



# Buying In to Coaching: DEVELOPING DEFENSE ACQUISITION LEADERS AT THE DAU

**As the corporate university for the United States' defense acquisition workforce, the Defense Acquisition University (DAU) is charged with providing learning opportunities and leadership development to the 152,000 military and civilian defense acquisition professionals involved in the largest buying enterprise in the world.**

In late 2007, the DAU began to explore the possibility of adding coaching to its portfolio of offerings in order to improve acquisition outcomes and enhance the leadership capacity of key defense acquisition leaders. After extensive research and benchmarking efforts the DAU launched a rigorous coach-training program oriented around the International Coach Federation (ICF) Code of Ethics and Core Competencies and adapted to the unique needs of the acquisition profession's operating

environment. To date, more than 49 DAU faculty members have completed the training. Through one-on-one and team coaching engagements, these coaches—all of whom are senior faculty members and seasoned defense acquisition professionals themselves—have reached more than 220 key leaders at the strategic and organizational levels. The ICF Core Competencies also illuminate DAU's portfolio of leadership-development courses for supervisors and mid- and senior-grade leaders. These four courses—Leader as Coach, Leading in the Acquisition Environment, Integrated Acquisition for Decision Makers and Forging Stakeholder Relationships—have extended the understanding and use of coaching skills throughout the defense acquisition workforce.

In recognition of the DAU's outstanding use of coaching, ICF Global awarded the organization an honorable mention through the 2013 International Prism Award program. The International Prism Award program honors organizations that have achieved a standard of excellence in the implementation of coaching programs fulfilling rigorous professional standards,

## COACHING AT DAU: BY THE NUMBERS

152,000  
employees

49  
coaches

220+  
key leaders coached

2,920+  
supervisors and leaders  
impacted by leadership-  
development courses

330%  
non-financial ROI

743%  
financial ROI



addressing key strategic goals, shaping organizational culture, and yielding discernible and measurable positive impacts. (Learn more about the International Prism Award at [Coachfederation.org/prism](http://Coachfederation.org/prism).) In June 2013, the DAU was also recognized at the 10th-anniversary Capital Coaches Conference as the recipient of ICF Metro DC's Chapter-level Prism Award.

DAU's coaches are subject to a stringent nomination, training and qualification process. Of DAU's more than 600 faculty members, only eight to 10 individuals per year are invited to participate in coach training. This select group of individuals participates in five, two-day-long workshops where they explore and put into practice the ICF Code of Ethics and Core Competencies. The training includes numerous opportunities for active-learning and constructive feedback in the form of peer-coaching audio and video recordings and reviews, group critiques of one-on-one peer coaching sessions, and a peer 360-degree feedback assessment. Each trainee is also partnered with a DAU mentor coach; in addition to helping trainees hone their own skills, this allows coaches-in-training to get the experience of receiving coaching. In order to be qualified as a DAU coach, trainees are required to successfully



complete a practicum experience and successfully coach a key leader for at least six months. At the midpoint and end of the practicum, the DAU conducts a qualitative and quantitative assessment of each trainee, including a client interview and an online survey. Once qualified, coaches are required to complete eight hours of continuous learning annually and maintain a roster of at least one active client per year.

With the ICF Code of Ethics as its cornerstone, the DAU's coaching program is designed to ensure 100-percent confidentiality around the coaching engagement. A policy that prevents leaders and their subordinates from working with the same coach creates an additional layer of protection. Although the clients who partner with DAU coaches value the program's confidentiality provisions, the growth of a coaching culture in the DAU means the absence of a stigma around coaching. As key military and civilian leaders have touted the individual and business impacts of partnering with

a DAU coach, the demand for coaching in the defense acquisition workforce has multiplied, with the percentage of key leaders who express an interest in coaching during their executive management courses climbing from 10 percent to between 20 and 35 percent. At the same time, a growing



number of coaching clients are eschewing 100-percent confidentiality and inviting their direct supervisors to participate in a conversation around the coaching engagement in order to boost accountability.

DAU coaching clients have reported a high return on expectations in areas including organizational change, networking, strategic thought and leadership, leadership confidence, and time management. A Kirkpatrick assessment pointed to positive impacts at all four levels: reaction (positive 92.5 percent value), learning (a positive 90 percent value), application (top four impacts: improved strategic communication, better change implementation, enhanced stakeholder relationships, enriched leadership/people interactions) and business impact (top four impacts: increased self/group productivity, increased customer satisfaction, increased resources, reduced cycle time).

With an annual acquisition budget of \$350 billion, the defense acquisition operating environment demands a high return on every investment of time, manpower and

money. The DAU's initiative has met this demand, with a reported non-financial ROI of 330 percent and a reported financial ROI of 743 percent. The DAU's ROI measurement techniques and findings were documented in a doctoral dissertation and subsequent monograph, "Coaching ROI: Delivering Strategic Value Employing Executive Coaching in Defense Acquisition" (Xlibris, 2011), by DAU coach Alphronzo Moseley.

Now that coaching has been institutionalized within the DAU itself, as well as within the defense acquisition workforce writ large, the program's leaders are striving to further enhance coaching at DAU while providing an example for other governmental organizations. In addition to building a community of practice around governmental coaching, the DAU is working to form partnerships with other government coaching programs that will provide the groundwork for an ICF-accredited coach training program designed especially for government professionals.

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Formed in 1995, today the International Coach Federation (ICF) is the leading global organization, with more than 20,000\* members, dedicated to advancing the coaching profession by setting high professional standards, providing independent certification, and building a network of credentialed coaches. We exist to support and advance the coaching profession through programs and standards supported by our members and to be an authoritative source on coaching information and research for the public.

*\*Numbers as of December 2012. Numbers are subject to change month to month.*

