

Incorporating Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Considerations into the 2021 Department of the Air Force Developmental Education Selection Boards

Analysis of Outcomes

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ISSUE

The Department of the Air Force (DAF) promulgates directives, memorandums of instructions, and other guidance embracing the importance of diversity. Indeed, DAF Senior Leadership is on record stating that diversity is a mission imperative. Yet, demographic data have been masked for most boards making decisions about career development and promotions. The DAF wanted to assess the efficacy of making demographic data visible to board members. The 2021 Central Professional Military Education (CPME) Program Boards provided an opportunity to test the effects of unmasking the data to board members. In addition, the DAF implemented two other diversity and inclusion–related changes for the 2021 CPME board: (1) board members underwent unconscious bias training, and (2) instructions to board members concerning consideration of race, ethnicity, and gender (REG) were modified. In this report, we present the results of our analyses comparing the 2020 outcomes (before the changes in guidance) with the 2021 outcomes (after the changes).



APPROACH

In conducting this research, the project team used a mixed-methods approach. Specifically, the team

- analyzed board inputs and selection outcomes for the 2020 CPME board (before the changes) and 2021 CPME board (after the changes) to assess the effects on the selection likelihood for minority versus nonminority members
- conducted semistructured interviews with 2020 and 2021 board members to learn about their experiences and how they interpreted and applied the new instructions to illuminate the quantitative patterns in the data
- reviewed relevant literature to identify trends that might assist the DAF in implementing the proposed changes.



FINDINGS

The project team derived these findings:

- Board member interviews and available data generally indicate that unmasking REG data and other changes that the DAF made for the 2021 CPME board did not have a significant effect on intermediate developmental education (IDE) and senior developmental education (SDE) board results when compared with the 2020 board.
- Most board members, for various reasons, explicitly chose not to consider REG data during the evaluation process.
- Given that this board is merely one data point, it is important to not make strong conclusions about unmasking REG data and selection board outcomes.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The project team offers these recommendations:

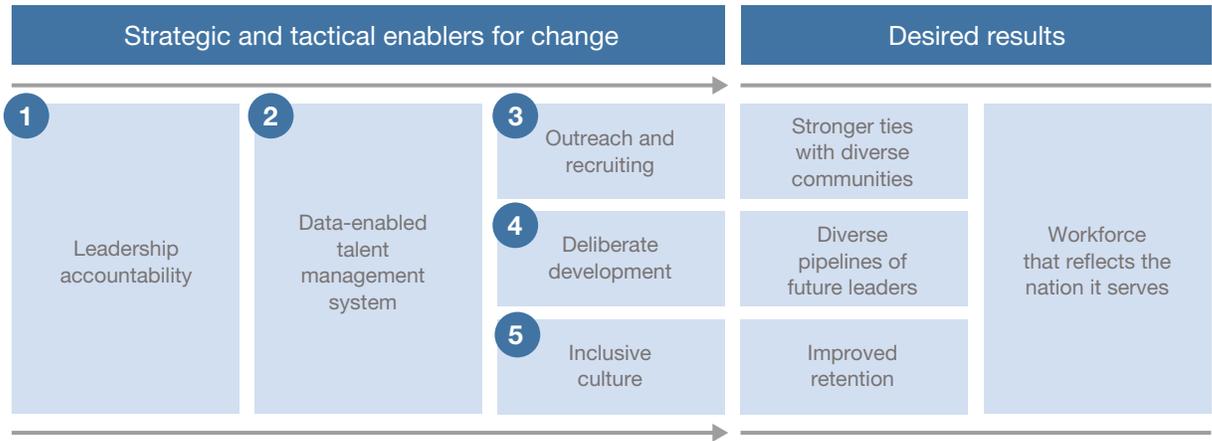
- Make adjustments to future developmental education boards:
 - Communicate diversity, equity, and inclusion goals, guidance, and intent to developmental education board members and SRs.
 - Review the IDE “definitely attend” process.
- After making the recommended changes for future CPME boards, DAF should keep the REG data unmasked for the next CPME board and analyze the results to determine whether the changes are having the desired effect.
- Leverage other aspects of human capital development and management cycle:
 - Establish REG applicant recruiting goals for the four commissioning sources.
 - Establish REG operational career-field designation goals at commissioning.
 - Update officer development/talent management guidance to squadron commanders, senior raters, and development teams.
 - Implement comprehensive rater training.
- Consider adopting strategic communications and cultural change management techniques:
 - Employ an enterprise strategic communications and change management approach.
 - Address DAF cultural norms (blind versus unblind).

As DAF implements unmasking demographic data, the research suggests that DAF will want to

- use training to educate members of the organization
- prepare for defensive responses
- implement organizational structures to address diversity, equity, and inclusion.

STRATEGIC AND TACTICAL ENABLERS FOR DESIRED DEI OUTCOMES

The RAND Corporation report *Improving the Representation of Women and Racial/Ethnic Minorities Among U.S. Coast Guard Active-Duty Members* presented a framework as an organizing construct that might facilitate the management and coordination of diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.



SOURCE: Reproduced from Nelson Lim, Kimberly Curry Hall, Kirsten M. Keller, David Schulker, Louis T. Mariano, Miriam Matthews, Lisa Saum-Manning, Devon Hill, Brandon Crosby, Leslie Adrienne Payne, Linda Cottrell, and Clara A. Aranibar, *Improving the Representation of Women and Racial/Ethnic Minorities Among U.S. Coast Guard Active-Duty Members*, RAND Corporation, RR-A362-2, 2021, p. 136.



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