



smooth transitions

AOG RAMPS UP CAREER SERVICES PROGRAMS TO BETTER ASSIST GRADS



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**— AOG President and CEO,
Marty Marcolongo '88**

Now more than ever, the Association of Graduates offers a host of tools for United States Air Force Academy alumni beginning a job search or looking to advance their education.

The AOG's newly designed Career Services portal — found at www.usafa.org/CareerCenter — is the new one-stop shop for transition assistance. The AOG has partnered with a host of industry experts — Veterati, BRK Strategies, Northrup Grumman, Military.com, Orion Talent, Phoenix Spark, Hiring Our Heroes and Bunker Labs — to beef up its offerings to grads.

"Transitioning out of the military and knowing where to start, where to go and what possibilities are available can be a daunting task," explains AOG President and CEO Marty Marcolongo '88. "Our hope is that by partnering with industry leaders, we can provide an all-encompassing road map for success to our graduates."

The expanded Career Services platform first was discussed about a year ago. Since then, the AOG has been working

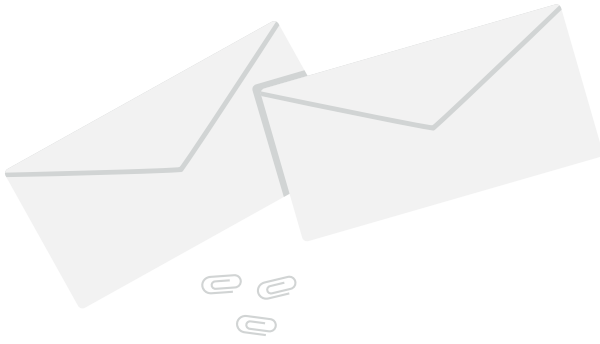
on the first phase of the upgrades, which launched in early September.

USAFA grads now have access to a myriad of services, including free resume writing tips and review; links to educational resources; a robust mentorship program connecting Zoomies with fellow grads and non-grads; current job listings that help match one's military experience to civilian opportunities; and much more. The portal also offers help for military spouses in their job search.

"There are more than 60,000 nonprofits out there that are geared toward transitioning veterans," says Corrie Grubbs, the AOG's senior vice president for operations. "You can get lost in the maze if you don't know where to look for help. We have all the resources that someone might need in one spot ... and we are far from finished."

Among additional services the AOG is planning to implement are targeted career assistance for pilots, entrepreneurs, female alumni and more.

"I am extremely excited about where this could go," Grubbs adds. "But our biggest



uphill battle is getting the word out about our expanded services. That education piece is crucial.”

Expert Help

The AOG contracted with career consultant Elizabeth McLean '06 to evaluate the organization's previous Career Services offerings and suggest upgrades and additions. She has also helped launch the improved programs.

“We knew there was a gap in our system,” Grubbs reports. “Elizabeth has veteran assistance and transition program experience, and she also is a graduate. We wanted to reach out to her to find out where she could help.”

McLean's passion is to help as many people as possible identify the next step in their careers. Sometimes that means finding a job, but it could also mean continuing education.

“Whether you are a company grade officer, a field grade officer or a general officer, there will be a transition process for you to follow as a USAFA alumni,” she notes. “The AOG's Resource Guide will be a graduate's one-stop shop to find information pertaining to job selection, benefits, interview assistance, VA [Department of Veterans Affairs] benefits, news and much more. The most up-to-date and relevant information for USAFA graduates and their families can be found in one location.”

McLean says she's pleased with how the new programs have been going so far.

“The response to the launch of the AOG's new services has been very positive, and I cannot wait to see how many people are able to find their dream careers,” she says.

As part of the revamp, Orion Talent has created a graduate-only career page specifically for the AOG's Career Services portal. The site includes current military and civilian job openings that would be a good fit for Zoomies. A handful of Academy

grads have already found new positions with the help of Orion.

In addition to those job listings, the site includes helpful job search tips and resources.

Resume Assistance

One of the most popular new offerings so far is resume consulting offered for free by BRK Strategies LLC. The AOG has already heard positive feedback from transitioning graduates who have taken advantage of the service.

