“Measure what can be measured and make measurable that which cannot be measured.”
—attributed to Galileo Galilei

The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), which has seen a decade of growth in expenditures, now spends about $400 billion annually on acquiring systems and services, in roughly equal measures for each. The next decade will likely see a marked reduction in defense acquisition spending, as DoD leadership is aiming to save 2–3 percent annually through productivity enhancements and greater efficiencies. To realize these savings, DoD must first know what is being saved and how to measure it. But this is not simply a question of establishing some numerical target and comparing output against it. As Frank Kendall, Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics said of a recent personnel initiative, “We are not measuring performance in terms of pure numbers...We want quality and we want the right kinds of people” (Brodsky, 2010, p. 2).

The idea of adopting broader ways of assessing defense acquisition is at the heart of this issue's theme, “Measuring Programs and Progress.” Chiang H. Ren, Col Stephen Busch, USAF (Ret.), and Matthew Prebble begin their discussion by arguing for a “try-before-fly” approach to automated information system programs, by creating a soft start period to evaluate materiel solution concepts before committing to a Materiel Development Decision. Rick S. Thomas, N. Clark Capshaw, and Paul M. Franken examine how a spectrum of testing activities was used to assess, over a period of time, the evolutionary progress of a system-of-systems, to build up an integrated evaluation of its performance.

Of course, evaluating progress requires understanding which critical factors must be evaluated, as Steve Geary, Scott Koster, Wesley S. Randall, and Jeffrey J. Haynie explain in their article on Life Cycle Support Strategies. Ismail Cicek and Capt Gary S. Beisner, USAF, describe how they were able to save program time and money by exploring new test and analyses methods to assess aeromedical equipment for safety certification. The final article by Alan Haggerty and Roy Wood describes how a little-known company at the beginning of World War II (WWII) quickly developed the renowned P-51 Mustang by pulling together a series of technological developments into a well-integrated system; with no time for systematic measurement and testing, the engineers relied on their collective lifetimes of experience to field a
capability that ultimately helped win the war.

By any measure, today’s acquisition workforce is as experienced and as motivated as their forerunners in WWII. Those qualities will be needed in the years to come as we rise to the challenge of “doing more without more” in equal measure.

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REFERENCE

WE ARE CHANGING OUR NAME!

Our name will officially change from the Defense Acquisition Review Journal to the Defense Acquisition Research Journal effective January 2011—Issue 57. Although the acronym ARJ will remain the same, the name change is being implemented to reflect an overall commitment to refocus the Defense Acquisition University’s research efforts on strategic alignment to meet the requirements of the Defense Acquisition Workforce.

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