Background

The Directorate of Accession Policy in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness has policy oversight for the Department of Defense Enlistment Testing Program (ETP) and Student Testing Program (STP). The *Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery* (ASVAB) is employed in the ETP as a screening assessment with military Service applicants. The ASVAB is also administered in high schools and post-secondary institutions, along with an interest inventory and various other career exploration and planning tools, to provide students with a cost-free, comprehensive career exploration and planning program, the STP. The program also educates students about potential training and career opportunities in the military and provides recruiters with qualified recruiting leads. While the STP is offered to 10th, 11th, and 12th grade high school students, only 11th and 12th grade students can use their STP scores to enlist.

The STP was recently redesigned. Initial changes were implemented in 2002 that included a new three-factor aptitude model of competencies and a new OCCU-Find built upon a competency-based linkage between the ASVAB tests and the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) ratings for the occupations in the Department of Labor's occupational taxonomy, the O*Net. The redesign culminated with the implementation of a new interest inventory, *Find Your Interests* (FYI). The FYI is available as both a paper-and-pencil, self-scoring version and an online version at www.asvabprogram.com. All of the program materials and the two websites (www.asvabprogram.com and www.CareersInTheMilitary.com) were updated in terms of content and functionality prior to the start of the 2006 school year. The revised STP was evaluated by the three primary user groups: students, high school counselors, and military recruiters.

The Recruiter Survey was one of three surveys used in a comprehensive program evaluation of the revised STP. This survey was fielded for the purposes of (a) determining the perceived usefulness and value of the revised program for recruiting and (b) identifying future program needs.

Key Findings

Highlights drawn from each of the major sections of the Recruiter Survey (Recruiter Demographics, Mission Support, Recruiting Process, Program Enhancements, and Student Testing) are presented below.

Recruiter Demographic Highlights

> **Most recruiters were Army, fewest from Air Force** – Among the Service Branches, Army recruiters comprised the largest subpopulation (51%). Air Force personnel comprised 8% of the recruiter population, Naval personnel comprised 21% of the recruiter population, and 19% were Marine Corps recruiters.

> **Most recruiters had one to six years of recruiting duty** – The majority of recruiters had one or more years of recruiting duty (82%) but less than six years of recruiting duty (86%).

Production recruiters were well represented in the sample – The majority of recruiters indicated they were production recruiters, 82% overall.

Production recruiters achieved 16.5 Non-Prior Service (NPS) contacts on average – The majority of recruiters were involved with recruiting NPS contacts (76%). Overall, production recruiters reported recruiting an average of 16.5 NPS contacts in the previous 12 months.

Two in ten NPS contacts participated in the STP – Overall, recruiters estimated that nearly one-fifth (18.6%) of their NPS contact recruits had participated in the STP.

Mission Support Highlights

Overall, fewer recruiters trained to conduct interpretation sessions or did not train at all – The most common areas of training provided to recruiters included administering the STP (42%), helping students explore careers (42%), interpreting scores (41%), and marketing the STP to schools (40%). Relatively fewer recruiters (28%) had received training in conducting an interpretation session. Moreover, slightly less than a third of the recruiters had not received training in any area of the STP (29%).

Overall, more recruiters received training on-the-job – The highest percentage of recruiters received training on-the-job (42%), followed by self-teaching (34%).

Half of all recruiters felt adequately prepared to market the program – Overall, recruiters were split evenly about being adequately prepared to market the program (53% yes, 47% no).

Most received good support for administering, fewer for interpreting – More than half (59%) of the recruiters agreed or strongly agreed that they received good support from the MEPS for administering the ASVAB. Fewer (41%) agreed or strongly agreed that they received this support for interpreting the test.

Less than half of recruiters agreed that the STP was effectively marketed to local schools – Only 42% of recruiters overall agreed or strongly agreed that the STP was effectively marketed to schools in their area. Remaining responses were evenly split with 29% of recruiters disagreeing or strongly disagreeing, or neither agreeing nor disagreeing (29%).

Most recruiters thought more marketing support would make them more productive – The majority of recruiters (58%) thought more marketing support would make them more productive as recruiters. The next most frequently marked response was more training in marketing (45%).

Recruiting Process Highlights

Nearly all recruiters recruited Non Prior Service (NPS) contacts – The vast majority of recruiters (94%) recruited NPS contacts in their current assignments; only 6% did not.

Over two-thirds thought STP had high importance – Over two-thirds (69%) of recruiters thought that the STP had high importance for achieving NPS recruiting goals, which placed it third out of ten lead sources listed.

