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Do Our Airmen Value Their CCAF Degree?

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Just Checking the Box

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A recent article, "CCAF Continues to Provide Value to Air Force, Enlisted Members," posted in the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF) alumni group on LinkedIn generated over 100 comments from CCAF graduates regarding the value of that college's degree.[1] Their perceptions of the worth of the CCAF degree ranged from no value at all to its having a tremendous impact on careers and goals.[2] The foregoing served as the catalyst for this two-phased research. Only by comparing both sides of the problem will we have truly answered the question regarding the value of the degree. Phase one consisted of the current research project, focused on the collection and analysis of CCAF graduates' perceptions regarding the value of their degree. Phase two will involve the collection of data collected from hiring

managers from various fields of industry regarding their perception of the CCAF degree and their estimation of it during a review of an applicant's credentials.

The CCAF Degree Program

The CCAF, an element of Air University, is a federally chartered two-year degree-granting institution accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.[3] The college awards an associate of applied science (AAS) degree exclusively to enlisted military personnel after successful completion of a degree program based on their assigned Air Force specialty code (AFSC). The purpose of the college is to develop educated Airmen through giving them academic knowledge, practical skills, and a theoretical foundation for enhanced performance as technicians and military leaders.

Airmen begin earning credits towards their CCAF degree in basic military training. Upon graduation from their assigned AFSC technical training school, they earn credit to meet the college's technical education and program elective requirements. Once an Airman is assigned to a specific AFSC, that active duty, Air National Guard, or Air Force Reserve enlisted member is automatically admitted to the college and registered in the degree program that corresponds with his or her AFSC. The degree program includes aspects from the Airman's technical education offered by the Air Force's technical training schools, a core of general education from accredited civilian postsecondary education institutions, and management curriculum from Air Force or civilian sources. The CCAF AAS consists of a minimum of 64 credits:

- 24 credit hours in technical education, generally satisfied by courses at affiliated technical training schools and through skill-level upgrade internship;
- 6 credit hours in Leadership, Management, and Military Studies, preferably accomplished through Airman Leadership School, the Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) Academy and/or the Air Force Senior NCO Academy;
- 4 credit hours of physical education, satisfied by completing basic military training;
- 15 credit hours in general education, satisfied by transfer of credit from an accredited institution or college-level testing credit; and
- 15 credit hours in program electives, satisfied by courses applicable to the technical education; Leadership, Management, and Military Studies; or general education requirements.[4]

"Common" Knowledge

To better understand the results of the survey, one must first become familiar with the General Education Mobile (GEM) program, the Air University Associate-to-Baccalaureate Cooperative (AU-ABC) program, and the promotion requirement for

CCAF-degreed senior enlisted leaders. The following sections offer insight into the foregoing prior to discussing the survey results.

Filling the Gap

The Air Force provides several opportunities for an Airman to satisfy the CCAF's general education requirements. Through on-base or base-sponsored test centers, Airmen can earn college credit free-of-charge by earning qualifying scores on any of 33 introductory College-Level Examination Program subject examinations.[5] Additionally, the CCAF has formed partnerships with regionally accredited civilian academic institutions that offer freshman/sophomore general education courses through GEM. This distance-learning platform allows general education courses to be offered anytime, anywhere through the Air Force Virtual Education Center. Thus, it facilitates accelerated completion of the CCAF and reduces the effect of deployments, permanent changes of station, and other family commitments on the education of Air Force enlisted personnel.

A Stepping Stone

The Air Force maximizes the application of military career education and training through partnerships established within the AU-ABC program. This cooperative connects CCAF AAS graduates with online four-year degree programs related to their AAS degree and has exceptional value for the Air Force. The AU-ABC program includes postsecondary regional and nationally accredited schools that offer bachelor's degrees that can be completed in as few as 60 semester hours beyond the CCAF AAS. Every participant receives a binding degree-completion contract that locks in transfer credit and documents remaining degree requirements. The requirements for an AU-ABC degree may also be completed after Airmen retire or separate from the Air Force.

