



Preparing Presidential Appointees for Leadership: A History
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Foreword

The Council for Excellence in Government organized orientation leadership programs for top Presidential Appointees and White House staff at the request of the Bill Clinton and George W. Bush administrations. We welcomed these assignments as critically important to our mission of improving the performance and accountability of government. As a reference for future Presidents, we have also documented the organized efforts of previous administrations to assist appointees, at or near the beginning of their service, to perform their jobs as effectively as possible.

As this history makes evident, eight of the ten U.S. Presidents between 1953 and 2004 - including the last six - organized a variety of projects to prepare their high-level political appointees for the operational challenges of leadership. In 2000, for the first time, Congress recognized the value of ongoing appointee orientation by authorizing this activity under the Transition Act of 2000 and appropriating funds for its design and implementation.

It is important to understand that past orientation efforts differed widely in scope, content, durability and location. There was little carry-over or continuity from one administration to another. But they show that appointee preparation has become a fixture on the agendas of successive administrations. This is an important and positive development. Appointees, after all, are the women and men entrusted not only with the day-to-day political leadership of the executive branch but also with the responsibility for the management and performance of government departments and agencies.

The Council for Excellence in Government welcomes the emergence of leadership preparation for Presidential appointees as a permanent institution under White House direction. We are privileged to play a role in it and - with the assistance of John H. Trattner - to have produced this history of the effort.

Patricia McGinnis
President and CEO

Introduction

Covering the period 1953-2004, this history addresses the appointee orientation programs of each administration that organized and carried them out, or in which there was some attempt to do so. Knowledge of how administrations have tackled that necessary task—what happened, what worked, what didn't work—will serve as a useful resource for those to follow.

The concept of leadership preparation enjoyed the endorsement of expert observers and senior officials inside and outside government throughout the modern era. The value of orientation was recognized even within two administrations that for various reasons never actually implemented organized or continuing orientation. One of many expressions of this advocacy is a 1960 memo written by Bradley Patterson when he was deputy secretary to the cabinet in the Eisenhower White House, assisting in preparations for transition to the Kennedy administration. Asserting that the Kennedy White House should conduct orientation for new political appointees, he said that “no one should make the mistake of overestimating how much new cabinet members really know about government; even John Foster Dulles thought the CIA was a part of the Department of State.”¹

I. Summary of Key Findings

Origin. The notion of appointee preparation seems to have had in-house roots in three administrations (Eisenhower, Johnson, Ford). In two other cases, orientation programs were adopted from the previous administration (Carter) or established to emulate a preceding program (George H.W. Bush). Outside suggestion or advocacy played at least partial roles in generating the orientation programs of the Reagan and Clinton administrations. In 2000, Congress institutionalized appointee orientation by authorizing and funding it under the Transition Act of 2000.

Presidential role. Even though many of these Presidents did not personally take a part in the preparation of their appointees for service, there is unanimity that such a role is imperative. Even without substantive orientation, a quick handshake and photo with the President at the beginning of each appointee's service - a practice followed in the Reagan administration - is deemed invaluable.

Substantive scope and content. Half a dozen subject areas were central to all of the programs and were nearly always the focus of speaker and panel presentations. They were: (1) the White House and the President's executive office - operations, relationships with agencies, and coordination on policy decisions; (2) the budget and OMB; (3) legislative affairs and dealing with the Congress; (4) media relations; (5) the career civil service; and (6) ethics. Other areas were covered in briefing books, live presentations, or both: economic and domestic policy development, managing for results, the National Security Council, interest groups, public trust, Presidential personnel, and the U.S. Constitution. Case studies were used in the programs of two administrations.

Participants. As practiced, appointee orientation focused mainly on subcabinet officials in the PAS category - appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate - at the levels between deputy secretary and assistant secretary in cabinet departments and their equivalents in other executive agencies. Though some programs included cabinet officials and White House staff, their attendance was infrequent. Some administrations scheduled separate orientation for Schedule C appointees. Selection for the program was normally the responsibility of the departments and agencies, with no detectable mandate as to which operational and functional areas were to receive priority. Although the lists of those designated in each administration are not available, interviews and research done for this history support the conclusion that participants in a given briefing represented a cross-section of the cabinet departments. In general, regulatory agencies were not represented; two administrations deliberately excluded them.

Design and management. Logically enough, the history of program design and management shows a pattern similar to that of program origin. Except for the Reagan, Clinton and George W. Bush administrations, it was exclusively senior staff in the White House and/or OPM who decided on structure and content; the programs ran under their supervision and sometimes with their participation. The Reagan, Clinton and George W. Bush administrations selected outside organizations to assist in the design and delivery of programs for appointees.

Speakers and panelists. Again, with the exception of the Reagan, Clinton and the George W. Bush administrations, the “faculty” for leadership orientation was confined to senior White House staff, agency heads, administration spokespeople, and an occasional member of the Congress. In the second Clinton administration and the first George W. Bush administration, the Council for Excellence in Government arranged speakers and panelists. In the George W. Bush administration, former cabinet members and representatives from state and local government were also invited to lead discussions. In the second Clinton term speakers and panelists included senior White House staff, agency heads, former appointees, members of the Congress and the media, attorneys, and authors. This was also the only bipartisan mix of presenters offered in any orientation program. During parts of the two Reagan administrations, Kennedy School of Government faculty led sessions centered on case studies.

