



# **Working Paper**

## **Leveraging ROTC to Span the Civil-Military Gap**

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## ABOUT THE MILITARY, VETERANS, AND SOCIETY PROGRAM

The Military, Veterans, and Society (MVS) program addresses issues facing America's service members, veterans, and military families, including the future of the All-Volunteer Force, trends within the veteran community, and civil-military relations. The program produces high-impact research that informs and inspires strategic action; convenes stakeholders and hosts top-quality events to shape the national conversation; and engages policymakers, industry leaders, Congress, scholars, the media, and the public about issues facing veterans and the military community.



Cadet David Houston, University of Maryland-College Park, carries the guidon for his platoon. Jesse Beals/U.S. Army Cadet Command

## INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For just over 100 years, the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) has stood at the intersection of the military and American society, serving as a bridge between local communities and the armed forces. Because of this relationship, ROTC has experienced many evolutions in the hands of both constituents. Competing demands came to a head in the 1960s, as college campuses became the front lines for social and political division in American society. ROTC chapters were caught in the crossfire of some of the most contentious debates over the Vietnam War, the draft, and gay rights.<sup>1</sup>

Two countervailing trends define civil-military relations today: Since the Vietnam War and the end of the draft in 1973, the military has gradually become more isolated from society as fewer individuals serve; conversely, the military is the best-regarded public institution, and recent policy changes have led to the reinstatement of previously university-embargoed ROTC programs. While ROTC provides the military with a steady and consistent source of commissioned officers, it also allows society an “opportunity to increase contacts between military and future civilian leaders.”<sup>2</sup> Congress and the military services should leverage ROTC’s unique capacity as a bridge between the public and the military to encourage dialogue, prompt diversity of officer recruitment, and share the burden of war.



This study examines the role served by ROTC programs and their potential for growth – specifically, how the program can broaden engagement with universities and communities to benefit cadets, university students, communities, and the services. First, we present trends in the history and existing research literature of ROTC. In addition, we examine available government data on ROTC funding and officer accession levels to assess the current state of the program. Finally, we provide insights from current ROTC instructors and university officials representing several different types of programs to measure the varying impacts of ROTC.

Through this analysis, we conclude that both civilian and military leaders could deeply benefit from strengthened and empowered ROTC programs. At minimum, ROTC programs can provide a vital cultural link between the military and communities in a society where few such links exist. These interactions would serve both to strengthen the abilities of future military officers and to more closely link American society to its military. As Gen. George Patton is attributed as saying, “The soldier is the Army. No army is better than its soldiers. The soldier is also a citizen.” By expanding the role of ROTC, the military can further develop warrior-scholars with a broad base of education and experience, deepen connections to civilian peers and local communities, and improve recruitment by leveraging cadets and ROTC detachments as influencers.

## THE HISTORY OF ROTC

In 1813, Thomas Jefferson wrote to James Monroe that not having a regular army proved “the necessity of obliging every citizen to be a soldier ... and [making] military instruction a regular part of collegiate education. We can never be safe till this is done.”<sup>3</sup> Anti-military colonial sentiment and national security needs leading to reliance on local militias were the theoretical beginnings of ROTC.

Foundational to American national identity was the possession of “a military large and professional enough to protect the nation from without while avoiding the dangers of heightened militarism, which, if unchecked, could destroy the nation from within.”<sup>4</sup> It was in the interest of the republic to have a cadre of trained military officers living among a civilian population, broadly educated in military tactics and civics at colleges such as Norwich University, Virginia Military Institute, and the Citadel. The outbreak of the Civil War, however, made it obvious that additional commissioning sources were needed to supply the Union Army with trained officers. As an institution, ROTC was set in motion in 1862 by Abraham Lincoln’s Land Grant College Act (also known as the Morrill Act), which provided 30,000 acres to each state to establish learning institutions focusing on agriculture, forestry, and veterinary medicine, with the provision that they would also teach military tactics.<sup>5</sup> The Land Grant College Act was based on the belief that education and civic values should be integrated with military discipline and training; founded in every state to create a geographically represented officer corps, Land Grant schools often became public universities and premier learning institutions.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the concept of unifying higher education with military training was introduced, laying the groundwork for a formal training program.

## The Evolution of ROTC

Formal inauguration of the ROTC program was prompted by another war: World War I, which spurred the need for educated and prepared citizen-soldiers leading up to American involvement. Convinced the United States would be drawn into the war with an army too small to be effective, a group of politicians formed the Preparedness Movement to advocate for the training of a citizen army, compelling the Army chief of staff to establish summer trainings preparing citizens to be officers. In response, President Woodrow Wilson's 1916 National Defense Act established ROTC and state National Guard units to serve along with active-duty forces. Beginning at 46 schools, ROTC expanded to 135 schools in 1919 and to 220 by 1940.<sup>7</sup>

Eventually, each military service organized and operated its own ROTC program: Army ROTC (AROTC), founded in 1919, has historically been the most prominent program due to its size, funding, and organization; Navy ROTC (NROTC), established in 1926, includes the Marine option program for cadets commissioning into the Marine Corps; and Air Force ROTC (AFROTC), originally established between 1920 and 1923, was formally created by General Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1946, though the U.S. Air Force was not formally established until 1947. For many universities, ROTC was an opportunity for civic engagement and participation in national defense.<sup>8</sup> The ROTC programs quickly became an important commissioning source for the military during World War I and World War II.

The program's utility in commissioning officers made it a focus for military leaders as great power competition changed following WWII. In 1948, the Selective Service Act prompted many men to enroll in ROTC to fulfill their military obligation.<sup>9</sup> The same year, the Army shifted ROTC's purpose from reserve officer production to officer production for both the active and reserve components. To institutionalize training and education to better prepare soldiers for active duty, the Army overhauled ROTC's military education component, establishing the General Military Science (GMS) Program in 1953.<sup>10</sup> GMS elevated military education and broadened its scope to be more comprehensive. The new curriculum, consisting of 480 hours of on-campus instruction, had no university academic input and was militarily focused. The reinvigorated military courses demanded more of cadets' time and earned greater scrutiny from academic officials who considered military course instruction to be subpar.