Because I Have To

The Air Force uses the CCAF AAS as one of many methods to validate an Airman's professional and technical competency. It serves as a key component of the Air Force Enlisted Promotion System and provides a means to ensure the development of NCOs as managers of Air Force assets. An AAS denotes that an Airman has attained the required academic knowledge, coupled with the technical experience, to perform his or her job successfully. Airmen eligible for promotion to the top two ranks of the enlisted force structure—senior master sergeant and chief master sergeant—must have a conferred two-year CCAF degree on or before their promotion eligibility cut-off date. CCAF degrees may be in any discipline.[6] Diplomas are awarded twice a year (April and October), and must be on the current enlisted data verification record in order to reflect in the next promotion cycle.

Methods

The survey instrument was designed around two central yes/no questions: Do you value the degree? Would you recommend it to others? Explanatory questions seemed subordinate to the two high-level questions and allowed for further analysis of the latter. These questions included whether or not the respondent was aware of certain Air Force programs (e.g., AU-ABC and GEM), anticipated degree-completion times, general concepts and their value (e.g., promotion of life-long learning, disciplined approach to problem solving, etc.), obstacles faced during the degree-completion process, and specific competencies that a CCAF course of study has improved (e.g., oral communication, etc.). Several questions had free-text attachments that allowed respondents to further explain their answers. Description of the quantitative data uses infographics and cross-tabulations when the data suggest that a relationship exists. Qualitative data are presented in coded form using a standard key word and concept-based coding chart.

Data were collected over 126 days (between 1 October 2014 and 3 February 2015), provided to the researchers by the CCAF. Of the total student population (n = 6,357) eligible to complete this survey, 1,516 did so. This sample size is sufficient from which to draw conclusions at a confidence level of 99 percent.[7] During the initial data-review phase, certain survey limitations emerged—for example, the use of biased prompts. The directions for certain yes/no questions instructed the respondent, "If No, please explain" when he or she selected a no answer. Therefore, free-text responses were not encouraged if the respondent selected yes. Some respondents chose to ignore the instructions and write positive remarks that were coded for later analysis. Based on the survey instructions, many write-in responses are biased towards the negative and do not represent an overwhelming negative opinion—only the presentation of the directions to the respondent. Suggestions to improve the survey instrument itself can be found in the recommendations section.

Results

Quantitative

The primary two questions addressed the value of the degree and whether or not the respondents who completed the course of study would recommend it to others. The vast majority of students (92 percent and 97 percent, respectively) answered yes. A cross-tabulation with other questions was conducted to determine relationships between those who do or don't value their degree and other related factors. Of those who value their degree (n = 1,385),

- 99 percent (n = 1,376) would recommend the degree to others;
- 17 percent (n = 240) did have a previous CCAF degree;
- 72 percent (n = 995) said this was their first degree earned since completing high school;

- 5 percent (n = 75) were unsure or had no plans for additional education;
- 64 percent (n = 890) clearly understood GEM and its relationship to the CCAF; and
- 64 percent (n = 880) understood the AU-ABC program.

Of those who do not value their degree (n = 128),

- 70 percent (n = 89) would recommend the degree to others;
- 8 percent (n = 10) did have a previous CCAF degree;
- 52 percent (n = 66) said this was their first degree earned since completing high school;
- 15 percent (n = 19) were unsure or had no plans for additional education;
- 43 percent (n = 54) clearly understood GEM and its relationship to the CCAF; and
- 42 percent (n = 54) understood the AU-ABC program.

Tables 1 and 2 examine relationships between graduates' responses for the purpose of better comprehending how and/or why Airmen value their degrees. For example, individuals who value their degree and desire more education believe that it could improve their mission. These Airmen are more likely to grasp the importance of education and the various intangible benefits that come with it. Similarly, these same Airmen demonstrate awareness of the importance of the CCAF degree to enlisted development. The aforementioned relationships do not exist among Airmen who do not value their CCAF degree.

Table 1. Correlations among Airmen who *value* their CCAF degree

	Desired Education Level	GEM Understanding	AU-ABC Understanding	Increased Professionalism	Promotion of Life-Long Learning	Positive Mission Impact	Importance to Enlisted Development
GEM Understanding							
AU-ABC Understanding		**					
Increased Professionalism	*	**	**				
Promotion of Life-Long Learning	*	**	**	**			
Positive Mission Impact	**	**	**	**	**		
Importance to Enlisted Development	**	**	**	**	**	**	
Disciplined Problem Solving	*	**	**	**	**	**	**

** = significant correlation in an error-free state

* = significant correlation not accounting for the potential type-one error. (Such an error occurs when multiple relationships are tested at once. Each is tested at a 95 percent confidence level. Therefore, when researchers test eight different situations, their error rate multiplies from 5 percent to 5 percent x 8 tests. To account for the potential error, one reduces the 5 percent error window by the number of relationships tested.)

