

# AIRMAN

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

## DEVELOPING FUTURE AIRMEN

Developing personnel is a deliberate priority requiring a dedicated and unified effort to attract, retain and nurture Airmen's talent



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DEFENSE MEDIA ACTIVITY  
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AFROTC

Video by Tech. Sgt. Janiqua Robinson

“Developing leaders, I think, is a lot like sports. You give them the fundamentals, they practice them, they implement them during game time.”

- Col. Eugene Moore III, Air Force Reserve Officers' Training Corps headquarters

Col. Eugene Moore III, Air Force Reserve Officers' Training Corps headquarters commander, explains where AFROTC has come from and why lieutenants are being developed differently.

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Col. Eugene Moore III, Air Force Reserve Officers' Training Corps headquarters commander, manages the Jeanne M. Holm Center for Officer Accessions and Citizen Development which develops the curriculum for the 145 AFOTC detachments around the world. The Holm Center's central mission is to develop leaders of character. (U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Janiqua P. Robinson)

# LIEUTENANTS OF CHARACTER

Video by Tech. Sgt. Janiqua Robinson

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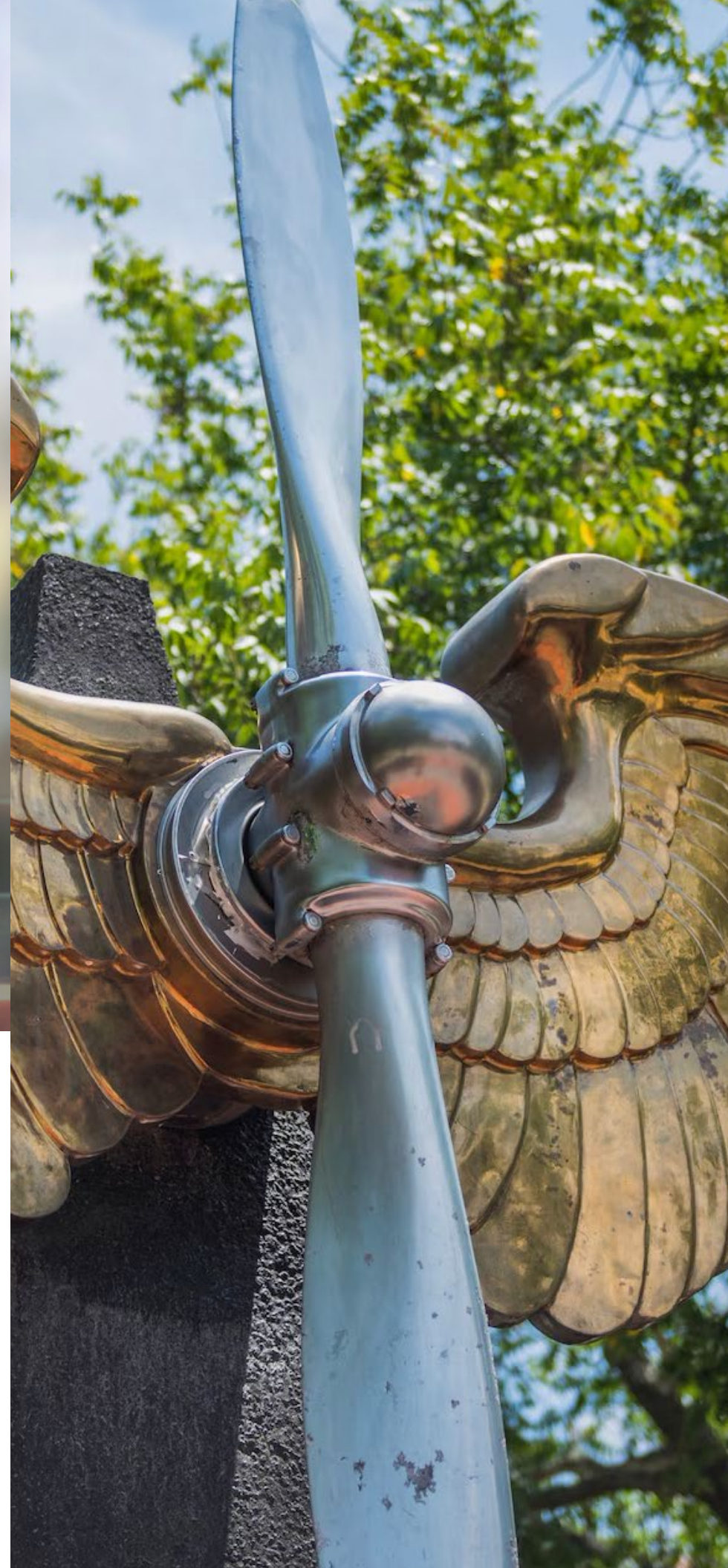


