

Competency #4

Create models using innovative methods in their professional area that are responsive to the needs of the different contexts, levels, quality criteria and are a recognized contribution in institutional improvements and the environment.

Developing abilities in the areas of strategic planning and decision-making are crucial aptitudes an administrator ought to have. While in this program, the cohort built up these aptitudes by visiting various organizations to encounter the organizations, to acquaint with their different strategic planning processes, to participate in their basic leadership forms and to use the apparatuses we procured for strategic planning and leadership. One such organization visited was the United States Military Academy, at West Point, in New York, USA.



During the Revolutionary War, West Point was every general's dream location. This army outpost on the Hudson River, with its waterways was the primary means of transportation. There were mainly foot paths, the roads were in very poor condition. There were only a couple options for travelling to the outpost. It was a "two-way invasion route." Battle ships from the enemy were non-existent. There was a 15-mile barrier trail, which accommodated only small unit movements



and that could easily be blocked, in order to keep out intruders. The outpost's narrow S-shaped inlet was key to engaging the enemy with cannon from the shore.

Today, this pristine acreage housed the United States Military Academy (USMA/West Point), a unique military college that trains young people to be exceptional leaders in military service. The Academy is funded by a branch of the Federal Government—the Department of Defense; as such, the Academy is very well funded. All faculty and staff are employees of the Federal Government. The buildings and grounds with its manicured lawns; are well maintained. Buildings are made of mostly brick and can withstand harsh atmospheric conditions. Cadets from all over the world endeavor to gain entrance to the USMA (West Point).

A REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF THE UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY (WEST POINT) STRATEGIC PLAN

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Dr. Stephen Pilgrim
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LOCATION—positioned on the Hudson River, between Albany, the Capital and Manhattan, the “Financial Capital of the World,” in New York, is 16,000 acres of pristine real estate, the “most strategic position in America” is the United States Military Academy (USMA), aka West Point. In 1778, General Brigadier Samuel Holden Parsons along with his brigade of soldiers crossed on the ice into the plain at West Point and they never left.

West Point is strategically perched on the hills overlooking the Hudson River; this location advantage gave the United States Army a sharp lookout point and a fortified position in the Revolutionary War. The site was used as a fort because of its strategic high ground overlooking the Hudson River. The inlet (the narrowing) of the Hudson River just a few miles before entering the campus of this military outpost; was a war advantage—no enemy vessel dared to come close enough for attack without being seen. The logistic benefit of West Point’s location gave the military leaders an extraordinary advantage. The hilly terrain, especially in the winter, frustrated the enemy’s plan for attack. With the waterways, the military was able to use barges to transport goods from West Point to ports in the Midwest. They transported iron ore, which was plentiful in the nearby Orange County, and wood for coal from the hills, down the Hudson River to ports and then transferred onto trains for their various destinations.

STRATEGIC CAPABILITIES—During the Revolutionary War, West Point was every general’s dream location. This army outpost on the Hudson River, with its waterways was the primary means of transportation. There were mainly foot paths, the roads were in very poor condition. There were only a couple options for travelling to the outpost. It was a “two-way invasion route.” Battle ships from the enemy were non-existent. There was a 15-mile barrier trail, which accommodated only small unit movements and that could easily be blocked, in order to keep out intruders. The outpost’s narrow S-shaped inlet was key to engaging the enemy with cannon from the shore.

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Using the PESTEL framework, an analysis of the factors that would affect or influence USMA, determined the following:

Political factors—the USMA is a unique entity in all respects. The United States is best known and respected, and sometimes feared, for its military might. The United States has three branches of government, Executive, Legislative, and Judicial. There are also two major political parties, Republican and Democratic. It is unlikely that any branch of government or any of the major political parties would enact laws that would have an adverse effect on the military. Since USMA trains and place commissioned officers for the Army; and since USMA is under the direct supervision of the Army, political forces will do all they can to keep the USMA in order to keep the military strong and feared. All branches of the US Government support the military.