Table 2. Correlations among Airmen who *do not value* their CCAF degree

	Desired Education Level	GEM Understanding	AU-ABC Understanding	Increased Professionalism	Promotion of Life-Long Learning	Positive Mission Impact	Importance to Enlisted Development
GEM Understanding							
AU-ABC Understanding		*					
Increased Professionalism							
Promotion of Life-Long Learning	*			**			
Positive Mission Impact			*	**	**		
Importance to Enlisted Development				**	**	**	
Disciplined Problem Solving	*			**	**	**	**

** = significant correlation in an error-free state

* = significant correlation not accounting for the potential type-one error

It was interesting to note in the cross-tabulation results that, whether or not students valued their degree, the majority were interested in pursuing additional education. Further, of those who did not value their degree, the vast majority (70 percent, n = 89) would still recommend the CCAF degree to others. It was also clear that students who did not value their degree were less likely to understand the GEM and AU-ABC programs. Comparison of the correlation coefficients of those who valued their degree and those who did not indicated a significantly higher degree and number of items that correlated. That is, graduates who understood the program were more able to discern its value and felt that it affected more aspects of their development for the better.

The data also showed that education is important to students: 36 percent (n = 548) wished to pursue a bachelor's degree, and 49 percent (n = 741), a master's degree. The correlations in tables 1 and 2 also demonstrate that students with a higher level of desired education (those who likely better understood the impact of education) also valued the CCAF degree and were more inclined to perceive benefits in other areas. Most students (67 percent, n = 1,015) plan to pursue additional education within one to three years, some of them (24 percent, n = 356) expecting to take four years or longer. The researchers must acknowledge that all respondents to this survey completed their CCAF degree, but when asked about barriers they experienced, 45 percent (n = 1,162) indicated that daily workload and family life made earning their degree more difficult.

Academic and life skills were also sampled via multiple selection (e.g., selection of all that apply) questions to determine if a CCAF degree enhances certain skills. Table 3 presents the skill with the response frequency and the percentage of people who did and did not report an improvement in this skill.

Table 3. Impact analysis of CCAF degree skills

Skill	Count	Improved	Not Improved
Technical competence in my career field	779	51%	49%
Oral communication skills (both interpersonal and briefing)	1,008	66%	34%
Writing skills	792	52%	48%
Decision-making skills	673	**44%**	56%
Critical-thinking skills	717	**47%**	**53%**
Leadership effectiveness	816	54%	46%
Followership skills	566	**37%**	**63%**
Professionalism	771	51%	49%
Resilience	534	**35%**	65%
Confidence to take the initiative	713	**47%**	**53%**
Ability to develop innovative improvements on the job	511	**34%**	**66%**

The data suggest that many skills were improved but that others were not. Over 50 percent of the respondents did not select decision making, critical thinking, followership, resilience, confidence to take the initiative, and ability to develop innovative improvements on the job as skills that their CCAF degree improved. These findings contrast responses to an earlier survey question whereby 80 percent (n = 1,211) of the students felt that earning a CCAF degree increased an Airman's professionalism, and 84 percent (n = 1,273) believed that the CCAF plays an important role in developing a professional enlisted corps. It is possible that the wording of the questions played a role in this difference; however, the reliability of the instrument or internal consistency may need to be reviewed in future versions. Furthermore, some students may have had preexisting skills and therefore did not see the CCAF as a source of improvement. For example, 30 percent of the graduates possessed a degree prior to completing their CCAF degree. If they learned writing skills during that time frame, then they would be less likely to attribute that improvement to their CCAF degree.

