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## Frequently Asked Questions (as of 18 July 2023)

### **Q: How was I selected to receive an invitation to apply?**

The Department of Systems Engineering searches for officers with a diverse background. To accomplish this, we use the Army's electronic Total Officer Personnel Management Information System to develop a candidate database. We provide three criteria for the search. We are looking for specific year groups, degree completion type (M.S. or MBA for PhDs), and degree codes. The degree codes include classical engineering degrees, systems engineering, operations research, industrial engineering, decision sciences, math, economics, and business management. Yes, we are interested in business management backgrounds!

### **Q: What are the qualifications for a faculty assignment?**

To be approved for Advanced Civil Schooling and a subsequent USMA faculty assignment, you must be branch-qualified as a Captain. We look for officers with undergraduate degrees in systems engineering, engineering management, operations research, mathematics, traditional engineering (civil, mechanical, environmental, etc.), computer science, management, economics or a closely related field. Our diverse background as a faculty is the strength of our Department as we teach cadets the full spectrum from classical engineering to business management. Our selection criteria include undergraduate academic performance (based on your transcript), military performance (based on letters of recommendation, OER's, etc.), and professional experience.

### **Q: How many applicants typically apply each year?**

We typically receive more than sixty applicants for the Master's program. Only 50% of the applicants fully complete their packets to be competitive for positions. The number of available positions varies from year to year, but we average four rotating Master's positions each year. We typically receive 30 PhD packets each year. About 75% of the PhD applicants fully complete their packets. We average one to two rotating PhD positions per year.

### **Q: What criteria should I use to screen myself for competition?**

If you are interested in joining our Department, then we are interested in you! We are looking for successful officers with strong military and academic backgrounds. Remember that we do not have all of your personal information. The personnel officer does not know your grades or the type of classes that you have taken. The eTopmis screening is not very selective since it filters out candidates by programs of interest and not quality of completion. Therefore, the Advanced Civilian Schooling division at HRC provides some screening criteria.

- Not more than a total of 17 years Active Federal Service (AFS) upon entry into the ACS Program.
- Undergraduate GPA of 2.5 or better.
- The Chief, Advanced Education Programs Branch, may grant waivers on a case-by-case basis for GPA.
- Meet most of the pre-requisites for graduate school. Some pre-requisites can be taken during the summer or in conjunction with the first semester of classes.
- Demonstrated potential for future military service. Officer must not be a risk for promotion to the next higher grade.
- Possess a SECRET Clearance.

### **Q: What OERs and AERs should I post?**

All applicants should post their last five (5) OERs and/or AERs. The selection committee is extremely interested in the progression and performance at different stages of your career.

### **Q: How should I focus my CV/Resume and/or answers for the Essay Questions?**

The Essay Questions and CV/Resume give you an opportunity to provide additional detail about yourself that is not readily apparent in your OERs and ORB. – Personal Interests, Motivations, Professional/Personal Experience, and academic interests/achieves that would assist the Department in achieving its mission.

### **Q: What format should we use for letters of recommendation?**

When you enter your Recommender's Name, Title, Position, and email, the TEACH System will send an email directly to the person, asking them to complete

a digital recommendation. The email includes instructions and a personalized link to the online recommendation form. Note: This option only works if your recommender has a ".mil" account.

If you have a recommender that does not have a ".mil" account, or prefers to send a traditional signed LoR, use a letter or memorandum format. Address the LoRs to the Department Head – Colonel Julia Coxen, Professor and Head of the Department of Systems Engineering. If you are applying to multiple departments, you can address these letters to the broader "Faculty Selection Committee." Scan and email the signed LoRs to the DSE S1 Team ([nicholas.coronato@westpoint.edu](mailto:nicholas.coronato@westpoint.edu) and [madison.oliver@westpoint.edu](mailto:madison.oliver@westpoint.edu)) so they can be added to your Application Packet.

**Q: How many letters of recommendation should I include?**

You may include in your packet as many letters of recommendation as you feel are necessary. Typically, candidates include two to three letters. The selection board encourages candidates to include letters from an instructor or mentor who knew you in school that can speak about your ability to teach at USMA, a current superior who can speak to your performance and someone who can discuss how teaching at USMA will provide a steppingstone for future endeavors. The LORs should complement the rest of your application, highlighting your abilities as an officer and leader, your critical thinking/intellectual abilities, and any experiences/aspects that make you a uniquely qualified officer to serve in our Department.

**Q: I already have a Master's or PhD. Can I still apply?**

If you already have a resident Master's Degree or PhD, it's possible to apply for an additional Master's or PhD depending on how you received funding for your previous degrees. If you self-funded your graduate degree, then it's possible for you to be selected for an ACS-funded Master's or PhD Program. However, if the ACS program funded your current M.S. or PhD, it is very unlikely that they will fund an additional Master's Degree. However, ACS is able to fund a PhD degree, even if they already funded an M.S. degree.

You can also submit an application to be considered for any Direct Hire positions. Personnel management is a dynamic process, which requires direct hire officers from time to time. Unfortunately, it is difficult to predict when we will have an opening for a Direct Hire. We are averaging one direct hire position per year.

When we do have a Direct Hire position to fill, we select from our pool of Direct Hire Applicants. This Direct Hire Selection is a separate process from the ACS Selection Process, so it is important to keep your Application Packet, particularly your Timeline, up to date.

**Q: Can I apply for both the PhD and Master's Program?**

Candidates will be considered for either the PhD or Master's programs, but not both.

**Q: I'm not a USMA graduate. Can I still apply for a faculty position?**

Yes! It is very important that our faculty include officers from all commissioning sources.