Format. This varied, from briefings for appointees by their individual agencies; to plenary sessions featuring both single briefers and panels; to plenary sessions combined with multiple break-out discussion groups. Most orientation was interactive; presentations plus questions and discussion.

Location. Four administrations conducted their orientation programs in the White House (including the Eisenhower Executive Office Building). Two programs combined White House premises with other locations. One took place at OPM, and one was the responsibility of individual agencies.

Evaluation. Formal evaluation surveys of participating appointees took place in connection with orientation programs in the second Reagan, Bush, second Clinton, and first George W. Bush administrations (there is anecdotal evidence from the programs of other administrations). The Reagan, Clinton and George W. Bush surveys were done by the outside

organizations that designed and/or conducted the programs in partnership with the White House. Additional, amplifying information is available in surveys of appointees in the George H.W. Bush and first Clinton administrations performed by experienced observer and analyst Judith A. Michaels. Results of all the surveys were generally favorable. Most participants in these three programs thought orientation was useful. Abundant data and individual comments support the “useful” characterization and also provide specific views about substance and structure. Details can be found in Section II, below.

Cost. Except for the Reagan, Clinton and George W. Bush administrations, costs of leadership preparation programs were minimal for combinations of reasons. Programs took place in cost-free premises, with small groups; few meal or reception outlays were involved; little logistical support was necessary; and outside groups were not involved in design, planning, or implementation.

Continuity between administrations. There were only two instances of continuity. The first occurred when the Carter administration continued for a year the program conducted by the Ford administration. A decade and a half later the first Bush administration, keenly aware of the programs conducted by the Reagan Administration, launched appointee briefings within four months of taking office and continued them for most of the Presidential term.

II. Lessons Learned: Recommendations

Personal participation of the President and White House venue. A personal role for the President is essential as much for team building and morale as for substantive reasons. The President’s active participation sends a strong signal of the urgency an administration attaches to the proper preparation of appointees for leadership as members of the team and, of equal significance, of the individual value to the President of each appointee. For many appointees, this may be their only opportunity to experience the physical presence and participation of the President in an administration’s collective endeavor. More than any other factor, the President’s involvement gives them a tangible sense of the importance the White House attaches to their service and performance, and of the direct concern at the very top that they succeed. Absent the President’s own role, the only viable fallback is the participation of the Vice President and senior White House officials including the chief of staff—but they are by no means a substitute.

Presidential participation and a White House venue also appear to be strong factors in (1) motivating White House staff and agency heads to keep the appointee briefing program going and give it meaningful speakers and panelists; and (2) countering the natural tendency of busy (not to say swamped) new appointees to view orientation as something for which, however valuable, they simply don’t have time. A program conducted at and with the direct involvement of the White House itself carries an *esprit* and momentum that, as history shows, cannot be duplicated under the aegis of any other government agency or in any other location.

Which appointees? How mandatory? An experienced academic observer, Calvin Mackenzie of Colby College, suggested that subcabinet appointees fall into two groups: those who really do not need much preparation for service and those who need it badly. He believed the number of appointees in the latter group is probably shrinking. That is because, he said, a

growing number come from the Washington, D.C. area and many have served before in the federal government. Even among those who are new to government service, this observer said, a “great many” appointees have worked in Washington and “probably either know the sorts of things discussed in an orientation or have been in government before. This is not going to be news to them.”²

Making participation as nearly mandatory as possible is the recommended formula. At its best, this means the personal expectation of the President, directly and clearly communicated to those chosen to take part. Next best is a tactic along the lines suggested by Bob Nash, Office of Presidential Personnel director during most of the Clinton years. It would help, he reflected, for the President to direct his cabinet team to encourage the attendance of the designated appointees in their departments.³ The actual selection of participants is most effectively done by the departments and agencies, which have a far better feel for who can most benefit.

Timing. Views vary on the best time to stage leadership orientation. Some with experience in the process have proposed that it take place while prospective appointees are awaiting Senate confirmation, before they are sworn in. Other veterans believe appointees should receive orientation at the very beginning of their service. Still others think orientation is most effective for appointees who have been in their jobs for a month or so—just long enough to acquire a sense of the specific problems they face and answers they need, but before they are too deeply immersed. (For more on this, see “Reaction from Participants” in this section.)

In fact, there is no optimum juncture for appointee preparation. The best answer is therefore the practical one provided by several past administrations: schedule the sessions at periodic intervals, especially starting early in the first year of a new administration when most appointments take place. Continue them throughout the term, but less frequently as the inflow of new appointees slackens. (Re-elected administrations should do the same, even though new appointees may be fewer in number than the first time around.) Variations of this model were practiced by the Ford, Reagan, first Bush, and second Clinton administrations (“I wish we had done it sooner,” Nash said).

Content. Judging by what most administrations actually decided, there is broad agreement on what the substance of orientation should be. Appointees need grounding in the operations of the White House and Executive Office of the President, cabinet affairs, and how to do business with the White House in management areas such as; the budget, cost efficiency, financial management, performance measurement, and teamwork; in effective relationships with outside entities both public and private—the Congress, the media, and interest groups; and in the behavioral aspects of their jobs, such as working with the career service, accountability, and personal and ethical integrity. Contemporary case studies and real examples can animate what otherwise might be boring lectures on government processes and procedures.

