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ACADEME: NOT SO HALLOWED HALLS FOR VETERANS

BY

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"Why do you want to be a murderer?"

The teenage, Army ROTC cadet was jolted and confused by the question. He did not understand why his English professor would say such a thing, nor did he understand her abusive tone or expression of contempt. It was the first time he'd worn his uniform to class, and that had apparently triggered a reaction ... a hidden hatred his professor could not control. Appallingly, this unprovoked assault occurred in front of the young man's classmates, making it even more incomprehensible and upsetting.

This incident actually happened at a large Midwestern university in 1991. Most sectors of American society were honoring those who wore the uniform that year. This was the year of Desert Storm. In contrast, a youthful ROTC cadet was verbally abused for wearing his military uniform. But, why? Is this typical?

Both of the authors of this article found this incident consistent with their experience. Upon returning to campus after Vietnam, one author watched the main building on his campus burn. Students, attempting to protest the Vietnam War, torched the building. Upon graduation, one author was pointedly told by his major professor to delete any reference to military service from his vita. This major professor understood that people who list military service on their vita do not gain employment in academia.

The ROTC cadet did not know that campus hostility toward the veteran began before he was born. Why did it begin? Why does it continue? Regretfully, a credible answer is difficult to come by. However, it is clear that long after the Vietnam War ended the tension between the military and the campus culture continues.

Representative Gerald Solomon recently sponsored an amendment to the Defense Appropriations Bill forbidding colleges and universities receiving Department of Defense funding from interfering with military recruiters on campus. Almost immediately, the higher education lobby devised ways to circumvent this amendment.

Beyond the Solomon amendment, there is other evidence that many in American higher education dislike the military and military veterans. But, why? What explanations are there for the campus war? Historically, how and when did tensions between the higher education community and the military escalate? These are questions this article attempts to address.

THE CITIZEN-SOLDIER TRADITION

Tension between the military and the remainder of American society was virtually nonexistent in the nineteenth century. Veterans experienced an easy transition between the military and their civilian occupation. To be a soldier was to be a good citizen. This meshing of citizenship to service to country as a soldier has been labeled the "citizen-soldier tradition."

There are a wealth of indicators as to how the military functioned in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as an integral part of society. One illustration is that the founding fathers accepted military service as an inevitable element of civic virtue. Thomas Jefferson proposed to "make military instruction a regular part of collegiate education" (Huntington, 197). This champion of the simple agrarian life regarded mastery of the military arts and skills as a normal part of being a responsible member of a democratic society. Jefferson disagreed with Alexander Hamilton over the necessity for a professional military that made a career from the study of military science. His solution was to hold the farmer, banker, and businessman responsible for maintaining their military skills. National defense was the responsibility of the common man.

The citizen-soldier tradition was born in the Revolutionary War. The effectiveness of common man turned soldier against the aristocratic officers and mercenaries of King George became a part of American folklore and culture. Andrew Jackson revived this ideal during his presidency—arguing that West Point must be closed because it was a needless expense and encouraged a counterproductive, aristocratic approach to national defense. And the common man tradition flourished throughout the Civil War as well. Both North and South relied heavily on conscription and volunteers. This was a war of commoners, a war where many chose their own weapons over those supplied by their units.

The decline of the citizen-soldier approach to national security can be attributed to a variety of factors: the increasing technical and scientific complexity of warfare, the emergence of professionalism, and politics. Dennis Hart Mahan, an instructor at West Point, began to win converts in the 1870s with his arguments that military matters must be treated as a scientific specialty. Citing national interest, he argued that untrained citizens, recruited hastily into the military, could no longer be counted on to protect the national interest. Mahan and his supporters were riding the wave of professionalism that was sweeping the country.

The state militia was the visible symbol of the citizen-soldier ideal, and Mahan's professional approach challenged its utility. The Republican Party during the 1870s threw its support behind Mahan's new kind of military. The Democratic Party, looking for an issue that would bring it back from the obscurity they suffered in the aftermath of the Civil War, opposed a professionalized military. More specifically, the Democrats opposed any expansion of the military. Instead, this party substituted a professionalized civil service for a professionalized military–arguing that America's future would be best secured by pouring resources into the development of the civil service. They further reasoned that an expanded civil service encouraged peace; whereas a large standing army was dangerous to liberalism and democracy.

