

Faculty for a Reserve Officers Training Corps Program at Columbia

It has not been possible to make the affirmative case for an ROTC program at Columbia because it has been crowded out by debate over the legislative prohibition of military service by open homosexuals (“Don’t Ask Don’t Tell”, or DADT). Recurrent student discussions beginning in 2003 have been almost completely dominated by that issue. When the University Senate voted against an ROTC program in 2005, DADT was almost the only objection raised. Statements on ROTC by President Bollinger and former Provost Brinkley centered on the inadmissibility of any program discriminating against any students.

However, the prospect of DADT’s repeal is now promising. President Obama, the Secretary of Defense, and the Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff all support repeal. The House of Representatives and the Senate Armed Forces Committee, respectively, have passed and approved legislation to that effect. With the prospect of DADT’s repeal, it is possible to address the substantive case for ROTC, which can be briefly summarized:

- It is damaging to democratic ideals of equality that graduates of highly selective, private universities are so underrepresented in the nation’s officer corps.
- That the officer corps is drawn disproportionately from non-urban settings and other regions of the nation creates an imbalance that benefits neither American society nor its military.
- At Columbia, military service should be recognized as a form of public service as is service in civil society.
- Our students’ prevailing experience is of great personal distance from military service, limiting preparation for citizenship.
- Reciprocally, military leaders are often uncomprehending of the values for which Columbia and its peer institutions stand. A civil-military gap caused by mutual incomprehension is undesirable.
- Diversity in the student body including students preparing for military service would help alleviate this situation.
- The university should not put obstacles in the way of students who wish to serve as commissioned officers and, in so doing, help finance their educations.
- These propositions are independent of judgments as individual citizens of policies involving the armed forces, and about which the university is institutionally neutral.

Faculty signing this statement may not agree fully with all its features but all agree with the following:

Provided that legislative prohibition of military service by open homosexuals is ended and ROTC is subject to the same academic procedures as govern other programs, we support the establishment of an ROTC program.

Mark H. Anders (*Earth/Environmental Sciences*)

James Applegate (*Astronomy*)

Jagdish Baghwati (*University Professor*)

Richard K. Betts (*Political Science*)

Phillip C. Bobbitt (*Law*)

Ronald E. Findlay (*Economics*)

Todd Gitlin (*Journalism/Sociology*)

Kenneth T. Jackson (*History*)

Robert L. Jervis (*Political Science*)

Mark Lilla (*Humanities*)

Robert McCaughey (*History, Barnard*)

Andrew J. Nathan (*Political Science*)

Richard M. Pious (*Political Science, Barnard*)

Ron Prywes (*Biological Sciences*)

Robert Y. Shapiro (*Political Science*)

Allan Silver (*Sociology, Emeritus*)

Jack L. Snyder (*Political Science*)

Seymour Spilerman (*Sociology*)

Faculty wishing to sign this statement or more information,
contact Allan Silver (as35@columbia.edu)