Structure. No consensus exists on a best approach. Administrations that conducted orientation seem to have been basically satisfied with its design, apart from fine tuning which in retrospect was seen to be desirable. The format of plenary sessions plus break-out discussion groups was used in two of the three orientation programs run by the Clinton administration. Thurgood Marshall, Jr., secretary to the cabinet in the second Clinton term, thinks the structuring

of break-out groups should seek to build networks of appointees throughout government with similar responsibilities, for example in health care or the environment. But care is necessary to ensure that appointees in any break-out group represent all agencies that work in a given area, not just one or two whose appointees “are going to deal with each other all the time anyway.”⁴

Presentations. Watch out for eye-glazers, especially on technical topics like budget. “You go through a whole series of flow charts,” said a former OMB director, “and unless you make it interesting, I challenge you to find one person awake in the room. If you explain it in bureaucratic terms or legalese, they’ll fade out on you.” Speakers, whether alone or in panels, should be informed, if not expert on their topics, relaxed, informal, engaging, interactive with the audience—and brief. Speakers with relevant experience have the most credibility when they talk about not only successes but mistakes and lessons learned.

Reaction from participants. The Council for Excellence in Government surveyed participants after each of the leadership conferences it jointly designed and conducted with the George W. Bush and Clinton White Houses, in 1997. The Bush appointees were particularly positive about the sessions with the President, along with the Vice President or cabinet officials held in each of the four years of the first term. They also praised the opportunity to get to know colleagues from other agencies and preferred smaller interactive group sessions over large plenaries with speakers. The retreats for Deputy Secretaries and other members of the President’s Management Council and the cabinet department Chiefs of Staff were seen as particularly valuable to the management of cross agency issues.

In the second Clinton term, a majority of those taking part over three years liked the opportunity to interact with people with direct experience in the topics covered, especially topics not typically offered in training courses, and felt the programs reinforced their sense of belonging to the administration’s team (For example, a Clinton appointee wrote that he enjoyed “meeting people with whom I can work on shared concerns.”). Many surveyed Clinton appointees wished the orientation program had begun earlier - in the administration’s first term; many thought the program should continue; and some said they would like to return for them. The format of plenary panel discussions combined with smaller, break-out group sessions, used in the first two years (1997, 1998), found favor with most of those surveyed. They were less appreciative of the large-group discussion led by a single speaker, which was part of the format in 1998. Ratings for panel discussions were directly proportional to their briskness and dynamism.⁹

In 1996, an unpublished survey by Judith Michaels of first-term Clinton appointees (some of whom had also been PAS’s in earlier administrations) showed that the Congress had barely nudged out ethics as the topic of most interest. Of 182 respondents, 85.5 percent thought interactions with the Congress were very important or of very great importance for an orientation program. Eighty-three percent of 181 respondents gave the same ratings to ethical guidelines.

Chase Untermeyer, director of the Office of Presidential Personnel in the George H.W. Bush Administration, had also been an assistant Navy secretary under Ronald Reagan and helped establish orientation under the elder Bush. He agreed that focusing on appointees with some weeks of service, rather than on those who have just arrived, “means they’ll have more real-life questions, rather than supposition questions.”⁶ His deputy, Jan Naylor Cope, who managed the

Bush orientation program, also saw merit in this point. Recalling some of the key comments from surveyed appointees, she said that if what appointees hear in the orientation program is totally new because they themselves are still very new in their jobs, “it was almost as if they didn’t know enough to know what to ask.”⁷ At the same time, Untermeyer and Cope recognized the value of orientation, whenever it occurs in an appointee’s tenure. Cope said it allowed brand-new appointees to make connections with people whom they could later seek out for more information, once they encountered some of the issues covered in the orientation. She said Bush appointees surveyed afterward felt that the program’s biggest value was simply the opportunity to meet other participants. Second was the chance to meet White House staff. Third was “getting a grip on what the intersection is between the White House and the agencies” - learning about the coordinating functions, cabinet affairs, and how to get things done interagency.

A GAO-sponsored survey of appointees serving in the Bush administration, by veteran analyst and author Judith E. Michaels, offers additional evidence of how appointees felt about orientation’s importance and results (some of these individuals had served in previous administrations). Ethical guidance, for example, headed their list of topics that an orientation program should include. Of 178 who answered the question on this subject, 94 percent thought it was very important or of very great importance. Other subjects to which heavy majorities of appointees gave high importance were public policies relevant to PAS’s individual agencies, the President’s policy objectives, interactions with the Congress, the federal budget process and personnel system, relations with the news media, and OMB’s decision making process. As for results, the great majority of respondents rated their orientation as generally adequate or very adequate on all topics covered.⁸

Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government ran case-study seminars over the course of several years for Reagan appointees. They took place in combination with the administration’s own briefing program (detailed in Section III, below). Peter Zimmerman, a senior Kennedy School official, raised an especially relevant point among those that emerged from surveys of appointee participants. Early on, he said, it was clear that the substantial number of participants who had been formally nominated but not confirmed - “those who were not yet really in the saddle” - tended to approach the seminar with the view that “anything was possible.” They were too new, as yet too inexperienced with the challenges they faced, to be able “to engage the issues on a concrete level.” As a result, the program’s managers switched the focus to confirmed appointees who had been in place for a while. “People needed to have been on the job long enough to stub their toes, bang their heads a couple of times, get a sense of the reality of the situations in which they found themselves,” Zimmerman said. “We’re talking about the difference between people who have been in Washington for 30 days, with a building pass and an office, and the same people 90 to 120 days later.” At the later point, “there was a material difference between their receptivity and interest and hunger for orientation discussions from when they were looking at all this in prospect.”⁵

