

# Forging the Path for Future Army Leaders

## *Talent based branching*

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Beginning with Fiscal Year 2021, the U.S. Army implemented a new system to branch cadets from the countless Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) programs across the nation.

This new system, called Talent Based Branching (TBB), aims to align newly commissioned officers with one of the 17 different branches that best suit their skills and aspirations, representing a significant evolution in how the Army identifies and cultivates its leadership talents.

This article will explore how TBB serves not only a strategic move for the Army but a transformative one, while highlighting the advantages for the cadets and the Army, specifically its impact on the Signal Corps.

### ***Understanding the TBB Mechanics***

The TBB system unfolds over a four-year trajectory, commencing with the Talent Assessment Battery (TAB). This comprehensive tool evaluates a cadet's cognitive and non-cognitive capabilities relative to their peers. This holistic assessment not only identifies individuals' strengths and areas of development, but also helps in discerning compatibility with various branches. It ultimately serves as a compass, guiding cadets towards branches with talent priorities that align with the cadet's unique talents.

Following the TAB assessment, cadets gain access to the Virtual Branching website (VBO 2.0). This interactive platform serves as a gateway to the different branches, segmenting them into individual virtual presentation booths. Here, cadets can explore the different informative materials and watch recorded videos that highlight the capabilities of the corresponding branch. Cadets immerse themselves in understanding the requirements, expectations, and opportunities within the diverse branches.

The culminating stage of the TBB process for the cadets is the interview process, facilitated by the HireVue platform. Through structured evaluations and tasks, HireVue allows

cadets to engage directly with their desired branches and to demonstrate their suitability and potential. From multiple-choice assessments to thoughtful essays and compelling video recordings, cadets showcase their readiness to become commissioned officers in their chosen path within the Army.

### ***Benefits to Cadets and the Army***

The TBB system signifies a paradigm shift in officer placement as it showcases multifaceted advantages:

#### **1. Enhanced officer satisfaction and retention.**

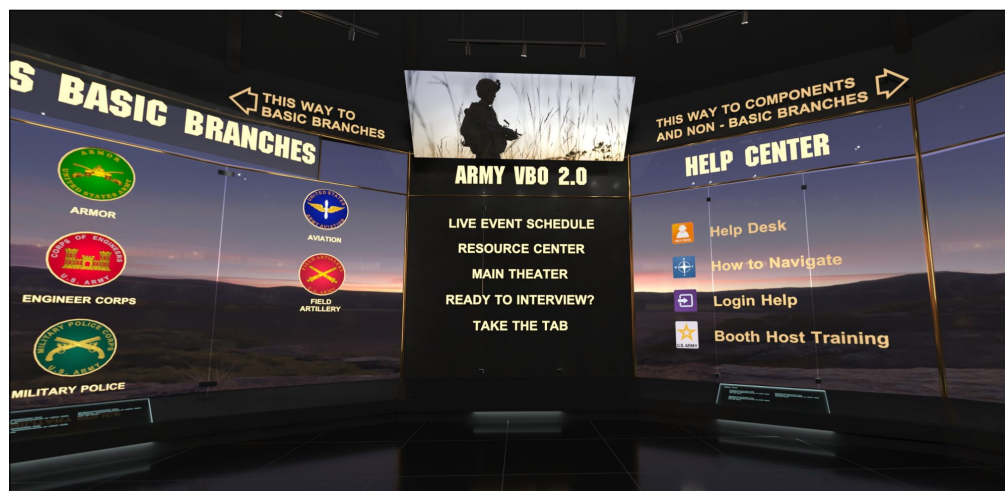
The system empowers cadets to select branches based on their talents and passions, which fosters higher satisfaction levels and reduces attrition rates. Similarly, branches benefit from having officers who are genuinely invested in their roles, which leads to improved morale and cohesion within units.

#### **2. Elevated performance and readiness.**

By aligning officers with roles that complement their strengths, the TBB system amplifies overall performance and readiness. Officers are better equipped to excel within their designated branches, while branches leverage the diverse talents of their officers to accomplish missions effectively and efficiently.

#### **3. Fostering diversity and innovation.**

It encourages cadets to explore diverse branches, cultivating a more inclusive and innovative Army culture. The combination of fresh perspectives and talents stimulates creativity and problem-solving, enhancing the Army's adaptability and resilience in dynamic operational environments.



*VBO 2.0 Introduction page - the first thing cadets see when they log into their VBO account. This interactive page allows cadets to explore the capabilities of each branch posted on the site. (Screenshot)*



Capt. Thomas H. Lee, left, U.S. Army Signal School, engages with Texas A&M University cadets during their Branch Day to give insight on career opportunities, training, and development within the Signal Corp Branch. (Courtesy photo)

### ***Navigating Talent***

In the realm of TBB, the Signal Corps career program manager's role within the Office Chief of Signal is paramount, overseeing the seamless integration of cadets into the Signal Corps. Collaborating closely with the Signal Corps Proponent, they tailor the TBB process to align with the branch's strategic goals and operational requirements.

Responsible for setting talent priorities and criteria, the career program manager facilitates cadets through virtual and in-person branch orientation engagements, mentorship opportunities, and interview preparations. Their expertise in evaluating cadets' suitability and potential ensures the recruitment of quality leaders for the Signal Corps' mission success. In essence, the career program manager assist the future leaders in navigating the talent landscape, steering the most preferred cadets towards a future of excellence within the Signal Corps.

### ***Impact on the Signal Corps***

Within this framework, the Signal Corps benefits significantly from the TBB system:

#### **1. Specialized skill alignment.**

The Signal Corps relies heavily on technical expertise and proficiency in communication systems. Through the TBB system, cadets with aptitudes in areas such as information technology, networking, and cybersecurity can be identified and channeled into roles within the Signal Corps that capitalize on these specialized skills. This ensures a more precise match between officer talents and branch needs, enhancing operational effectiveness.

#### **2. Nurturing technological innovation.**

As technology continues to evolve, the Signal Corps plays a pivotal role in adapting and implementing cutting-edge communication technologies. By attracting cadets with a passion for innovation and technology through the TBB system, the Signal Corps can cultivate an organization of officers who are not only proficient in current systems but also adept at driving technological advancements within the branch.

#### **3. Strengthening community engagement.**

The TBB system facilitates a more interactive and transparent process, fostering stronger connections between cadets and the Signal Corps community. Through mentorship opportunities, informational sessions, and branch-specific engagements, cadets gain deeper insights into the unique challenges and opportunities within the Signal Corps, fostering a sense of belonging and commitment among future officers.

### ***Review***

The Army's Talent Based Branching system represents a pivotal advancement in officer placement. It caters to the diverse talents and aspirations of cadets while meeting the evolving needs of various branches, including the Signal Corps. By aligning individual strengths with organizational requirements, the TBB not only enhances officer satisfaction, performance, and diversity but also fortifies branches like the Signal Corps with the specialized skills and an innovative mindset necessary for success in an ever-changing landscape. As the Army continues to adapt and modernize, the TBB system stands as a testament to its commitment to excellence in talent management and operational readiness.

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### ***Sources***

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