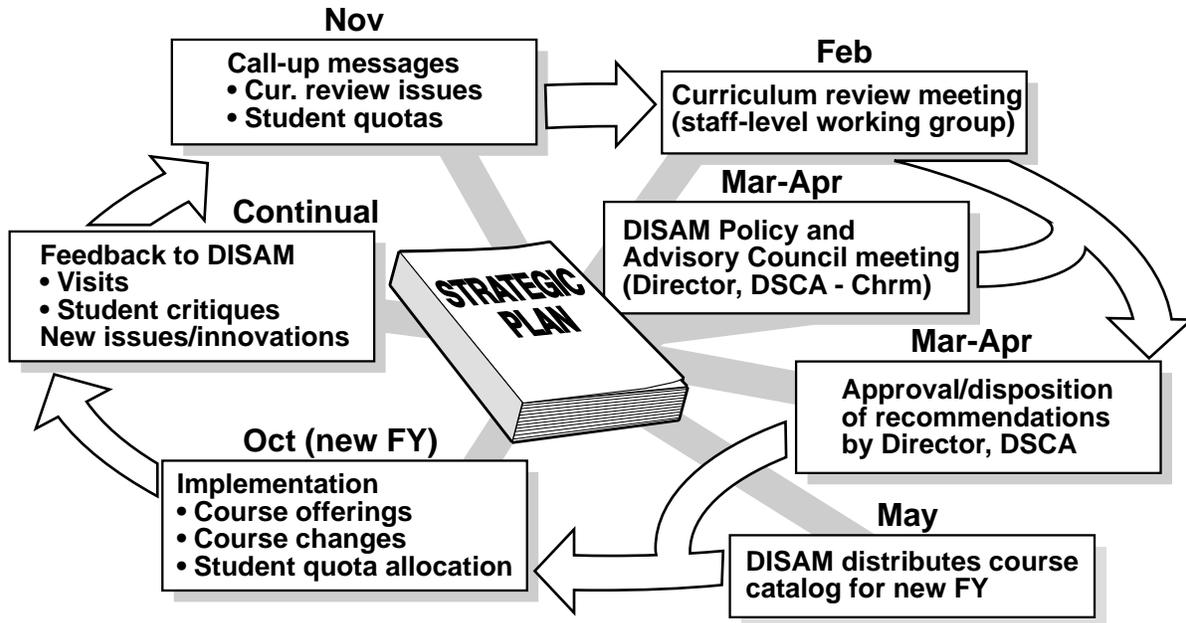


Figure 4 - DISAM Curriculum Review Process

From a quantitative output measurement standpoint, one of DISAM's major performance results is course graduates. Looking back over the past three fiscal years (1997-1999) and the current fiscal year (FY2000), the DISAM student load is well above the 2,200 annual mark. In order to provide the basis for better metrics and workload performance in the future, traditional courses (e.g., CONUS, Overseas), as well as non-traditional training events, are now being captured within a database. The non-traditional category, for example, includes special training associated with the Security Assistance Automated Resource Management System (SAARMS), the Training Management System (TMS), and the Defense Security Assistance Management System (DSAMS). TMS training is often conducted at the unified commands' training program management reviews (TPMRs), a non-traditional training opportunity for the typical schoolhouse but a good one to be sure. On other occasions, DISAM will send a faculty member to an SAO and perform a tutorial on a special subject such as TMS or SAARMS.

While the student numbers correctly depict an ambitious educational workload, routine efficiency measures readily point to ways where greater cost-benefit outcomes are possible. In this regard, the curriculum review participants were advised that, in several instances, there have been shortfalls in student registration levels. Essentially, DISAM would like to see a minimum of 25, and preferably 30, students in most of its classes. While practically all courses could stand some improvement with respect to average student levels, the more significant shortfalls are associated with the Case Management (SAM-CM), CONUS Orientation (SAM-CO), and Advanced/Refresher (SAM-A) courses. By contrast, the Overseas (SAM-O) course will often have student class loads exceeding 50 personnel due to spring and summer billet rotations. With respect to the CONUS audiences, DISAM encouraged the military service quota managers to try to work closer with their student constituencies and the DISAM registrar in getting the average student levels increased during future classes.