This nineteenth century political conflict over the military might have remained a tempest in a teapot had it not been for subsequent developments during the Progressive era. In this era, the nation's colleges and universities were growing, and this growth profoundly affected the military.

THE PROGRESSIVE ERA

During the waning decades of the nineteenth century, the American middle class discovered that education was an alternative route by which to succeed. A professional education offered young men and women who did not own property another means by which to make money. And it is not surprising that the lure of professionalism transformed the American campus, particularly in the Progressive era from 1890 to 1920. Training professionals for civilian occupations became a central mission of colleges and universities. Not unexpectedly, Jefferson's ideal of a military curriculum fully integrated into collegiate education was not achieved in the Progressive era.

The Progressive movement was primarily a movement of intellectuals dedicated to the use of science to solve social problems. Progressives believed that universities should be used to train people in science so they could address urban problems and inefficient government. Science applied to military purposes was not a central concern for most reformers. Hence, military professionalism and campus professionalism began to diverge during the Progressive era. Professional military officers were taught primarily in dedicated military institutions.

The separation of the military from American society became so complete that it alarmed many in the military sector. The Secretary of War in 1920 argued, for example, that the military must be brought into closer contact with the experience of the general population (Huntington, 283). In response, the Reserve Officer Training Corps, established by the National Defense Act of 1920, was an effort to involve a broad base of higher education institutions in the training of officers. In short, the goal was to put the military back on campus, in touch with a broader segment of civilian society.

However, many progressive reformers were opposed to using the resources of American higher education to create a professionalized military. Charles Beard, a leading Progressive and historian of the period, was one of the most strident opponents, arguing that the resources of the university and the country should be diverted away from the military to peaceful pursuits. Beard used historical scholarship to argue that military intervention abroad and a preoccupation with national security diverted the country from making domestic advances (Breisach, 191-194).

Beard's hostility towards the military was eventually his undoing when he continued to advocate an isolationist foreign policy in the face of Hitler's conquests of Belgium and France. Not only Beard but other Progressive intellectuals who treated military service as a marginal activity were discredited as the country prepared for World War II.

The campus itself was swept up in war mobilization. Association with the military became fashionable again among intellectuals. At the University of Chicago, for example, it was not uncommon for three Pullman cars to leave for Washington, DC, on Sunday night, full of professors and other professionals who served in the wartime administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Nonetheless, World War II was but a lull in the developing campus conflict over the military. The antipathy and hostility of many intellectuals toward the military would be reborn with heretofore unseen fury in the 1960s.

THE CAMPUS WARS: THE 1960S AND BEYOND

In the post World War II era, American campuses expanded, and this expansion created a pluralistic, complex environment. On the typical college campus, Department of Defense (DoD) dollars contributed to the expansion. Using the GI Bill, thousands of veterans utilized the higher education system to retrain for civilian occupations.

The 1958 National Defense Education Act (NDEA) further enlarged the DoD presence on campus over the next decade. Student support funds from NDEA and the GI Bill in combination with billions of dollars of defense funds earmarked for university-based research should have predicated loyalty to military values from students, professors, and educational administrators inhabiting the post-war campus. Yet, the opposite occurred. And the answer to this anomaly can be summed up in one word: Vietnam.

Perhaps the most durable impact of the Vietnam War was its effect on the people who attended the university during that period. In the early 1960s, record numbers of undergraduates flocked to the college campus–lured by generous DoD scholarships. Professors, researchers, and technicians swelled higher education payrolls, supported in many cases by DoD research grants.

The S-2 draft deferment provided a substantial percentage of these people with an incentive to linger on in university graduate programs just as the Vietnam War was expanding in the mid-1960s (Bowen 1992). In essence, avoiding Vietnam was the motive harbored by many who attended college in the '60s. When the S-2 deferment for graduate studies ended in 1968, those who faced military service had an additional incentive for joining the antiwar, campus-based protests that were gaining momentum.