As it relates to ***Economic factors***—the USMA is responsible for training and providing the United States Army with skilled, cultured, commissioned Second Lieutenant Officers. Their skills and leadership roles are pivotal to the building of military might. Also, since the United States boasts of having the “brightest and the best,” even if the poor do not have food, brains and guns are “necessary” for our defense.

Social factors—“I’m proud to be an American...,” is the cultural moto of most, if not all Americans. Everyone is proud of the Flag, we are proud of our military and everything associated with the military. We have the Flag on our homes, on our school buildings, in our churches, in our legislative halls, and basically, all around us. We honor our service men and women; and take much pride in our Military. Since USMA is a vital part of military preparation, we pride ourselves in the USMA (West Point); and I do not see that changing anytime soon.

Technological factors—the world relies on technology. We need technology to operate the most basic things. The military needs technology for communicating and disseminating information. USMA trains cadets to be outstanding leaders in the military. One cannot imagine any institution of higher education without technology. The Military needs technology to use tanks, build bombs, lead strategically, and operate command centers.

Environmental factors—in 1779, construction of various buildings started on the site. The Academy was founded in 1802 with its only mission to train young men, and since 1976, young women to be leaders of character to serve as commissioned officers for the United States Army. USMA operates in the national security environment where goals and objectives are set to promote the well-being of the United States and its interests at home and abroad. It is currently a highly competitive educational institution, with over 4,300 cadets. Their classes each day

center on discussions of topics and writing to ensure that they become masters at critical thinking; thereby, fulfilling the Academy's goal to train, educate and inspire cadets to become leaders of character committed to providing excellent military service to the United States of America.

Over the years, the Academy's graduates have proven themselves culturally clever in their adaptability. They are able to assimilate with high degree of professionalism in regards to getting along with our allies in order to get the job done. Their leadership skills covers a wide spectrum in providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief around the globe. The Academy's mantra is, "Leadership, Honor, Duty and Country." The Academy's strategic guidance comes from the Department of Defense. USMA competes in a market with other four-year colleges and universities. It is accredited by three agencies—Higher Education, Engineering and Athletics—the three areas that cadets of the Academy focus on. All the cadets take basically, the same courses—preparing them to be educated, cultured, creative, critical thinkers and leaders. The Academy graduates approximately 1000 cadets each year, who are change agents for the Army.

Mission Command, a form of shared governance, is top down at the USMA. The Superintendent sets high-level goals, and faculty, staff and cadets execute those initiatives to achieve those goals. Self-sufficiency is a large part of survival in military service. Surviving on little is their modus operandi (MO); therefore, conservation on energy, waste disposal and all the other environmentally friendly norms are all part of the instruction given to all cadets at the Academy—take care of the environment, and the environment will take care of you.

Legal factors—the USMA like every other institution, has to abide by the laws governing our country. I would think, even more so. It is unlikely; however, that the Legislative, Executive, and Judicial branches of our government would enact any law that would adversely affect the USMA.

SWOT ANALYSIS—A tool that helps an organization to strategically plan and recognize the factors that will enable it to build and sustain itself. This framework tool helps to evaluate four distinct areas as it relates to strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats—that is, how the external environment influenced USMA. The analysis revealed that USMA has the following **Strengths**:

- Excellent leadership institute—provides innovative and relevant training material and resources that enable leaders of the future to address emerging opportunities and challenges.
- USMA location—the strategic location of the Academy, provides logistic capabilities to combat enemy intrusion, especially during the Revolutionary War. It is nestled in the hills of Highland, New York, high above the Hudson River. Its scenic views are second-to-none.
- Free high quality education—cadets' education is free, with a contract to serve in the military after graduation. All graduates enter military service as officers.
- Very competitive entrance standards—over 17,000 applicants each year, but only about 1,100 are accepted and enrolled. The cadets have to be leaders in their communities and have other recommendations from highly placed individuals, such as, a Member of Congress.
- The Academy is financially stable. Their funding comes from the Department of Defense.
- The regimental lifestyle—everything done in order and on time. This training instills in young men and women the value of time and other resources.
- Family-oriented atmosphere.
- Brilliant past—many famous leaders were cadets at the Academy; among past Generals, Rhodes Scholars, etc.,—the name sells.
- Infrastructure—the buildings at the Academy are very strong and well maintained and the faculty, staff, administrators and students are of excellent quality.