Despite interest in molding and educating the next group of military leaders, translating military education and values to a university setting has consistently posed a hurdle for university educators and ROTC instructors. Historically, ROTC held a favored position on campus, able to act independently and operate autonomously as a distinct department. This autonomy included the freedom to design military science coursework and appoint military personnel with stature equivalent to that of professors. Over time, as former Land Grant schools and other university institutions increased their focus on teaching and research, the military science requirement became less salient, and universities grew frustrated with the lack of oversight over ROTC. Concurrently, many professors began questioning whether military personnel could or should exist in higher education. ROTC provided real and tangible benefits to universities, which benefited from scholarship funds, and to the services, which benefited from high-quality officers, but both institutions were reluctant to compromise their values and structure.<sup>11</sup>

The introduction of GMS exacerbated existing tensions over military versus college instruction, time valuation, and sufficient officer preparation. The Army's changes prompted some university administrators and professors to question the compatibility of ROTC classes with university culture, citing ROTC detachments' first loyalty to the military over host institutions. To diffuse tensions, Army leaders encouraged the Modified GMS program, which allowed some academic course substitution. The universities, only partially appeased as the services attempted to maintain military courses, increasingly relegated ROTC to extracurricular status, and GMS remained a subject of controversy. Disillusionment and institutional disagreement would reach a breaking point during the Vietnam era, as disengagement between the services and universities would mean losing sight of the long-term impact of the citizen-soldier.

### The Vietnam War Era

In 1964, Congress passed the Vitalization Act in an attempt to restructure and reinvigorate Army, Navy, and Air Force ROTC given declining enrollment and officer accession rates. The Vitalization Act updated and solidified ROTC's primary goal to commission active-duty officers. It created the modern program structure, divided into two- and four-year options, and scholarships, establishing monthly stipends to attract high-quality and talented high school students.<sup>12</sup> The changes strengthened ROTC's ties with college education at a time when tensions were rising over the Vietnam War and militarization on campus. Unfortunately, the Vitalization Act also increased detachments' military drills and training, highlighting the features of the program most objectionable to university communities. During the 1960s, ROTC was more than a training institution; it was a tangible and visible example of the militaristic foreign policy that students were protesting. The Vietnam War cast a long shadow on policymakers and the public, creating distance between the military and academic institutions that remains today.

The Vietnam War provided an ideological and practical justification for faculty and students to argue against the military's intrusion on elite campuses, reasoning that ROTC coursework did not meet university standards.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the fallout from the Tet Offensive in 1968 and introduction of the draft lottery in 1969 made ROTC cadets increasingly likely to be deployed, and therefore more visible as complicit actors in the war.<sup>14</sup> Backlash continued in 1969, as Harvard and Yale faculty and students protested the military's role in liberal education and took steps to restrict the authority of military personnel on campus. ROTC cadets at the time compared the treatment to being stationed at "an embassy on foreign soil."<sup>15</sup> ROTC programs subsequently left both campuses in 1970. The University of Pennsylvania, Princeton University, and Cornell University were the only Ivy League schools to maintain ROTC training on campus. A total of 15 schools disbanded ROTC on their campuses, while several units were discontinued due to low enrollment.<sup>16</sup> Though commonly described as a "ban" from campus, the disbanding and removal of ROTC was in many ways a mutual decision: Universities stopped offering free rent and space to ROTC programs, and the military relocated to other universities where it was more cost-effective and culturally amenable to run its programs.

ROTC was dealt another blow with President Richard Nixon's 1973 decision to end the military draft and transition to the All-Volunteer Force (AVF).<sup>17</sup> With the combination of the new AVF

model and the post-Vietnam War end to contracts between colleges and the Department of Defense (DoD), ROTC enrollment decreased by 75 percent by the end of 1973. The need for additional cadets prompted ROTC to offer scholarship incentives and allow women entry to the program. Within two years of opening ROTC to female participation in 1973, women accounted for 29 percent of ROTC enrollment.<sup>18</sup> Following the major transitions of the 1960s and 1970s, the geographic distribution of ROTC units began to shift as the Army closed unproductive units and expanded its base in areas where ROTC would be successful.<sup>19</sup> The Navy contributed to this trend following a 1977 requirement that 80 percent of all NROTC scholarship students pursue a degree in science, resulting in the relocation of NROTC to universities with an engineering focus.<sup>20</sup> Liberal arts colleges were increasingly isolated from ROTC programs, and additional loosening of requirements on Land Grant universities mitigated the impact of ROTC on cultural and geographic representation in the military. Between 1968 and 1974, there was a significant shift in ROTC unit location: In the East a net total of 30 units were closed, while in the South a net total of 33 units opened.<sup>21</sup> Historic tensions, resource constraints, and political opposition have made it difficult for the services to respond to demographic and geographic societal trends and have further isolated ROTC units.

### The Modern ROTC

Throughout the 1980s, DoD attempted to improve the quality of ROTC training and geographically refocus programs. Following the wars in Korea and Vietnam, as ROTC concentrated on regions and universities where it could recruit and commission the most officers, training and education increasingly emphasized tactical preparation for potential combat. In 1980, Army Training and Doctrine Command constructed the Military Qualification Standards (MQS), a complex system of tasks and subjects for officers to master prior to commissioning, to establish baseline skills and knowledge.<sup>22</sup> In response to findings showing structural and managerial problems,<sup>23</sup> the Army created Army Cadet Command in 1986. With ROTC's future uncertain, Cadet Command was meant to consolidate and systematize training, additionally standardizing uniforms, patches, and scholarship structure. Training became more rigorous and tactical, with a greater emphasis on field training exercises and summer trainings.<sup>24</sup>

In the 1990s, the success of the Gulf War and the Revolution in Military Affairs, which demonstrated advances in military weaponry and technology, bolstered the professionalized AVF military. Following the fall of the Soviet Union, troop drawdowns allowed the services to consistently recruit high-quality individuals. ROTC existed in a comfortable stasis, as schools that had ended contracts with ROTC remained opposed and the military continued to focus on reliable recruitment streams. However, the Bill Clinton administration's 1994 "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT)<sup>25</sup> compromise created significant controversy in liberal-minded segments of society, particularly on college campuses.<sup>26</sup> DADT remained a point of significant criticism for liberal arts and elite universities throughout the 1990s and 2000s. Equally controversial for universities was the Solomon Amendment<sup>27</sup> in the 1996 National Defense Authorization Act, which tied millions in federal funding to the willingness of universities to allow military recruiters on campus. After the attacks of 9/11, attention to federal funding and renewed pressure resulting from the outbreak of war pressured the government to expand the scope and enforcement of the Solomon Amendment.<sup>28</sup> These changes reignited arguments over militarization of campus and liberal education.