Non-resident programs are another element of performance. DISAM conducts on-site courses at CONUS government and industry locations as well as mobile education team (MET)

courses for our international customers. In fiscal years 1996-1999, DISAM provided from 6 to 11 METs each year, with a growing demand from the Central European nations. In FY2000, DISAM has already conducted six METs (Brazil, Colombia, Israel, Taiwan, Ukraine, and Oman), with almost that many scheduled for the remainder of the fiscal year. METs are an example of the synergistic effect of primary and secondary performance outcomes. The obvious or primary reason for DISAM to conduct a MET, especially from the host country and the SAO's point of view, is to better educate the foreign government personnel. While that is DISAM's primary reason as well, METs afford an opportunity for faculty personnel to visit the American embassy, the SAO, and the foreign government offices. Consequently, such visits have a secondary performance outcome of making the faculty better understand country team interrelationships as well as the defense security cooperation business practices as they are applied within a given country.

Other Educational Quality and Performance Assessments

Within the educational methodology literature, there are a number of methods to help gauge overall program performance. The value of program evaluation modes is a challenge for both program personnel and evaluating groups, and multiple program evaluation endeavors are generally needed.²⁸ Thus, in addition to the annual curriculum review, DISAM has other performance indicators, as follows:

Informal/Internal Curriculum Reviews

During most weeks of the calendar year, DISAM is running multiple resident and non-resident classes. However, the holiday weeks (e.g., Labor Day) afford an opportunity for the faculty to "stand down" and do other things. This is the time when DISAM has internal curriculum reviews that can be centered on an entire course, or one or more functional areas (e.g., logistics) which cross over the boundaries of several courses.

End-of-Course Student Critiques

As an integral part of every DISAM course, students have the opportunity to present their assessments of the educational experience. In past years, DISAM tended to show a predisposition toward narrative comments. DISAM is currently in the process of reviewing all of its end-of-course instruments with an eye towards using scaled responses that can be quantifiably stratified and measured, while retaining the opportunity for supplemental student narrative comments. These critiques provide a means of addressing the educational delivery process as well as the student support services, e.g., registrar, library, billeting, and so forth.

Follow-On Surveys

Due to the special needs of the SAO community, DISAM has used a six-month follow-on survey in order to gain the feedback of this client community. In addition to helping DISAM better understand the effectiveness of its educational delivery system and processes, the follow-on surveys allow SAO members to express the differences among their country environments and position duties. Occasionally, DISAM uses follow-on surveys to gain feedback from other audiences. In this latter regard, DISAM is doing a follow-on survey to the international military student officer/manager (IMSO) community as a means of validating the Training Officer (SAM-TO) course.

Faculty Peer Reviews

Newly-assigned DISAM instructors as well as instructors assigned to teach different subject areas undergo special one-on-one or peer group reviews prior to going before a student audience. Each major area of the DISAM curricula, e.g., International Sales Process, has a functional subject manager and each course has a course director. Collectively, there is a systematic internal approach to ensuring that the right subject is taught in the right course in the right level of detail. In addition, faculty members receive feedback from peers sitting in on classroom presentations.

External Reviews

Along with the formal curriculum review, the Institute is the recipient of visits by the Office of the Chancellor for Education and Professional Development. Moreover, another form of external quality review was recently accomplished by the American Council on Education (ACE), discussed in more detail later in this article.

DSCA Customer Survey

In 1998, DSCA conducted a stakeholder survey as part of the strategic planning process. DISAM, of course, was part of the agency survey. Current plans call for the agency stakeholders' survey to be accomplished again this fiscal year. The results will then be quantified by survey attribute (e.g., responsiveness, accessibility) by business area entity.

Stakeholder Networking

Another way of gaining impressions of DISAM's performance results is to listen to the stakeholders. Outside the regular classroom, DISAM members are readily accessible by telephone and e-mail. Quite often, these informal communications provide insights as to how well DISAM is covering a particular subject. DISAM members also take advantage of the opportunities for networking while conducting on-site and mobile education team courses, attending conferences and workshops, and visiting stakeholder sites. The DoD Chancellor for Education and Professional Development is now an additional stakeholder for DISAM educational programs, and DISAM participation in the Chancellor Office's Metrics of Excellence Task Force will lead to the identification of additional means of performance assessment.