The campus riots of the late 1960s/early 1970s are a matter of record. These riots, though, were a visible indicator of the tensions between the campus and the military. The roots for this tension had grown decades before. The campus-based causes spouted by a radical minority of the population were amplified by the mass media of the day, and, contributed to the end of the Vietnam War. However, the question lingers: What happened to the college campus in the aftermath of the war? Unfortunately, as the rhetoric subsided, the anti-military culture of the campus did not recede. There are a variety of ways to illustrate this point, but the most telling is to consider who institutions of higher education employed after the Vietnam War.

As the war ended, the United States Congress gave colleges and universities, along with thousands of other federal contractors, a reason to hire Vietnam veterans. The Vietnam Era Veterans Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974 (Title 38, United States Code, Section 4212) required all federal contractors–those contracting in amounts over $10,000–to use affirmative action in the employment and advancement of those who had served in the military between 5 August 1964 and 7 May 1975. Those with military service during these dates were defined as "Vietnam-era veterans." Anticipating discrimination against the Vietnam-era veteran, the Congress also imposed penalties on those who did not comply.

The Readjustment Act provides an excellent opportunity to examine whether American universities threw off the influence of the radicals of the '60s and '70s and welcomed the Vietnam veteran back to campus. Virtually all colleges and universities are federal contractors and subject to this law. As a benchmark, Vietnam-era veterans make up approximately 6% of the civilian labor force nationally (Trewyn 1994), so that is the employment level one might reasonably expect to find at these institutions by chance; i.e., without any positive efforts of affirmative action or negative effects of discrimination.

AFFIRMATIVE INACTION

The 28 April 1995 issue of THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION cataloged "key elements" in the development of affirmative action in higher education. The first three elements specifically affecting employment were: **1971**, "Harvard University adopts an affirmative action program for the hiring of women and members of minority groups;" **1972**, "Williams College formally adopts a policy of affirmative action in faculty recruitment and hiring;" and **1973**, "the American Association of University Professors endorses the use of affirmative action in faculty hiring."

Not listed among the milestone events in THE CHRONICLE: **1974**, the Vietnam Era Veterans Readjustment Assistance Act was signed into law. With what went on the preceding three years, the timing for veterans should have been ideal. Following Harvard's lead, universities around the nation were gearing up for affirmative action in recruitment and hiring at all levels of employment. Vietnam-era veterans and disabled veterans should have been swept along on the new tide. So, why, as shall be documented below, were they swept aside? Why did it take until 1994 before Harvard University decided to comply with federal requirements of the 1974 veterans' act?[1] Why did it take so long to begin the process of granting veterans their legally mandated civil rights–twenty years late?

The answers to these questions may never be known with certainty, but as any veteran of the Vietnam era can attest, the college campus of that period was not a friendly place for veterans or the military. Few antiwar fanatics could separate their abhorrence of the war from their loathing of those who served; their unbridled hostility permeated the "hallowed halls" of the Ivory Tower. Veterans were not welcome there.

Nevertheless, did those in academe willfully violate federal law? Did they knowingly contravene the 1974 act that protected veterans from discrimination and afforded them

affirmative action rights in initial employment and advancement? In retrospect, it's hard to believe otherwise.

Administrators of American higher education have consistently endorsed affirmative action from its inception in 1965 with Executive Order 11246. Opponents of the Vietnam War who came to regard the campus as a safe haven from an oppressive American society have been particularly zealous about affirmative action. In a utopian-like mind-set, they view affirmative action as a technique or method by which to convert the university into a model institution for the rest of American society. With this technique, radical academicians proposed to transform the university into a "city on the hill" that represents all of American society, not simply the privileged few.[2]

Closer scrutiny of the "city on the hill" envisioned by the radicals reveals that it is a university free of veterans. Harboring the belief that an oppressive military establishment caused the Vietnam War, the university they sought was to be a military-free zone of peace where all formerly oppressed peoples of the country could associate and build a new peaceful society–one that is free of conflict, hatred, and competition.