The repeal of the DADT policy in 2010 prompted renewed discussions about the viability of ROTC detachments on campuses.<sup>29</sup> As a result of these conversations, universities with ROTC bans and colleges that had maintained their distance from DoD began to welcome the program back to campus. For all the tense discussions prior to the return of ROTC to Ivy League and liberal arts college campuses,<sup>30</sup> the program's return has been relatively non-controversial. ROTC was voted back onto Harvard and Columbia campuses in 2010, formalizing Harvard's cross-town participation at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) programs and Columbia's participation at Manhattan College and Fordham University. Yale welcomed Navy and Air Force ROTC back in 2011. Stanford faculty voted to bring ROTC back the same year. Brown formally recognized ROTC in 2016.<sup>31</sup>

While students at these colleges now have a lower barrier to entry into ROTC, the most significant efforts are university coordination with detachments, facilitation of academic endeavors, and transportation assistance. Prior to university collaboration with ROTC programs and support to cadets, students had to balance their course schedules with ROTC requirements and travel across town or across the state to participate in physical training (PT) or military science courses, all without assistance.<sup>32</sup> ROTC course commitments are substantial: All the services offer scholarship and non-scholarship options and summer trainings or other optional training opportunities. Army Cadet Command oversees AROTC training and education, which is divided into two- and four-year programs called Basic Course and Advanced Course.<sup>33</sup> The Navy requires cadets to take a military science course each semester, as well as a weekly drill; summer training; and academic courses in calculus, English, national security policy, and physics.<sup>34</sup> Air Force ROTC requires two military science courses each semester and leadership courses.<sup>35</sup> ROTC operates as an extracurricular activity, and most schools do not award academic credit for military science courses. After cadets complete military science and training course requirements, upon graduation they receive a commission to join the active or reserve components.

## THE CURRENT STATE OF ROTC

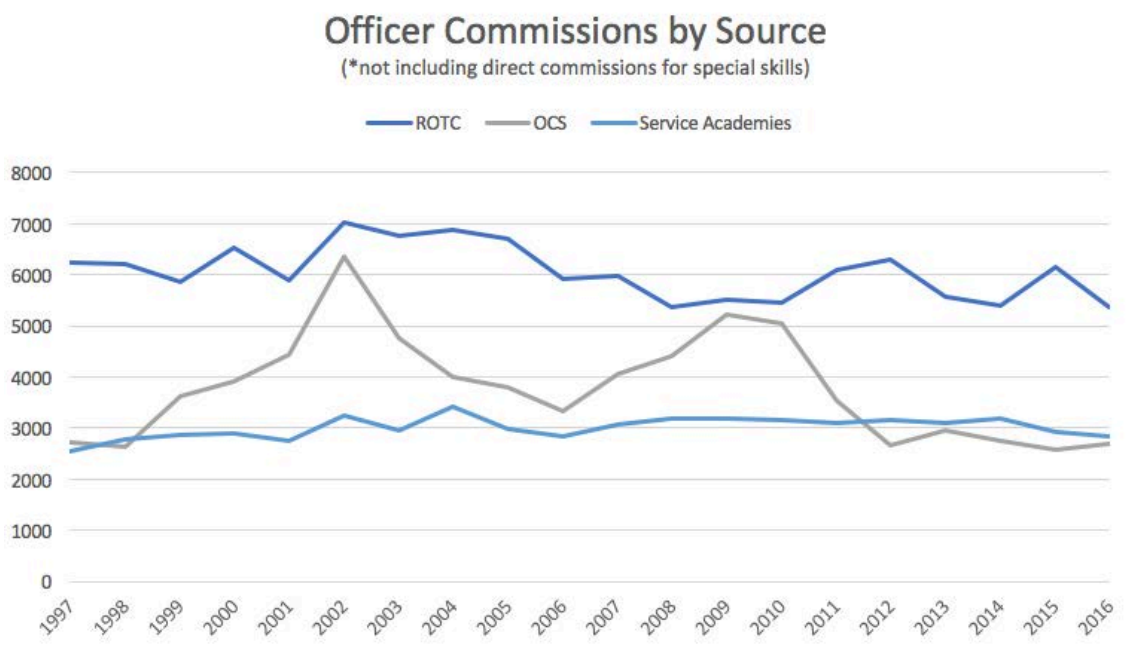
After decades of transformation, ROTC exists today as a robust and well-resourced commissioning source for the U.S. military, with active programs at more than 275 universities.<sup>36</sup> As historically evidenced, ROTC holds distinct value for the military and society: The military experiences measurable benefits in regularly gaining quality officers, and universities experience tangible and intangible benefits, gaining scholarship money and a role educating future military leaders. While achieving these goals while balancing military needs and university standards has raised tensions in the past, the state of ROTC today illustrates both progress and room for growth.

The services release little publicly available data about ROTC programs save for funding levels, accessions by service, and program location. This study examines available data, including population reports from CNA, funding data from the Government Accountability Office, and publicly available analyses of ROTC officer promotion and time in service. To assess challenges to ROTC retention, further information is needed examining the number of students exiting the program after one or two years. Additionally, a comprehensive examination of the impact of university support to cadets on retention and success in ROTC is needed.



## ROTC in the Military

For the Army and Air Force, ROTC represents the largest single commissioning source for new officers. The Navy commissions officers through Officer Candidate School (OCS) and ROTC at similar rates, while the Marine Corps primarily commissions officers through OCS (see “Officer Commissions by Source”). The service academies consistently provide around 1,000 new officers per academy each year, and OCS can be used to quickly increase the number of officers. ROTC, in comparison, provides a reliable means to meet the needs of the military with educated, professional officers, with some flexibility to increase or decrease commissioning depending on need. To this point, ROTC funding is directly subject to the needs of the military, with scholarship funding allocated to meet recruitment targets and align to DoD strategic goals. ROTC earns its value to the services because data shows the programs steadily produce new, high-quality officers at a reasonable cost.



Source: CNA

Budgetary and manpower constraints are a considerable part of the calculus for maintaining ROTC programs, with services preferring universities proximal to smaller schools to draw from multiple regional colleges or from universities with populous undergraduate classes. Although political shifts have meant colleges are more willing to welcome ROTC back to campus, multiple factors determine a detachment’s viability, including overhead for military science instructors, potential cadet enrollment and accessions, and incentive of ROTC scholarships against tuition costs. For instance, ROTC scholarships do not sufficiently offset high tuition at elite and private universities, while low expected enrollment due to the small size of liberal arts institutions is insufficient return on investment.