Weaknesses include:

- Not requiring attendance to worship services. In years past, it was mandatory for cadets to attend chapel services. That, I believe, instilled in the young the recognition that God is. Today, they believe that all things are done through their own strengths.
- Not inclusive enough. There are not many minority students enrolled in the Academy. The entrance requirements are very selective; after prospective cadets meet curricular and extra-curricular qualifications; they still need recommendation from some highly-placed military personnel or politicians. There is a need for a more diverse cadet

population, faculty and staff, because the Army itself is made up of people from diverse cultures, therefore, the commissioned officers should be diverse also.

- Too much emphasis placed on competitive sports. I can understand that cadets must be in tip-top physical condition, however great emphasis is placed on competitive sports.

The Academy also presents some areas of **Opportunities**. They include:

- The USMA is a known all over the world for its high standard of education. In order to maintain its place, it needs to find ways to maintain its excellence. USMA need to a have more diverse student, faculty and staff population.
- The Academy must endeavor to do more outreach to the community. They can do so by having cadets visit local community centers and speak with youth groups regarding leadership, honor and commitment.
- Recruit and develop young men and women from diverse cultures and train as exceptional change agents of our world.
- They can also collaborate with their sister institutions to offer cross training to cadets—blue ocean thinking.

USMA faces **Threats**, which include:

- Financial viability—like many institutions of higher education; the USMA, although financed by the Department of Defense, a branch of the Federal Government, may also see cuts in operation budgets. With higher education costs continuing to rise, and budgets reducing, maintaining standards of excellence will not be easy.

INDUSTRY ANALYSIS—the USMA is an institution of higher military education. Using Porter’s five forces in an effort to understand the forces that shape competition within this industry, the threat of new entrants, threat of substitutes, bargaining power of suppliers, bargaining power of customers and inter-firm rivalry, the following was noted:

- ***Threat of new entrants*** is low. To establish a military academy like West Point is almost impossible from a private sector perspective. The Academy is very competitive as far as students wanting to enter the Academy is concerned.

- The *threat of substitutes* is low also. Graduates from the USMA are employed as commissioned officers as soon as they leave the academy. There is no substitution for that.
- The *bargaining power of suppliers* is very low. Cadets are bending over backwards to be accepted into the Academy. Students from all over the world apply to the academy every year, with only a small six (6) percentage of the applicant pool accepted into the Academy.
- The *bargaining power of customers* is also low. There are many more cadets seeking entrance than the Academy have space for; therefore, prospective cadets do not really have much, if any, bargaining power.
- *Inter-firm rivalry* maybe on the low to moderate spectrum. There are five military academies in the United States; one for each branch of military service—USMA at West Point, USNA (Navel), USAFA (Air force), USCGA (Coast Guard) and the USMMA (Merchant Marine). Although all these branches serve their unique purposes, cadets can cross over to other branches. For example, the 1,000 midshipmen graduated from the Naval Academy each year, are all commissioned ensigns or they can cross over as Second Lieutenants in the Marine Corps. In addition, graduates can be cross-commissioned to other branches of the service.

COMPETITOR ANALYSIS—the USMA is a four-year coeducational institution that grants Bachelor of Science degrees that include training in “military leadership performance, and mandatory participation in competitive athletics. Cadets are required to adhere to the Cadet Honor Code, which states, “a cadet will not lie, cheat, steal, or tolerate those who do.” The Academy’s academics are on par with four-year colleges/universities that grant Bachelor of Science degrees. However, cadets receive specialized training for leadership roles in the Armed Forces, while other like institutions, trained students for service everywhere. Although students who graduate from other institutions, such Yale or Harvard, can go into the Service as officers, they still would need to go through military training, which the graduates of West Point go through as part of their educational training.

The USMA competition also comes from the other branches of military education. They include; USNA (United States Naval Academy), USAFA (United States Air Force Academy, USCGA (United States Coast Guard Academy) and the USMMA (United States Merchant

Marine Academy). These four other academies, prepare cadets for service in their respective branches. They also have similar entrance requirements and are as competitive (*See All Academies Enrollment chart on page 9*).

