



## MLDC Research Areas

Definition of Diversity  
Legal Implications  
Outreach & Recruiting  
Leadership & Training  
Branching & Assignments  
Promotion  
Retention  
Implementation & Accountability  
Metrics  
National Guard & Reserve

This issue paper aims to aid in the deliberations of the MLDC. It does not contain the recommendations of the MLDC.

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# Career Development Resources in the Services

## Abstract

One issue of concern to the MLDC is whether servicemembers are able to make informed career decisions. Fair opportunities for promotion, assignment, and command may depend on whether all servicemembers are aware of the impact of their career choices. The Services currently offer a range of career development resources that may help servicemembers make informed career choices. This issue paper presents findings on the extent and effectiveness of these resources based on (1) information provided by the Services to the MLDC and (2) survey data. It appears that the Services are undertaking many efforts to provide career development resources, including placing a great deal of information online. Yet, the limited survey data suggest that, regardless of race/ethnicity and gender, servicemembers' knowledge of and satisfaction with career development programs and assignment processes are only moderate. Overall, it appears that the Services' career development resources are extensive, but their effectiveness is still in question. Further efforts to evaluate the effectiveness of these resources may clarify the extent to which they provide adequate career information.

**A**n important goal outlined in the MLDC charter tasks is to determine whether all career options in the Services are open to those who are qualified and wish to pursue them. Providing fair opportunities for promotion, assignment, and command entails ensuring that servicemembers clearly understand their career options and the impact of their career choices. To be able to select the right career paths, servicemembers must be aware of how their career choices may affect their opportunities for advancement.

To address these concerns, this issue paper seeks to answer the following questions:

- 1) How do the Services provide career development information to their members?
- 2) What methods are the Services finding to be most effective in providing career development information?
- 3) How do servicemembers perceive the fit between their individual career goals and their Service's goals for them?
- 4) What are servicemembers' beliefs about and experiences with career development resources?
- 5) Are servicemembers satisfied with their Service's career development resources?

We relied on two main sources of data to answer these questions. First, we examined information provided by the Services on their career development programs and resources. The MLDC asked each Service to provide information on career counseling and development programs and tools, including information on how they hold supervisors (who are generally the mid-term counselors) accountable for conducting counseling sessions and for providing adequate career guidance, not just performance ratings (e.g., through fitness reports [FITREPs]). This information was supplemented by career development information found on the Services' publicly accessible websites.<sup>1</sup>

Second, we analyzed survey data on servicemembers' attitudes and experiences regarding career development resources. In a survey fielded by the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI) in March 2010, we asked servicemembers for their opinions on 13 items relating to the following topics:

- the fit between personal career goals and the Service's goals for them
- beliefs about career development resources

- personal experience with career development resources
- satisfaction with career development resources.

The resulting data provide insight into the effectiveness of extant career development resources in the military Services.

### The Services' Career Counseling Resources

Table 1 summarizes several approaches taken by the Services to offer career guidance to servicemembers. A check mark means that the Service offers the type of resource listed in that row. The superscripted letters next to the check marks indicate whether we have evidence that the resource is for enlisted personnel (e) or officers (o) or whether we do not know (u). The lack of a superscripted letter means that the resource is available to both enlisted and officer personnel. In the sections that follow, we provide further detail on these efforts, which may be targeted specifically to enlisted personnel, officers, civilians, or some combination of the three.

### The Air Force

- Web-based information: The Air Force provides online resources for enlisted and officer personnel, mainly within individual development and training plans available through the Air Force Portal website.
- Individual development plans: Air Force personnel are expected to actively participate in their career development (U.S. Department of the Air Force, 2008b) by updating their assignment and career preferences online. Enlisted personnel are expected to use such web resources as the Career Field Education and Training Plan and My Enlisted Development Plan, which are available through the Air Force Portal website (U.S. Department of the Air Force, 2008a), and officers are expected to use the

Airmen Development Plan/Developmental Education Preferences/Statement of Intent or similar forms. However, officers now have access to a web resource akin to My Enlisted Development Plan: My Officer Development Plan (Petcoff, 2010). For more details about the Air Force's individual development plans, see an earlier MLDC issue paper (Military Leadership Diversity Commission, 2010).