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**“We’re not building followers, we’re building leaders in this job. We prepare cadets for commissioning. Our mission is to develop air and space leaders of character who we expect to fight and win our nation’s wars. Leadership is leadership across the board.”**

**- Col. Eugene Moore III, Air Force Reserve Officers' Training Corps headquarters commander**

Col. Eugene Moore III, Air Force Reserve Officers' Training Corps headquarters commander, manages the Jeanne M. Holm Center for Officer Accessions and Citizen Development. The Holm Center's central mission is to develop leaders of character.



## EDITOR'S NOTE

The National Defense Strategy highlights the pacing threats posed by our adversaries, underscoring the need to cultivate and maintain a capable, adaptable force. Recruiting, developing, and retaining a skilled and diverse workforce ensures the U.S. Air Force can project airpower anytime, anywhere.

To remain at the forefront of air superiority, the Air Force is implementing transformative changes across its talent management framework. These efforts include optimizing human capital strategies, fostering a culture of continuous learning, and ensuring training is closely aligned with mission requirements. Additionally, the Force is modernizing personnel systems to better match Airmen to roles that maximize their potential, support retention, and create flexible career paths responsive to operational needs.

In this issue of Airman magazine, we explore how Air Force talent management serves as a cornerstone of force readiness and resilience. We visited Air University at Maxwell AFB, Alabama, and spoke with leaders about major changes underway, including the reintroduction of warrant officers, redesigned training programs to develop character-driven leaders, and a renewed focus on digital skills to make data a reliable weapon. Through these initiatives, the Air Force equips Airmen with the skills and adaptability needed to meet today's demands and prepare for tomorrow's challenges.

Air University, headquartered at Maxwell AFB, Alabama, is a major component of Air Education and Training Command and is the lead agent for Air Force education. AU provides the full spectrum of Air Force education, encompassing precommissioning programs for new officers; graduate programs in specialized military disciplines; progressive, career-long professional military development for officer, enlisted, and civilian Airmen; and specialized programs for U.S. cabinet appointees, senior executive service civilians, and general officers. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Charles Welty)





# WHY THINGS MATTER



Col. Schlusel is the commander of the Thomas N. Barnes Center for Enlisted Education. The Barnes Center is named after the Air Force's fourth Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, the first African American to attain the highest enlisted position in any branch of the U.S. Armed Forces. (U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Janiqua P. Robinson)

Video by **Tech. Sgt. Janiqua Robinson**

**“Our warfare is becoming about survival. There are people who do not agree with our way of life and for the service piece right now, it’s less than one half of 1% of the U.S. population currently or has served in the U.S. Military service is about serving a greater good.”**

- **Col. Damian Schlusel**, Thomas N. Barnes Center for Enlisted Education commander

Col. Damian Schlusel, Thomas N. Barnes Center for Enlisted Education commander, and Chief Master Sgt. Stefan Blazier, Air University command chief, discuss the significance of an all-volunteer force and the magnitude of every Airman’s commitment to serve.

