



AM red skies – Harvard & the various ROTC programs

Red skies at night, sailor's delight. Red skies in the morning, sailors take warning!

Background

Since the American Revolution, many Harvard military veterans have paid a price in time, blood and restricted earnings for the freedoms now enjoyed in our great country. The bios of many of these Crimson warriors are described in the Harvard Hall of Heroes and all other Harvard veterans on the website for Advocates for Harvard ROTC, including 18 Harvard alumni who were awarded the Medal of Honor, which is highest number of alumni recipients for any university in the world except for West Point and the Naval Academy.

Excluding the public Land Grant colleges, the blueprint for current ROTC programs at civilian colleges was initiated at Harvard under the leadership of Medal of Honor recipients and Harvard grads: President Theodore Roosevelt (H-1880) & General Leonard Wood USA (HMS-1884) with the active support of Harvard president A. Lawrence Lowell (H-1877 & HLS-1880) in 1913 at the Harvard Club of New York. Harvard subsequently documented that at least 11,319 Harvard men from the class of 1887 to 1921 served during World War I in the US or allied military services. Many of these men were sent overseas to France including 4 Medal of Honor recipients and over 105 who earned the 2nd highest military medal for valor (i.e. the Distinguished Service Cross /Navy Cross or comparable foreign medals). After World War I, the Harvard Army ROTC was subsequently reconfigured to be a permanent training unit and in 1926 Harvard hosted one of the first 6 Navy ROTC units in the country.

As we all know, this crucial and patriotic service of training future junior officers at Harvard continued until all of the ROTC units were thrown off the campus in 1971 due to the myopic and divisive politics relating to the Vietnam War when a weak administration caved into the demands of law breaking radical students who demanded that ROTC be removed from the Harvard Campus. The ROTC units at MIT subsequently agreed to train all cadets and midshipmen from Harvard. Despite an understandable drop in Harvard ROTC participation, this arrangement with MIT continued until the "Don't ask, Don't tell" policy for the Pentagon was passed by a Democrat controlled congress and signed into law by President Clinton. At that point, several of the former anti-military radicals of the 1960's were now tenured faculty members at Harvard College who demanded that Harvard de-recognize the ROTC activities of Harvard cadets and midshipmen as if they were involved in a banned fraternity. In addition, this group of ageing zealots coerced the Harvard Corporation and administration and to shut down Harvard's long established contribution to MIT's overhead for providing services to Harvard student in the ROTC programs. A weak Harvard administration again capitulated to myopic mob who for the most part were faculty members of the College of Arts and Science rather than students which was the case 3 decades previously.

Current sitrep

In 2001, the Advocates for Harvard ROTC were started to lobby for Harvard's official recognition of the ROTC for Harvard cadets and midshipmen training at MIT & a greater degree of ROTC participation by Harvard undergraduates. Currently the Advocates have over 2,600 members who encourage Harvard to strive for diversity of opinion as well as a DNA at the College by pro-actively promoting a climate of tolerance & acceptance for Harvard undergraduates who believe in duty, honor and country as evidenced by their participation in the ROTC Programs of the 3 services now hosted by MIT. An initial victory for patriotic rationality occurred when former Harvard president Lawrence Summers agreed in 2002 to be the key note speaker at the commissioning ceremony in the Harvard Yard for Harvard cadets and midshipmen. This patriotic outreach continued for the rest of his presidency and continued to this day under the leadership of current Harvard President Drew Faust. President Summers also eliminated many petty anti-ROTC prohibitions at Harvard College and once again allowed:

1. Use of Harvard rooms and facilities for ROTC related meetings
2. Official attendance of Harvard officers and administrators at ROTC activities
3. Students listing ROTC as an activity in their Yearbook since it was no longer officially recognized as an official undergraduate activity
4. Posting ROTC related notices on Harvard bulletin boards
5. Wearing US military uniforms by Harvard cadets and midshipmen Harvard classes even though some classes may have been right after early morning ROTC physical fitness activities
6. ROTC promotional/ recruiting efforts on the Harvard campus
7. Publishing availability and benefits of ROTC in Harvard brochures and websites.