- Career path guides: According to information provided to the MLDC by the Air Force, the Air Force provides information guides on professional development such as the *Officer Professional Development Guide* and *The Professional Development Guide*. We also learned that the Air Force has career development diagrams that illustrate, by functional area, career progression against the required skills and education for each level. Other diagrams depict an institutional perspective on career paths and outline specific responsibilities for enlisted personnel, officers, and civilians. It is unclear from the provided information, however, where and when these diagrams are distributed.
- Online information about enlisted-to-officer programs: The Air Force describes opportunities for enlisted personnel to become officers by attending college (with Air Force assistance) or attending officer training. The Air Force lists various enlisted commissioning programs that allow airmen to attend college before completing commissioning training, although these programs are often available in selected fields only (*Enlisted opportunities website*, 2009).
- Dedicated career counselors:
  - For enlisted career development, the Air Force Personnel Center has Career Assistance Advisors and First Term Airman Center Non-Commissioned Officers in Charge assigned at bases throughout the Air Force. According to information provided to the MLDC by the Air Force, these personnel provide career counseling and information about education, training, promotion, and retention to the population at the base.

**Table 1. Types of Career Development Resources, by Service**

	Air Force	Army	Coast Guard	Marine Corps	Navy
Web-based information	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Individual development plans	✓		✓		✓ <sup>u</sup>
Career path guides	✓	✓ <sup>o</sup>	✓ <sup>o</sup>		✓ <sup>e</sup>
Online information about enlisted-to-officer programs	✓ <sup>e</sup>	✓ <sup>e</sup>	✓ <sup>e</sup>	✓ <sup>e</sup>	✓ <sup>e</sup>
Dedicated career counselors	✓		✓ <sup>o</sup>	✓	✓ <sup>e</sup>
Raters encouraged to give career advice in counseling sessions during the performance review process	✓				
Career road shows	✓ <sup>e</sup>		✓	✓	✓ <sup>u</sup>

**NOTES:** Individual development plans refer to all-in-one, standardized documents or online platforms that allow servicemembers to “share their records, career plans, and other relevant information with supervisors (i.e., primary mentors) and other mentors of their choosing” (Military Leadership Diversity Commission, 2010). Career road shows are events during which counseling personnel visit installations to describe assignment and promotion processes and deliver other career information.

- For officer career development, the Air Force has career field managers and Development Teams to provide career feedback “via the automated Airmen Development Plan system or similar process” (U.S. Department of the Air Force, 2008b, p. 15). Air Force Academic Specialty Monitors (ASMs) provide information on graduate education requirements for officer advanced academic degree positions. The ASMs also serve as an indirect source of career information by acting as points of contact for managers and leaders seeking information on graduate education requirements for officer advancement.
- Career advice in counseling sessions during the performance review process: According to information provided to the MLDC by the Air Force, in the Air Force Enlisted/Officer Evaluation Systems, raters are encouraged during the formal feedback session to suggest “avenues to improve for future assignments/positions and promotion potential.” Although raters and the personnel being rated have to confirm that counseling sessions occurred, we did not receive information about whether the Air Force tracks the quality of information that is provided during the sessions.
- Career road shows: The aforementioned Career Assistance Advisors and First Term Airman Center Non-Commissioned Officers in Charge hold monthly Informed Decision Seminars, which are mandatory for servicemembers who are 12–15 months from their end of term. According to information provided to the MLDC by the Air Force, these seminars include comparisons of “current [Air Force] entitlements and what it will require in the civilian sector to have a comparable lifestyle.”
- Dedicated career counselors: We did not find evidence that the Army has dedicated career counselors.
- Career advice in counseling sessions during the performance review process: According to a description of the Army’s Evaluation Reporting System, the Army requires that all officers be counseled by their raters within 30 days of the beginning of the rating period and that subsequent counseling sessions occur within a certain timeframe (U.S. Department of the Army, 2007). However, these formal counseling sessions are focused on performance objectives and not necessarily on imparting career information. That is, Army raters are not explicitly encouraged to talk about future assignments as part of the formal counseling sessions. However, Army officers may list their own preferred areas of focus for professional development, including future assignments, on their evaluation forms, and they are encouraged to sit down with their leaders for face-to-face counseling.
- Career road shows: The Army does not appear to currently offer career road shows. However, according to information provided to the MLDC by the Army, the Army uses other personnel, such as assignment managers, to provide career information at Army service colleges where there are large concentrations of officers. For example, a team of officers from Human Resources Command visits officers receiving intermediate level education at Fort Leavenworth.