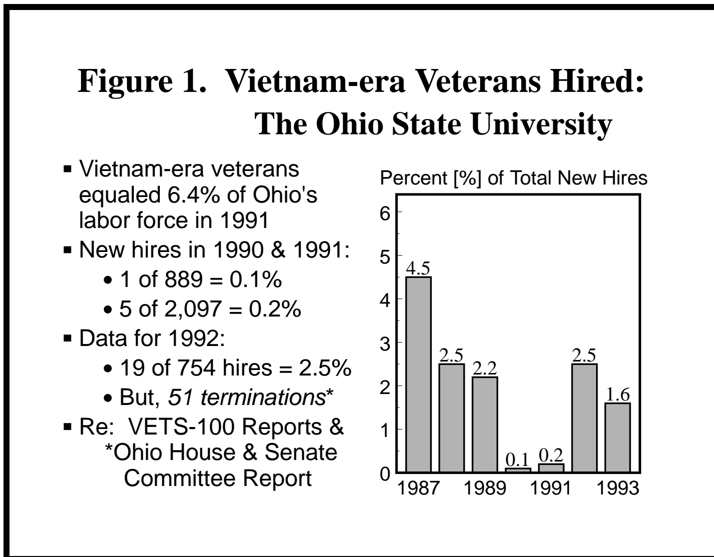
Radical academicians, with the assistance of university administrators, began to construct this model university in the aftermath of the Vietnam War. Hence, it is hardly surprising that campus administrators simply ignored the Vietnam Era Veterans Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974 when it called upon colleges and universities as federal contractors to give Vietnam-era veterans full affirmative action privileges in employment. Radical intellectuals supported affirmative action for other classes they regarded as oppressed, but not for veterans whom they regarded as dysfunctional elements in their new model society.

VETERAN CLEANSING

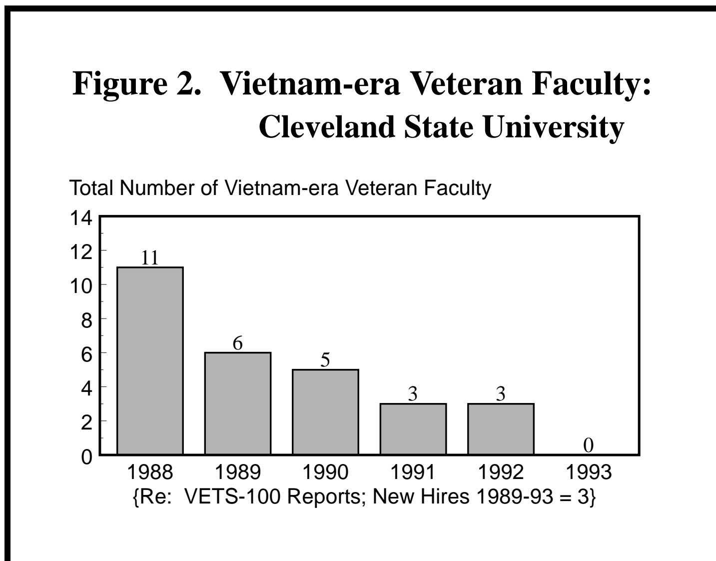
Data collected by the CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF VETERANS IN SOCIETY suggests that the post-Vietnam climate for veterans on most college campuses hasn't changed much in twenty years. Overt discrimination may have given way to covert discrimination, but the outcome is much the same—veterans need not apply!

In 1988, many institutions of higher education discovered for the first time that they were employing Vietnam-era veterans; 1988 was the first year that federal contractors were required to file an annual report (the VETS-100) quantifying the number of Vietnam-era veterans and disabled veterans they employed as well as the number hired during the previous year. An interesting pattern emerged once the alarm was sounded that there were "unrepentant" veterans within the halls of the academy ... veterans who were willing, unashamedly, to identify themselves as such (Vickers 1991). In many cases, the VETS-100 numbers for the first year or so were fairly respectable, but at a number of institutions, they dropped like a rock thereafter.