Qualitative

Qualitative data were collected using free-text responses to provide amplifying information for specific questions. Based on the design of the survey instrument, students were encouraged to enter a free-text response to *Q1: Do you value your CCAF degree?* and *Q2: Do you recommend completion of a CCAF degree to others?* only if they selected no. Because students who chose yes were not offered the option of a free-text response, Q1 and Q2 free-text responses were biased towards the negative.[8]

The most significant negative responses of those who chose no (n = 128) when asked Q1 or Q2 were as follows:

- I finished the degree only because I was going to receive a negative enlisted performance report (EPR).

- It's an EPR bullet and provides no outside Department of Defense value. Bachelor's degrees should hold more weight.

- It's a generic degree that only the Air Force values.

- I have been told by more than one agency that they will not accept it.

- It's merely a stepping stone and means nothing in the civilian world.

In addition, many people obtained CCAF degrees who already had a bachelor's degree (n = 25), and some said that their CCAF degree or CCAF credit was not transferable to other universities or that it carries no weight in the civilian world (n = 22). The most common negative response of those who chose no (n = 47) when asked *Q2: Do you recommend completion of a CCAF degree to others?* was that the degree is used only for promotion purposes (n = 13) (table 4). The other coded responses, though informative, make up a fraction of the total responses to Q2 and will not be presented here. The researchers must acknowledge that the preceding negative comments were enlightening but make up a relatively small subsection of the responses. The vast majority of respondents indicated yes to both questions: that their degree had value and that they would recommend it to others.

Table 4. Qualitative rankings for CCAF value comments

Value of the CCAF Degree	Total	Recommend to Others	Total
No value outside the Air Force	26	Yes, promotion requirement	13
Already have a bachelor's degree	25	Yes, if the Air Force is your career choice	8
Not transferrable outside the Air Force	22	Credits or skills don't transfer	7
Mandatory	16	The CCAF is not a real institution	4
Necessary only for promotion	13	Waste of time	4
Not a reputable degree	12	Promotion\career progression	3
Promotion\career progression	11	Good only for the EPR bullet	3
Grand Total	128	Grand Total	47

The additional comments or feedback to the questions contained a significant number of complaints about individual circumstances or opinions not related to the quality of the CCAF degree. Four general themes emerged from the analysis (table 5). Most graduates' comments reflected a general satisfaction with their CCAF degree and the effect it will have or has had on their career. The next-most-frequent set of comments reflected negatively about the time it takes the CCAF to process credits and/or transcripts of student records.

Table 5. Qualitative rankings: additional comments section

Additional Comments or Questions	Total
Satisfaction with the degree's impact on career	46
Long transcripts/transfer-credit processing timelines	41
Lack of information or program support	26
Lack of significance/transferability to civilian sector	18

Several graduates commented on the lack of support from their chains of command in obtaining information regarding their degree. Others noted the lack of information on the AU-ABC or GEM programs; however, it is important to note that the research team found this information fairly quickly on the CCAF website. Some students, even those who disagreed with Q1 and Q2, still see the value in the CCAF degree:

> I put [that] I disagree with two of the questions, and I think I owe an explanation. I personally was never pushed to get my CCAF. In fact as I took classes, my general Ed classes were the last thing on my mind. There are a lot of Airmen out there that do not realize that you can take about five classes and get your Associate's. This is what needs to be told to the Airman. Yes it will help you in your career, but it only takes about a year to complete. Now that I am making my way up the chain, I have an understanding, and [I] am giving that information to my Airmen.[9]

Qualitative Website Analysis

The researchers conducted a qualitative review of the CCAF's web footprint to further explain some of the qualitative comments since many consistent themes emerged. One was that students felt they must obtain a CCAF degree "or else" and that the value of the degree, both tangible and intangible, was not always clearly understood. A comparison of a small sample of community college websites indicated how the CCAF website ranks with those of other community colleges (see table 6 and the figure below).