Command Sgt. Maj. (Ret.) Benny R. Kinsey, founder of BRK Strategies, says resume assistance is just a click away. Just head to the AOG portal and click on the “Free Resume Service” link.

“Once there, you fill out the online form, attach a copy of your current resume and submit — which will then notify us of a member wanting our services,” he says.

Kinsey then follows up with a phone call to gather preliminary information about the transitioning USAFA graduate.

The process from there is fairly simple: determine needs and wants for post-military employment; review of the resume with the graduate; explanation of job descriptions/minimum requirements/preferred requirements; suggestions on corrections and review of industry terminology; review of corrections and final review of resume; and offer interviewing tips and procedures prior to an upcoming Service Academy Career Conference.

While the resume service has been up and running for just a couple months, Kinsey says he's helped numerous graduates who are working toward a transition.

“My most enjoyable experience was being able to help a married couple with both of their resumes at the same time,” he reports. “We try to keep the process as fun as possible while also making graduates aware of any significant employment obstacles or issues they

may have ahead of themselves when they do begin to transition out of the military. It has been an absolute pleasure working with the AOG and their graduates.”

Finding a Mentor

Another new service that grads are gravitating toward is the mentorship platform. A mentoring network is important, as statistics indicate that 80% of job opportunities exist only within personal networks.

“A quality mentor can assist grads in taking their career to the next level,” McLean suggests.

The AOG has partnered with Veterati, the nation's only “mentor tech” platform in the veteran market, to help coordinate the mentorship program.

Veterati reports that they have helped more than 900 veterans and military spouses land jobs in top Fortune companies over the past three years.

Northrop Grumman stepped up to sponsor the Veterati platform for USAFA alums, and industry-specific matches have already occurred. The matching service allows graduates to find potential mentors within a chosen industry.

Evan Guzman, chief veteran advocate at Veterati, reports the platform is helping Academy grads connect and network every day.

“A transition is not always easy, but thanks to Veterati, our military community now has a wonderful platform to help them find answers related to employment, education and entrepreneurship,” he says.

To start a mentoring relationship, an Academy grad just needs a LinkedIn profile to sign into the platform. Then he or she answers a few questions and provides a little information to begin.

“Once mentors are identified, a graduate can select and book them for a one-hour

conversation,” Guzman explains. The mentoring relationship can be short or long term, depending on the needs and wishes of the participants.

Another networking tool the AOG is now offering, ZoomieLink, can help graduates network with fellow Zoomies around the world, Grubbs adds. Thousands of graduates have already connected through the Zoomie-Link platform.

“Our overall goal is to engage graduates at all levels and connect them to one another,” she explains.

Professional Development

In the fast pace of New York City, time outside of work and family is precious. Charles Zitzmann '98 knows this well in the litigations and investigations area of Credit Suisse.

Regardless of limited time, Zitzmann wanted to reconnect with USAF alums as well as other like-minded groups to encourage and assist one another in the various phases and milestones presented in their professional careers. After extensive research on LinkedIn, Zitzmann was able to form the NYC Society of Air Force Academy Alumni (NYSAFAA) along with Bram Smith '70 and Maj. Gen. Jack Briggs '86. The first event was held in January 2018 and included alumni, parents, potential Academy applicants, along with guest speaker USAFA Superintendent Lt. Gen. Jay Silveria '85.

After the initial event, the NYSAFAA vision of “rising tides raises all ships” came to fruition. In April 2019, the chapter hosted a Cybersecurity event to educate, explore and consider professional opportunities regarding

finance within the cybersecurity industry. At the same time, it provided an opportunity to engage with these industries to provide potential future opportunities for cadets in the way of internships and partnerships.

NYSAFAA is an example of alumni of not just USAFA but all military academies coming together with a similar start but with a desire to flourish, create and grow in the ever-changing world of careers, professional development, and using valuable resources such as time and talent to serve one another.

To learn more about this chapter and other chapters throughout the nation, visit: <https://www2.usafa.org/group/chapters#list>

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