

COMMIT!

By Mark Hille '97, CEO, U.S. Air Force Academy Association & Foundation



A few weeks ago, I joined members of the Great! Class of 1978 at the 2028 Commitment Dinner. The following morning, the Class of 2028 (Be Bold! Be Great!) attended its first academic lessons of their nascent two-degree year, officially committing to serve in the Air Force or Space Force upon graduation.

The Commitment Dinner tradition is an opportunity for cadets and their legacy class to reflect on the importance of the cadets' remaining two years at the Academy, and their service after.

It is also a chance to celebrate. The Class of 2028 unveiled its crest for the first time to boisterous applause and added cadet names to a new class artifact — a Class Commitment Scroll. The scroll read, in part, that the dinner “marks a pivotal point in our journey at the United States Air Force Academy. This event is not merely a celebration but a profound reaffirmation of our dedication to values and principles that define our path as future military leaders.”

During the celebration, Brig. Gen. Brandon Tellez '01, the 32nd commandant of cadets, addressed the class. He highlighted the importance of the word “commit” in the context of the air dominance mission. That word, he emphasized, meant more than “let’s go.” Embedded within is a sense of shared preparation, shared values and a readiness to do one’s part in service to the mission. Moments earlier, Deputy Group Air Officer Commanding Lt. Col. Jack Glojek '08, shared his own reflections on the concept of commitment. Col. Glojek served as a special tactics officer in Syria,

Iraq and Afghanistan, and pointed out how the mission motivates our sense of commitment even when we are asked to do the dangerous or the daunting. Taken together, these remarks perfectly matched the moment.

At the end of dinner, Gen. Tellez asked the members of the Class of 2028 to raise their right hands and take the oath of office. It was a reminder for all in attendance that we commit to something larger than ourselves — to our nation and to the ideals that define the Long Blue Line.

The Commitment Dinner was one of several important events this summer at our school.

On Aug. 7, we bade farewell to the 22nd superintendent of our Academy, Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Tony Bauernfeind '91, who, among other accomplishments, strengthened the Academy’s focus on the warrior ethos and returned the 306th Flying Training Group to the Academy’s command structure. We thank Gen. Bauernfeind for his remarkable 35 years of service to our nation, concluding with his service to our alma mater.

We also welcomed the 23rd superintendent of our Academy, Lt. Gen. Paul Moga '95, who has returned to this institution after serving as commander of Third Air Force. Gen. Moga is a familiar name to many; he was commandant of cadets from 2021 to 2023 and the first commander of the F-22 Demonstration Team, and throughout his career has earned the respect of those who served alongside him.

Finally, we celebrated the stand up of the Academic Wing under the leadership

of Brig. Gen. James Valpiani '04 as provost and wing commander. In his remarks at the Aug. 5 ceremony establishing the wing and the four schools within it, Gen. Valpiani spoke of the new complexities facing graduates that are vast, technical, fast-moving and reliant on human judgment for the lives on the line. He ended his remarks with the charge to drive integration, stay focused on the mission and uphold a high standard of excellence. (See “Final Word” on p. 144 for photos from the ceremony, along with an overview and a link to Gen. Valpiani’s speech.)

The Association & Foundation looks forward to providing Gen. Moga with platforms to share his vision and priorities for our Academy as its superintendent. We will also provide fora for Gen. Tellez and Gen. Valpiani to engage with the Long Blue Line on all that’s happening within the mission elements they lead.

In the meantime, we welcome these three outstanding leaders to our Academy, and we reaffirm our mission of supporting our Academy, serving our graduates and preserving the growing heritage of the Long Blue Line. 

With best wishes,

Mark Hille '97