## The Army

- Web-based information: We did not find detailed career management information on any Army websites other than a mentoring website, which affords access to an online mentoring program that is described in greater detail in an earlier MLDC issue paper (Military Leadership Diversity Commission, 2010). It could be that the Army maintains websites with career management information but that the information can only be seen by Army personnel via the Army Knowledge Online (AKO) portal.
- Individual development plans: We did not see evidence that the Army has formalized individual development plans. It is possible that such plans exist on AKO websites.
- Career path guides: The Army provides fairly detailed information about officer career paths by branch in U.S. Department of the Army (2010). The guide provides information on such things as key billets within a specialty and descriptions of officer education, evaluation, and leadership development.
- Online information about enlisted-to-officer programs: The Army describes opportunities for enlisted soldiers to become officers by attending college (with Army assistance) or attending officer training. The Army Green to Gold scholarship helps soldiers attend college in order to earn a commission (*Army ROTC* website, n.d.).

## The Coast Guard

- Web-based information: The Coast Guard’s Officer Personnel Management Career Management Branch (OPM-4) of the Personnel Service Center (PSC) provides officers with some information about career management on its website (*Career management branch [PSC-opm-4]* website, 2010). Specifically, the website provides officer career guides, (optional) professional development forms, and contact information for career counselors. Other branches of OPM, such as the Officer Assignment Branch (OPM-2), provide some career guides for officers on their websites.
- Individual development plans: The Coast Guard’s Individual Development Plan (IDP) is mandatory for first-term enlisted personnel and officers. Completing the IPD requires personnel to assess their own competencies and identify career goals to discuss with their supervisors and mentors. The IDP is described as a “personally tailored action plan” that is developed jointly by the supervisor and the individual to “identify short and long-term personal and career goals” and outline the “training and developmental experiences [needed] to achieve those goals” (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2006, p. 2). The first IDP counseling session takes place within 30 days of an individual’s arrival at a new unit, and subsequent sessions take place at least twice a year. The sessions are documented using the Training Management Tool, and, if they are overdue, automated reminders are sent to ensure compliance. The Training Management Tool is also used by leadership to monitor compliance by supervisors and individuals.