Table 6. A qualitative comparison of community college website content

Homepage Elements	Community College					
	CCAF	DTCC	TCC	OCCC	HACC	MGCCC
President's Welcome Message	X					
Frequently Asked Questions	X					
About Page	X	X	X	X	X	X
Accreditation	X					
Continuing Education	X	X	X	X	X	X
College Catalog	X	X	X	X	X	X
Credit Transfers	X	X	X			
Admission/Application Info		X	X	X	X	X

Table 6. A qualitative comparison of community college website content (*continued*)

Homepage Elements	Community College					
	CCAF	DTCC	TCC	OCCC	HACC	MGCCC
Student Resources		X	X	X	X	X
Events Calendar		X	X	X	X	X
College News Feed/Blog		X	X	X	X	X
College Magazine		X		X	X	
Social Media Links		X	X	X	X	X
Student Highlights		X	X		X	X
Request More Information		X	X	X	X	X

DTCC = Delaware Technical Community College*
TCC = Tidewater Community College*
OCCC = Oklahoma City Community College*
HACC = Harrisburg Area Community College
MGCCC = Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College
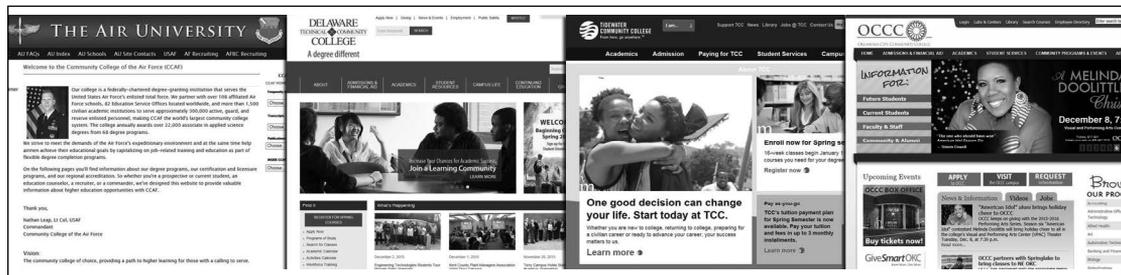
──────
* = website depicted in the figure below

Figure. Common community college pages compared to the CCAF page

The results of the qualitative website analysis revealed a general framework used by most community colleges when they developed their websites. The standard framework consisted of rich information on academics and program admission, social media links, university events, and press coverage of student and college achievements. Table 6 shows a fairly large disconnect between what the CCAF displays on its website as compared to those of some academic peers. Roughly 90 percent of the CCAF site consists of the president's welcome message and photo, with the remainder taking the form of a few drop-down menus that link to frequently asked questions, accreditation, the college catalog, and information on credit transfers. The figure above depicts the difference in aesthetics and layout between the aforementioned sites.

Discussion and Recommendations

The sum of the data collected shows that graduates think the CCAF provides a worthwhile education to Airmen, encourages learning, facilitates promotion, and is

beneficial to the mission of the Air Force. One challenge that did emerge entails assessing the effectiveness of the degree and differentiating between individuals who obtained an education from the CCAF and those who learned very little but felt they must attend to be promoted. Based on the preceding and the data collected, the following recommendations emerged.

Improve the Resolution of the Exit Survey

The survey instrument itself could benefit from a thorough review and analysis. Several technical errors noted by the researchers could affect its reliability and validity. First, questions that use yes/no with free text should include unbiased directions to capture both positive and negative feedback, thus assisting in determining specifically why respondents made the choice they did and eliminating bias to the negative in the write-in responses.

Second, the specific goals of the CCAF should be identified, and survey questions about those goals should be the focal point. Asking questions such as *Q13: Does the CCAF play an important role in developing a professional enlisted corps?* forces a guess or unsupported opinion from respondents who have no specific knowledge of the entire corps or the linkage between the CCAF and professionalism outside their own personal experience.[10] Open-ended comments support the idea that this question might have been confusing or misunderstood by respondents.[11]

Third, developers of the CCAF graduation survey did not include "neutral" or "I don't know" as a response. Although the literature supports this survey method in most instances to avoid evasion bias, in some cases respondents generally feel neutral regarding a subject or don't know an answer.[12] The example in the previous paragraph demonstrates a scenario in which a respondent might answer, "I don't know" but in this study was forced to provide an answer nevertheless. In the open-ended feedback section, a graduate highlighted this problem: "I would have likely selected Neutral as a response for most questions had it been an option in this survey."

