

Put ROTC Back in the Ivy League

By Kenneth Harbaugh

For almost 40 years, military training has been effectively absent from the nation's most selective civilian universities. During the Vietnam protest movement, schools such as Brown, Columbia,

Harvard, and Yale banned on-campus ROTC programs. This practice continued under evolving rationales, the most recent being Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT). In March of 2006, the Supreme Court ruled unanimously that these schools must allow the military full access. The Naval Education and Training Command (NETC) has yet to take advantage of this opportunity.

I spent three years at Yale as a law student, and went on to teach an undergraduate seminar on the obligations of citizenship. This school has supplied more than its share of senators and presidents, yet most of my classmates and students never noticed the absence of uniforms on campus. In a nation at war, this is a disgrace. For the military, reestablishing a connection to our most selective universities is

of its officer corps from the Ivies, but by having a visible presence on campus, it can provide a critical reference point for America's future leaders.

Reestablishing military training programs at these schools will require more than just a financial commitment. It will require a change in attitude. The bitterness that characterized ROTC's departure four decades ago still lingers. Some in the military harbor memories of that insult. Others cling to its lore, and reject any suggestion that the Ivies are worth re-engaging. But we cannot allow wounded pride to rule this issue. There is too much at stake.

The good news is that students themselves largely reject the anti-military rancor that dominated their campuses during the late 1960s. At Yale, a number of pro-military, *student-led* organizations now exist, including one that helps undergraduates navigate the process of applying to Marine Officer Candidate School. My students all professed a deep respect for those who chose to serve, even though most lacked a personal connection to the military.

To be sure, reintroducing ROTC will generate controversy. Certain campus constituencies have a vested interest, however misguided, in maintaining the ban. Some groups are reflexively anti-military, but most cite opposition to Don't Ask, Don't Tell. DADT is indeed unjust, but it cannot serve as an excuse for continuing the ban on ROTC. Our military has no choice (nor should it) but to enforce the policies enacted by its civilian leadership. Stiff-arming ROTC is unfair, both to the military and to students who wish to serve. But ending the ban is about more than fairness. It is, ultimately, about the future of civil-military relations.

Naval Education and Training Command should take the lead in reaching out to these schools. The students themselves are ready. As a former ROTC instructor, I taught my midshipmen about anticipating change by leading through it. On this issue, the Navy can either wait or it can lead. ✪



IVY LEAGUE OFFICERS The author believes ROTC should return to campuses such as Columbia, Brown, Yale, and Harvard (above). This would help to reconnect the military with the civilian elites who make policy, he says.

Part of the reason is that the NETC remains skeptical of the value of an Ivy League education. The Navy pays tuition costs for midshipmen, so near-term cost benefit analyses suggest that such ROTC programs are a waste of taxpayer dollars. As one high-ranking NETC official asked me, "Is a Yale-educated officer really worth five from Auburn?" The short answer is "Yes." That answer, however, has almost nothing to do with quality of education, and everything to do with our military's relationship to its civilian masters.

well worth the investment. The civilian elites who shape our national policy are growing dangerously out of touch with the men and women they send to war.

Fifty years ago, a significant number of Ivy League graduates joined the military. Today, hardly any do. Restoring ROTC will help to bridge this ever-widening gap, by providing some students with opportunities to serve directly, and providing others with a real connection to those who fight in their place. The military may never again draw a significant percentage

Mr. Harbaugh, a former Navy pilot, taught as a Guest Fellow at Yale and as an ROTC instructor at The Citadel. He currently serves as executive director of The Mission Continues.