- Career path guides: Information about officer career paths can be found in Coast Guard guides, such as *The Sector Officer Assignment Guide* (U.S. Coast Guard, 2007). Like other Services' guides, the Coast Guard guides provide some general career path guidelines and information about education and promotion.
- Online information about enlisted-to-officer programs: The Coast Guard's Pre-Commissioning Program for Enlisted Personnel helps select enlisted personnel finish college before attending Officer Candidate School (OCS) and receiving a commission and assignment (*Pre-commissioning program for enlisted personnel* website, n.d.). The Coast Guard emphasizes that assignments are based on the needs of the Service.
- Dedicated career counselors: The Coast Guard has dedicated career counselors for officers in OPM-4. Officers can make counseling appointments via email. According to information provided to the MLDC by the Coast Guard, the PSC also sends reminders to alert company-grade officers of "the importance of career guidance and receiving mid-period counseling."
- Career advice in counseling sessions during the performance review process: The Coast Guard PSC not only encourages company-grade officers to seek career counseling but, according to information provided to the MLDC by the Coast Guard, also sends an email to all O-5s to request that they "provide feedback to their subordinates and mentees." The email also goes to all O-6s to request that they hold O-5s responsible for providing feedback to subordinates and mentees. Finally, one of the leadership performance dimensions in the Coast Guard's performance evaluations mentions the development of others (*Coast guard leadership competencies* website, n.d.). Based on this information, it is not clear that the Coast Guard has a formalized career counseling mechanism during the performance review process for officers or enlisted personnel.
- Career road shows: According to information provided to the MLDC by the Coast Guard, career road shows in the Coast Guard are typically held where large units are located and are conducted by either assignment or career management personnel. These presentations are held in the summer; officer presentations can draw approximately 1,500 attendees, and enlisted presentations more than 3,000. Road shows include presentations on promotion and selection panels (including advanced education opportunities), the assignment process, evaluation reports, career paths/specialties, and career management. Notably, road show presentations for officers and reservists are also offered in online meetings (webinars), which are archived for later viewing.
- Individual development plans: We did not find or receive information on IDPs for marines.
- Career path guides: We did not find much information on career path guides for officers or enlisted personnel in the Marine Corps. However, Navy Knowledge Online (NKO) allows personnel to use the Sailor/Marine American Council on Education Registry Transcript (SMART) (Vasquez, 2005), which provides marines access to their personal information in addition to institutional career information (although we do not know whether that career information includes career path guides). Also, the Marine Corps Combat Development Command, which is responsible for professional military education (PME), provides information on completing PME and posts promotion requirements online (U.S. Department of the Navy, 2008a).
- Online information about enlisted-to-officer programs: The Marine Corps Enlisted Commissioning Educational Program helps marines attend college in order to earn a commission. The Marine Enlisted Commissioning Program and Meritorious Commissioning Program allow qualified individuals to attend Officer Candidate School (*Marine officer: Enlisted to officer* website, 2010).
- Dedicated career counselors: Enlisted career counselors are available for counseling sessions over the phone, in person at Marine Corps Headquarters, and during their visits to enlisted PME locations and units (U.S. Marine Corps, 2004). For active-duty officers, there is a dedicated career counseling office that is part of the Officer Assignment branch of the Manpower Management division (MMOA-4); career counseling for reserve officers is handled by the Reserve Career Management Team [*Career counseling (MMOA-4)* website, n.d.].
- Career advice in counseling sessions during the performance review process: The Marine Corps holds formal performance counseling sessions during the performance review process for both enlisted personnel and officers, but there is no direct evidence that career development is discussed during these sessions. However, raters are responsible for helping to professionally develop their subordinates. According to information provided to the MLDC by the Marine Corps, in FITREPs, officers are rated on whether they "ensure subordinates participate in all mandated development programs" and on developing and instituting innovative programs for the personal and professional development of subordinates. The officers themselves are also rated on their own professional development beyond standard requirements. Thus, officers may use the formal performance review process as a time to provide career counseling to subordinates. However, we do not know whether this is truly the case.
- Career road shows: According to information provided to the MLDC by the Marine Corps, career road shows for officers are conducted by the Officer Assignment Branch to educate individuals about the officer assignment process and to provide professional career counseling. The Officer Assignment Branch also coordinates with senior leaders to "facilitate a common understanding of requirements," and its goal is to brief 100 percent of officers. There are also three enlisted road shows per year, although more-specific information was not provided.

## The Marine Corps

- Web-based information: Like the other Services, the Marine Corps provides career information for military personnel on different websites. The Marine Corps' *Manpower & Reserve Affairs* website (n.d.) contains downloadable documents, such as information about how to prepare an official record, and links to such resources as enlisted career counselors and conferences on occupation-specific manpower issues.

