

# ASSOCIATION OF GRADUATES

## UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ACADEMY



February 15, 2008

Dick Sexton '60  
President, Class Advisory Senate  
332 Mission Hill Way  
Colorado Springs, CO 80921

Dick,

As promised at our meeting earlier this month, I am writing this letter to you on behalf of the AOG Board of Directors to comment on several AOG issues of mutual interest:

1. The Directors have reviewed the CAS white paper, Moving Forward, and your presentation to the Board was well received. As you know, my presentation to the Superintendent on February 8 offered several observations that were very compatible with the recommendations put forth in the CAS study. Please express the thanks of the Board to the Class Senators for the time and effort put into Moving Forward.
2. As you are aware, the Board has reappointed a Strategic Planning Committee to assess the strategic needs of the AOG going forward. The Chair, Allison Hickey, will be looking for assistance and substantive input from many sources; and you may be assured that we will not hesitate to seek CAS participation as we address this very critical area.
3. The Board of Directors is trying to meet current fiscal challenges head on as we work our way through the transitional period following the governance changes that are being implemented. The Board has reaffirmed the organizational commitment to support all three elements of the AOG Mission and fund raising plans will be developed to address needs in all areas. As a result, the Board is initiating steps that will allow the CEO to rebuild fund raising capabilities at all development levels. This decision in no way diminishes the intent of the Board to seek cooperation and collaboration with all of the nonprofit entities that support the Academy.
4. The CEO Search Committee is working diligently to develop a pool of highly qualified candidates that will yield a permanent CEO to lead the AOG Staff and work in cooperation with the Board of Directors to accomplish the AOG Mission. The current CEO and Staff are doing an excellent job, and the Board has not imposed an arbitrary schedule on the hiring process. We will take the time necessary to find the best qualified graduate available to fulfill the responsibilities of the CEO position.

Last summer, at the first meeting of the CAS after this Board took office, I shared my thoughts on [1] the role of the CAS and [2] on some areas where I felt the CAS could offer

the Board some needed assistance. It is appropriate to review both of these areas:

1. We are traveling in uncharted waters as we jointly explore how the CAS can most effectively serve the AOG membership and the AOG Board. The way the Board and CAS interact will be precedent setting, and we need to be careful to protect the working relationship without unduly restricting the initiatives of either body. In some areas, it will be appropriate for the Board to take the lead and to request CAS assistance; in others, the CAS will be able to take the initiative. We must be careful to continue to nurture strong communications, and I offer thanks to you for your diligence and personal efforts to make the CAS a meaningful part of the AOG governance system.
2. There are two areas of great importance to the AOG that I would like to have the CAS review and assess for the Board:
  - In my opinion, the AOG Chapter Program is not realizing its potential as a source of support and input for the AOG and the Academy. Chapters exist in various forms, are organized for a variety of purposes, and are largely independent of the parent organization. Perhaps the current landscape is the best we can hope for, but an objective assessment would provide the Board with a framework for determining if constructive changes could be made. Please consider accepting this task with an eye towards evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the current program, arraying optional structures, and making recommendations for Board consideration.
  - As we know, the AOG is a membership organization; and, like any other member based entity, its strength, effectiveness, and success will ultimately depend on the number of members and the depth of their involvement with the organization. The USAFA graduate community numbers almost 40,000. The graduate membership in the AOG is approximately 22,000. Questions are easy: Why don't we have a higher participation rate? What do the non-members find lacking in the AOG? What would it take to attract and to retain the non-members? What can be done about the changing *Life Membership at Graduation* parameters? The Answers are not obvious and may not be actionable, but we won't know unless the topic is researched and evaluated. Here, too, the Board would profit greatly from CAS assistance.

Please give consideration to the two areas outlined above as constructive undertakings for the CAS. With the help of the CAS, the Board remains optimistic that our AOG can continue to mature and evolve in ways that will benefit the Academy, the AOG membership, and the graduate community.

Respectfully,

James F. Wheeler '64  
Chairman