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# WARRANT OFFICER ETHOS



Senior Master Sgt. Kayleigh McAviney is the Warrant Officer Training School operations superintendent. WOTS is a 40-day in-residence accessions program designed to educate and train candidates with specialized knowledge and technical skills on how to serve as technical advisors to command leadership. (U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Janiqua P. Robinson)

Video by **Tech. Sgt. Janiqua Robinson**

**“So the warrant officer, they’re technically focused. They are the subject matter expert in their craft, and what’s unique about them is that’s their sole focus. They’re going to have the best posturing to really advise their commanders.”**

- **Senior Master Sgt. Kayleigh McAviney**, Warrant Officer Training School operations superintendent

Senior Master Sgt. Kayleigh McAviney, Warrant Officer Training School operations superintendent, and David Bonner, Air University chief historian, discuss the history and significance of Air Force warrant officers.

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# FOUNDATIONS COURSES

Video by **Tech. Sgt. Janiqua Robinson**

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**“So if you have a family, there are things that you want to teach about the culture of your family at your home and then there are things that you send them to school to learn. So, I want you to look at foundations the same way, the things that we send people off to school are brick and mortar institutions, things that you can’t do at the unit level. Foundations, on the other hand, is a touch point that’s taught and led by Airmen, or their family, that’s at the home stations.”**

- **Col. Damian Schlusel**, Thomas N. Barnes Center for Enlisted Education commander

Col. Damian Schlusel, Thomas N. Barnes Center for Enlisted Education commander, and Chief Master Sgt. Stefan Blazier, Air University command chief, explain the origins of the new Foundations courses and their role in deliberate development.

# DIGITAL LITERACY

## Vital Tools for the Great Power Competition

Story by **Tyler Prince**

**“Digital literacy is key to enabling Airmen to understand their role in collecting, managing and utilizing data effectively, which in turn strengthens the entire force.”**

- **Dr. Lisa Tripp**, Air Education and Training Command’s command analytics officer and AI liaison

In a rapidly changing global environment, where technological advancements shape the nature of conflict, every Airman’s contribution is critical.

Dr. Lisa Tripp, Air Education and Training Command’s command analytics officer and AI liaison emphasizes, “Digital literacy is key to enabling Airmen to understand their role in collecting, managing and utilizing data effectively, which in turn strengthens the entire force.”

As the Department of the Air Force faces the increasing demands of modern warfare, it’s working to equip Airmen with advanced skills in artificial intelligence, data analytics, and cybersecurity. To maximize the benefits of these tools, digital literacy — understanding how to use digital technologies to access, evaluate, and communicate information — is essential for both individual development and mission success.

“For decades, our air and space power has relied on cutting-edge technology. But today, it’s not enough to simply operate high-tech equipment,” says Col. Paul Brenner, AETC senior reserve advisor to the chief information officer. “We must leverage data, communicate effectively in digital spaces, and protect sensitive information.”

Brenner, who is also a computing and data science professor at the University of Notre Dame, adds, “In both my military and academic work, I’ve seen how good data management transforms decision-making. Airmen need to be as proficient with data as they are with any weapon in their arsenal.”

Understanding why digital literacy is essential for every Airman starts with recognizing how deeply technology is embedded in daily operations across all roles and ranks.

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Dr. Lisa Tripp, Air Education and Training Command's command analytics officer and AI liaison, poses for a photo at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph, Texas, Oct. 15, 2024. Tripp helped spearhead the AETC Data Literacy Foundations course, which aims to digitally upskill Airmen in data management and analysis. The course is part of an effort to integrate data literacy into training programs across the Air Force. (U.S. Air Force photo by Sarayuth Pinthong)

# DIGITAL LITERACY

## Vital Tools for the Great Power Competition

"In today's Air Force, every Airman interacts with data that can influence outcomes on a strategic level, whether they're maintaining aircraft, securing communications, or planning missions," Dr. Tripp explains.

Individual Airmen's decisions can have far-reaching implications, making digital proficiency not just an advantage but a necessity.

