

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

Against the Institutionalization of ROTC at CUNY

WHEREAS:

- ROTC, the Reserve Officers' Training Corps, is a college-based program to train commissioned officers for the U.S. military. It dates from the 1862 Morrill Act establishing the land-grant colleges. Many recruits receive tuition scholarships and are obliged to serve for eight years in the U.S. armed forces.
- In its 2011 report, *Underserved: A Case Study of ROTC in New York City*, the American Enterprise Institute,¹ the conservative think-tank, urged the reinstatement of ROTC in New York City colleges, from which it had long been absent as a result of faculty, staff and student protest. The American Enterprise Institute makes no attempt to obscure its agenda: the plan is to put the diversity of the CUNY student body in service of the U.S. military, especially as military engagements are increasingly in the Middle East and the global South:

The absence of ROTC units on urban campuses, especially in the Northeast, prevents the military from taking full advantage of their large, ethnically diverse populations. This is particularly true in the case of CUNY, the third-largest public university system in the country By passing on schools like CUNY, the ROTC is missing out on greater geographical diversity. It is also missing out on a huge potential recruiting pool—nearly half of all college students in New York City attend CUNY. Those students are remarkably diverse; African American, white, and Hispanic undergraduates each represent more than a quarter of the student body, and Asians more than 15 percent. Of first-time freshmen, 37 percent were born outside the U.S. mainland. . . . By recruiting at CUNY, the ROTC would be targeting a student body for which 'cultural competency' is a part of daily life.

- In 2013, two years after the American Enterprise Institute publication, the CUNY administration announced the return of a University-wide ROTC, with college-based programs at three CUNY campuses: City College, Medgar Evers College and York College. Shortly afterwards, the administration at College of Staten Island proposed an ROTC program for consideration by the college community.
- In announcing the return of ROTC, the CUNY administration failed to mention the reason for the long absence of ROTC from CUNY or the history of protest that led to the removal of the program from CUNY campuses: Queens College (closed 1960), Brooklyn College (1966), and City College (1972). An ROTC program had been established at John Jay College in the 1970s, but it was closed in 1989 in response to student and faculty protest against the military's policy on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered men and women.
- Students who enlist in ROTC are obligated to eight years of military service and are thereby locked into a career with profound physical and psychological risks. In college ROTC participants normally take one elective class and lab each semester, engage in mandatory physical and field training exercises and attend a summer leadership camp. Participation for the full junior and senior years is required. Students who enlist and who

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

Against the Institutionalization of ROTC at CUNY

maintain a 2.5 academic average receive full tuition scholarships and a stipend of \$300 to \$500 per month for living expenses.

- Supporters of ROTC programs on CUNY campuses maintain that the programs offer students an opportunity for a subsidized college education and a chance to develop important character traits, such as self-discipline and leadership. They cite the shortage of other opportunities for support for students from poor or low-income communities of color. They also point to the prospect of a future military leadership that is more evenly distributed among races, ethnicities and regions of the country.
- In fact, ROTC relocates inequality to the sphere of career choice. Service in the U.S. military will put our students at risk for a life-time of physical and psychological problems. ROTC entices low-income students, often with hard-sell tactics, into accepting dangerous jobs and restricting their freedom. More affluent peers enjoy much more flexibility in choosing their professions. They are less likely to feel that their only choice if they want support for their education and a firm promise of a job upon graduation is to obligate themselves to military service, during which they will not be able to refuse an assignment, no matter how dangerous or morally questionable. The real solution to unaffordable CUNY tuition is a redirection of public funds to public higher education.
- Recent U.S. wars have been shown to expose military personnel to undue risk; for example, the Pentagon itself reported in a 2006 internal document “that as many as 80 percent of the Marines killed in Iraq from wounds to the upper body could have been saved by extra body armor.”² Through most of the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars, soldiers were subject to the “stop-loss” program, often called a back-door draft, in which they were forced to stay in the armed forces after their contractual obligation had expired.³ According to official DOD statistics, nearly 6,600 U.S. soldiers died in Iraq and Afghanistan, and over 51,000 suffered serious injuries in the last 13 years.⁴ Another 500,000 are now afflicted with post-traumatic stress disorder.⁵ By 2012, almost half of the 1.6 million military members sent to Iraq or Afghanistan had filed disability claims for their injuries.⁶
- Military service is associated with a variety of medical and social problems. “At least 20% of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans have PTSD and/or depression. . . .19% of veterans may have traumatic brain injury (TBI).”⁷ In 2012, more active duty military personnel committed suicide than died in battle. Being in the military doubles one’s risk of suicide. A recent study of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans found that 39 percent met criteria for alcohol abuse. “Twenty-eight percent of Gulf War-era II veterans reported having a service-connected disability in August 2012, compared with 14 percent of all veterans.”⁸ “Sixteen percent of the homeless population is veterans while only 10 percent of the total population is veteran.”⁹
- The U.S. military has proven itself incapable of reducing the high rates of sexual harassment and sexual violence against women. There is no judicial system in the military independent of military command in which perpetrators of sexual abuse and violence can be held accountable. A recent study by the Department of Veterans' Affairs reports that a quarter of the women surveyed reported being sexually assaulted