Appointee contact with predecessors. Perhaps for understandable reasons, no administration specifically advocated this as part of its own appointee preparation program. However, several observers argue the considerable benefits to individual new appointees of the practical insights that earlier tenants of their jobs can impart from their own experience. They suggest that administrations make a point of encouraging their appointees to take advantage of this rich resource. Further, Kathryn Higgins, a Clinton appointee at the U.S. Department of Labor who also served at the White House as secretary to the cabinet, noted a tradition among previous occupants of a certain position to get together as a group with the individual who has newly been appointed to their former job - "almost like an alumni group." People who have held positions before "tend to still be doing that kind of work in this town," she said. So it serves their interest to have relationships with each other and with whoever is their current successor in the administration. "They get together at the beginning of each administration and welcome that person to the fray. It's a good idea."¹⁰

Alternative to live orientation. Technology now offers rich opportunities to connect appointees with information and interactive discussions. The first website developed for Presidential appointees was launched in 2002 by the George W. Bush administration. For reasons stated earlier, these online resources and connections would lack the immediacy, proximity to the President, contacts, and team-building qualities of live group sessions.

Leadership preparation as an institution. Most administrations in the period covered here conducted some organized kind of appointee preparation for the operational challenges of their jobs. Moreover, the value of appointee orientation is universally acknowledged. So it is something of a paradox that orientation *as a concept* has rarely achieved enough visibility or momentum to cross through the transition from one administration to the next. Five of the seven administrations that conducted it apparently arrived at their decisions virtually independently of anything that occurred in the past. Sometimes, as with Reagan and Clinton, the decision was partly the result of conversations with outside individuals or groups that suggested or advocated it. One of the reasons why orientation is not more of an institution at this point can be traced to transitions between administrations of different parties, when the instinct of those coming in, at least at the outset, is usually to ignore or reject advice in such matters from those they are replacing.

Orientation as a permanent part of the picture has now been authorized by the Presidential Transition Act of 2000. It amends earlier transition legislation (in 1963) to provide for "payment of expenses during the transition for briefings, workshops, or other activities to acquaint key prospective Presidential appointees with the types of problems and challenges that most typically confront new political appointees when they make the transition from campaign and other prior activities to assuming the responsibility for governance..."¹¹

III. Individual Administration Histories since 1957

This section covers those administrations that designed and provided substantial orientation programs to their sub cabinet appointees. Some notes on those that did not:

- There is no evidence of such a program conducted under Presidents Kennedy or Nixon, although Nixon is said to have been quite focused on problems of federal management and organization.
- In the Johnson administration, said veteran government official Dwight Ink, “I didn’t really see much of an effort with respect to briefing the incoming leadership from a management standpoint.” What did occur were “episodic” efforts to brief incoming cabinet members and White House staff.¹² Another source, a Johnson appointee, reportedly recalled orientation of a sort: a senior White House aide organized events for new appointees, presumably of the sub cabinet, who were invited to the White House, given an autographed picture of the President, and convened in the Roosevelt Room for “a session about the Johnson administration.”
- In December 1992, President-Elect Clinton agreed to a two-day meeting for designated heads of cabinet departments and independent agencies, but it did not occur. Although sub cabinet orientation was recommended by outgoing Bush officials, none took place in the Clinton administration until its second term.

Where it is available, information on the expenses of orientation activities, and how they were paid, is included for the programs described below.

Dwight D. Eisenhower

Appointee orientation in the Eisenhower period began in August 1957, according to James Pfiffner, a George Mason University faculty member who has written extensively on the presidency. Departments, agencies, boards, and commissions in the Eisenhower administration were responsible for briefing their own appointees about federal government operations and their own places in the scheme of things, he wrote in 1987.

Chief among the topics were the Constitution, separation of powers, the external relations of the appointee’s agency, the merit system, the Hatch Act, conflict of interest legislation, and the agency’s organization, programs, and personnel. “The strength of the program was that it was instituted by the White House,” Pfiffner said. “The weakness was that it was to be delivered by the departments and agencies. As with many other policy initiatives in the federal government, agency interest cannot be sustained without White House interest and follow-through.” As a result, he noted, the Eisenhower orientation program did not achieve much recognition within the administration and did not carry over to the Kennedy administration. A further reason for the program’s failure to survive into the next administration “was that sufficient staff were not assigned to develop and carry it out.”¹³

Gerald R. Ford

The Ford administration program was designed and managed by the White House Office of Presidential Personnel in cooperation with OMB and the Civil Service Commission. The central operational figure, however, was Bradley Patterson, an assistant director of OPP (who as deputy secretary to the cabinet in the Eisenhower administration had worked on a White House initiative in this area). In all, three sessions for about 30 appointees each took place during 1975 and 1976, on invitation from the White House chief of staff (Dick Cheney and, later, Donald Rumsfeld). Participants were non-career appointees at the GS-16 level or higher who were new to government service. Usually held at the end of the week, sometimes including Saturday, the two-and-a-half-day orientation events encompassed a kick-off dinner, two days of orientation in the White House family theater, and a concluding reception with the President. “Jerry Ford was very good about that,” Patterson remembered. For some, it was “a big morale booster—probably the only time they’d ever meet him.”¹⁴