For example, maintenance personnel use digital tools to diagnose aircraft systems, predict failures before they occur, and ensure mission readiness. Without the ability to interpret data accurately, critical issues might be missed, leading to equipment failure or mission delays. Similarly, Airmen involved in logistics rely on data analytics to manage supply chains. Misinterpretation of this data could result in resource shortages at crucial moments.

Dr. Tripp stresses that digital literacy empowers Airmen to take a proactive approach. "When Airmen can handle and interpret data, they can spot patterns and anomalies that may indicate security threats or operational inefficiencies. This kind of proactive thinking is essential in a landscape where adversaries are constantly seeking vulnerabilities."

To meet this growing need, Col. Brenner and Dr. Tripp have collaborated with the rest of the AETC staff to develop the AETC Data Literacy Foundations course, designed to help Airmen manage data effectively in their roles.

"The course is our starting point to digitally upskill the entire headquarters AETC Staff and could potentially become available to all Airmen in the Air Force," Brenner explains. "It's about more than just learning new tools; it's about changing how we think and approach problems."

The course goes beyond basic data management and is available through the DAF eLearning platform.

"It teaches Airmen about the data and analytic tools and training available to them and sets a foundation to build the analytic skills to employ data to inform decisions and enhance operational effectiveness," Dr. Tripp says. "We want Airmen to understand that their interaction with data influences mission success and, ultimately, national security."

**"When Airmen can handle and interpret data, they can spot patterns and anomalies that may indicate security threats or operational inefficiencies. This kind of proactive thinking is essential in a landscape where adversaries are constantly seeking vulnerabilities."**

- **Dr. Lisa Tripp**, Air Education and Training Command's command analytics officer and AI liaison



Video by **Tech. Sgt. Janiqua Robinson**

**"We are not professional education, we are professional military education. That end becomes very important because we are warfighters. Our job is lethality. When you use lethality, you have to have standards, you have to have discipline. Those are the things that are the cornerstones of what we do."**

- **Col. Damian Schlussel**, Thomas N. Barnes Center for Enlisted Education commander

Chief Master Sgt. Stefan Blazier, Air University command chief, and Col. Damian Schlussel, Thomas N. Barnes Center for Enlisted Education commander, discuss the importance of discipline and being ready to train on day one.

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Dr. Yolanda Williams is the provost and institutional accreditation administrator for AU. AU provides the full spectrum of Air Force education, to include pre-commissioning programs for new officers to progressive, career-long professional military development for Total Force Airmen. (U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Janiqua P. Robinson)



Video by Tech. Sgt. Janiqua Robinson

**“We are really getting after that continuum of learning. Right now, I believe that there are still some gaps in that continuum of learning and, with the stand up of ADC, we’re able to then fill those gaps to ensure that it is one continuous area of learning.”**

- **Dr. Yolanda Williams**, Air University provost and institutional accreditation administrator

Chief Master Sgt. Stefan Blazier, Air University command chief, and Dr. Yolanda Williams, AU provost and institutional accreditation administrator, discuss the significance of changing from Air Education and Training Command to Airman Development Command.

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**“By investing in their own digital education, Airmen are positioning themselves to ensure they are effective and agile in a rapidly evolving, digitally-driven operational environment.”**

- **Dr. Lisa Tripp**, Air Education and Training Command’s command analytics officer and AI liaison

The course provides scenarios that are relevant to a wide range of roles within the Air Force. Airmen from various specialties are introduced to advanced data analytics and data management practices that enhance decision-making and operational efficiency. By linking these skills to their daily responsibilities, Airmen can see how improving digital literacy directly contributes to mission success.

Looking ahead, these digital concepts and capabilities will be reinforced throughout an Airman’s career, from basic military training to advanced professional military education.

“Digital transformation is not a one-time event; it’s an ongoing journey,” Dr. Tripp says. “We must ensure that our Airmen continuously develop their skills to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow.”