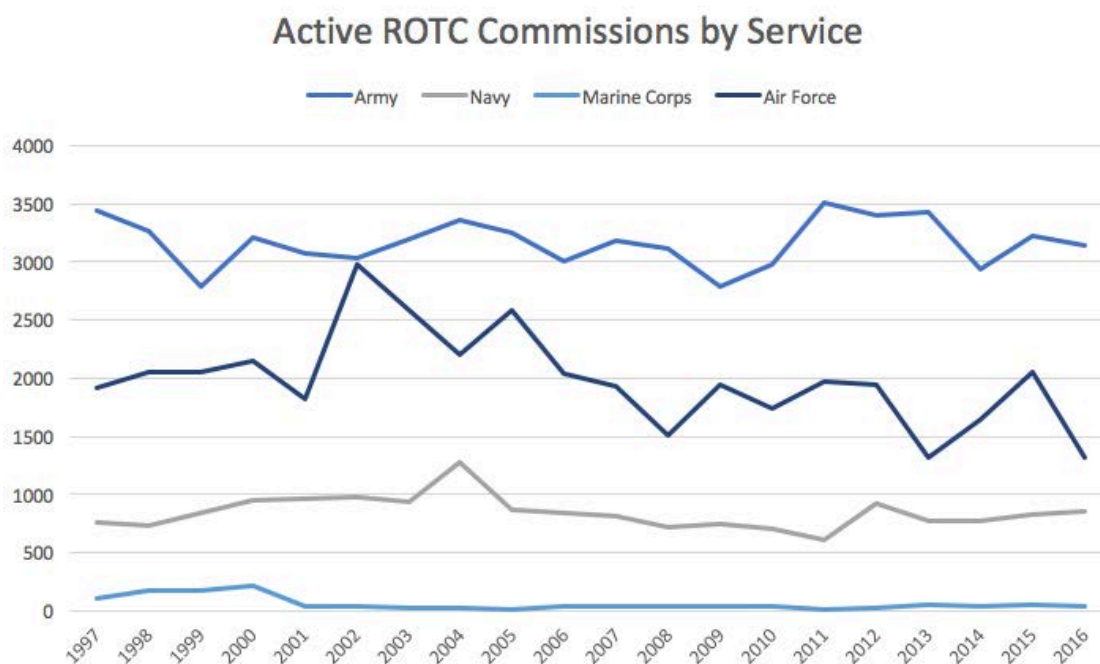
Due to high investment and operation costs for maintaining ROTC detachments, the services regularly strive to close unproductive units. Urban areas and the Northeast have been consistently

underrepresented as universities distanced themselves from the armed forces and the military invested in easy markets. Given the high cost of establishing and maintaining a ROTC program for the military, ROTC programs in urban centers tend to host students from multiple schools. However, attempts by the services to discontinue low-producing or expensive detachments have regularly faced opposition by Congress and DoD; in recent years, the Air Force and Army have attempted to close units to refocus resources and have subsequently faced blowback. Since the Vietnam-era ROTC chapter closures, the services have expressed little interest in expanding to elite universities or into regions without significant military support or propensity to serve. Patriotism and strong overall military recruitment following the 9/11 attacks perpetuated this trend.

## TRENDS IN ROTC COMMISSIONING AND FUNDING

### ROTC Accessions

ROTC enrollment has varied significantly over time, most markedly incurring a 75 percent reduction following the transition to the AVF in 1973. Commissioning data through 2016, the most recent year available for officer accessions, shows ROTC has been a relatively consistent and reliable commissioning source across the services since the 1990s.<sup>37</sup> Since 2001, the Army has regularly gained about 3,000 new officers annually from ROTC, while adjusting OCS commissions to meet immediate needs (see “Active ROTC Commissions by Service”).<sup>38</sup> In 2001, 3,070 new officers commissioned into the Army through ROTC, versus 845 through OCS, for a total officer population of 64,797. In 2016, the Army received 3,142 officers from ROTC, compared to 538 through OCS, in an officer population of 77,861. ROTC scholarship and non-scholarship options have consistently provided around 50 percent of commissioning Army officers annually.



Source: CNA

ROTC accessions for the other services are smaller, but similarly consistent. The Air Force commissioned 1,817 officers through ROTC in 2001 and 1,322 in 2016, versus 1,294 and 643 respectively through OCS, though the number of Air Force ROTC scholarships over that time notably decreased almost to zero because of an Air Force reduction in the number of junior officers.<sup>39</sup>

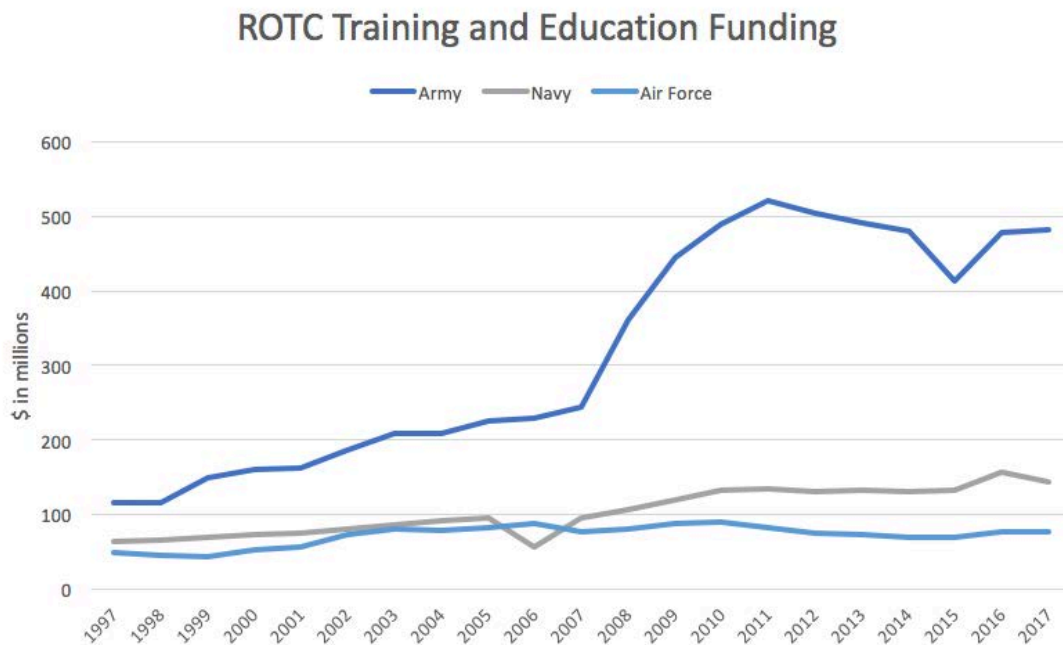
In 2016, the Navy commissioned 855 officers through ROTC and 1,052 through OCS; a decrease compared with 2001, in which it commissioned 964 through ROTC and 1,278 through OCS.<sup>40</sup> ROTC consistently accounts for approximately 20 percent of annual Navy commissions. While Naval ROTC students have the option to commission into the Marine Corps, this is a less utilized commissioning path – with only 45 Marine ROTC commissions in 2016, compared with 468 through OCS.<sup>41</sup>

As previously mentioned, service academy accessions vary slightly. West Point, or the U.S. Military Academy, commissions on average 1,000 officers annually; the U.S. Naval Academy commissions on average 820 Naval officers and 220 Marine Corps officers annually; and the U.S. Air Force Academy commissions on average 970 airmen annually.