Applied Research and Information Dissemination

As part of its applied research mission, DISAM produces a number of publications such as the DISAM text, *The Management of Security Assistance*, the quarterly *DISAM Journal of International Security Assistance Management*, the DISAM Catalog, and various user handbooks (such as the *Security Assistance Network User's Handbook*). DISAM has further taken a coordinating role, on behalf of the defense security cooperation community, to advance the International Programs portion of the Defense Acquisition Deskbook. In fact, Deskbook is a principal electronic reference that includes official publications as well as instructional guides. Deskbook also has an "Ask a Professor" feature that the DISAM faculty supports.

Automation Technology

Automation is now second nature to several DISAM members and a major part of the overall DISAM mission. Starting in 1990, DISAM became the project manager for the Security Assistance Network (SAN), which has evolved into an Internet web site with interfaces to the military services' international training systems and the financial reporting system at

DFAS–Denver Center. Moreover, the DISAM-developed SAARMS and TMS modules interact with the SAN’s data upload/download capabilities. In the past two years, DISAM automation personnel have developed Internet web pages, with various links for DSCA Headquarters and the Institute. Very recently, DISAM assisted the DSCA Information Technology Directorate in developing a windows-based web page for Excess Defense Articles. Other DISAM automation efforts include database applications for the DSCA Strategic Plan and the Joint Manning Program coding systems.

Automation technology is now impacting the way DISAM provides students with course materials. While students legitimately want and need some “hands-on” materials, such as the DISAM textbook and the student notebook with the topical advance sheets, DISAM has dramatically cut down on the amount of paper that a student carries away following a course. Students are now provided with a set of CD-ROMs with applicable classroom references and, in several occasions, classroom graphical presentations.

New Initiatives

Repository for Best Practices

In December 1999, the Deputy Secretary of Defense tasked Director, DSCA, to “designate DISAM to be the repository for, and direct DISAM to facilitate the sharing of, security assistance best practices within the Department.” Figure 5 represents the best practices sharing processes in terms of inputs and outputs. With respect to inputs (best-practices compilation), there are several things that DoD and military service defense security cooperation offices can do to help facilitate the process, as follows:

- Ensure DISAM is on distribution for policy papers that are candidates for best-practices compilation.
- Contribute best-practices articles for publication in the *DISAM Journal*, or to the applicable Internet web page.
- Extend invitations to DISAM faculty to attend conferences and key meetings and provide minutes from such events to DISAM.
- Provide well-qualified guest speakers, as requested, to participate in DISAM classes and question-and-answer sessions with the DISAM faculty.
- Host DISAM faculty visits to their sites in the process of improving the academic curriculum, including helping DISAM identify and gather best practices.

From the Institute’s standpoint, we will promulgate best practices through a variety of media: resident and nonresident classes and seminars, the DISAM text and *Journal*, the Institute’s web page, and the *Defense Acquisition Deskbook*. In this latter regard, the Deskbook is ideally suited to the compilation of best practices, since it already serves that function for the acquisition community. Moreover, the *Security Assistance Management Manual (SAMM)* is an integral component of the Deskbook.

Distance Learning and Computer-Based Training

A relatively ambitious DISAM initiative involves the entry into distance learning and computer-based training (CBT). Distance learning is defined as any formal educational process that occurs with the teacher and the student separated by either time or distance.²⁹ The distance

education process employs media in many forums and to varying extents, including mail, e-mail, facsimile, radio, television, satellite broadcasts, videotapes, CBT, teleconferencing, Intranets, and the Internet, including the worldwide web. Based on a review of a modest portion of the business and educational literature, it is readily apparent that distance education and distance learning, including CBT, continue to expand in the workplace, military services, and academic communities.