Over three-quarters thought high school lists/student directories had high importance – Over three-quarters (77%) of recruiters thought that high school lists/student directories had high importance for achieving NPS recruiting goals, which placed it second out of ten lead sources listed.

Recruiters rated referrals from applicants as most important– The vast majority of recruiters (84%) thought that referrals from applicants was of high importance for achieving NPS recruiting goals, which placed it first out of ten lead sources listed. There were very few differences among groups in terms of the level of importance of this lead source.

Over half of recruiters rated local advertising as highly important– The majority of recruiters (58%) thought that local advertising had high importance for achieving NPS recruiting goals, which placed it fourth out of ten lead sources listed. There were very few differences among groups in terms of the level of importance of this lead source.

About half rated national leads as having high importance– Slightly more than half (53%) of recruiters thought that national leads had high importance for achieving NPS recruiting goals, which placed it sixth out of ten lead sources listed.

Half of recruiters rated community colleges as having high importance– Half (50%) of recruiters felt that community colleges had high importance for achieving NPS recruiting goals, which placed it eighth out of ten lead sources listed.

One-third thought 4-year colleges/universities had high importance– Only one-third (33%) of recruiters rated 4-year colleges/universities as highly important for achieving NPS recruiting goals, which placed it tenth out of ten lead sources listed.

Less than half find local merchants/community contacts important– Fewer than half (44%) of recruiters rated local merchants/community contacts as having high importance for achieving NPS recruiting goals, which placed it ninth out of ten lead sources listed.

More than half considered recruiter assistance as highly important– Over half (55%) of recruiters said that recruiter assistance had high importance for achieving NPS recruiting goals, which placed it fifth out of ten lead sources listed.

Half of recruiters considered recruiting station walk-ins as highly important– Slightly more than half (51%) of recruiters rated recruiting station walk-ins as having high importance for achieving NPS recruiting goals, which placed it seventh out of ten lead sources listed.

The STP serves multiple purposes – Overall, recruiters understood the role of the STP to be more than just generating recruitment leads. Nearly two-thirds (65%) of all recruiters cited generating recruitment leads as a primary role of the STP. An equal number (64%) of recruiters cited educating students about military careers as a primary role of the program. These roles were followed closely by the purpose of helping students view the military positively (59%).

The STP serves career-related roles – Overall, recruiters were more likely to perceive the career-related roles of the STP as being primary. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of all recruiters cited encouraging students to discover their interests and skills as a primary role. More than half (55%) of all recruiters also cited promoting student career exploration as a primary role of the program. The role of promoting continuing education after high school was clearly

perceived as being more peripheral or secondary; only 44% of recruiters indicated this role as primary.

Benefits talked about on a regular basis – Nearly three-quarters of all recruiters (71%) regularly talked with potential recruits about the benefits of the STP.

Uniformed test proctors established a connection with students – Overall, nearly three-quarters (71%) of all recruiters agreed or strongly agreed that uniformed personnel proctoring the ASVAB helped to establish a connection with students that could be useful later in recruiting.

Between two-thirds and three-quarters said STP increased qualified leads over short term and long term – Slightly less than three-quarters (72%) of recruiters reported that the STP helped increase the number of qualified leads somewhat or significantly over the next 12 months. Meanwhile, 68% of recruiters said that the STP helped increase the number of leads somewhat or significantly over the next 1-2 years.

Three-quarters believed STP was a valuable source of leads – Slightly less than three-quarters (72%) of recruiters felt that the STP was a valuable source of leads.

Half agreed that the STP provided more leads – Slightly more than half (52%) of recruiters agreed or strongly agreed that the STP provided more leads than they would had gotten otherwise.

Half agreed that the STP increased access to schools – Slightly more than half (53%) of recruiters agreed or strongly agreed that the STP increased access to schools.

Two-thirds agreed that the STP is an effective recruiting tool – About two-thirds (64%) of recruiters agreed or strongly agreed that the STP was an effective recruiting tool.

About half agreed that recruiting would suffer without the STP – Slightly more than half (53%) of recruiters agreed or strongly agreed that their recruiting efforts would suffer without the STP.

More than half agreed that the STP made their job easier – More than half (60%) of recruiters agreed or strongly agreed that the STP made their recruiting job easier.

About two-thirds felt time spent on STP was worth the payoff – Slightly fewer than two-thirds (62%) of recruiters agreed that time spent on the STP was worth the recruiting payoff.