### *ROTC Funding*

The DoD Office of Operations and Maintenance reports annually allocated training and education funds, indicating the services' investment in military personnel training and ongoing education. Most notably, the Army showed a significant increase in funding, from \$162.1 million in 2001 to \$482.7 million in 2017, and peaking in 2011 at \$520.9 million – more than a 300 percent increase. For both the Navy and Air Force, funding increased modestly from 2001 to 2017. Navy funding grew in current-year dollars from \$75.4 million to \$144.7 million, and Air Force funding from \$57.3 million to \$95.8 million.

Though the rate of ROTC commissioning has remained relatively consistent since 9/11, funding levels for ROTC training and education (Figure 3) have grown over time, particularly in the case of the Army.<sup>42</sup> Per new commissioned officer, the Army paid nearly \$130,000 in training and education funds in 2015, versus only around \$53,000 in 2001. The funding growth during this time reflects conscious efforts within the Department of the Army to more closely align ROTC training with the active-duty Army, to better prepare cadets for the wars of the post-9/11 era.<sup>43</sup> In comparison, it costs the Navy \$275,001 per graduate at the Naval Academy and \$322,750 per graduate at the Air Force Academy.<sup>44</sup> OCS costs an average of \$32,000 per commissioned officer.<sup>45</sup>



Source: Government Accountability Office

## ROTC COMPARED WITH OCS AND THE ACADEMIES

Given the reliability of ROTC commissioning rates, it is useful to evaluate the value of ROTC alongside other commissioning sources to put the program into greater context. Studies on retention and promotion across commissioning sources indicate key trends that elucidate the long-term benefits of ROTC for the services.<sup>46</sup> However, the role of ROTC to produce officers captures only part of its greater importance to the services and society.

Due to the lack of publicly available data on exact length of time in service or time in grade by commissioning source, we relied on past comparative analyses to evaluate historical trends of officers commissioned through ROTC. It is possible that trends have shifted as the Global War on Terror has progressed into its second decade. Historically across commissioning sources, officers commissioned through ROTC spent somewhat more time in service than academy graduates and somewhat less than OCS graduates.<sup>47</sup> By a different measure, officers commissioned through ROTC show strong promotion rates, especially at higher levels. Officers from both ROTC scholarship and non-scholarship options have higher retention rates compared to other commissioning sources;<sup>48</sup> in the Marine Corps, officers from OCS and ROTC had higher promotion rates to grade O-4;<sup>49</sup> and in the Army, ROTC scholarship graduates exhibited higher promotion rates than other sources.<sup>50</sup> In the Navy, Academy graduates had better performance records throughout their career, though ROTC remains a critical source of officers.<sup>51</sup>

Past analyses<sup>52</sup> and raw data indicate that, compared to other commissioning sources, ROTC remains a cost-effective and reliable source for officers with high rates of promotion and retention. The program has remained a strong source for educated officers who have been drilling and training



for years to enter the military full- or part-time. Furthermore, the intangibles of a political education and regular engagement in civil society may tie these ROTC-commissioned officers more closely to civil society and democratic ideals. The benefit for society is even less tangible but critically important. Given the military's increasing isolation from civilian society, interaction, engagement, and collaboration with cadets and future service members disproves misconceptions about the military, helps communities welcome veterans back into their midst, and most importantly, better shares the burdens of war.

### ROTC in Society

In addition to playing a central role in commissioning officers, ROTC has been critical in connecting the military to the rest of society. Many hurdles cited by universities as reasons to bar reentry of ROTC onto campus – the Vietnam War, DADT, the bar on women in combat roles, and transgender individuals' inability to serve – have been removed, prompting many individuals to demand a change in policy. In many cases, university leadership was hesitant to change or challenge the status quo, especially at elite institutions. The ongoing conversation about the role of the military in society, particularly at learning institutions, is an important one for the health of the civil-military relationship.

For many students, ROTC provides scholarship opportunities to those who may otherwise not have a chance to attend college; for others, it offers a unique career trajectory. For universities, ROTC is an opportunity to educate military officers and future leaders as civilians with a comprehensive educational background.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, universities benefit from ROTC scholarship funding and student retention and graduation rates. ROTC cadets are high performers who are required to graduate within four years. For society, exposure to ROTC cadets is an opportunity for professors and students to bridge the familiarity gap and address worrisome military recruitment and isolation trends.

### ROTC ON CAMPUS

ROTC programs vary in structure and size. ROTC detachments are located on one campus and sometimes act as host schools for cross-town enrollment by students at nearby secondary schools. Each ROTC detachment is unique, although with similar organizational structure.<sup>54</sup> For additional visibility into the current state of ROTC's composition, engagement, and treatment today, we contacted programs diverse in structure, location, and size, and were able to speak with five programs that are illustrative of different types of schools that host ROTC: Brown University, Georgetown University, Harvard University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Texas A&M University. Brown and Harvard ended their relationship with ROTC in the 1960s but recently reinstated ROTC, while MIT and Georgetown have long-standing relationships with the program as regional host schools. Texas A&M is a Senior Military College (SMC) with a large Corps of Cadets. All information regarding these programs is from the 2017 academic year. These five programs illustrate the structural and size differences in the ROTC program, its importance to the campus, and its reception among students and the community. Highlighting these individual programs further provides a view into current trends in military-university engagement.

Brown University was the final Ivy League institution to welcome ROTC back to campus in 2016 after a historic disconnect, following lively debate among students and alumni.<sup>55</sup> In the 2017 academic year, Brown had 18 student cadets representing each of the service branches, each program hosted by a different nearby school.<sup>56</sup> Although the Brown administration sought to host a program with alumni support, the military cited the expense of establishing a program and the efficiency of cross-town enrollment for its refusal. To support students and facilitate community and assistance, Brown established the Office of Student Veterans and Commissioning Programs (OSVCP), which provides transportation and logistics assistance in addition to regular luncheons for cadets and veterans. Other than days on which cadets wear uniforms, there is minimal explicit engagement between cadets and other students at Brown. Despite being the last Ivy League school to welcome ROTC back to campus, Brown has experienced remarkably little fanfare or issue following reengagement with ROTC.

The Hoya Battalion at Georgetown University hosts four other schools<sup>57</sup> in the District of Columbia with a total enrollment of 140 cadets, half of whom are from American University. The ROTC offices are located separately from campus, reflective of the minimal engagement the detachment has with Georgetown and the other universities. Cadet community engagement is primarily through Color Guard presentation of the flag at sporting events on campus and at events in the D.C. region and via a community service project all cadets must complete during their final semester of college. There is interest in greater university engagement, through campus-wide events such as sexual assault awareness month or black history month, or campus institutions such as the multicultural center. Such engagement is currently motivated by military science instructors or detachments to engage further on campus.