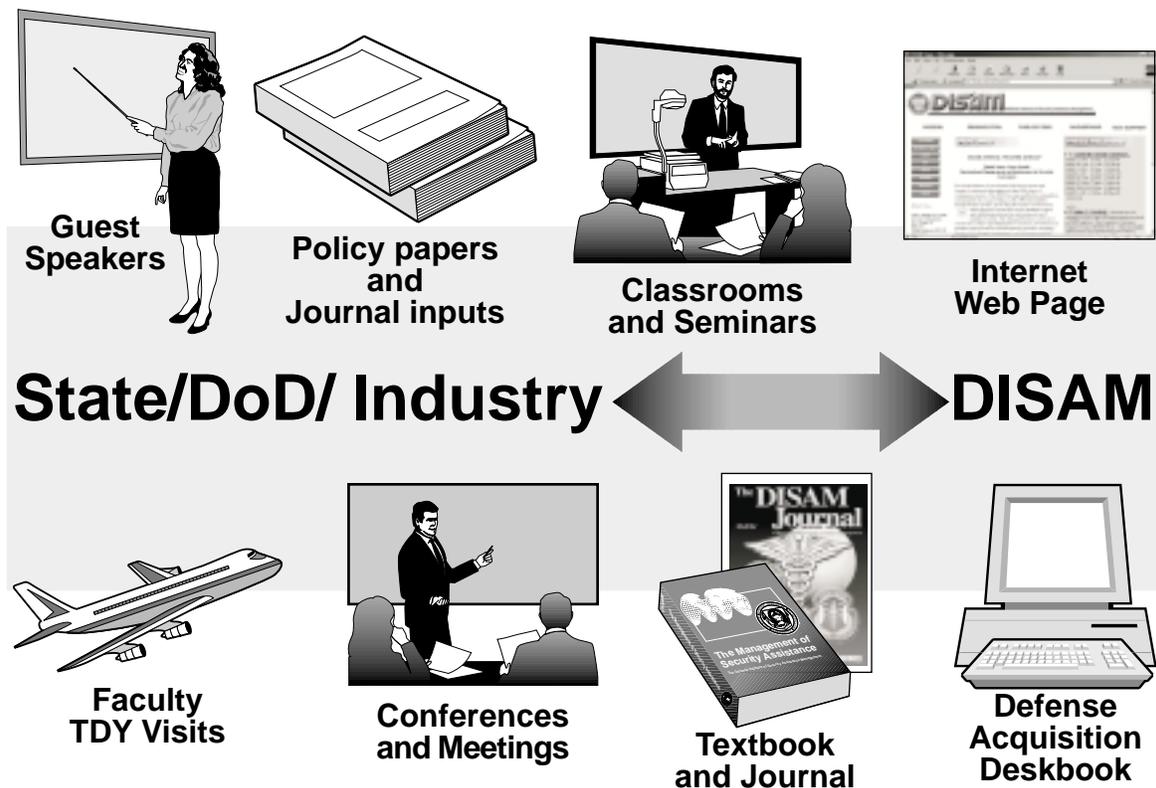


Figure 5 - Sharing Best Practices

During the next few years, DISAM plans to take the following approach with respect to distance learning and CBT:

- Gradually and systematically increase the expertise of selected DISAM faculty and staff personnel with respect to distance learning and CBT technologies, including sending certain personnel to training to improve their technological skills.
- Continue to look at other organizations' use of distance learning and CBT to use lessons learned and benchmarking to the maximum extent possible.
- Develop focused and manageable distance learning courses and CBT modules in an iterative process while balancing other DISAM mission priorities, using the data from a survey to be administered to defense security cooperation community personnel as a means of establishing future direction and relative priorities.

As a result of occasional stakeholder expressed interest and in consonance with the DISAM Business Area Plan, we have reviewed some existing CBT applications being used by the Navy and the U.S. Army Security Assistance Command (USASAC) as well as software to track

course lesson progress and completion status. In addition, DISAM has looked at various developmental software applications. In January 2000, we acquired a copy of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community 2020 Planning Software CD-ROM training package, which won a CBT technology award in 1999.³⁰ This software is being reviewed for its benchmarking potential.