## The Navy

- **Web-based information:** We were able to find career-related online resources for enlisted personnel on Navy websites, but access restrictions blocked resources for officers. Sailors can find personalized career information on NKO, which is designed to be a “one-stop shop” (Valdez, 2004). The Navy Educational Command’s website provides individual development information (e.g., training courses, personnel qualification standards). The Navy Personnel Command’s website provides links to resources, including information for career counselors, and enlisted career path advice. As the Navy’s web portal, NKO serves as the individual-facing module of a larger Navy vision called Sea Power 21, which is articulated to meet new directions for the United States. A major component of this vision is the Sea Warrior initiative, which is focused on manpower issues: “Sea Warrior is the process of developing 21st century Sailors. It identifies the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for mission accomplishment; applies a career-long training and education continuum; and employs a responsive interactive career management system to ensure the right skills are in the right place at the right time” (England, Clark, & Jones, 2002, p. 5).
- **Individual development plans:** The Navy provides an IDP for new employees, and the plan is updated annually (Navy Fleet & Family Readiness Training, n.d.). It is unclear whether this tool is for enlisted personnel, officers, civilians, or some combination of the three. In addition to IDPs, enlisted sailors can use Career Master Plans, which are web-based, career planning tools developed by the Naval Education and Training Development and Technology Center. Career Master Plans contain information about the enlisted sailor’s career, breaking it out by community or rating, and provide “information about the tasks, skills and knowledge Sailors need to master during average 20-year career paths” (Eifert, 2002). In addition to requiring general information on career paths, sailors need to be able to match these career paths against their own qualifications and competencies. NKO allows personnel to use the Electronic Training Jacket and SMART so that they can access personal and institutional career information.
- **Career path guides:**
  - For enlisted sailors, Learning and Development Roadmaps (LaDRs), intended to be “comprehensive career guides,” are available from NKO (Lee, 2010). Available for 57 Navy ratings as of February 2010, a LaDR “supports all enlisted active and reserve component military members” (U.S. Department of the Navy, 2009, p. 1). Its stated purpose is to provide “a tool Sailors can use as they seek to accomplish both professional and personal goals in their Navy careers . . . [and] a valuable tool for counseling” that “shall be used as leaders guide the development of our Sailors” (p. 1). The Navy’s goal is to make all LaDRs available by April 2010. The Navy also makes available Enlisted Career Maps via NKO. The Enlisted Learning and Development Strategy, developed by the Naval Education and Training Command, serves as “an umbrella under which are the learning and development programs that enlisted Sailors need access to for a successful career” (Naval Education and Training Command Public Affairs, 2008).
  - Officer career path information, broken out by the three unrestricted line communities, was provided in the Navy’s November 2009 briefing to the MLDC. However, we did not receive information about how such career path information is provided to Navy officers. Officer career guides are likely to be on websites with restricted access.
- **Online information about enlisted-to-officer programs:** The Navy’s Seaman to Admiral-21 Program offers sailors in different career paths (e.g., naval flight officer) to become officers and helps them attend the Naval Science Institute and college before selection and placement into an officer community (*STA 21: Seaman to Admiral-21 Program* website, 2009). Like the Coast Guard, the Navy emphasizes that assignments are based on the needs of the Service.
- **Dedicated career counselors:** The Navy has career counselors for enlisted personnel, but NKO is intended to be the primary source for career management and information (Valdez, 2004). That is, the Navy’s approach to enlisted career development appears to emphasize the role of the individual sailor. “At the heart of [the Sea Power] approach” is “sailor advocacy,” giving “sailors a stronger voice in and greater control over their career decisions” (Harms, Hoewing, & Totushek, 2003). Sailors work in collaboration with detailers and a command retention team to “develop a realistic, career-enhancing set of expectations” (Harms et al., 2003).
- **Career advice in counseling sessions during the performance review process:** Like most of the other Services, the Navy requires raters to provide counseling during the performance review process. However, there is no direct evidence that career advice is necessarily provided during these counseling sessions, although each rater is encouraged to “conduct informal counseling sessions on a regular basis to help keep the member on track in the areas of job performance and career development” (U.S. Department of the Navy, 2008b, p. 19-7).
- **Career road shows:** In a December 2009 briefing to the MLDC, the Navy noted that the Navy Personnel Command’s Personnel Progression, Performance and Security department (PERS-8) conducts road shows that offer information on the promotion board process. However, we do not know anything about the nature of these road shows.