**Q: What is the appropriate point in my career timeline to attend graduate school and teach at USMA?**

We send officers to a Master's Degree program in their 6th, 7th, or 8th year of service. Due to pressures caused by Human Resource Command policies, it is becoming increasingly difficult for us to get approval for 8th-year school starts. Thus, being available to start school in the 6th or 7th year is strongly preferred. We select officers for a Doctorate Program to coincide with completion of their MEL 4 requirements. This typically includes officers in their tenth year of service through their fifteenth year of service. The last year group would complete their last year of ADSO in their 27th year of service or mandatory retirement date for LTC.

**Q: What are my options for graduate schooling?**

All our Master's candidates attend graduate school for two years, fully funded by the Army. You may attend the school of your choice, subject to two constraints. First, we ask that you attend a highly rated school. Second, we ask that you apply to three different graduate schools, two of which must be in the Army's "low cost" category.

The good news is that many of the finest engineering graduate programs in the U.S. are low-cost. Faculty attend programs across the country that include but are not limited to Systems Engineering, Engineering Management, Decision Analysis, Systems Design and Management, Operational Research, Industrial Engineering, Mathematics, and Management Science and Engineering.

Candidates can also apply to MBA Programs that include a concentration in Data Science, Decision Science, Operations Management, or a similar analytical concentration.

**Q: Will a USMA faculty assignment damage my career?**

No. Our officers are promoted to Major at a significantly higher rate than the Army as a whole. Many of our faculty alumni are current General Officers. True, a USMA faculty assignment entails five years away from troops. Therefore, serving at the Academy is probably not as career enhancing as, say, a second company command. However, compared with the types of assignments you are most likely to have during this period of your career, a USMA assignment is an excellent broadening assignment at the field grade level. More importantly, the intellectual abilities that you develop, both in graduate school and as a teacher in a world-class engineering program, will serve you very well as an adaptable leader in our technology-rich Army.

**Q: Do I need GRE scores?**

*(Updated July 2023)*

**Yes, include your GRE scores!** Although the latest ACS regulations do not require a current GRE score if your graduate education program does not require it, we encourage you to take the exam until you are satisfied with your score. Higher scores may increase your competitiveness as you apply to a wide variety of graduate programs. Additionally, uploading your GRE score to TEACH could serve to strengthen your application to serve on our faculty. The selection committee values your overall performance in your undergraduate and master's program and use the GRE as an additional indicator of your potential.

**Q: What if I earn a cooperative master's degree from Missouri Science and Technology or another program during my advance course?**

The selection committee looks for officers that excel in their military career and continue their education and your master's degree program reinforces your commitment to excel. However, we still require officers to complete a resident program to qualify as an instructor in the Department of Systems Engineering.

### Q: How should I assemble and upload my packet to TEACH?

Candidates are responsible for compiling and uploading their completed packets to the TEACH system – <https://teach.westpoint.edu/teach/login>. You must complete all required fields and upload the necessary documents. The TEACH systems requires the following inputs: (1) Information and documents required by all West Point departments and organizations ("Common") and (2) DSE-specific information and documents.

1. West Point ("Common") TEACH Application Materials
  - a. Basic Biographical Data
  - b. Contact Information
  - c. Assignment History
  - d. Desired Department and Application Type
  - e. Timeline Considerations
  - f. CFD Intentions (if applicable)
  - g. Career Satisfaction Program Information (if applicable)
  - h. Degrees Completed and Transcripts
  - i. GRE/GMAT Score Scores and Report
  - j. Publications (if applicable)
  - k. Officer Evaluation Reports (OERs)
  - l. Letters of Recommendation (LORs)
  - m. Officer Record Brief (ORB)
  - n. Special Considerations (MACP, EFMP, etc.)
2. DSE-specific TEACH Application Materials
  - a. CV or Resume (optional)
  - b. APFT Scores (optional)
  - c. Desired Board Year

Candidates are responsible for ensuring that documents are uploaded and legible. If you have questions or issues, please contact the S1 team.

### Q: How do I get my USMA transcripts?

The following information should be provided on each request:

- Download, print out, and use this form:  
<http://www.usma.edu/transcript/SitePages/Home.aspx>
- Full name (include maiden or name used while attending USMA)
- Graduation class year
- Social security number

- Current mailing address
- Complete mailing address to which transcripts are to be sent (including zip code)
- Your signature (Due to confidentiality concerns, requests CANNOT be processed without a signature)

Mail or FAX the completed form along with any appropriate fees (see details below) to:

O/Dean AARS (MADN-AARS)  
 ATTN: Graduate Records  
 United States Military Academy  
 Official Mail & Distribution Center  
 646 Swift Road  
 West Point, New York 10996-1905  
 Phone: 845-938-3708

NOTE: The Registrar's office cannot accept requests for transcripts over the telephone and transcripts requests cannot be faxed into or out of the office. Further, transcripts cannot be sent to requestors via e-mail unless military email address is provided on the transcript request. Federal Express transcript requests can be sent by email with the completed form enclosed to [USMATranscripts@westpoint.edu](mailto:USMATranscripts@westpoint.edu).

**Q: How do I contact the registrar's office to get feedback on my transcripts?**

Call 845-938-3708.

**Q: What is the Department's Point of Contact Information?**

If you have questions about your application or the application process, contact the Department Personnel Office, [nicholas.coronato@westpoint.edu](mailto:nicholas.coronato@westpoint.edu) and [madison.oliver@westpoint.edu](mailto:madison.oliver@westpoint.edu).

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