The orientation sessions began with an introduction by the White House chief of staff. Agenda topics mentioned by Patterson, who moderated the sessions, were working with career public servants, handling the media, the functions of the National Security Council, managing relationships with members and staff of the Congress, avoiding conflicts of interest, and abiding by the requirements for ethical behavior. Among the presenters on these subjects were the chair of the then-Civil Service Commission, the White House press secretary, the House minority leader, the White House counsel, and interest group representatives. Each appointee received a tabbed notebook book that included relevant statutes like conflict of interest regulations and information about the purpose and operations of various executive and legislative branch entities. In addition, a dinner meeting was scheduled for each group with “four or five” senior federal career executives.

Selection of participants focused on confirmed appointees to cabinet departments and agencies. It did not include regulatory agencies, judged to be semi-independent of the executive branch. Patterson said appointee orientation would have continued in a re-elected Ford Administration, because the President “was delighted with this” and appointees, although they were not formally asked to evaluate the program, were “very pleased.”

Jimmy Carter

As already noted, the Carter administration continued the Ford program described just above. This was the result of the interest that Carter budget director Bert Lance took in the program run under the aegis of his Ford predecessor, Roy Ash. But as recorded in a letter to the director of the Federal Executive Institute from the late Edward Preston—then a career OMB official who was closely involved with the program—President Carter had no personal interest in the program Lance adopted. It took place in the Old Executive Office Building. On Lance’s departure a year later, the Office of Personnel Management took it over. With no White House involvement and consequent difficulty in getting senior White House officials involved, however, the program faded out.¹⁵

Late in the Carter administration Arnie Miller, who had become director of OPP, and deputy OPM director Jule Sugarman began discussing a plan that, Miller said, would train appointees “with no background in government how to deal with the federal budget, how to handle the media, and how to cultivate relationships with Congress.” The orientation program, he said, would also begin discussions about policies. In addition, Miller saw it as a team-building vehicle, integrating people at the policy making level in the White House and the Executive Office of the President with relevant officials in the departments and agencies. This would “establish from the very beginning connections that would serve to offset departmental loyalty,” Miller said. “People would start seeing themselves as part of an administration and a team, working for a President as opposed to working for a particular department.” Housed in OPM, the program was to be a “key element” in a projected second Carter term.¹⁶

Ronald Reagan

The Reagan era saw the most extensive effort yet undertaken to ready appointees for the management responsibilities of their service. It originated partly in conversations during the first year between presidential counselor Edwin Meese and Jonathan Moore, then-head of the Institute of Politics at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government (which since the early 1970s had been interested in the problems of presidential transitions). As related by Peter Zimmerman of the Kennedy School, Meese next asked the secretary to the cabinet to take the lead on the idea of training for new appointees. In 1982, the Kennedy School ran a two-day pilot workshop at the White House for newly confirmed and unconfirmed appointees including sub cabinet members (at the assistant and under secretary level) and independent agency heads as well as agency general counsels and inspectors general. It was staffed by faculty of the Kennedy School and the university’s law and business schools. This was deemed a success, according to Zimmerman.¹⁷

What followed, from 1982-1987, was a series of about 20 orientation programs in Washington, running from two-and-a half to three days and scheduled “whenever 20 to 30 new appointees had been sworn in.” Again, OMB career official Edward Preston assisted in the design of the program. It took place in the White House and in the Old Executive Office Building and featured a consistent format. On the first day, as recounted by Pfiffner and Preston, senior officials including Meese welcomed the group and spoke to them about the administration’s agenda. White House staff members briefed on such subjects as the budget, legislative and cabinet affairs, presidential personnel, and policy development. A White House reception and dinner followed.

On days two and three, Harvard faculty ran case-study seminars for between 25 and 35 appointees, with a focus on political and administrative processes and the effective management of federal agencies. According to Pfiffner and Zimmerman, the case studies—from the public and private sectors alike—addressed three problems facing public managers: dealing with an organization’s external environment; organizing and deploying its internal resources; and devising strategies to achieve its goals. Appointee participants joined in analyzing various approaches to the problems presented. The seminars were divided into about six sessions of 60 to 75 minutes each over the two days, with lunch the first day, no dinner that evening, and a closing lunch on the final day with a high-level official as speaker.

Zimmerman estimated that, in all, the Harvard-run seminars reached more than 400 Reagan political executives— “a healthy sampling of about two-thirds of the most important sub cabinet appointees.” In the 1986-87 period, the Kennedy School commissioned two junior faculty members to interview a hundred appointees who had taken part in the program. Among the data they sought was evaluation of the seminars and their impact. Their survey was not published, but several of its findings are worth noting here. Asked what had been most surprising about their experience in Washington, appointees said they had developed a new appreciation of the complexity of the policy process. To a slightly different question—what had they found in Washington that they did not anticipate—they expressed increased respect for the commitment and professionalism of career civil servants. A third finding, about timing of appointee orientation, is included in Section II, above.