## The Effectiveness of the Services’ Career Development Resources

**Service-Provided Information.** The Services were asked about current efforts to evaluate the effectiveness of their career development resources. It appears that little is currently known about their effectiveness, and much of the evidence is indirect. Air Force representatives reported not having retention issues at present and speculated that this may be due, in part, to mandatory counseling briefings, which have received positive survey ratings. Army representatives reported conducting surveys on the quality of career counseling (e.g., the Sample Survey of Military Personnel) but did not report the results of these surveys. The Coast Guard’s diversity strategy provides a performance metric for evaluating mentoring and counseling networks but we do not know if the Coast Guard has used this metric yet (Military Leadership Diversity

Commission, 2010). The Marine Corps has a climate survey, the *2007 Marine Corps Climate Assessment Survey* (U.S. Department of the Navy, 2007), which contains a few items about professional development but we have not seen the data related to these questions nor do we know how the Marine Corps uses the survey results. Finally, the Navy reported heavy usage of NKO: 96 percent of active-duty members and 90 percent of reservists were registered users in 2005 (Gagne, 2005). This may suggest that NKO is an effective career development tool.

Although the Services did not provide much information about how they measure the effectiveness of their career development programs and tools, we know that the Services largely rely on members to be motivated to seek out career information. However, given the scattered nature of career information, servicemembers, recruits, and potential recruits may find it difficult to find all of the information despite being motivated to find it. A Yeung and Gifford study suggests this may be the case: Potential recruits' willingness to ask for military career information in discussion forums suggests that (1) not all of the desired information is available directly from the Services and (2) individuals are willing and able to seek out what they want to know to manage their careers (Yeung & Gifford, 2010).

**Survey Data.** To examine servicemembers' perceptions about their Service's career development resources, survey data were collected in March 2010 during DEOMI's online Defense Equal Opportunity Organizational Climate Survey (DEOCS).<sup>3</sup> A total of 352 servicemembers completed the survey (8 Air Force; 111 Army; 18 Coast Guard; 25 Marine Corps; 91 Navy; and 99 no response).<sup>4</sup> The final sample of participants was 85 percent male, 15 percent female, 37 percent minority, and 63 percent nonminority. In terms of specific race/ethnicity groups, participants self-reported as

- 63 percent white non-Hispanic
- 17 percent black non-Hispanic
- 12 percent Hispanic
- 1 percent Asian non-Hispanic
- 7 percent other non-Hispanic (i.e., American Indian, Alaska Native, Pacific Islander, or multiple races).

In terms of military rank, 78 percent of participants were enlisted, 20 percent were officers, and 2 percent were warrant officers. Each branch of Service was represented in the survey sample, with 3 percent in the Air Force, 44 percent in the Army, 7 percent in the Coast Guard, 10 percent in the Marine Corps, and 36 percent in the Navy.

Note that the sample from this survey is a convenience sample and is not necessarily representative of members of each Service. The sample size is fairly small and is strongly weighted toward enlisted personnel and Army and Navy members. As such, inferences from the survey results need to be made with caution.

