

Opportunities for Professional Development in Acquisition Management

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Introduction

Men and women employed in the defense community are facing tremendous career opportunities in the acquisition management field. Acquisition management is hot! This is triggered by three facts:

- Key decision makers recognize that the effectiveness of the Department of Defense is based on the effectiveness of its acquisition workforce – Congress has even passed laws to require government agencies to strengthen the capabilities of their acquisition personnel (Clinger-Cohen Act, 1996; Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA), 1990).
- Workforce projections show that there will be a tremendous shortfall of qualified acquisition professionals to help DoD achieve its mission. Other agencies as well as private sector companies are also eagerly seeking acquisition professionals to help them in their work efforts. Right now, acquisition professionals find themselves in a seller's market.
- DoD experienced major reforms in its acquisition processes that have just recently been implemented. The old processes are largely out of date. A large number of people – government workers and defense contractors alike – need to get up to speed quickly to understand the new ways of doing business.

UMT has prepared this brief summary of career opportunities in acquisition management to help potential acquisition professionals develop a better sense of what the opportunities are. As a strategic partner of the Defense Acquisition University (DAU), UMT is committed to promoting competence among acquisition workers through education and training (go to <http://www.dau.mil/about-dau/umt.asp>). It offers degrees and executive development courses that can help acquisition managers move forward in their careers.

Background

In 1990, Congress passed the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA). Its goal is to improve the acquisition management knowledge and skills of DoD employees, since DoD achieves most of its programmatic and weapons development capabilities by means of contractors. If DoD employees lack solid contracting and program management skills – the key components of acquisition management – then its effectiveness in achieving its mission is low. Considering that DoD has the largest budget of any government agency, inefficiencies in its operations translate into billions of dollars of waste. Also, inefficiencies can damage the defense preparedness of the United States. DAWIA promotes increased acquisition management competence in a number of ways, including:

- In the promotion of an Acquisition Corps, comprised of a cadre of well-educated acquisition professionals who stand at the forefront of acquisition management practice
- In the development of a well-designed, structured certification program, comprised of three levels of acquisition management practice

In addition, the Clinger-Cohen Act promotes the strengthening of acquisition management capabilities throughout the government, including the use of internship programs. Consequently, DoD promotes an internship program to encourage non-college grads to earn a college degree that will enable them to further their career development in acquisition management

Career Opportunities in Acquisition Management Today

Now is a good time to work in the acquisition management arena. Currently, DoD employs some 130,000 acquisition professionals. Estimates suggest that half of these people will retire within the next five years. This means that DoD will likely face a serious shortfall of qualified acquisition professionals. The fact that there may be a substantial number of unfilled acquisition management jobs presents acquisition professionals with great career opportunities.

As acquisition management principles and practices become adopted in other government agencies (e.g., Health and Human Services, Department of Energy), DoD finds itself competing with other government agencies for qualified acquisition professionals. Over the next few years, demand for such professionals will exceed supply. The demand for qualified acquisition professionals is also strong in the private sector. Defense contractors need personnel who understand the government contracting and program management systems. This is especially true as a result of the implementation of major acquisition reforms at DoD in the past few years. Consequently, defense contractors are hiring acquisition professionals away from government, in addition to improving the acquisition management skills of their existing employees through education and training.

DoD's Acquisition Corps

The following is an abbreviated summary of Acquisition Corps education standards prescribed in 10 U.S.C. 1732(b)(2):

A baccalaureate degree and either

- § Twenty-four semester credit hours of study at an accredited institution from among the following disciplines: accounting, business finance, contracting law, purchasing, economics, industrial management, marketing, quantitative methods, and organization and management, OR
- § Twenty-four semester credit hours at an accredited institution in the person's acquisition career field, AND EITHER twelve semester credit hours from among the above listed disciplines, OR training in the disciplines listed above equivalent to the twelve semester credit hours.

The option to substitute equivalent training for the twelve semester credit hours in the disciplines specified was provided by Sec. 812(e) of Public Law 102-484, "The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1993," October 23, 1992, which amended Section 1732(b)(2)(B) of Title 10, United States Code.

