



National Security Leaders Today and Beyond

The Defense Civilian Training Corps (DCTC) was established to develop a modernized, multi-disciplinary civilian talent pipeline for the Department of Defense (DoD). DCTC provides the targeted education, development and experiences required to meet current and future complex demands on the DoD workforce. The goal is to foster a continuous and increasing stream of multi-disciplinary cleared talent directly from the higher education system into the DoD civilian workforce.

OBJECTIVE

DCTC will provide the upfront investment needed for selected students to earn a bachelor's degree, free from financial burden, and prepare to be a future leader within the DoD ecosystem. While in school, DCTC Scholars will engage in experiential learning in the classroom, participate in the Department's special projects to solve real-life problems, and hold paid summer internships.



LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Congress authorized creation of DCTC in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2020. In the FY 2023 NDAA, Congress directed the Under Secretary for Acquisition & Sustainment to lead the effort. The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Acquisition Data & Analytics has launched a pilot and is leveraging the Acquisition Innovation Research Center (AIRC) to support implementation of the pilot.

BACKGROUND

The National Defense Strategy mandate to maintain an enduring advantage over our foreign adversaries requires an agile and future-leaning DoD civilian talent pipeline and workforce. In March 2023, the Defense Business Board recommended to the Secretary of Defense that the DoD needs to invest in its civilian workforce in order to develop a talent pipeline that can keep pace in the great power competition.

- The DoD currently has in place programs such as the Science Mathematics and Research for Transformation (SMART) scholarship program and DoD Cyber Scholarship program (DoD CySP) to recruit and develop exceptional STEM civilian talent within their academic field, and has long relied on the Senior Reserve Officer Training Corps (SROTC) to attract top talent for the military officer ranks.
- To improve the collective speed and agility in delivering improved capabilities to our military, DoD needs an educated acquisition workforce that can collaborate across disciplines. DCTC provides a solution to enhance the acquisition talent pipeline while complementing other Department workforce initiatives.
- To strengthen the defense ecosystem, DCTC will equip future DoD civilians with the digital literacy needed to work innovatively in and across multi-discipline teams, prepared to innovate processes, policies, and methods to enable adoption and transition new technologies into fielded deterrence and military capabilities.



THE PILOT

Four academic institutions, each a member of the AIRC university partner network [North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (an Historically Black College/University), Purdue University, the University of Arizona (a Minority Serving Institute), and Virginia Tech] are hosting the piloting activities necessary to fully implement the stated goal of DCTC. Each pilot university partner will competitively select approximately 20 students for the 2023 cohort. The pilot will:

- ✓ Evaluate recruiting methods and scholar attributes, the experiential learning curriculum and hands-on DoD challenge projects offered on campus, and the summer internship experience.
- ✓ Provide DCTC Scholars full academic scholarships and a monthly stipend.
- ✓ Provide DCTC Scholars a paid summer internship with DoD entities.
- ✓ Initiate the security clearance process with the goal of an approved security clearance at the time of graduation.
- ✓ Provide DCTC Scholars with an opportunity to engage a broad network of mentors from across the defense acquisition community (government, military, industry, and academia).
- ✓ Offer unique insights into the defense ecosystem at conferences, competitions, and site visits.
- ✓ Require one year of employment within the DoD upon graduation for each year of scholarship. Students in the Academic Year 2023 cohort will have the opportunity to join the DoD upon graduation, but the service obligation requirement will not take effect until the Academic Year 2024 cohort.



THREE UNIQUE ELEMENTS OF THE DCTC SCHOLAR EXPERIENCE

1 COHORT-BASED LEARNING

The cohort of DCTC Scholars will engage in experiential learning in a multi-disciplinary environment on campus.

The 2023 cohort curriculum, developed in a collaboration between the host universities and AIRC, is designed to fulfill learning objectives on public service, leadership, DoD culture, and critical skill areas, such as digital literacy, innovation, and the Defense Acquisition System.

The experiential learning curriculum creates an environment where students collaborate across disciplines (business, engineering, computer science, public policy, etc.) and actively engage in classroom discussions and hands-on assignments to understand the fundamental principles of defense acquisition and how to work as multi-discipline teams, using flexibilities and agility to develop, acquire, and sustain capabilities to keep pace in the great power competition.

AIRC will create professional networks and promote professional development through on-campus events introducing students to current DoD acquisition professionals.

2 HANDS-ON CHALLENGE PROJECTS

DCTC Scholars will apply what they learn in the classroom to innovate and collaboratively solve complex, real-world problems.

DCTC Scholars will work in multi-disciplinary teams on projects.

Projects will be grounded in real-world problems identified by AIRC strategic partners within the Department.

The DCTC curriculum will culminate in a multi-disciplinary Capstone project informed and evaluated by AIRC strategic partners, to include the Department.

3 STRATEGIC PARTNERS

DCTC enables the DoD to shift from reactively filling current vacancies to strategically building talent pools to reflect the Department demand signals for talent and skills for the future to increase organizational cohesion between the Department and academia at large.

DoD strategic partners will identify critical skills gaps, sponsor cohort projects to tackle complex DoD problems, and create a pathway for immediate employment and future career development.

Paid internships, with an emphasis on solving real-world problems in a multi-disciplinary setting, will be offered by DoD participating organizations.

DoD organizations will establish a pathway to permanent employment through cohort hiring by committing to hire DCTC Scholars upon graduation.