To examine overall career perceptions, we averaged responses across the survey items to create four representative factors.<sup>5</sup> Using a composite factor provides a more reliable assessment of a group's opinion by minimizing the influence of any wording bias contained in a single item. Table 2 shows the survey questions that belong to each factor. Table 3 shows the averages of these factors, broken out by gender and race/ethnicity. The item-level averages for each factor and the factor-level averages by corps and component are reported in an appendix.<sup>6</sup>

Overall, averages for each of the factors tended to cluster around 3.00 (i.e., a response of "neither agree nor disagree" or "neither satisfied nor dissatisfied"). There were no statistically significant differences by either gender or race/ethnicity for any of the survey factors. These results mean that, on average, servicemembers did not have very positive (or negative) perceptions about career development resources and the assignment process. The only survey factor with averages less than 3.00 was Perceptions of Career Education in Early Career (Factor 3): Servicemembers, on average, reported being somewhat less knowledgeable about career processes early in their careers.

Although we do not show them here, all of the factors were positively correlated with each other, with correlations ranging from 0.40 to 0.67. The largest correlation (0.67) was for the relationship between Personal-Service Career Goal Congruency (Factor 1) and Satisfaction with the Assignment Process (Factor 4). Specifically, individuals who felt that their career goals generally matched their Service's goals for their careers were more likely to be satisfied with their Service's assignment process (and vice versa). Although the other correlations were not as large as this one, the pattern of results generally suggests that servicemembers who felt that they knew more about the assignment process early in their careers and servicemembers who have career goals that match those of their Service were more satisfied with their Service's career development resources and assignment processes. Note, however, that these are correlations and thus do not imply causality. As such, the directions of relationships between factors can go either way (e.g., satisfied individuals are more likely to report knowing about assignments *or* individuals who report knowing more about the assignment process are more likely to be satisfied with career development resources and their career options).

### Summary

Based on information about career development resources both provided by the Services and culled from publicly accessible information and survey data, we conclude that

- The Services are engaging in active efforts to ensure that servicemembers are aware of career opportunities and requirements.

- The Services provide a great deal of career information online, although the information is spread across many websites. The Services use these websites to provide career advice, promotion requirements, and resources for further counseling.
- Servicemembers are expected to be self-motivated to develop their careers.
- Servicemembers report moderate knowledge of and satisfaction with career development resources and processes.
- Servicemembers' perceptions of their career goals, knowledge of the assignment process, and access to career development resources are related to their satisfaction with career development information and assignment processes.

**Conclusions**

Overall, servicemembers have access to a great deal of career information, particularly on the Internet. Yet, this information is spread across many sources and websites. Other information must be downloaded, a process that servicemembers may have neither the time nor inclination to undertake. If we were unable or found it difficult to locate career information, even with specific material provided directly to us, it may be difficult for servicemembers to find it on their own. Our survey results suggest that finding information may be somewhat difficult early in a military career.

In the survey data, servicemembers reported only limited understanding of their career options and only moderate satisfaction with available career resources: None of the average responses for any of the survey factors was above a 4.00 (i.e., a response of “agree” or “satisfied”). Therefore, although the Services’ career development resources appear to be widespread, their effectiveness is still in question. Research from the private sector (e.g., Whiston & Buck, 2008) suggests that the effectiveness of career development resources should be evaluated on an ongoing basis and that “career support from the employer encourages employees to improve both their internal and external employability” (Verbruggen, Sels, & Forrier, 2007, p. 79). Thus, continued support for career counseling services and the dedication of resources to assess these services’ effectiveness are likely to benefit servicemembers and the military Services alike.