Finally, it is best to assess only the constructs that were specifically taught and that can be identified and assessed as outcomes of a CCAF program. For example, unless the CCAF specifically teaches resilience or followership skills (directly, not incidentally), it is best not to ask people if such indirect skills have improved since this variable is difficult to measure. A respondent generally cannot make such introspective measurements accurately and will have a tendency to overstate his or her knowledge or performance when indirect connections are present.[13]

Improve the Quality of the CCAF Website

Qualitative analysis of the CCAF website revealed a number of areas for improvement. In today's digital world, Internet marketing is more important than it has ever been. Although the CCAF is not a traditional community college that requires tuition to operate, delivering information and providing value to the customer are still of great importance. Research has demonstrated the correspondence between website design and achieving an organization's strategic goals.[14] A more modern design, matching more closely that of its peers, would allow the CCAF to connect better

with its—mostly millennial—Airmen who grew up in a digital era and look to websites for information and value.

Academics. The CCAF would benefit from adding an academics section to its website, one that would outline briefly each AAS degree and connect it to a civilian-equivalent function. The public-facing Air Force website, for example, effectively outlines the different AFSCs and their technical training programs.[15] The foregoing would create Air Force–specific and post–Air Force value for Airmen.

Student resources. A student resources section should be added that contains information about the CCAF degree's purpose and that contains sublinks to the existing GEM and AU-ABC sections. Additionally, it would contain a link to the various base education offices, much like public community colleges reference their various student centers. This information is available on the Air Force Virtual Education Center, but a bare-bones public-facing site is not a sufficient way to create value for potential or new Airmen who will look there first.

Student and CCAF news feed. The CCAF public-facing website would be greatly improved by adding a dynamic news blog to the main page. The blog would highlight key student accomplishments—specifically, those logically connected to the pursuit or completion of the CCAF degree. Additionally, many articles and stories are posted to the non-CCAF-owned LinkedIn page but are never connected to the college's website. The CCAF could add value by placing organizational news highlights in addition to student and alumni highlights in the main blog.

Social media links. The emergence of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn allows organizations to track their word-of-mouth impact, which translates from online social media to offline communication.[16] It is difficult to find an organization without a social media presence and equally difficult to find a website without a connection to such a presence. The fact that every college website analyzes links to a social media presence and that the CCAF website does not should substantiate the need for this recommendation. Connecting to social media goes beyond the basics of adding value to Airmen to offering an additional marketing tool for the Air Force.

Although all of the community colleges reviewed were regionally accredited, they did not mention that fact on their public-facing home page, perhaps because it is generally understood that they are accredited, much like their higher-level state colleges. The CCAF, as do many for-profit schools, struggles with validating itself as an equal competitor and—similar to its for-profit cousins—probably benefits more from demonstrating its accreditation than would a traditional community college.

Actively Manage the Image of the CCAF

Although the vast majority of the quantitative results were positive, some themes in the qualitative responses were consistent. Certain students feel that a CCAF education is a check-in-the-box or a necessary hurdle to attain promotion. This in fact may be true, but it would seem that the other benefits should be equally important (e.g., learning new material, obtaining a degree, participating in networking, etc.). Many Airmen receive information about the CCAF from their peers or superiors, and the attitudes of those people will influence young Airmen.[17] The CCAF should

promote itself by providing student success stories, testimonials, value statements, and other informative remarks about education so that Airmen see the entire value of a CCAF education—not just the opinions of others.[18] Migrating away from a word-of-mouth presence to a web-based one may allow the conveyance of more accurate and holistic information to future students. Moreover, selling the CCAF as though it were competing with other community colleges may help leadership move away from the monopoly mind-set and assist with highlighting the true and full value of a CCAF degree.[19]

Conclusions and Future Research

Overall, CCAF graduates value their degree, but an important question for future research remains: *Why?* Given the inadvertently integrated survey bias, there were no open-ended questions directly geared to obtain feedback from graduates about why they selected yes to valuing their degrees—only those who selected no received that option. Many of the *additional comments* that alluded to degree value concentrated on promotion opportunity, indicating that Airmen might value the degree only for the reasons that many Airmen do not value the degree—that it is useful only for promotion. There appears to be a cultural framing of the degree in the Air Force that obtaining it for promotion is important; however, not much mentoring of young Airmen addresses the necessity of having the theoretical support for their field or any of the general benefits of higher education. Further, Airmen seem to perceive the *automatic* awarding of many of their credits and the "everybody gets one" aspect of the CCAF degree as detracting from its value. Many of them fail to see that they are an exclusive group of degree holders and that they spend multiple 80-hour weeks in an accredited classroom environment (most with 80 percent minimum passing scores) to obtain their *automatic* credits. Immediate supervisors need to make their Airmen aware of the value of education instead of emphasizing the promotion aspects of the degree.

