



By Justin Magula

Editor's Note: This post is the last entry in the FTGN Army Broadening Series that we ran from March 15 to April 02, 2021 and is intended to capstone the different facets that were presented throughout. Through this series, our hope is that we have equipped you with the knowledge and tools to make informed decisions when deciding your future broadening

assignment.

A few years ago, I came to a career crossroads. Like many other junior Army officers, I wanted to explore other options after completing my key development assignment as a captain. I finally chose to change career paths after conducting extensive research. In the process, I learned a lot about the different career choices that the Army affords its officers.

Army officers can follow a few general career paths. Aside from following jobs in their current branch, officers can switch to a functional area or pursue broadening assignments. However, it is important to note pursuing these options can have significant personal and professional implications.

The Army offers many excellent opportunities, but officers do not always know what is available. It can be challenging to find and sort through the wealth of information. The many options can easily overwhelm junior officers as they shape their future career paths.

For those wondering where to begin, fear not!

This guide will help prospective candidates understand the different types of broadening assignments. It will also provide advice about finding more information for those preparing to make this big decision.

What is a Broadening Assignment?

When people hear the term “broadening assignment,” they usually think of some prestigious and exciting experience. There are plenty of those, but there are also many more that are less well known.

No universal approach fits every officer. They can pursue broadening assignments at

various points during their careers yet still balance broadening and operational positions. As officers progress through their careers, they must complete specific key developmental jobs to remain competitive for promotion.

[Broadening assignments](#) allow officers to expand their capabilities and understanding through experiences in and outside of the Army. Through experiences or education, officers immerse themselves in different organizational cultures and environments. By doing so, the Army develops its officers' ability to operate and learn outside of their perspectives. Ultimately, broadening assignments improve individual officers and benefit the Army.

Broadening assignments generally fall into one of the five categories listed below, but these may not cover all possibilities.

1. Functional, Tactical, or Institutional

This category includes positions in Army units at various echelons. Functional and tactical broadening provides a developmental opportunity related to an officer's branch, such as assignments to the [75th Ranger Regiment](#) or other [Special Mission Units](#). Officers can serve on an operational or strategic staff, such as an [Army Service Component Command](#). Institutional broadening assignments are usually not associated with an officer's branch. These billets, often in the generating force, give officers a greater understanding of the Army. [Combat Training Centers](#), [Instructor positions](#), [Human Resources Command](#), or [Army Commands](#) fall into this category.

2. Scholastic and Civilian Enterprise

Officers pursuing assignments in this category can attend civilian institutions, work with industry, or contribute to Army research and education. Many of the education

opportunities include specific follow-on assignments as part of the program. One example is the Joint Chiefs of Staff or Army Staff Internships, where members attend [Georgetown University](#) and then complete a tour on one of these staffs.

Other programs provide officers with the ability to attend graduate school and immediately return to the operating force. The [MG James Wright MBA](#) program, [Olmstead Scholars](#) program, [Downing Scholars](#) program, and the Performance [Based Graduate School Incentive Program](#) are in this category. [West Point](#) rotating faculty attend top tier graduate schools before completing a teaching assignment at the Academy.

Officers can also work with a [civilian industry](#) under the [Training With Industry](#) program. In some broadening assignments, officers conduct research for the Army or contribute to officer education. Some examples include the [Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies Fellowship](#), the [George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies Fellowship](#), and the [Rand Arroyo Center Fellowship](#).

3. Joint or Multinational

Officers can complete tours outside of the Army yet still serve in a military capacity such as joint or multinational positions. The [Under Secretary of Defense](#) for Personnel and Readiness approves joint duty assignment list (JDAL) billets. These positions are often nominative and are usually at the operational and strategic levels. To become a general officer, officers must [complete joint assignments](#) and become [joint qualified](#). Chairman of the Joint Chiefs' instruction [1300.05B](#) outlines qualifications for joint service. The Chairman recently updated this policy. Now, officers are [eligible for joint duty assignment credit](#) after accumulating 24 months, points, or a combination of both. Some joint and multinational assignments include duty at the [Joint Staff](#), [Joint Task Force](#) staffs, [NATO](#), [Geographic Combatant Commands](#), or foreign military assignments.

4. **Interagency or Intergovernmental**

Not all officer positions are in the U.S. military. Some fall outside the Department of Defense, either with other U.S. Government agencies or partner nation governments. These assignments are more politically or policy-oriented than traditional jobs. Some academic programs also fall into this category, like the Congressional Fellowship. In this program, officers complete a [Master's of Professional Studies](#) in Legislative Affairs from GWU. Afterward, they serve on a congressional staff and then as an intern on the Army or joint staff in a legislative duty position. Officers can apply to work at interagency positions through the [Command and General Staff College Interagency Fellowship](#). This fellowship consists of twenty-eight interagency partners, including the [National Security Agency](#), the [Federal Aviation Administration](#), the [Central Intelligence Agency](#), and the [Federal Bureau of Investigation](#).

5. **Cross-Component**

Some Army positions exist outside the active component. Active Component officers can serve in the Army National Guard or U.S. Army Reserve and vice versa. These assignments expand an officer's understanding of the total Army's capabilities, training, and Manning.

Where to Look for Information

The Army does not advertise these opportunities well. What little info is available can often be hard to find. There is no comprehensive list of all potential officer broadening assignments. Furthermore, junior officers have no first-hand experience and rely on others to share their experiences. Even so, there is some important information available to officers.

[Department of the Army Pamphlet 600-3](#) (DA PAM) contains foundational guidance about

officer career development. Officers interested in a broadening assignment should first read this pamphlet. [Milsuite](#) provides more specific advice. It is tailored for each branch to help officers map their careers and stay abreast of the latest opportunities.

Many broadening assignments require officers to submit applications. The Army Human Resources Command (HRC) [Broadening Opportunity Program](#) (BOP) outlines these application requirements, along with detailed information about specific programs. Other resources, like [AIM 2.0](#) and [S1 Net](#), routinely announce additional opportunities.

Even with these resources, officers will still require guidance and mentorship to make informed decisions. After researching their available options, officers should discuss their proposals with their HRC assignment officer. This dialogue helps officers understand their options and identify any application requirements. Doing so allows them to backward plan to meet specific timelines and recognize their decision's potential career implications.

Mentors and commanders can also provide vital career guidance. Even if they do not have direct experience with an officer's desired assignment, they can most likely put you in touch with someone who does. Some good leaders might host a [leader development seminar](#) to help junior officers, but in my experience, most will not.

Broadening programs and units are happy to share information with prospective candidates. Most list their contact info publicly. Prospective candidates should call them and ask questions.

Pursuing a broadening assignment is a significant decision. Officers must explore their options, through research and dialogue, to make an informed choice. Doing so will allow them to pursue a path that will offer personal and professional rewards. This guide only serves as an initial entry point. I hope others will share their unique experiences and add to this important conversation.

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