“We have a mission imperative to foster a culture of continuous learning and provide tools for Airmen to refresh and advance their skills,” adds Gordon Pfeil, DAF eLearning Services chief of the Acquisition and Compliance Branch at AETC. In partnership with Skillsoft, the DAF eLearning platform uses AI-driven learning paths to create personalized development plans.

“AI delivers decision-quality information in real-time and identifies trends that might otherwise go unnoticed,” Pfeil explains. “The platform benchmarks current skill levels and recommends targeted learning to improve those skills.”

This personalized approach ensures each service member enhances the competencies necessary to support mission outcomes.

For individual Airmen, embracing digital literacy means enhancing their effectiveness and career prospects. Proficiency in digital skills improves performance in current roles and prepares Airmen for future responsibilities that may involve more complex technological systems.

“By investing in their own digital education, Airmen are positioning themselves to ensure they are effective and agile in a rapidly evolving, digitally-driven operational environment,” says Dr. Tripp.

The DAF’s commitment to digital literacy extends beyond individual development and directly influences mission success and national security.

“Success in the Great Power Competition depends on how effectively we harness data,” Brenner notes. “By embedding digital literacy throughout our ranks, we’re building a force capable of outthinking, outmaneuvering, and outpacing our adversaries.”

By prioritizing digital literacy, professional development, and the strategic use of data, the Air Force empowers its personnel to excel in a tech-driven world. This safeguards U.S. dominance and ensures mission success in an increasingly digitized and contested global landscape.



**“Success in the Great Power Competition depends on how effectively we harness data. By embedding digital literacy throughout our ranks, we’re building a force capable of outthinking, outmaneuvering, and outpacing our adversaries.”**

- **Col. Paul Brenner**, AETC senior reserve advisor to the chief information officer

Col. Paul Brenner is the senior reserve advisor to the chief information officer at Air Education and Training Command, and a professor and research scientist at the University of Notre Dame focused on artificial intelligence and data analytics. Brenner’s work on AETC’s Data Literacy Foundations course aims to instill these foundational skills, empowering Airmen to make informed decisions and respond quickly in a data-driven environment. (U.S. Air Force photo)





David Bonner, Air University chief historian, is responsible for maintaining AU archives and chronicling the changes and events happening across AU. AU provides the full spectrum of Air Force education, to include pre-commissioning programs for new officers to progressive, career-long professional military development for Total Force Airmen. (U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Janiqua P. Robinson)



# WE ARE ALL WARFIGHTERS

Video by **Tech. Sgt. Janiqua Robinson**

**“That’s the thing that makes us us, we are all warfighters no matter what our AFSC is, we’re all war fighters. Whether it’s Airman Leadership School all the way up to the Air War College, we have to have a curriculum that is relevant to everyone, but also relevant for their role as warfighters.”**

