



BACKGROUND

On November 8, 2019, the United States Air Force Academy announced the establishment of the Institute for Future Conflict (IFC). The IFC was created to address the rapidly changing political and technological developments that are shaping the twenty-first century security landscape, emphasizing the qualities that Air Force Academy graduates must possess to be the agile and credible warriors needed to anticipate and adapt to rapid change in the character of conflict. To meet these challenges, the IFC was announced to develop unique and pioneering partnerships with the Air Force Academy Foundation (AFAF), MAJCOMs, and academic research centers to “connect cadets, faculty, and staff with cutting-edge research and innovation through exposure to the individuals and organizations shaping the future fight.”

Opening efforts of the IFC build on USAFA’s award-winning competitive academic teams, our outstanding Scholars Program, and the partnerships that have enabled USAFA to become the nation’s top undergraduate-only research university.

CADET ENHANCEMENT

IFC works across mission elements to provide timed education throughout a cadet’s career. All cadets will be exposed through a minimum of their core curriculum, the Cadet Wing’s 47-month training plan, and through human performance development operated by the Athletic Department. Cadets also have the opportunity to participate in research programs, enroll in warfighting minors, and get involved with the Academy Scholar’s Program.

The IFC aims to take a phased approach to its establishment. First, is the creation of the core staff. Currently, the staff consists of a Chief of Innovation, permanent professor, and a research fellow. Second, the IFC will provide resources for cadets and permanent party to pursue high-impact learning opportunities through lectures, scholarships, curriculum development, and research. During the summer of 2020, the IFC partnered with

MIT, MITRE and John Hopkins University to lead a six part “Future Fight Summer Seminar Series.” For calendar year 2021 the IFC will implement a summer Future Fight course that educates cadets about the foundational topics, emerging threats, and technological challenges associated with future conflict.

RESEARCH

The initial academic focus is to support the Academy Scholars Program (ASP). The ASP selects 5% of each class who have demonstrated passion and capability to accomplish a portion of their core curriculum in a cohort and graduate with the distinction of Academy Scholar. Each class of scholars has an opportunity to participate in a themed research in-line with the current National Defense Strategy.

The IFC investigates emerging national security concerns identified in the National Defense Strategy with Combatant Commands, and research organizations to include AFWIC, AFWERX, Checkmate, AFRL, the Krulak Center, and the Modern Warfare Institute at West Point. The IFC, in coordination with the University of Colorado, USNORTHCOM, and the Homeland Defense Institute is creating a Colorado National Security Initiative to investigate emerging national security issues and their impact on future conflict.

FUTURE EFFORTS

The IFC continues to hire more staff to accomplish the institute’s six lines of efforts. Currently, the IFC is under review for approval to be certified as a top-tier Air Force fellowship program for Intermediate Developmental Education (IDE) selects. To expand awareness of future conflict, the IFC will host a Future Conflict symposium during the Fall of each academic year to facilitate thought provoking discussion. Additionally, the IFC, in coordination with the Cadet Wing is developing a Future Conflict summer seminar that engages cadets in the application of Future Conflict concepts.