As her immediate predecessor, President Faust fortunately continued to both project and execute a positive attitude and policies towards ROTC for Harvard students including the following initiatives:

1. Formal recognition of the Navy and Army ROTC programs at Harvard
2. Officially naming the commanding officers of the Navy and Army ROTC units at MIT as Visiting Professors of either Naval or Military Science and Harvard Directors of their units.
3. Allowing the Harvard operated bus transportation to the ROTC building at MIT
4. Providing the Harvard cadets & midshipmen MBTA & zip car passes to get to ROTC at MIT
5. Permitting the installation of the Medal of Honor plaque of Harvard alumni in Memorial Church
6. Permitting the annual service for Harvard veterans on Memorial Day in Memorial Church
7. Permitting ROTC to set up and man an information table at freshman registration day
8. Allowing Harvard cadets & midshipmen to serve as the color guard at Harvard sporting events
9. Permitting use of House common rooms for grad school vets to discuss service experiences
10. Posting ROTC options for undergraduates on the Harvard University website

Despite the above progress and forward momentum over the last decade, the current prognosis of Harvard & ROTC relations can be summarized as: "**Beachhead secured but mission not yet accomplished!**", as stated in recent headlines of the annual newsletter of the Advocates for Harvard ROTC

Challenges & opportunities

The key issue relative to ROTC at Harvard is the rather anemic level of participation in ROTC by Harvard undergraduates due to many societal issues as well as some factors reflective of policies and attitudes at Harvard University. Last scholastic year, there were only a grand total of 24 Harvard cadets or midshipmen enrolled in the 3 ROTC programs at MIT which represents only 0.4% of the Harvard undergraduate population of whom only 4 were commissioned last May as officers in the US military. This current level of Harvard ROTC participation has been static over the last decade and is in sharp contrast to the 1960's when approximately 15% of undergraduates were in one of the 3 ROTC programs hosted by Harvard. In addition to ROTC, approximately the same % from most of the Harvard classes in the 1960's also served in the military after attending one of the various officer candidate schools.

It is embarrassing for Advocate members to admit that currently **Yale** is now "Go to" Ivy league college for those interested in serving our country through ROTC since it surged from **0** to **41 Yale midshipmen** in the last 3 years. Thus, Yale again successfully justified their request to become a host college for Navy ROTC and Air Force ROTC. Other IVY host schools include Cornell & University of Penn for NROTC and Princeton for Army ROTC. Ivy Colleges with ROTC participation that are lower than Harvard included Columbia & Dartmouth which, like Harvard, have "cross-town" ROTC arrangements with other ROTC host colleges and of course Brown which has no ROTC activities. In a notable contrast to Harvard, 15 high school students with full Army scholarships applied to MIT of which 8 were accepted which was the same number of full Army scholarships among new freshmen accepted by Princeton. Yale sees the acceptance of students apply with military scholarships as means of increasing the real diversity pool of their undergraduates as well as admitting new freshmen with a higher potential to demonstrate leadership both as undergraduates as well as in later life. For the next new crop of freshmen starting in September 2015, the impact of **Harvard's admittance decisions** on the growth and sustainability on the ROTC programs serving Harvard undergraduates was not only disappointing but **disastrous** as show below in table 1:

TABLE 1

Service	Applicants with full military scholarships	Letters of recommendation by CO	Admitted number	% admitted
Army	35	8	0	0.0%
Navy*	15	0	4	26.7%
USAF**	<u>15</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>20.0%</u>
Total	65	8	7	10.8%

*Includes USMC + 1 awaiting a medical waiver + one who elected to go Army vice Navy

** Includes 1 accepted into Harvard Law

Challenges & opportunities (continued)