Two other kinds of orientation unfolded in the Reagan administration. One, in Pfiffner’s description, was a series of White House briefings “on specific policy issues in areas of major public controversy.” Cabinet officers usually ran these 90-minute sessions; all PAS-level appointees were invited. Preston wrote that such sessions were also sparked by the announcement of major policy initiatives. The other kind of orientation consisted of several conferences for non career (politically appointed) members of the Senior Executive Service and for Schedule C appointees. They were conducted by the White House and OPM and directed variously at national security policy, foreign and domestic economic and social policy, and management techniques.

Finally, early in the first Reagan term, the President on two occasions addressed large groups of new appointees, including cabinet members, about administration plans and goals. Later on, as the number of incoming appointees diminished, he met about every six weeks with small groups of new appointees for brief remarks and individual photographs. E. Pendleton James, the first Reagan director of OPP, said it was important “that appointees meet the President at the beginning, not at the end when they go home.”¹⁸

The Kennedy School received a fee for its seminar services from the White House, which covered the expense at least in part by charging agencies for their participating appointees.

George H. W. Bush

Bush transition planners were well aware of the orientation activities of the Reagan era. They called on retired Ford OMB veteran Edward Preston to help design a program for Bush appointees. Jan Naylor Cope, a member of the transition team who was to be deputy director of OPP, got the job of putting together the orientation sessions, working with OPM and its new administrator, Constance Newman, as well as with Preston.¹⁹ President Bush, Cope added, “clearly gave us the message that he wanted appointees, whether they were returning or totally new, to have a clear understanding that the civil service was not the enemy.”

Day-and-a-half orientation sessions, each with about 20 PAS appointees, began in April 1989 and took place every three weeks into the fall, usually in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building. As the number of new or recent appointees dropped, the sessions slowed to about one a month by the fall, then fell off further, but continued through the Bush term. They covered

White House components, including cabinet affairs, and their relationship to the rest of the executive branch; ethics/financial disclosure; budget; economic and domestic policy formulation; congressional and media relations; working with career employees; and government ethics. Separate time was also reserved to discuss how to bring outside individuals into government on Schedule C appointments.

Attendance at the sessions was just all but mandatory, and the pressure to take part began with the President. Cabinet members, however, were not often present. “That’s fairly understandable,” Cope said, “but we did an effective job down the rest of the line. We hounded people who said they had a conflict.” The program reached a total of 450 individuals, each of whom also received a detailed briefing book and a copy of *A Survivor’s Guide for Government Executives*, published in 1989 by the Council for Excellence in Government. Program sessions began with a reception in the Indian Treaty Room with senior White House officials, including the President or Vice President “depending on their availability,” Cope said.

The faculty for the program was top executive branch officials, each covering one of the areas mentioned above—such as the White House counsel, the director or deputy directors of OMB, and the chief of OPM. A typical presentation occupied 20 minutes, with the rest of the hour on that topic given over to interactive discussion. On the topic of relations with the career service, presenters included senior career executives. For congressional and media relations, the presentation broadened into panels with such figures as former members of the Congress, White House or agency congressional affairs people, and the White House press secretary.

“We tried not only to get the cross-pollination of PAS’s meeting one another, but to give them a point person in all the senior places in the White House,” Cope said. “A lot of people frankly didn’t know how the White House was organized and what their relationship with them would be.” Constance Horner headed OPP in the administration of George H.W. Bush after serving as deputy secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. Earlier, she headed OPM under Reagan. “From a networking point of view, these sessions are fantastic,” she said. “This may be the only time you’ll see the head of the Federal Trade Commission, for example, in your four years of service. It creates wonderful bonding in a very short period of time.”²⁰

Parallel to the PAS orientation, according to Preston, OPM ran similar sessions for (1) non-career appointees of the Senior Executive Service and new career SES executives; and (2) Schedule C appointees. During the Bush/Clinton transition, the Bush administration made an informal effort to advise Clinton personnel officials about the program and to recommend that the process be continued.

Since the Bush program was an in-house operation, its costs were low. The White House paid for meals and receptions.

William Jefferson Clinton

The second Clinton administration conducted orientation programs in 1997, 1998, and 1999.²¹ They originated in a series of conversations between Patricia McGinnis, President of the

Council for Excellence in Government, Ann Lewis, Council Vice President, and White House senior officials including Kitty Higgins, Secretary to the Cabinet, Bob Nash, Director of OPP, John Koskinen, Deputy OMB Director for Management, and several senior cabinet department representatives. These discussions led to a formal White House request in 1997 that the Council work with it to jointly plan and run a leadership conference for appointees and nominees.

To help design the conference, the Council created a bipartisan advisory group comprising a number of Council members and trustees. Some of these advisors and other Council members as well would serve as facilitators for the break-out discussion groups in the conference.

With an opening address by the Vice President, the first conference, a day-long event, took place in May 1997 (on a Saturday) at the U.S. Department of State. A hundred and fifty appointees and nominees from 27 executive branch cabinet departments and agencies attended. The conference was designed to connect the appointees with their colleagues across government and with the White House staff in discussions about effective leadership and management. Four plenary panel discussions, plus a dozen break-out discussion groups that met twice during the day, examined several key objectives—getting results in the public interest, working effectively with the Congress and the media, proper stewardship of the public trust. To exemplify these themes for participants, the Council also developed five case studies of actual problems that had been met and resolved earlier in this administration. The plenary and break-out meetings allowed appointees to hear and interact with 40 expert, diverse presenters: current and former appointees and members of the Congress of both political parties, public affairs and media veterans, and academic and think-tank specialists. A reception in the diplomatic rooms of the U.S. Department of State ended the day.