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

Against the Institutionalization of ROTC at CUNY

and half reported being sexually harassed.¹⁰ “The Department of Defense estimates that 86.5 percent of violent sexual assaults” in the military went unreported.¹¹ The CUNY community would not condone the presence of recruiters from any other organization with such a pattern of violence against women.

- The merits of ROTC cannot be considered independently from the record of the U.S. military. The CUNY community must ask what students are being trained *for*. The nature, goals and historical record of the U.S. military must be evaluated before CUNY enters into a joint training program with the U.S. military. The PSC in 2002 opposed the pursuit of a “permanent and unconditional war on terror”; and later voted to oppose the pursuit of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan on the basis that “the war and occupation of Afghanistan, like the war in Iraq, is not a war of defense and not a war in the interest of working people.” These positions were affirmed by our 1.5-million member national union, the AFT, in later resolutions. The recent wars of aggression and occupation are not an anomaly: in the years since the Vietnam War, the United States has engaged in bombings, command operations or proxy wars in Angola, Dominican Republic, Haiti, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Indonesia, Iran, Laos, Libya, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Panama, Somalia, Yemen, and Yugoslavia, among others. In addition, the U.S. maintains a permanent military presence worldwide, military personnel in 156 countries and bases in 63 countries.
- Modern weapons mean that heavy loss of civilian life is now an intrinsic part of war, not an accidental consequence: according to the United Nations Children’s Fund, 90% of war casualties are now civilian, as opposed to 5% during World War I.¹² CUNY students recruited to ROTC would be required to participate in such wars, regardless of any moral or political questions they might have—or face court martial or dishonorable discharge and potential requirement to repay tuition support.

AND WHEREAS:

- It is the responsibility of a university to teach students how to be critical thinkers and to foster an environment that promotes debate, discussion and independent thought. The military emphasizes deference to authority and punishes dissent. The Army’s recruitment efforts are designed to sell the Army, not to provide a balanced view of the pros and cons of joining the military. Informed consent to join the ROTC is often practically impossible. CUNY is rightly strict in ensuring informed consent for human subjects in research; it should uphold similar standards for participation in a military contract.
- Although the military has rescinded the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy, it continues to discriminate against people based on gender identity, and transgendered Americans are not allowed to serve in the U.S military. CUNY does not allow discrimination based on gender identity. Thus, allowing the ROTC to operate on campuses would violate one of CUNY’s “fundamental principles.”
- According to the ROTC Vitalization Act of 1964, Section 2102 paragraph b (an Act reauthorized in 2012): “no unit may be established or maintained at an institution unless the senior commissioned officer of the armed force concerned who is assigned to the

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

Against the Institutionalization of ROTC at CUNY

program at that institution is given the academic rank of professor. . . .the institution adopts, as a part of its curriculum, a four-year course of military instruction or a two-year course of advanced training of military instruction, or both, which the Secretary of the military department concerned prescribes and conducts.”