**Table 2. Survey Questions About Perceptions of Career Development Resources and Assignment Processes, by Factor**

<b>Factor 1: Person-Service Career Goal Congruency</b>	
1.	My career goals match my Service’s goals.
2.	My career timetable matches my Service’s timetable for me.
3.	I can meet my career timetable in my Service.
4.	My career strategy matches my Service’s military career strategy for my future.
5.	I can use my career strategy in my Service.
<b>Factor 2: Satisfaction with Access to Career Planning Tools</b>	
1.	My Service has formal career planning programs or services (e.g., “road shows”) that help servicemembers identify future assignment opportunities.
2.	In my Service, raters/counselors are effective at identifying future assignments as part of servicemembers’ performance rating process (e.g., mid-term counseling by rater).
3.	My Service provides a method to easily identify or find out about openings for assignments.
<b>Factor 3: Perceptions of Career Education in Early Career</b>	
1.	When I first entered the military, someone talked to me about the typical career paths of servicemembers who are in my military occupation.
2.	When I first entered the military, I knew how the occupational branching and assignment process worked in my Service.
3.	When I first entered the military, I met role models from the occupational area I was likely to enter.
<b>Factor 4: Satisfaction with the Assignment Process</b>	
1.	How satisfied are you with the way servicemembers are first assigned to occupations/communities/branches in your Service?
2.	How satisfied are you with the amount of input you are allowed to give in the job assignment process?

**NOTES: This is the response scale for Factors 1–3: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree. This is the response scale for Factor 4: 1 = strongly dissatisfied, 2 = dissatisfied, 3 = neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 4 = satisfied, and 5 = strongly satisfied.**

**Table 3. Average Perceptions of Career Development Resources and Assignment Processes, by Gender and Race/Ethnicity**

	Survey Factor			
	1	2	3	4
<b>Gender</b>				
Female (N = 38)	3.11	3.10	2.92	3.05
Male (N = 215)	3.33	3.13	2.91	3.09
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>				
Nonminority (N = 152)	3.25	3.12	2.87	3.07
Minority (N = 88)	3.45	3.22	3.04	3.13
<b>Total</b>				
Overall average (N = 269)*	3.30	3.13	2.92	3.09

**NOTES:** This is the response scale for Factors 1–3: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree. This is the response scale for Factor 4: 1 = strongly dissatisfied, 2 = dissatisfied, 3 = neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 4 = satisfied, and 5 = strongly satisfied. These are the survey factors: Factor 1: Personal-Service Career Goal Congruency; Factor 2: Satisfaction with Access to Career Planning Tools; Factor 3: Perceptions of Career Education in Early Career; and Factor 4: Satisfaction with the Assignment Process.

\*The overall sample size (N = 269) is larger than the sum of the sample sizes for the female and male groups (overall gender N = 253) and the sum of the sample sizes for the nonminority and minority groups (overall race/ethnicity N = 240) because of missing data for the gender and race/ethnicity variables.

**Notes**

<sup>1</sup>Note that because we had to rely primarily on what the Services provided, the amount of information reported in this issue paper may vary greatly by Service. Also, we did not have access to all of the career information provided to servicemembers by the Services.

<sup>2</sup>We did not find a set of websites that provided career guides for enlisted personnel. However, the Coast Guard does provide some basic descriptions of enlisted ratings, advancement, basic training, pay and benefits, and other topics on a publicly accessible website (*Enlisted opportunities* website, n.d.).

<sup>3</sup>DEOCS assesses factors related to organizational climate, such as military equal opportunity, civilian equal employment opportunity, and organizational effectiveness. DEOCS is administered by the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute and is typically deployed at the request of a military unit commander. It is available 24 hours a day and operates like an employee survey.

<sup>4</sup>The 99 nonresponders did not provide complete responses to the survey items used in this issue paper. Therefore, they were dropped from the analysis.

<sup>5</sup>To support averaging these items into single unified factors, we conducted an exploratory factor analysis, a statistical procedure designed to assess the extent to which the items are measuring a single theme. We also examined the extent to which the factors demonstrated acceptable reliability or internal consistency ( $\alpha$  levels for the four factors ranged from 0.80 to 0.92).

<sup>6</sup>Results by Service branch were not provided because of the small number of respondents from the Air Force, the Coast Guard, and the Marine Corps.

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