DISAM is currently working on two distance learning projects. One is the virtual classroom, which will allow personnel to take the DISAM CONUS Orientation (SAM-CO) course on line. Upon registration, students will follow a lesson advance sheet and read at their own pace within specified overall course completion parameters (e.g., six months), hyperlinked sections (chapters) of the DISAM textbook, *The Management of Security Assistance*. A second project relates to the development of prototype CBT modules. Such modules could augment the virtual classroom project described above or further offer a means for DISAM graduates to review the latest information relative to distinct processes (e.g., FMS transportation).

Before engaging in any significant distance learning or CBT undertaking, one should first assess the needs of the customer base. This can be accomplished, in part, through a DISAM-administered survey of the defense security cooperation community. The objective of the survey is to determine which additional courses and/or topics of instruction should be developed in a distance learning format to best meet the training requirements of the security assistance community. Survey participants will be asked to report their preferences for topics and for participating in various distance learning modes of instruction. The survey, including some questions on basic demographic data, will be administered to the entire security assistance community via the web.

Security Assistance Workforce Analysis and Development Study

The defense security cooperation community faces numerous challenges in trying to develop and maintain a workforce in times of downsizing and the aging of the baby boom generation. At the request of DSCA Headquarters, a DISAM faculty team will examine the composition of the security assistance workforce in terms of grade structure, years of service, and retirement eligibility. The end result of the study will be a series of findings and recommendations designed to enhance workforce planning and professional development for the security assistance community. The study will consist of three phases: data collection and analysis, benchmarking, and development of solutions.

Data will be gathered from DSCA and its subordinate organizations, the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS), the military service functional organizations for defense security cooperation, the international logistics control organizations, as well as the military service inventory control points, logistics centers, and system commands. Other aging workforce studies and employee development programs, both in and out of the federal government, will be reviewed to determine if there are initiatives that can be applied to the security assistance workforce. The study will be conducted from March through May 2000, with a report to be provided this summer.

Security Assistance Certificate Program

This Security Assistance Certificate Program initiative is designed to promote the professionalism of those individuals serving in security assistance-related positions, and to encourage security assistance personnel to broaden their technical and managerial knowledge of security assistance issues. Although drawn from several functional specialties (e.g., acquisition, logistics, financial management), defense security cooperation personnel can demonstrate through the certification process that they are professionals in the true spirit of the word. Certification programs are one way to affirmatively document that select personnel have taken the

steps to acquire a specialized knowledge that can be gained only after intensive preparation in terms of education, training, and experience.³¹ There are three different certificates that are under study with respect to this proposed program, as follows:

- (1) the Security Assistance Career Professional Certificate,
- (2) the Security Assistance International Certificate, and
- (3) the Security Assistance Training Manager Certificate.

Additional details will be provided when the program is approved and officially announced.

Continuous Learning Points for the Defense Acquisition Workforce

DISAM will begin to award Continuous Learning Points to members of the defense acquisition workforce who complete DISAM courses. This is related to the Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition, Technology and Logistics) program that requires all defense acquisition personnel to earn 80 “continuous learning” points (representing 80 hours of professional activities) every two years by participating in a number of professional development activities, including formal training, college courses, conference attendance, and job rotations/internships in functional areas related to acquisition. For more information on acquisition workforce training and certification, the reader is invited to review the applicable Internet web site (<http://www.acq.osd.mil/ar/education.htm>).

Accreditation

In 1978, the DISAM Overseas Course (SAM-O) was evaluated by the American Council on Education (ACE) and recommended for three semester hours of upper division baccalaureate credit in International Business. This recommendation is published in ACE’s annual *Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Forces*. Founded in 1918, ACE is the nation’s coordinating higher education association. Its approximately 1,800 members include accredited, degree-granting colleges and universities from all sectors of higher education and other education-related organizations.³²

In April 2000, DISAM was visited by a delegation under the cognizance of the American Council on Education. The ACE evaluation team consisted of academicians from colleges and universities as well as the ACE Military Evaluation Programs Office. Their role was to evaluate the SAM-O Course, as well as the two-week DISAM CONUS (SAM-C) Course. For ACE to conduct a course evaluation, the candidate course must have at least 45 contact hours.