Three-quarters believed STP was helpful for recruiting high school students – About three-quarters (73%) of recruiters felt that, overall, the STP was helpful to their recruiting efforts within the high school population.

Program Enhancements Highlights

Most recruiters familiar with Summary Results Sheet, fewer with *Career Exploration Guide*, and very few with others – The majority of recruiters (59%) were familiar with the Summary Results Sheet. Less than half (46%) were familiar with the *Career Exploration Guide*. Between 15% and 21% of recruiters were familiar with other program components.

Recruiters lacked awareness of STP enhancements, few explored on-line resources –
Only slightly more than a quarter of recruiters said they were made aware of program
enhancements during training (28%) and had explored STP on-line resources (26%). Many
more said they were not made aware of enhancements during training (38%) and had not
explored on-line resources (41%).

**Most recruiters agreed or were neutral about website helpfulness, STP enhancements
making recruiting easier** – The majority of recruiters were either neutral or agreed that STP
websites were helpful to students who were interested in exploring military careers (48%
agreed or strongly agreed; 47% neither agreed nor disagreed). The majority of recruiters
were also either neutral or agreed that STP enhancements would make it easier to recruit
qualified candidates (42% agreed or strongly agreed; 54% neither agreed nor disagreed).

**Most recruiters neutral about STP enhancements increasing student access and student
interest in military** – The majority of recruiters were neutral (55%) toward or agreed or
strongly agreed (41%) with the assertion that STP enhancements would make it easier to
interest students in exploring a military career. Similarly, the majority of recruiters were
neutral (58%) toward or agreed or strongly agreed (37%) with the assertion that STP
enhancements would make it easier to gain access to students.

**Vast majority of recruiters either favorable or neutral toward military career
educational quality**– Almost all recruiters were either favorable or neutral toward the
military career educational quality of new STP (52% said it educates well or very well, 44%
said it educates neither well nor poorly).

Student Testing Highlights

Most were satisfied with the STP – About two-thirds of all recruiters (67%) were satisfied
or somewhat satisfied with the STP.

Most believed the program benefits a wide variety of students – Nearly three-quarters of
all recruiters (72%) agreed or strongly agreed that the STP was beneficial for a wide variety
of students, not just students who were interested in military careers.

**Program association with the military was not widely seen as reducing student
participation** – Less than half of recruiters (43%) believed that the association of the STP
with the military reduces the number of students who participate in the program.

Majority believed the current conflicts made it more difficult to interest participants –
The majority of recruiters agreed or strongly agreed that the current military conflicts in the
world made it difficult to interest students (62%), or schools, counselors, or principals (61%)
in participating in the STP.

Group Comparison Highlights

Recruiters with more knowledge of the program and more prepared to market the STP tended to be more positive about most issues than those with less knowledge and not as prepared –Among recruiters who were aware of the STP enhancements:
- 72% considered encouraging students to discover their interests and skills a primary role of the STP.
- 86% regularly talked with potential recruits about the benefits of the STP.
- 82% felt uniformed personnel proctoring the ASVAB helped to establish a connection with students that could be useful later in recruiting.
- 81% reported the STP increased leads over the short term.
- 79% reported the STP increased leads over the long term.
- 86% reported the STP was helpful for recruiting high school students.
- 85% reported the STP was a valuable source of leads.
- 80% agreed the STP was an effective recruiting tool.
- 76% agreed the STP made their recruiting job easier.
- 80% agreed the time they spent with the STP was worth the recruiting payoff.

A consistent finding was that recruiters who were aware of STP enhancements tended to be very positive about them:
- 84% believed the STP websites were helpful to students who were interested in exploring military careers.
- 81% believed the enhancements that were made to the STP would make it easier to recruit qualified applicants.
- 81% believed the enhancements would make it easier to interest students in exploring a military career than if the enhancements had not been done.
- 75% believed the enhancements would make it easier to gain access to students than if the enhancements had not been done.
- 80% reported the redesigned STP did well or very well in terms of educating students about career options in the military.

Recruiters who were aware of STP enhancements were more satisfied overall with the STP and more positive about the program applying to a wide variety of students.

These findings indicate that increasing recruiter knowledge about these enhancements may help to increase the marketing effectiveness overall.

Training delivered via diverse methods – The different branches of the Military were inconsistent with each other in terms of where training took place. This could imply that to be effective, training programs may need to be tailored for each Service Branch. It could also imply that there may be ways to standardize training, especially in ways that borrow best practices from each Service.