At Ohio State University, 4.5% of the new hires at all levels of employment in 1987 were Vietnam-era veterans (Figure 1). By 1990, the value had fallen to 0.1%, and it was only 0.2% in 1991 when university officials testified before the Ohio Senate that they were providing affirmative action in the employment of Vietnam-era veterans (Doulan and Snell 1991; Snell 1991, 1992). Throughout that period, Vietnam-era veterans comprised more than 6% of the civilian labor force in Ohio.



The lack of attention to the employment numbers at Ohio State may well have continued, except that the federal government intervened. A less-than-timely investigation by the U.S. Department of Labor in 1991 found that, in fact, Ohio State was not providing affirmative action to veterans and, moreover, that an atmosphere of "harassment, intimidation and coercion" existed for veterans on campus (Doulan 1992). The supposed corrective action that ensued was noted by university officials to include an increase in new hires of Vietnam-era veterans in 1992 to 2.5% (19 of 754).[3] However, an official questionnaire submitted by OSU to a Select Committee of the Ohio House and Senate indicated that "veteran terminations" in 1992 included: "51 Vietnam-era veterans" and "135 other military veterans;"[4] the number for Vietnam-era veteran terminations exceeding the preceding four-year aggregate of new hires.

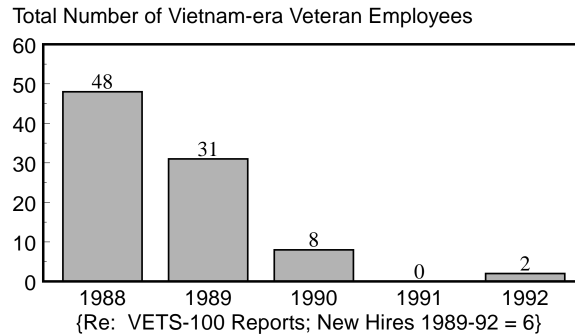


A similar phenomenon appears to have been in vogue at other institutions as well. The federal VETS-100 reports filed by Cleveland State University indicate that 11 faculty members were Vietnam-era veterans in 1988 (Figure 2). Three of the new faculty hires in subsequent years were also era veterans which should have brought the total to 14, but remarkably, the number of Vietnam-era veteran faculty decreased each year. By 1993, the number had dropped to zero. The total number of non-faculty Vietnam-era veterans remaining at Cleveland State was reported to be 9 in 1993, 0.6% of the total employees.[5]

The New School for Social Research in New York City is another noteworthy institution with regard to veterans' employment. The New School reported that it employed a total of 48 Vietnam-era veterans in 1988 (Figure 3). That number plummeted to zero by 1991; only 2 era veterans were employed in 1992. The latter number represents 0.1% of the total employees at the New School.[6]

With the pattern that emerges, covert discrimination may be too generous a description for the practices employed.

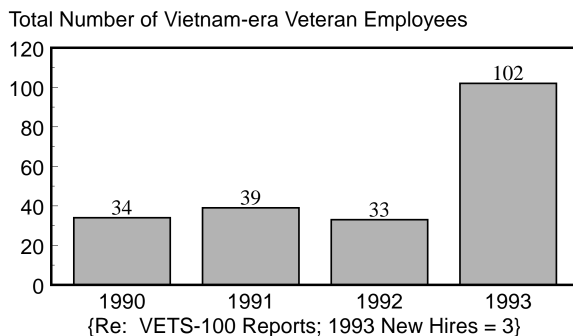
Figure 3. Vietnam-era Veteran Employees: New School for Social Research



TRUTH: A CASUALTY OF WAR

When challenged on the issue of discrimination against veterans, universities provide an array of innovative responses. For example, the University of Akron was criticized in the press in 1992 for employing a low number of Vietnam-era veterans–2.0% (Snell 1992). An examination of Akron's VETS-100 reports illustrates a fascinating solution to the problem (Figure 4). In 1992, a total of 33 Vietnam-era veterans were employed at the university. Three (3) additional era veterans were hired in 1993. Then, the total number employed jumped from 33 to 102. Now that's affirmative action!