Satisfaction with the results of the 1997 program, plus good marks from those who took part, generated a renewal in 1998. Nearly 180 appointees from 34 federal agencies took part in a day-and-a-half event (on a Friday and Saturday in April), again jointly planned and carried out by the White House and the Council. With a format similar to that of the 1997 program, the conference began in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building with a conversation with the Vice President and a reception in the Indian Treaty Room, and continued at the U.S. Department of State, with a reception at the close. The discussions were led by a large, bipartisan group of eminent speakers, panelists, and discussion leaders with especially relevant experience—the same mix as for the 1997 event, plus an author, an academic, a nonprofit leader, and an opinion specialist. In addition to the subject matter examined by the 1997 conference, this one looked at leadership among competing interests and the relationship between all of these issues and public trust in government. At lunch, six senior White House staff members described their responsibilities and answered questions. Case studies were employed to illustrate the operational strategies under discussion.

In 1999, the White House and the Council offered appointees a different format: five luncheon panel discussions over a two-month period in nongovernmental locations. Between them, the five sessions covered three topics—getting results (two sessions), dealing effectively with the media (one), and working productively with the Congress (two). Appointees could choose the sessions they preferred to attend in covering all three topics. Each session also

emphasized the necessity to sustain momentum as the administration's term entered its final year. Attendance at the five meetings totaled 150. As panelists, the program called on a group of 17 individuals representing business, the executive and legislative branches, academic institutions, think tanks, and the media. Among these experts were the chair of the Consumer Product Safety Commission, the Vice President's director of legislative affairs, two faculty members of Harvard's Kennedy School, a former Senator and a former Congressman, the congressional correspondent of the *Baltimore Sun*, a resident scholar of the American Enterprise Institute, the staff director of the Senate Committee on Government Affairs, a senior policy advisor to the Vice President, and the director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Appointees attending all three Clinton programs received briefing books and other relevant materials. Expenses for the programs were chiefly for logistical support, rental of premises, catering, preparation of case studies, and staff time. A small number of honorariums was involved. In the first year, the federal government's expenses were financed through tuition payments from federal agencies with participating appointees; support from The Carnegie Corporation of New York, The Fannie Mae Foundation, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and The German Marshall Fund of the United States made the Council's role possible. Tuition payments covered nearly all of the total cost of the 1998 conference as well as all costs in 1999.

George W. Bush

The Presidential Transition Act of 2000 authorized an orientation program for Presidential appointees and White house staff. An appropriation of \$1 million was provided for the creation of an Appointee Directory and orientation programs.

In late summer 2001, the Council for Excellence in Government was selected to assist with the development and implementation of a Presidential Appointee Orientation Program. Council CEO Patricia McGinnis recommended the creation of a steering committee of White House staff and several top appointees to guide the effort. The steering committee was chaired by Clay Johnson, Assistant to the President for Presidential Personnel. Its members included Albert Hawkins, Assistant to the President for Cabinet Affairs, two veterans of government service, Michael Jackson, Deputy Secretary of Transportation and Marion Blakely, Chair of the National Transportation Safety Board, and two newcomers to government, Leo McKay, Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs and Kathleen Cooper, Under Secretary of Commerce for Economic Affairs.

Clay Johnson described the goals of the orientation effort as "to build a strong team, to share ideas and best practices about what works and what is not working and to give appointees tools to help them be successful." He pointed to "ethics rules, how Congress works, oversight," and the President's Management Agenda.²²

There was a strong focus on management and results, the theme of three large sessions for subcabinet appointees held at the State Department. The President spoke to appointees at least once a year during the first term, when the orientation program was underway.

- October 2001: "Dedicated to Serving America" – Presidential address to cabinet and subcabinet appointees and SES at Constitution Hall.

- February 2002: The President met with cabinet, subcabinet and White House staff to discuss goals and expectations. The Vice President and three cabinet secretaries also spoke.
- December 2003: The President met with cabinet and subcabinet appointees to discuss goals and expectations for the second half of the administration at the Reagan Building. OMB Director Mitch Daniels and HHS Secretary Tommy Thompson also spoke.
- January 2004: The President met with cabinet and subcabinet appointees and SES at Constitution Hall.

Small discussion sessions and workshops were organized to engage appointees in the President's Management Agenda and Managing for Results.

Discussion Sessions on the President's Management Agenda

Four half-day sessions for Presidential appointees. These interactive sessions were created to help appointees achieve results for the people they serve.

- February 2002: Electronic Government
- March 2002: Budget and Performance Integration
- March 2002: Strategic Management of Human Capital
- May 2002: Competitive Sourcing

Workshops on Integrating Budget and Performance

- In-depth sessions for appointees on PART with Congressional staff – April 2003, October 2003, January 2004.
- Follow-up sessions for agency leads on budget and performance integration – spring and summer 2004.

Discussion Sessions on Managing for Results for Appointees

- March 2003: Admiral Jim Loy and Transportation Deputy Secretary Michael Jackson discussed the creation of the Transportation Security Administration.
- January 2003: Former Secretary of State George Shultz discussed his experience leading OMB and several cabinet departments and lessons learned.