Hosted by MIT, the Paul Revere Battalion includes students from eight other regional universities, including Harvard University.<sup>58</sup> Harvard downgraded ROTC to an extracurricular following the Vietnam War, leaving Harvard students the options to enroll cross-town at MIT, with further faculty opposition following implementation of DADT. Harvard cadets still participate in MIT programs. Enrollment in the Paul Revere Battalion averages 60-75 cadets annually for all eight participating schools. If participating schools have at least five cadets on campus, military science instructors have the opportunity to teach on those campuses, though the majority of classes take place at MIT. Similarly, once cadets demonstrate proficiency at PT, cadets lead their own PT sessions on their home campus. AROTC initiatives at MIT include multiple opportunities for military science instructors to teach university students, detachment partnerships with university groups, and cadet-led initiatives. The Paul Revere Color Guard presents at sporting events and ceremonies on campus. MIT and ROTC have a positive relationship with no negative opinions toward students. MIT boasts the strongest community engagement and community development within the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade of Army Cadet Command, which covers the Northeast United States.

Founded by the Morrill Act and an all-military college until 1965, Texas A&M is one of six SMCs.<sup>59</sup> SMCs provide a unique function under Title 10 of the U.S. Code, with specific requirements to train and develop character among students via the Corps of Cadets.<sup>60</sup> Students decide whether to commission through the Corps after a year and a half, with those who do not commission still able to participate, though subject to the same requirements. The A&M Corps of Cadets aims to commission 100 cadets a year and comprises 2,500 cadets. Despite the Corps' relative size on a

campus of 59,000 students, the cadets are a significant, respected, and supported presence. Texas A&M cadets are known for their presence at major sporting events, and the Fightin' Texas Aggie Band performs at all games. Most ROTC detachments include a community service component, for which Texas A&M's Corps of Cadets completes an annual "March to the Brazos [River]" to raise money for the March of Dimes.

## ROTC IN THE COMMUNITY

The most striking difference between programs interviewed for this study is the discrepancy in engagement activities with local communities. While not representative of all ROTC programs, our discussions suggested the tone of relationships between detachments and university communities varied from positive to disengaged. Engagement initiatives are developed by individual ROTC programs, contingent on the program's goals, and include DoD ROTC events, engagement with the local community, and engagement with the host school or participating schools. While all programs provide leadership training and physical training, there is no specified guidance regarding engagement with university hosts or the adjacent community. Subsequently, engagement beyond the stipulation to train, teach, and prepare cadets varies widely.

The presence of ROTC is more visible at host schools, to which cadets travel from other campuses for drill and military science courses. Programs showed a tendency for ROTC to live in a bubble, content to train and prepare cadets without engaging further with the university or community. Subsequently, at some schools where ROTC is not a key part of university life, the program can often go unnoticed by university departments; at others, the faculty are unaware of how to interact with the program. ROTC instructors observed a general lack of awareness or familiarity with the military among students. While cadets traverse both military and college life, there exists confusion regarding the presence and purpose of ROTC. Secondary schools are sometimes less welcoming to cadets than the host institution, and cadets there experience their peers' disapproval. While the visible return of ROTC programs to campus has been met with remarkably little pushback or animosity, the lack of awareness and understanding about the military and purpose of cadets highlights other issues. MIT, on the other hand, demonstrates a program interwoven with its host institution, where detachment leadership endeavors for cadets to participate equally and easily with ROTC and university communities, developing affinities with campus groups and sports. Illustrating one way of breaching the familiarity gap, cadets sometimes include their sports teammates in morning PT sessions.

The attitude toward ROTC and cadets at most host and secondary universities is either disengaged but positive or generally apathetic. In our discussions, we heard of some strained relations at participating schools that had cadets worried about wearing their uniform on campus and feeling isolated from the university. Some instructors mentioned that the ROTC offices serve as a safe space for cadets who feel like they are not full members of their university. By no means a universal phenomenon, the pattern nonetheless highlights the lack of understanding of cadet and ROTC life and presents an opportunity for university administrators to better support and include ROTC in university events and culture.

Of ROTC programs interviewed, the program at MIT was the most engaged with the university and the community. The cadre organized a Freshman Advising Seminar to help freshmen adjust and learn to converse with different audiences, a Vets and Cadets partnership between veteran students and ROTC cadets, and mentorship to support men of color in partnership with the Office of Minority Education. Furthermore, the ROTC cadre teach leadership during MIT's winter Independent Activities Period and hosts a Football Leader Camp, and the cadets complete weapons familiarization with MIT Police. As evidenced by the collaboration between the Paul Revere Battalion and MIT, as well as efforts to engage with participating secondary schools, there are many opportunities and options for ROTC programs to have a greater impact on their host school. Our discussions with ROTC detachments indicated that while ROTC already serves an important role for the military and society on college campuses, there is room for many ROTC programs to have a greater positive presence on campuses and in local communities.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Our conversations with ROTC instructors demonstrated how many unrealized opportunities there are for bridging the civil-military divide through ROTC, which would benefit the services, universities, and society as a whole. Overall, the services need to assess the balance between commissioning sources, funding, and geographic diversity of ROTC programs. While DoD and congressional opposition is possible, the services could do more to make their case for maintaining and leveraging a nationwide presence for future recruiting and diversity. Furthermore, ROTC should be more flexible in reflection of personnel and talent management changes to DoD writ large. In a time where few Americans are exposed to the military, ROTC can be a venue for increased dialogue and engagement between the military and society as well as a compelling entry point into service for many young people. MIT's Paul Revere Battalion is an exceptional example of the kind of engagement possible and offers a blueprint for other programs. Cadet Command, the services, and Congress could do more to encourage and demand higher standards of participation with host universities and communities.

First, there is room for more formal ROTC collaboration with the university by enhancing partnerships across campus. Encompassing traits of a leadership course and a varsity sport, ROTC has many potential venues for formalized engagement. Specifically, ROTC units could establish partnerships with university multicultural centers, student advisory services, mentorship services, sports teams, and more. Such mentorship and departmental collaboration would employ military leadership and structure where it can make an impact, while also familiarizing students with a major component of American foreign policy and influence.

Second, ROTC units can foster community by collaborating with student veterans. Given the shrinking number of veterans in society, integration can be a challenge. Welcoming student veterans into the cadet community would serve as a mentorship platform and minimize both veteran and cadet isolation. Some university offices create joint offices for veterans and cadets together, such as Brown's OSVCP, which can serve to bring the vast experience of student veterans together with future military officers. Combining veterans and cadets supports leadership development; provides a support group that other students gain from sports, fraternities and sororities, and religious groups;



and allows the military community to jointly coordinate. Furthermore, an established community could help draw veterans to universities that may otherwise seem unwelcoming.