While it will be several weeks before the final results will be known, the ACE evaluation group informally advised us that the DISAM courses were considered to be substantively comparable in level of academic substance to college programs in International Business, International Acquisition, and International Supply Chain Management. The management context of our program will likely continue to facilitate an upper-division (college junior/senior) designation. In addition, the ACE team provided complimentary remarks about the conducive educational atmosphere that DISAM affords through its seminar rooms, library, and computer classrooms as well as the Institute’s role in producing publications and conducting research and consultation. Once DISAM receives the final ACE results, we will post this information on the DISAM web page.

In addition to the ACE evaluation, DISAM plans to pursue institutional accreditation through an accrediting body such as the Council on Occupational Education. Accreditation involves a

much broader review than the ACE evaluation, which focused on specific courses. As part of the accreditation review, the accrediting organization will look at such standards as institutional mission and objectives, educational programs, program and institutional outcomes, evaluation and planning, learning and physical resources, student services, and so on.

Closing

DISAM is engaged in several ongoing actions, all the while maintaining its schedule of FY2000 courses and working on new initiatives that will likely bear fruit in FY2001 and beyond. One of the tools that DISAM is using to help chart a course for the future is the DSCA Strategic Plan and the DISAM Business Area Plan. As result of the Government Performance and Results Act and the tendency of governmental institutions to adapt best practices from the private sector, strategic planning is now widely practiced.³³

In this changing world of downsizing, restructuring, and adapting to technological innovations and changing business practices, education becomes more and more important. In the 1980's, the noted advocate for total quality management (TQM), W. Edwards Deming stressed the importance of education and self-improvement as one of his fourteen points for management.³⁴ Jumping to 1999, the author of *The Four Elements of Successful Management* also stresses the importance of education and training, with the purpose of education being to translate knowledge into action and to create expertise. While there is some merit to the proverb that experience is always the best teacher, experience can be costly.³⁵ Just as you do not want an untrained medical technician performing medical tests that impact your medical well being, international customers would likely be equally uncomfortable in having untrained case management personnel oversee their foreign military sales (FMS) cases.

When it comes to defense security cooperation management, education is not a luxury. Rather, it is a necessity. This truism is well recognized in other areas of the Department of Defense, such as the defense acquisition community. In this latter regard, the annual report of the Secretary of Defense emphasizes the importance of having a well educated, fully trained acquisition workforce, with the opportunity for continuous learning.³⁶ This concept equally applies to the defense security cooperation community. Looking at the federal workforce as a whole following years of downsizing, a February 2000 *Federal Times* article noted that "the priority is on giving the smaller work force the right mix of skills, experience and training for the future."³⁷

Education is DISAM's most visible core mission element, and this has enabled DISAM to better contribute to the research and consultation, information dissemination, and automation development and support areas. As the world of its stakeholders change, DISAM, too, needs to change in order to meet the stakeholders' educational and support needs. Distance learning will be one response to such needs. Scholars and writers involved with projecting the future tell us that customer expectations will continue to rise, requiring more attention to service and quality.³⁸ In fact, the co-authors who write about *big nexts*, within the context of future trends, have coined the phrase, "the ever demanding consumer." The modern-day consumer, who has the power of choosing his or her suppliers, insists on service now and wants that service customized to meet his or her specific needs.³⁹ Thus, addressing customer and stakeholder needs in the future will be a challenge to entire defense security cooperation community.

Finally, should government organizations, even government schools such as DISAM, be so bold as to expect results and customer satisfaction on a level that is enjoyed by comparable private entities? According to a recent study, the answer tends be "yes." While it is widely accepted that most government organizations have substantial room for improvement, some federal agencies surveyed in 1999 found that, overall, their customer satisfaction scores were similar to those

garnered by private-sector organizations.⁴⁰ In fact, one key finding in the survey was that government employees who have direct contact with the public received high marks for courtesy and professionalism.⁴¹ These findings suggest that such focused initiatives, such as reinvention, can have positive long-term results. DISAM wants to be a viable part of this improvement process.

About the Author

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Endnotes:

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