In addition to their ROTC host status, a major differentiation between Yale, Cornell & U-Penn versus Harvard's approach to ROTC is the pro-active outreach of the above "Ivy ROTC Big 3" to admit student with a demonstrated interest in ROTC participation as evidenced by a full military tuition scholarship or their interest expressed in their admission application or interviews. For generations, Harvard has strived to achieve world class status in all academic and research endeavors. This pursuit of excellence should also apply by providing the best ROTC units possible for those Harvard students who wish to do something beyond their own narrow self-interest by serving on active duty in the protection of the national security of our country for a few years or a career. The key to successful ROTC units is the ability to maintain a critical mass of participants for both leadership training as well as to justify the time and expense of the Defense Department to sponsor such units in the current period of extreme military budget cuts. Granted the military units & platforms have been greatly downsized over the last 3 decades as result of both financial constraints and advanced technology which has resulted in the need for fewer junior officers in the field or fleet. While not officially recognized in addition to academic achievements, all Ivy League colleges have multiple "buckets" of positive outreach for the diversification of an entering class such as: gender, ethnicity, religion, types of high school, geography, athletic ability, cultural arts skills & talents etc. To increase student participation in ROTC, it is strongly recommended that Harvard add an ROTC outreach "bucket" in the admission process as do other colleges offering successful ROTC programs either on campus or "cross town".

In their admissions application, MIT, BU and other colleges in the area ask applicants if they are interested in participating in ROTC. Among those admitted to the new freshman class who positively checked an interest in ROTC, their names and contact information are provided to the ROTC commanding officers for follow up discussions and guidance. For the last decade and probably longer, the vast majority of Harvard students participating in ROTC have had a direct relative who has served in the military, typically a father or grandfather. On the other hand, most Harvard students as well as elsewhere simply do not have awareness or thought of serving in the US military any more than joining the French Foreign Legion since it simply is not on their "radarscope" of life. However, exposure and guidance to the active duty ROTC staff may open the eyes of "diamonds in the rough" who could benefit from the unique leadership development and many other benefits of military service to the individual, our country and Harvard College.

As noted above, Harvard's formal recognition of the Army & Navy ROTC programs under President Faust was major first step in the reinvigoration of ROTC activities at Harvard and included the opening of official Army & Navy ROTC offices in the Radcliffe Quadrangle. Although the Army and Navy ROTC staff members periodically "man" these 2 offices, they rarely ever get visited by students ROTC related interests or questions. Except for those living at Radcliffe, the 2 ROTC offices are way off the beaten path for most and are seldom used even by Harvard cadets or midshipmen. The ROTC offices or even one joint ROTC office should be repositioned to more visible and user friendly location such as in the Harvard Yard or somewhere between Massachusetts Ave and Mount Vernon Street.

Challenges & opportunities (continued)

Thus, Harvard should reinvigorate its noble tradition of educating patriots who are willing to serve our country in the armed forces with great distinction by enacting the following actions:

I. High priority recommendations

1. Initiate a pro-active outreach at Harvard College to admit freshmen demonstrating a willingness to serve in the military as officers via ROTC as does Yale and Corneli.
2. On the Harvard admissions application, add a check & consider any interest in ROTC
3. Provide the names of newly admitted freshmen who checked the ROTC interest box in the admissions application to the 3 ROTC unit CO's as does MIT & other local colleges
4. Move the ROTC offices now in the Radcliffe Quad to a more convenient and visible location

In addition to the above high priority issues, several other actions could positively impact Harvard ROTC in the long run. The most visible of which is the current Harvard non-recognition of Air Force ROTC unit based at MIT as an officially recognized student activity, which hopefully will be rectified in the near future. However, the official Harvard recognition of Air Force ROTC seems to be a political issue now with relatively low priority which primarily must be addressed and settled in Washington.