Third, there should be greater connection between faculty and ROTC. Non-cadet students should have the option to audit or take military science courses as electives. Cadets are not officially part of the military until they commission after graduation, and each service's ROTC program allows for some later entry; therefore, the courses serve as an educational tool as well as a recruitment tool. ROTC instructors could additionally offer a Military and Department of Defense 101 class for faculty and students to educate the student body more widely. While cadets can study abroad with approved summer courses, Army Cadet Command and the other services should allow greater access for cadets to study abroad or take a semester at other institutions, both to broaden the cadet's knowledge, perspective, and experience and to expose other universities to ROTC.

Fourth, past research has recommended expanding the ROTC program to include postgraduate and community college students.<sup>61</sup> ROTC currently recruits from the undergraduate population at four-year institutions; broadening ROTC eligibility would encourage greater diversity among military officers, increase the pool of potential officer recruits, and allow for greater interaction with society. For instance, community colleges are an untapped source of talent. They boast strong attendance<sup>62</sup> and could fulfill certain technical specialties in the warrant officer community. Similarly, graduate students who may have missed the chance to enroll in ROTC as undergraduates would be highly educated assets to the services.

These recommendations offer lines of effort for leveraging ROTC and one course of action to address the civil-military divide. ROTC produces skilled officers with the ability to lead; the program itself could be more flexible in order to reach more individuals and fully engage all of society.

## CONCLUSION

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, ROTC's purpose of developing citizen-soldier officers and educating a diverse set of future leaders was sidelined by controversies in American society and further damaged by isolation and a growing familiarity gap between society and the military. As the country continues to ask so much of its military, the willingness of citizens to serve will be essential to maintaining the professional All-Volunteer Force on which the United States has relied since 1973. In 1775, George Washington told the New York Provincial Congress, "When we assumed the soldier, we did not lay aside the citizen," confirming the military's respect for, and understanding of, American liberty.<sup>63</sup> The ongoing isolation of the military from society since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century threatens that balance and the importance of a citizen-soldier. Furthermore, geographic isolation of military bases in the West and South, trends toward military service as a family profession, and shrinking numbers of citizens with any connection to the military<sup>64</sup> position ROTC as a natural bridge between the military and society.

ROTC has been an important interlocutor between the military and society since its inception, though this role waned post-Vietnam and in the AVF-era of troop drawdowns.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, since the institution of the AVF, American society at large has become more separated from the U.S. military socially and geographically. The personal distance from the military experienced by many

citizens can pose a danger for a few reasons. In the words of author James Fallows, “America’s distance from the military makes the country too willing to go to war, and too callous about the damage warfare inflicts.”<sup>66</sup> Less tangibly, this distance leads to preconceptions and inaccurate understanding of the military.<sup>67</sup> Distance from and ignorance about the military inhibits healthy interactions between civilians and service members, and it prevents successful community integration of veterans into society after service.

ROTC has a strong history as a platform for civic engagement and education, and government initiatives should include ROTC in their examination of existing means of engagement to close the familiarity gap and inspire service. With a national presence at a wide variety of universities and a focus on civil and military values, ROTC has the potential to provide greater outreach and engagement for the military to younger generations.

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<sup>1</sup> Doug Wissing, “The Return of ROTC,” *The American Legion*, December 20, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Feaver and Richard Kohn, *Soldiers and Citizens: The Civil-Military Gap and American National Security* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Jefferson, “Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, 19 June 1813,” National Archives.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Neiberg, *Making Citizen-Soldiers: ROTC and the Ideology of American Military Service* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 3.

<sup>5</sup> See: Arthur Coumbe and Lee Harford, *U.S. Army Cadet Command: The Ten-Year History* (Fort Monroe, Virginia: U.S. Army Cadet Command, 1996).

<sup>6</sup> “History and Overview of the Land Grant College System,” in *Colleges of Agriculture at the Land Grant Universities: A Profile*, (Washington: National Research Council, 1995), <https://www.nap.edu/read/4980/chapter/2>.

<sup>7</sup> Coumbe and Harford, *U.S. Army Cadet Command*, 14.

<sup>8</sup> “First, to create a nucleus of educated citizens throughout the country who could be called to arms in case of a national emergency; and second, to obstruct the development of a Junkerlike official cast.” Gordon Sander, “Where Have all the Young Men Gone?” *Change*, 7 no. 7 (1975), 16-18.

<sup>9</sup> Coumbe and Harford, *U.S. Army Cadet Command*, 21.

<sup>10</sup> Instruction consisted of the fundamentals of drill and staff procedures, advanced tactical techniques, and individual military skills. Coumbe and Harford, *Army Cadet Command*, 23; and Neiberg, *Making Citizen-Soldiers*, 68-70.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 131-132.

<sup>12</sup> Coumbe and Harford, *U.S. Army Cadet Command*, 140.

<sup>13</sup> Diane Mazur, “The R.O.T.C. Myth,” *The New York Times*, October 24, 2010.

<sup>14</sup> Neiberg, *Making Citizen-Soldiers*, 117-118.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>16</sup> Kori Schake and Jim Mattis, *Warriors & Citizens: American Views of Our Military* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2016).

<sup>17</sup> The military’s “all-volunteer force” is a misnomer more accurately described as an “all-recruited force” and was not an easy hurdle for the services or ROTC to overcome. James Drago, “Generational Theory: Implications for Recruiting the Millennials,” USAWC Strategy Research Project (U.S. Army War College, 2006), 4.

<sup>18</sup> Coumbe and Harford, *U.S. Army Cadet Command*, 41.

<sup>19</sup> Previously, the Army had faced blowback from deceptively apathetic universities when trying to remove programs from campus. The Army went so far as to institute the “100 in – 25 out” criteria, which demanded detachments enroll 100 new freshman and commission 25 new graduates annually.

<sup>20</sup> Neiberg, *Making Citizen-Soldiers*, 199.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>22</sup> Coumbe and Harford, *U.S. Army Cadet Command*, 92.

<sup>23</sup> The “ROTC Study Group” was chartered in October 1984 by Army Chief of Staff General John Wickham to conduct a comprehensive review of the program and to consider alternatives to its organization.

<sup>24</sup> Neiberg, *Making Citizen-Soldiers*.

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<sup>25</sup> Officially the Department of Defense Directive 1304.26, the compromise prohibited discrimination against gay individuals in the military and allowed gay individuals to serve, contingent on those individuals not referencing or acknowledging their same-sex relationships.

<sup>26</sup> James Fallows, "DADT and Ivy League ROTC," *The Atlantic*, May 25, 2010.

<sup>27</sup> 10 U.S. Code § 983, "Institutions of higher education that prevent ROTC access or military recruiting on campus: denial of grants and contracts from Department of Defense, Department of Education, and certain other departments and agencies," <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/10/983>.