Knowing Airmen's perspectives regarding the value of their degree is only the first step. Because the degree is funded, accepted, and used by the Air Force as a promotion discriminator, it has internal value—whether or not the Airman realizes it. Future research should consider how civilian employers value the CCAF AAS degree if an Airman were to retire or separate and present it on a resume for a job in his or her related field. Only by combining the results of both studies will the true value of the degree become apparent.

Finally, this study should be replicated two years after implementation of its recommendations. The results would paint a more accurate picture of graduates' assessment of the value of their degree since the improved CCAF survey will generate more reliable data. Those data, improved supervisor mentoring regarding the impact of higher education, and a more modern CCAF website that engages students will undoubtedly generate more value for current CCAF students and the college's alumni. ✪

Notes

1. Robert Goetz, "CCAF Continues to Provide Value to Air Force, Enlisted Members," Joint Base San Antonio–Randolph Public Affairs, 11 September 2014, http://www.jbsa.mil/News/News/tabid/11890 /Article/598856/ccaf-continues-to-provide-value-to-air-force-enlisted-members.aspx.

2. Edwin Hernandez, "Value of the CCAF Degree Article," Community College of the Air Force Alumni Group, January 2015, https://www.linkedin.com/grp/post/64715-5952882538375626754.

3. *Air University: Community College of the Air Force, 2014–2016 General Catalog, Number 20*, 9 March 2015, http://www.au.af.mil/au/barnes/ccaf/catalog/2014cat/2014_2016_General_catalog.pdf.

4. Ibid.

5. "General Education Mobile Program," CCAF, accessed 23 April 2015, http://www.au.af.mil/au /barnes/ccaf/publications/gem_web_brochure.pdf.

6. Air Force Instruction 36-2502, *Enlisted Airman Promotion/Demotion Programs*, 12 December 2014, 10, http://static.e-publishing.af.mil/production/1/af_a1/publication/afi36-2502/afi36-2502.pdf.

7. "Sample Size Calculator," Survey System, accessed 27 April 2015, http://www.surveysystem .com/sscalc.htm.

8. We would like to thank Dr. Marques Armant for his help with the initial scrub and coding of the qualitative data for questions one and two, as well as the open-ended general comments.

9. Direct quotation from a CCAF graduate's *additional comments/questions* submission.

10. Sara Dolnicar, "Asking Good Survey Questions," *Journal of Travel Research* 52, no. 5 (March 2013): 551, doi:10.1177/0047287513479842.

11. Respondent comment on *Question 13: CCAF plays an important role in developing a professional enlisted corps*: "Based off of my own experience that answer is [an] agree and disagree answer. I've worked with people who are book-smart and can complete their CCAF quickly; however, when it comes to utilizing that learned professionalism from attending college, it doesn't translate because of the lack of experience of being in the field. I've learned professionalism over the years through experience in working in my current AFSC. I believe college had a bit to do with it but not entirely." Response to *Question 14: CCAF graduates tend to have a more disciplined approach to problem solving*: "Based off of my own work experience, this is another 'agree and disagree' answer. The college courses expose someone to more situations when a disciplined approach is necessary, but the on-the-job training and experience will teach and cultivate the disciplined approach to problem solving needed to meet daily mission requirements. I've worked with individuals who have completed their CCAF degree and when trying to apply the disciplined approach they should have, that approach doesn't happen due to the different environmental pressures they are exposed to that are not applicable in the college setting."

12. Dolnicar, "Asking Good Survey Questions."

13. Norman Bradburn, Seymour Sudman, and Brian Wansink, *Asking Questions: The Definitive Guide to Questionnaire Design—for Market Research, Political Polls, and Social and Health Questionnaires*, rev. 1st ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004).

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15. "Technical Training," US Air Force, accessed 3 December 2015, http://www.airforce.com/joining -the-air-force/technical-training/.

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