In the recent past, the Harvard Alumni Office has sponsored several reflective discussions for Harvard students and alumni relating to Public Service during which the concept of the military as public service alternative was never considered let alone discussed. This significant slight seems to reflect more benign neglect or ignorance rather than a symptom of the return of myopic radical anti-militarism. Without any relevant connection, many at Harvard just do not see the US military as an honorable form of public service. However, Harvard does have major funded programs, staff and facilities to promote many other types of public service to undergraduates such a government internships, social service programs, community organizing etc. As noted above, Harvard has taken some positive steps relative to the US military and thus ROTC during the annual Harvard commissioning ceremony in the Yard and Medal of Honor plaque and related the publicity of both endeavors. In addition, the University Communications Office has recently initiated new effort focusing on Military Traditions at Harvard by sponsoring campus tours of Harvard's military symbols and monuments which were discovered and developed by Colonel Everett Spain USA while was perusing his doctorate degree at the Harvard Business School. To this end, Harvard should develop program and presentation to acknowledge and promote the value & many benefits of military service for some Harvard students but certainly not all. This could in part involve developing the awareness and pride the long tradition of military service among Harvard alumni as well as in the positive exceptionalism of the United States in various Harvard history and other courses. Perhaps the History department may go so far as reintroducing formal military history course at Harvard as was the case when Rear Admiral Samuel Morrison USNR taught on the campus before and after World War II. It is right and a noble thing to honor the all the Harvard men who died for their country as is currently partially the case, All gave some, and some gave all. This honor should be inclusive of the Harvard warriors who died both serving in military of Army and Navy during the American Revolution as well as those who died for the Confederate States of America who represented 22% all who served and 38% of all who died among Harvard alumni veterans of the Civil War.

Challenges & opportunities (continued)

Many of the local colleges as well as others in the Ivy League provide course credits for some of the ROTC courses. Harvard should again follow suit as was the case at Harvard before 1971. Such a step is not seem a short term “show stopper” for the survival of ROTC at Harvard. However, many ROTC course are not only time consuming and challenging but contribute to the concept of a well-rounded education liberal education such as marine engineering, navigation and maritime or military history. Furthermore, some of these classes could and should be provided by Harvard faculty. At any rate, Harvard should vigorously contest the distorted notion of some that ROTC military courses are in effect “trade school” like indoctrination sessions designed to kill innocent women and children.

To further enhance diversity, Harvard should follow the example of both Columbia and Dartmouth to pro-actively search for and admit some enlisted military veterans into each entering freshman class. In the last several years, Columbia has several hundred undergraduate veterans and Dartmouth has admitted several each year. These veteran students have proven to immediately bring leadership skills and maturity to the campus as well as the ability to get things done under pressure. Some of these former enlisted students may also wish to go back on active duty as a commissioned officer via the ROTC programs or for the most part will at least have project a positive attitude towards their military service for our country. Such veterans should be extended every consideration in the Harvard admission process since like all veterans they had risked all in their youth by signing a blank check to the United States which was payable possibly up to the cost of their life.

Finally like other universities, the Harvard alumni office and class reunion committees should take the initiative to sponsor alumni events for Harvard veterans at reunions, sporting events, Veterans Day and other relevant times. Harvard cadets and midshipmen could be invited to such events during the school year to learn from lessons and adventures of veteran alumni as well as provide a framework for the development of potential mentoring relationships

Harvard, the Pentagon and the White House may or may not have satisfactorily addressed the key issue of low ROTC participation rates among Harvard students over the next decade. As added propellant to this noble quest, it strongly recommended that following supplementary measure also be taken to drive the reputation of Harvard ROTC programs to world class levels:

II. Supplementary recommendations

1. Strive for the official recognition of Air Force ROTC
2. Recognize military service as the highest form of public service
3. Provide Harvard credits for some ROTC courses taken by Harvard cadets & midshipmen
4. Initiate a pro-active outreach at Harvard College to also admit former enlisted military veterans as do Columbia and Dartmouth

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