- It is incompatible with academic freedom that any part of the college curriculum be prescribed by the Secretary of the military and not by the faculty, acting through the governance structures recognized in college and University bylaws. The exercise of academic freedom is essential to maintaining full freedom of inquiry, teaching and research and is recognized as a fundamental right under the union contract. This right was reaffirmed in a recent arbitration decision. To allow a senior commanding officer automatically to assume the rank of professor is a severe breach of academic standards, governance and past practice.
- While the 1994 Solomon Amendment can result in the denial of all federal funding for colleges and universities that impose an outright ban on general military recruiters, the application of this amendment specifically to ROTC is still unresolved legally.¹³ In several instances where ROTC programs on college campuses have been closed, the ROTC programs have withdrawn after the college administration has made it clear that, given the requirements for military control of professors and curriculum, the programs are not permissible within academic practices and structures.
- This spring 2014, Medgar Evers College’s Faculty Council voted to remove ROTC from their campus, and President Crew announced on March 19 that he would respect the vote of the faculty. At the College of Staten Island, no department has so far agreed to sponsor an ROTC program and no ROTC program has been established. In both cases faculty decisions have been reached after open forums at which supporters and opponents of the establishment of ROTC were given equal time to speak and at which discussion was informed and respectful; therefore be it

RESOLVED:

- **That the PSC opposes the institutionalization of the ROTC at CUNY because the institutionalization of ROTC is not in the best interest of our students or the University community.**
- **That the PSC calls on the CUNY administration to close the existing ROTC programs at CUNY and prohibit the establishment of future programs, as such programs require military control of faculty appointments and curriculum and are in violation of University Bylaws, faculty governance and academic freedom.**

¹ Cheryl Miller (2011). Underserved: A Case Study of ROTC in New York City. American Enterprise Institute. Retrieved from <http://www.aei.org/paper/society-and-culture/underserved-a-case-study-of-rotc-in-new-york-city/>

² Michael Moss (January 7, 2006). Pentagon study links fatalities to body armor. *The New York Times*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/07/politics/07armor.html?pagewanted=all>.

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

Against the Institutionalization of ROTC at CUNY

³ Thom Shanker (March 18, 2009). 'Stop-Loss' will all but end by 2011, Gates Says. *The New York Times*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/19/washington/19gates.html>.

⁴ <http://www.defense.gov/news/casualty.pdf>

⁵ Congressional Budget Office. (February 2012) The Veterans Health Administration's Treatment of PTSD and Traumatic Brain Injury Among Recent Combat Veterans. <http://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/cbofiles/attachments/02-09-PTSD.pdf>

⁶ Marilyn Marchione (May 27, 2012) Iraq, Afghanistan Veterans Filing for Disability Benefits at Historic Rate. *Huffington Post*. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/05/27/iraq-afghanistan-veterans-disability-benefits_n_1549436.html

⁷ Veterans statistics: PTSD, Depression, TBI, Suicide. <http://www.veteransandptsd.com/PTSD-statistics.html>

⁸ Bureau of Labor Statistics (March 20, 2013) Employment Situation of Veterans Summary 2012 <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/vet.nr0.htm>

⁹ National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistic (September 2012). Profile of sheltered homeless veterans for fiscal years 2009 and 2010. http://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/SpecialReports/Homeless_Veterans_2009-2010.pdf.

¹⁰ Gregg Zoroya (Dec 27, 2012) Study: Sex assault more common than DoD says. *Army Times*. <http://www.armytimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2012212270307>

¹¹ George Zornick New study demands zero-tolerance for military sexual assault. *The Nation*. <http://www.thenation.com/blog/173522/new-study-demands-zero-tolerance-military-sexual-assault>

¹² United Nations Children's Development Fund. Impact of Armed Conflict on Children. <http://www.unicef.org/graca/patterns.htm>

¹³ Cheryl Miller (2011). Underserved: A Case Study of ROTC in New York City. American Enterprise Institute. Retrieved from <http://www.aei.org/paper/society-and-culture/underserved-a-case-study-of-rotc-in-new-york-city/>