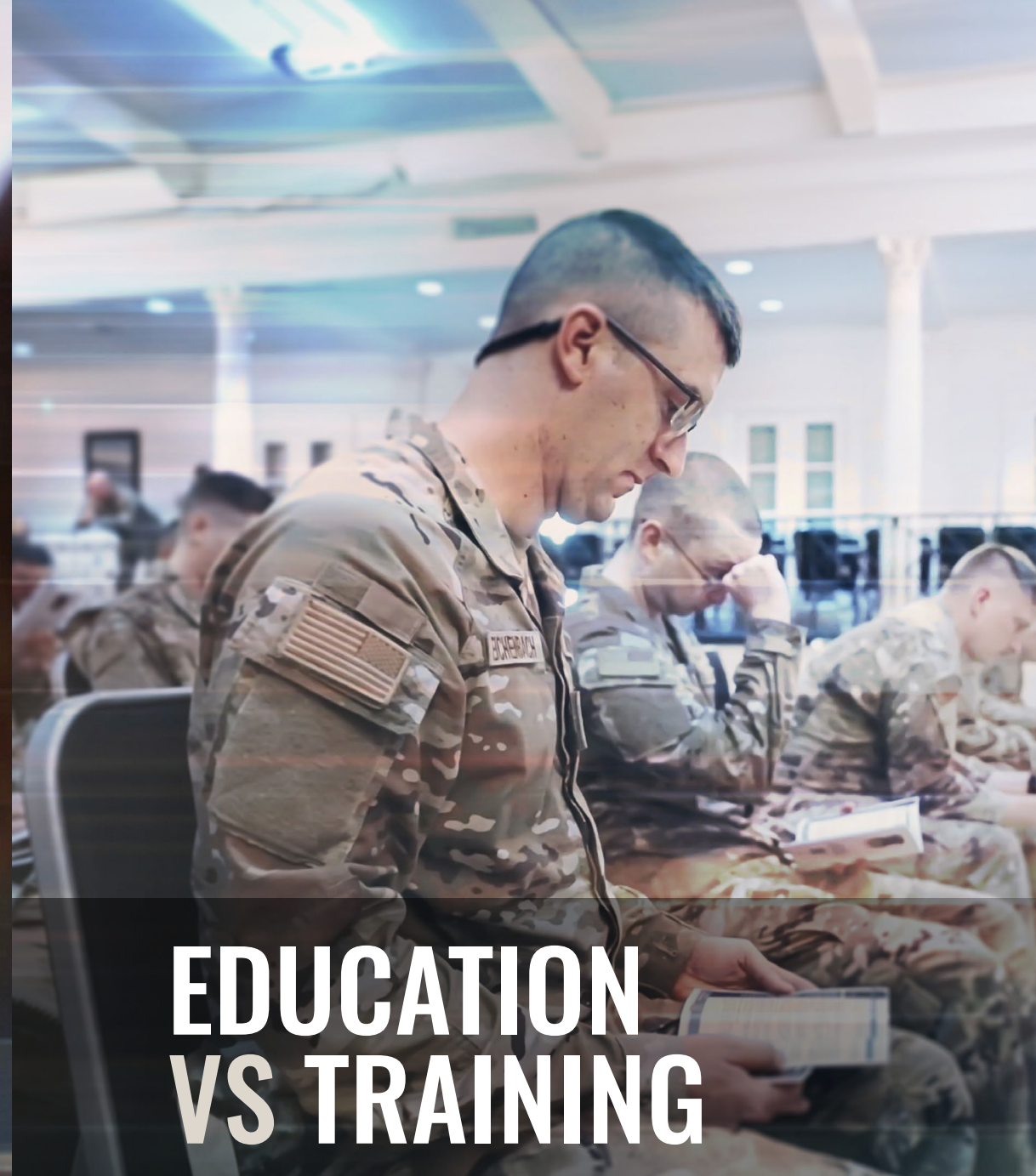
- **David Bonner**, Air University chief historian

Chief Master Sgt. Stefan Blazier, Air University command chief, David Bonner, AU chief historian, and Col. Damian Schlussel, Thomas N. Barnes Center for Enlisted Education commander, explain why professional military education course curriculums must be relevant to every Airman’s role as a warfighter.

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# EDUCATION VS TRAINING

Video by **Tech. Sgt. Janiqua Robinson**

**“Think about the difference between training and education. Training helps me understand the checklist. I can do XYZ and it’s a known. Education really prepares you for the unknown. Being in a classroom and being educated makes us think more critically about a particular topic.”**

- **Chief Master Sgt. Stefan Blazier**, Air University command chief

Chief Master Sgt. Stefan Blazier Air University command chief and Dr. Yolanda Williams, the provost and institutional accreditation administrator for AU discuss the differences between education and training and what each prepare Airmen to do.



Chief Master Sgt. Stefan Blazier, Air University command chief, serves as the adviser to the AU commander on all matters affecting the quality, welfare, morale, readiness and leadership of service members assigned to more than 1,300 locations around the world. (U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Janiqua P. Robinson)

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