<sup>28</sup> Marc Lindeman, "Storming the Ivory Tower: The Military's Return to American Campuses," *Parameters*, Winter 2006-7, 45; and Claudio Sanchez, "U.S. Government Punishes Schools That Ban Military Recruiting," National Public Radio, June 1, 2005.

<sup>29</sup> "Don't Ask Don't Tell Is Repealed," U.S. Department of Defense, 2010, [http://archive.defense.gov/home/features/2010/0610\\_dadt/](http://archive.defense.gov/home/features/2010/0610_dadt/).

<sup>30</sup> Brian Bolduc, "ROTC? ROFL!" *The Harvard Crimson*, February 19, 2010; and Peter Makhlof, "Makhlof '16: ROTC: Return of the Criminals," *The Brown Daily Herald*, February 5, 2015.

<sup>31</sup> The Committee on the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC), "Brown and the Reserve Officers Training Corps: Past, Present, and Future," Brown University Office of the Dean of the College, June 2011.

<sup>32</sup> Michael Winerip, "The R.O.T.C. Dilemma," *The New York Times*, October 26, 2009.

<sup>33</sup> Basic Course, the first two years of instruction, comprises Military Science I (MSI), Military Science II (MSII), and Basic Camp. Advanced Course, the second two years of instruction, consists of Military Science III (MSIII) and Leadership Development Program.

<sup>34</sup> "Academic Requirements," Navy ROTC, [http://www.nrotc.navy.mil/acad\\_requirements.html](http://www.nrotc.navy.mil/acad_requirements.html).

<sup>35</sup> "Courses and Training," U.S. Air Force ROTC, <https://www.afrotc.com/college-life/courses>.

<sup>36</sup> Army Cadet Command, <http://www.cadetcommand.army.mil/>.

<sup>37</sup> *Population Representation in the Military Services* (CNA Analysis and Solutions, 1997-2016), <https://www.cna.org/research/pop-rep>; and Government Accountability Office (GAO), "Strategic Plan Needed to Address Army's Emerging Officer Accession and Retention Challenges," GAO-07-224 (GAO, January 2007), <https://www.gao.gov/new.items/d07224.pdf>.

<sup>38</sup> Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, "Population Representation in the Military Services: Fiscal Year 2016 Summary Report," (Office of the Under Secretary of Defense, 2018).

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> "DoD Budget Request" (Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), 2018).

<sup>43</sup> "History," Army Cadet Command, <http://www.cadetcommand.army.mil/history.aspx>.

<sup>44</sup> Government Accountability Office, "Military Education Report: DOD Needs to Enhance Performance Goals and Measures to Improve Oversight of Military Academies," GAO-03-1000 (GAO, September 2003), 8, <https://www.gao.gov/new.items/d031000.pdf>.

<sup>45</sup> "Comparative Analysis of ROTC, OCS and Service Academies as Commissioning Sources" (Tench Francis School of Business Advanced Management Program, November 19, 2004), 7, <https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0059/6242/files/tenchfrancisprose.pdf>.

<sup>46</sup> Of note, the closure of the service academies has occasionally been advocated, due to their high operating costs and lack of significant success compared to the other commissioning sources. See: Tom Ricks, "Why We Should Get Rid of West Point," *The Washington Post*, April 19, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/04/16/AR2009041603483.html>.

<sup>47</sup> Susan D. Hosek, Peter Tiemeyer, M. Rebecca Kilburn, Debra A. Strong, Selika Ducksworth, and Reginald Ray, "Minority and Gender Differences in Officer Career Progression," (RAND Corporation, 2001); Levent Ergun, "An Analysis of Officer Accession Programs and the Career Development of U.S. Marine Corps Officers," Naval Postgraduate School, March 2003; and "Officer Commissioning Programs: Costs and Officer Performance" (Congressional Budget Office, 1990).

<sup>48</sup> Hosek et al., "Minority and Gender Differences in Officer Career Progression."

<sup>49</sup> Ergun, "An Analysis of Officer Accession Programs and the Career Development of U.S. Marine Corps Officers."

<sup>50</sup> Zafer Kizilkaya, "An Analysis of the Effect of Commissioning Sources on Retention and Promotion of U.S. Army Officers" (thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, June 2004), <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a424559.pdf>.

<sup>51</sup> William Lehner, "An Analysis of Naval Officer Accession Programs," Naval Postgraduate School, March 2008.

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<sup>52</sup> “Comparative Analysis of ROTC, OCS and Service Academies as Commissioning Sources.”

<sup>53</sup> See: Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier* (New York: Free Press, 1960).

<sup>54</sup> Each detachment consists of a commander – or professor of military science – usually at the lieutenant colonel and commander level (O-5), officers and non-commissioned officers to teach military science courses, and civilian staff for support.

<sup>55</sup> Natalie Fondreist, “Serving Silently,” *The Brown Daily Herald*, 2014.

<sup>56</sup> AROTC occurs at Providence College, NROTC at College of the Holy Cross, and AFROTC at Worcester Polytechnical Institute.

<sup>57</sup> American University, Catholic University of America, George Washington University, and the Institute for World Politics.

<sup>58</sup> Endicott College, Gordon College, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Harvard University, Lesley College, Salem State University, Tufts University, and Wellesley College.

<sup>59</sup> “History of the University,” Texas A&M University, <https://www.tamu.edu/about/history.html>.

<sup>60</sup> 10 U.S.C. § 2111A, “Support for Senior Military Colleges.”

<sup>61</sup> Task Force on Defense Personnel, “Building a F.A.S.T. Force: A Flexible Personnel System for a Modern military,” (Bipartisan Policy Center, March 2017), <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/BPC-Defense-Building-A-FAST-Force.pdf>.

<sup>62</sup> Jennifer Ma and Sandy Baum, “Trends in Community Colleges: Enrollment, Prices, Student Debt, and Completion” (research brief, College Board, April 2016), <https://trends.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/trends-in-community-colleges-research-brief.pdf>.

<sup>63</sup> “New York Provincial Congress,” George Washington’s Mount Vernon, , <https://www.mountvernon.org/library/digitalhistory/digital-encyclopedia/article/new-york-provincial-congress/>.

<sup>64</sup> Amy Schafer, “Generations of War,” (Center for a New American Security, 2017).

<sup>65</sup> “By the Numbers: Today’s Military,” National Public Radio, July 3, 2011.

<sup>66</sup> James Fallows, “The Tragedy of the American Military,” *The Atlantic*, January/February 2015.

<sup>67</sup> Phil Klay, “The Citizen-Soldier: Moral Risk and the Modern Military,” The Brookings Essay, May 24, 2016.