

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-14-216](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

DOD's colleges and universities that provide JPME, including their research institutions, are intended to develop military personnel throughout their careers by broadening them intellectually and fostering collaboration across the military services. JPME research institutions generally provide studies and analysis research that can support academic programs or inform DOD policymakers.

The National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2013 mandated GAO to review JPME research institutions. GAO's report (1) describes how JPME research institutions have changed in number, funding, and size; (2) evaluates the extent to which DOD assesses JPME research institution performance; and (3) evaluates the extent to which DOD coordinates the research requests of these and other DOD-funded research organizations. GAO identified and examined the 20 JPME research institutions that conduct research as their primary mission and have dedicated personnel. GAO reviewed DOD documents and interviewed officials on changes at the 20 institutions and how they are overseen, as well as the processes to coordinate their research activities and those of 14 other DOD-funded research organizations GAO determined conduct research activities.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOD take actions to define the role of JPME research institutions, assign responsibilities for assessing performance, and establish a mechanism to coordinate studies and analysis research requests. DOD concurred with the recommendations.

View [GAO-14-216](#). For more information, contact Johana Ayers at (202) 512-5741 or ayersj@gao.gov.

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JOINT PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION

Opportunities Exist for Greater Oversight and Coordination of Associated Research Institutions

What GAO Found

Joint Professional Military Education (JPME) research institutions, particularly at the National Defense University, experienced growth in number, funding, and size in terms of staffing levels from fiscal year (FY) 2007 through FY 2011, but the number of institutions as well as funding and staffing levels declined over the past 2 years. For example, total funding for JPME research institutions increased from \$30.8 million in FY 2007 to \$47.7 million in FY 2011, but subsequently decreased to \$40.6 million in FY 2013. GAO identified several factors that contributed to these institutions' growth, including increases in funding provided by outside organizations for research and the creation of new research institutions. Department of Defense (DOD) officials reported that DOD-wide budget reductions, including the effects of sequestration, contributed to decreases in the number, size, and funding for JPME research institutions.

The extent to which DOD can assess the performance of JPME research institutions is limited by the lack of a comprehensive framework to systematically assess their performance in meeting professional military education and other departmental goals and objectives. JPME colleges and universities have not consistently established measurable goals or objectives linked with performance metrics for their associated research institutions. Best practices state that achieving results in government requires a framework with measurable goals and objectives and metrics to assess progress. Further, oversight mechanisms for the colleges and universities, such as accreditation processes, focus on the quality of JPME academic programs and not on the research institutions' performance. There is no DOD-wide guidance that addresses the intended role of the research institutions in supporting JPME or other departmental goals, or assigns responsibilities for conducting reviews of them, leaving the department without a basis to assess the institutions' stated mission and actual performance against planned or expected results. Therefore, DOD does not have a basis to assess the institutions' missions and performance against expected results, as called for by best practices. Without measurable goals and objectives linked with performance metrics, and clear guidance on their intended roles and assignment of oversight responsibilities, DOD cannot ensure JPME research institutions are effectively accomplishing their missions.

DOD has not established mechanisms to coordinate requests for research conducted by JPME research institutions and other DOD-funded research organizations because there is no requirement to do so. Although many of these organizations have missions to conduct research in similar topic areas, DOD uses a variety of processes to request studies and analysis research. Specifically, offices within the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the military departments each have their own separate internal processes to manage research requests and do not participate in one another's processes. Best practices on managing for results state that organizations involved in similar missions should coordinate and share information to avoid unnecessary duplication of work. At a time of constrained budgets, fragmentation in DOD's approach to managing its research requests across the department exposes DOD to the risk of potential overlap of studies and analysis research.