The USMA, the USNA, and the USAFA are highly competitive and all require prospective cadets to go through prequalification processes before application forms are given. However, less students seem to go through the application processes to enter USCGA and the USMMA than the other academies. The application processes for the Academies are more stringent than that of Yale University. For example, Yale applicants go through the Common Application process—no special preference given to one student over another, if they both meet the requirements. However, the military academies sift out prospective students before they can even apply. The USMA and the other Academies, except for the USMMA, beat the competition by offering stipend to cadets, free room and board, free tuition and a guaranteed job after graduation. While graduates from other four-year institutions can also enter the Army as officers, West Point graduates have the edge, because of their physical and tactical training.

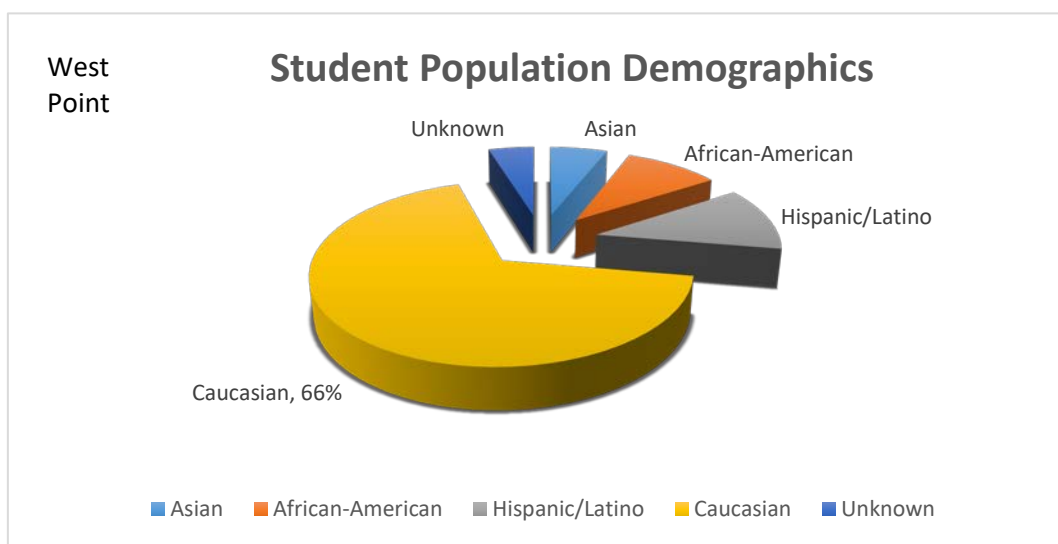
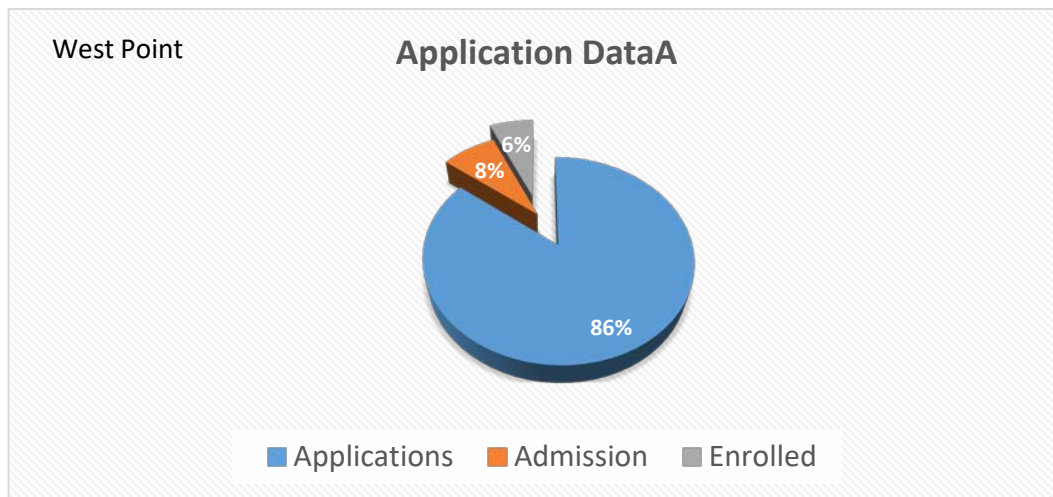
MARKET SEGMENTATION ANALYSIS—the USMA is a segment in academia that provides specialized training for young men and women to serve as commissioned officers or Second Lieutenants in the Army. The Academy serve a special sector of the Armed Forces—whereby, the Army is guaranteed to have at least one thousand officers, between the ages of 20 and 34 years old to join its ranks each year, due to its reciprocity program—free tuition for five to eight years of service.