A website, www.results.gov was launched in September 2002 with information and resources for appointees, including the Appointee Directory with photographs and short biographies, updates on the President's Management Agenda, including updates from the OMB Deputy Director for Management and the lead staff in each element, updates and best practices from the Departments, guidance on ethics rules, records management, legislative affairs and government oversight. The website also included video and transcripts of the President's meetings with appointees and other speakers at events for appointees.

Retreats were also organized for Deputy Secretaries and Chief Operating Officers, Chiefs of Staff and Deputy Chiefs of Staff, and Regional Appointees from across the federal government.

- March 2002: One-and-a-half day retreat for President's Management Council (Deputy Secretaries and Chief Operating Officers of departments and agencies) to discuss President's Management Agenda and how to get to green on the PMA scorecard.

- January 2003: One-and-a-half day retreat for Chiefs of Staff and Deputy Chiefs of Staff to discuss the role of the COS and to share best practices and practices to avoid.
- February 2003: One-and-a-half day retreat for PMC (Deputy Secretaries and Chief Operating Officers of departments and agencies) to discuss President's Management Agenda and how to get to green on the scorecard.
- May 2003: One-and-a-half day retreat for Regional Appointees to discuss effective regional management – challenges and best practices.

Funds for appointee orientation in the second term were not appropriated by the Congress with the rationale that federal departments and agencies could use existing funds for orientation. Patricia McGinnis noted “orientation for new appointees has value throughout an Administration’s tenure, especially given the turnover of leadership.” The authorization of appointee orientation is a valuable ongoing resource for every President.

IV. Putting this history together

To document the history of appointee orientation, the Council interviewed a number of former officials of various administrations who were involved, as well as experienced observers who have written about the process. These individuals are identified in the text, in endnotes, and in the list of interviewees, below. The Council also consulted written sources: published texts, congressional documents, memoranda, and the briefing books that accompanied the orientation programs of the Ford, Bush, and Clinton administrations.

Interviewees and their current or former positions relevant to this history

Jan Naylor Cope, Deputy Director, Office of Presidential Personnel, George H.W. Bush administration

Kathryn Higgins, Secretary to the Cabinet, Clinton administration

Constance B. Horner, Director, Office of Presidential Personnel, George H.W. Bush administration, and Director, Office of Personnel Management, Reagan administration

Dwight Ink, who held many senior positions in several administrations

E. Pendleton James, Director, Office of Presidential Personnel, Reagan administration

Clay Johnson, Deputy Director for Management, Office of Management and Budget, George W. Bush administration

Calvin Mackenzie, Goldfarb Family Distinguished Professor of Government, Colby College

Thurgood Marshall, Jr., Secretary to the Cabinet, Clinton administration

Judith E. Michaels, analyst and author

Arnie Miller, Director, Office of Presidential Personnel, Carter administration

Bob Nash, Director, Office of Presidential Personnel, Clinton administration

Bradley Patterson, Assistant Director, Office of Presidential Personnel, Ford administration

Chase Untermeyer, Director, Office of Presidential Personnel, George H.W. Bush administration

Joseph R. Wright, Jr., Deputy Director and acting Director, Office of Management and Budget, Reagan administration

Endnotes

¹ The White House, memorandum by Bradley Patterson on the first meeting of the Brookings Institution Advisory Committee on Presidential Transition, September 16, 1960, quoted in “Strangers in a New Land: Orienting New Presidential Appointees,” by James P. Pfiffner in *The In-and-Outers: Presidential Appointees and Transient Government in Washington*, ed. by G. Calvin Mackenzie (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 143

² Calvin Mackenzie, interview with author, November 19, 2001

³ Bob Nash, interview with author, December 13, 2001

⁴ Thurgood Marshall, Jr., interview with author, November 19, 2001

⁹ Council for Excellence in Government, tabulation of evaluation survey results, 1997-2001.

⁶ Chase Untermeyer, interview with author, November 13, 2001.

⁷ Jan Naylor Cope, interview with author, November 2, 2001.

⁸ Judith E. Michaels, *The President's Call: Executive Leadership from FDR to George Bush*, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997, 257, 300-301

⁵ Peter B. Zimmerman, Senior Associate Dean for Program Development and Executive Education, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, interview with author, November 1, 2001.

¹⁰ Kathryn Higgins, interview with author, December 14, 2001.

¹¹ Washington, D.C., The Presidential Transition Act of 2000.

¹² Dwight Ink, interview with author November 15, 2001.

¹³ Pfiffner, in Mackenzie, *The In-and-Outers*, 148

¹⁴ Bradley Patterson, interview with author, November 14, 2001.

¹⁵ Edward F. Preston, *Orienting Presidential Appointees: An Essential White House Task*, paper prepared for the Panel on the Presidency of the National Academy of Public Administration, November 1988, revised in November 1992, page 3.

¹⁶ Arnie Miller, interview with author, October 29, 2001.

¹⁷ Peter Zimmerman, interview with author, November 1, 2001.

¹⁸ E. Pendleton James, interview with author, November 29, 2001.

¹⁹ Jan Cope, interview with author, November 2, 2001.

²⁰ Constance Horner, interview with author, November 30, 2001.

²¹ The sources of information in this section, on the history of Clinton Administration orientation, are the relevant files and briefing books of the Council for Excellence in Government as well as the staff of the Council, including the author.

²² Clay Johnson, quoted in *The Washington Post*, 2001