For more information, go to <http://www.dau.mil/learning/appi.asp>.

Acquisition Management Certification Program

The acquisition management certification program provides acquisition executives with a clear career path they can pursue to advance themselves in their career development. By being certified at one of three levels of certification, certain job opportunities are opened to DoD acquisition professionals. The higher the level of certification achieved by a manager, the greater the responsibilities he or she can assume. The levels of certification are:

- Level I (Basic Level). [Geared toward GS5-GS8/O-1 thru O-3] Basic level training standards are designed to establish fundamental qualifications and expertise in the individual's job series, functional area or career field. Development at the basic level lays the foundation for career progression and is designed to prepare qualified, motivated personnel for positions of increasing responsibility.
- Level II (Intermediate Level). [Geared toward GS9-GS12/O-4] At the beginning of the intermediate level, specialization is emphasized, then an individual should later begin to broaden his or her background toward a more general expertise in the overall processes of their career field.
- Level III (Advanced Level). [Geared toward GS-13/O-5 employees and higher] By the time an individual reaches Level III, he or she should have completed all the mandatory training and education requirements up to that level and should have advanced through a career pattern that has given them an in-depth knowledge in their career field and breadth of knowledge across the entire acquisition process.

For a detailed explanation of the certification process, go to Appendix B (the Certification Standards Checklist) found in the Defense Acquisition University catalog at www.dau.mil/catalog

Acquisition Management Internship Program

In order to enable employees who do not possess the bachelor's degree to advance along the acquisition management career track, DOD has established an acquisition management internship program that enables aspiring acquisition professionals to achieve a college degree, increase their acquisition management knowledge and skills, and advance to higher level management positions.

UMT Programs that Help Acquisition Professionals Advance Their Careers

As noted above, two major driving forces behind the promotion of acquisition management capabilities in government are the Clinger-Cohen Act and DAWIA. In both these pieces of legislation, a cornerstone to improving acquisition management competence is education and training. Within the Department of Defense, a number of educational institutions have responded to the challenge by offering a wide range of courses in acquisition related areas such as contracting, program management, logistics, systems engineering, facilities management, technology management and IT management. Significant Defense education players include the Defense Acquisition University, the Air Force Institute of Technology, and the Naval Postgraduate School at Monterey. As good as these programs are, they cannot educate enough students to meet DoD's workforce needs. Consequently, DoD must depend on outside academic institutions to help it in its efforts to educate and train the defense workforce.

UMT is a leading provider of education and training in the areas of acquisition management, project management, and contract management. Its faculty are world famous educators and practitioners in these areas. UMT not only teaches acquisition-related courses, it engages in world-class research on acquisition management topics as well. UMT's pertinent graduate degree programs are:

- MS in Management, Acquisition Management major (<http://www.umtweb.edu/msm-acqstmgt.htm>)
- MS in Management, Project Management major (<http://www.umtweb.edu/msm-projectmgt.htm>)
- MS in Computer Science, IT Project Management major (<http://www.umtweb.edu/csit-itpm.htm>)
- MBA, Project Management concentration (<http://www.umtweb.edu/mba-projmgt.htm>)

In addition, UMT offers an academic graduate certificate in project management (<http://www.umtweb.edu/gradcertif.htm>) For acquisition personnel who do not possess a degree, but wish to advance their careers in acquisition management, UMT offers an undergraduate Bachelor in Business Administration degree (BBA). This is of special relevance to employees involved in DoD's internship program. (Go to <http://www.umtweb.edu/bba.htm>). Acquisition personnel who are not interested in earning a degree may elect to study towards an Executive Certificate. UMT offers two that are pertinent to men and women in the acquisition management arena:

- Executive Certificate in Acquisition Management
- Executive Certificate in Project Management

For more information on the Executive Certificate programs, go to <http://www.umtweb.edu/pmsuite-execertif.htm>.

Please note that as a strategic partner of the Defense Acquisition University, UMT makes sure its courses and programs are in line with the needs of the DoD.

If you have questions about UMT's programs, contact us by phone at (703) 516-0035 or by email at admissions@umtweb.edu.

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