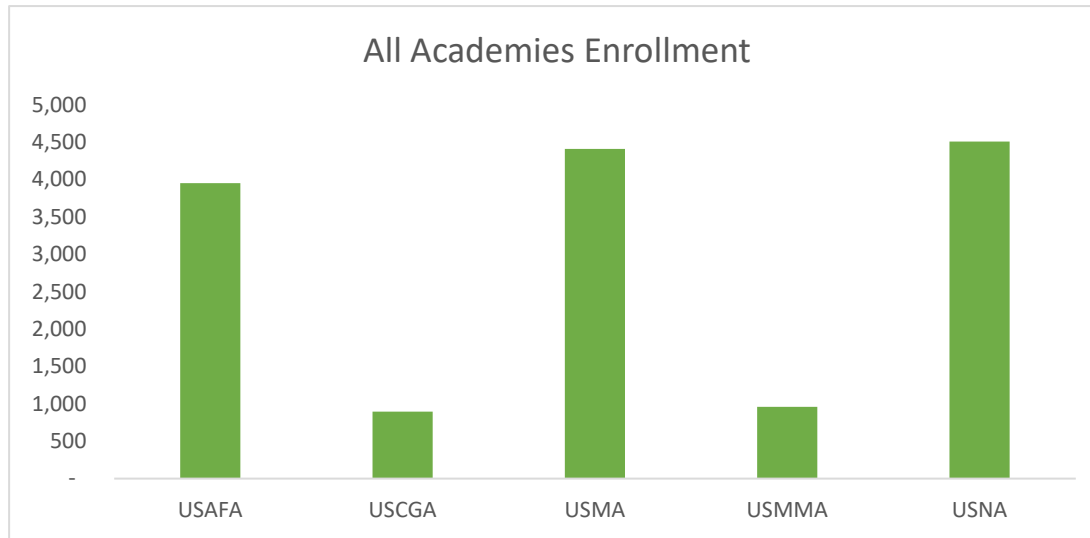
MARKET STRATEGY ANALYSIS—West Point is not easily duplicated by other civilian institutions, in that; it provides specialized training to fulfil the needs of the Armed Forces only. Service men and women, after they have completed their mandatory years of service, if they chose, can seek leadership roles in civilian organizations or other branches of government. I believe West Point can further extend itself by collaborating with its sister academies to provide cross training to their cadets. For example, they could have the cadets take training in the Air Force Academy or Naval Academy so that graduates could be multifunctional in offering leadership. This could be a Blue Ocean strategy.

SUMMARY—the United States Military Academy (West Point) is a unique coeducational institution that is one of the best of its kind. The institution trains young men and women to serve the Army as brilliant commissioned officers. Entrance into the Academy is very

competitive with only about 6% of its applicants accepted each year. The school needs to be more diverse in its student, faculty, staff and administration populations. Although it serves a distinctive educational purpose, I believe that there are Blue Ocean opportunities the Academy can explore. For example, there are four other academies within the Military, instead of just training people for the Army, West Point could probably look at giving cadets a combination training in the Navy, and the Air force. As such, by collaborating with those other academies, the USMA would graduate top notch officers who could command army squads, along with the Navy and the Air force—where three people are currently needed, there would only be a need for one brilliant multifunctional officer.

CHARTS AND GRAPHS





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