

WEATHER TRAINING AT THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF THE AIR FORCE

by Laurent E. Guimond (1)
Public and Support Services Dept.
Community College of the Air Force
Maxwell AFB, Alabama 36112

The Community College of the Air Force (CCAF) was established on April 1, 1972 by direction of the Secretary of the Air Force. Since that time, Air Training Command's CCAF has burgeoned to the point where it has been cited by the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges as the "largest multi-campus Junior, Technical, or Community College in the nation."

The College has achieved several milestones in its rapid development. In 1975, confident that its educational programs were of top quality, CCAF requested degree-granting authority from the Congress and the President of the United States. This authority was conferred when the President signed Public Law 94-361 on July 14, 1976. A major accomplishment in its short history was achieved on January 1, 1980, when the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools conferred accreditation on the CCAF Educational System.

The Community College of the Air Force is worldwide, with its Administrative Center at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama. The core of the System is the seven AF technical school charter campuses where quality occupational education is provided. However, in its evolution, an increasing number of other Air Force technical, management, and leadership schools became affiliated with CCAF so that at present it has 82 affiliated schools and 14 candidates for affiliation.

This widespread Education System provides two-year, career-relevant, postsecondary study programs to broaden the non-commissioned officer as a technician, manager, and citizen. It is unique in that, despite their geographic mobility, CCAF students are able to advance their educational goals while they pursue their AF occupations. CCAF is proud that since its inception 27,438 students have achieved their goal of an associate in applied science degree.

There are 76 degree programs in the current CCAF catalog. The foundation of the degree program is the technical education offered by the Air Force schools; in most of the programs 30 semester hours of technical education are required. In addition, a core of general education is required to

include courses in communication skills, mathematics, natural sciences, and social sciences and humanities. Management is also stressed as a necessary requirement for the role of the NCO.

A typical degree program offered by CCAF is Weather Technology. The Air Force offers these students exceptional weather training at Chanute Air Force base in Rantoul, Illinois. There are currently over 1100 active registrants and approximately 600 graduates in this degree program.

The basic Weather Specialist course offered at Chanute is primarily in the area of weather observation. It is 54 days in length, for which the student earns 15 semester hours. Later in his career the student attends the 112-day Weather Technician course to prepare him as a forecaster. This student receives thorough grounding in atmospheric physics and dynamics, climatology, synoptic analysis, radar and satellite meteorology, briefing techniques, and operational weather forecasting. The forecaster earns 34 semester hours for this 900-hour course.

Supplementary training is also available at Chanute in Rawinsonde operation, weather radar and scope interpretation, satellite imagery interpretation, and tropical analysis and forecasting, among others. Some students are also selected to attend the Solar Observations Optical Network school at Holloman AFB in New Mexico.

The training which a weather student acquires in the classrooms of the Community College of the Air Force is among the best available in an associate degree program. It is these students who ably staff weather stations throughout the world.

FOOTNOTE

1. Laurent E. Guimond is Program Administrator at the Community College of the Air Force Administrative Center, Montgomery, Alabama, and is responsible for the Weather Technology degree program. Mr. Guimond spent 7 years as an instructor at the Chanute Air Force Base Weather School prior to his current assignment. He received a B.S. in Meteorology from San Jose State University and has also studied at the University of Connecticut and the University of Washington. Mr. Guimond served 8 years in the U.S. Navy, where he specialized in aviation electronics.