Figure 4. Vietnam-era Veteran Employees: University of Akron



As depicted in Figure 5, geography doesn't seem to play a role in such aberrations or in the demographics of university employment of veterans. Montgomery College, a few miles from Washington, D.C., in Maryland, employs what might be considered a reasonable number of Vietnam-era veterans, 5.5%,[7] especially when compared to the not-too-distant University of Pennsylvania (0.9%)[8] and nearby American University (0.7%). The latter institution, in Washington, D.C., is worthy of additional scrutiny as well, since the Washington Post reported recently that 2.5% of American's employees were Vietnam-era veterans (Mathews 1995). That's curious because their federal VETS-100 report filed for 1993 (for the period 2/15/93 to 2/14/94) points to the much lower number cited above, 0.7%.

According to American's VETS-100 report, a total of 27 full-time and part-time employees were Vietnam-era veterans in 1993. A survey filed by the university to comply with the Civil Rights and Higher Education Acts (the IPEDS report) indicated a "grand total (for) all employees," full-time and part-time, of 3,968 for 1993.[9] Twenty-seven (27) Vietnam-era veterans amount to less than 0.7% of the total; a far cry from the 2.5% quoted to the Washington Post reporter a year later. To reach 2.5% from 0.7%, over sixty (60) additional Vietnam-era veterans would have to have been added in one year. Somehow, that seems an unlikely occurrence based on the fact that the largest number of new hires in any of the preceding 4 years was three (3) according to the institution's VETS-100 reports.

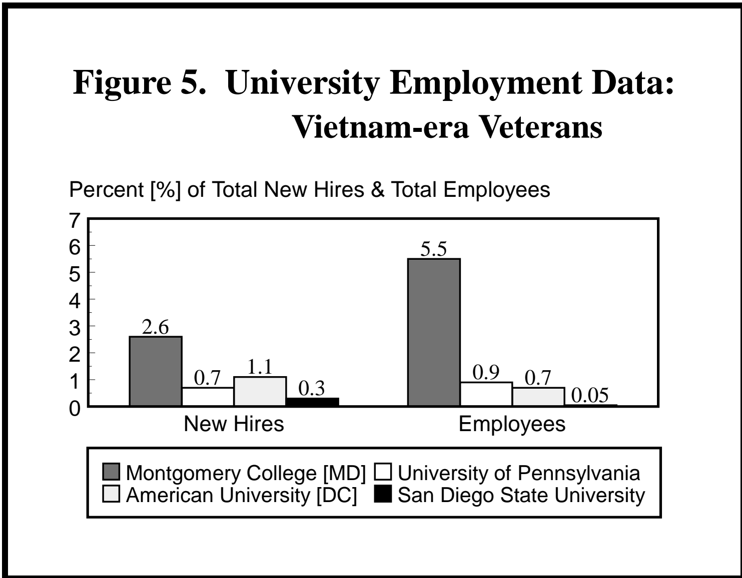


Figure 5. University Employment Data: Vietnam-era Veterans

As also shown in Figure 5, appalling employment statistics are not limited to the East Coast schools either; San Diego State University ranks among the worst. The 1994 VETS-100 data for San Diego State documents two (2) new Vietnam-era veteran hires for the year (the only ones hired since 1990), with a total of three (3) employed. Sixteen (16) Vietnam-era veterans had been employed by the institution four years earlier. With three veterans on the employment roster for 1994 and a total employee count of 5,675 as of October 1994 according to San Diego State's IPEDS report, a paltry 0.05% is obtained for the percentage of Vietnam-era veterans, hardly a value indicative of affirmative action.

In fact, with Vietnam-era veterans constituting 6% of the civilian labor force nationally, what term other than "discrimination" could one use to describe most of the outcomes summarized above? There appear to be few other descriptors appropriate for results 10-fold—even 100-fold—lower than those expected by random chance.

RIGHTS *VERSUS* WRONGS

One might question how discrimination against veterans could still exist, decades after the war in Southeast Asia. Interestingly, the answer may have been provided by a professor of English at Harvard in an article about "political correctness" (Brustein 1994). He noted that "the radical students who once occupied university buildings over the Vietnam War ... are now officially occupying university offices as professors, administrators, deans, and even presidents." Maybe these individuals don't like being reminded of their evasive behavior in days gone by.

Most military veterans can look back with pride on their own conduct, having served their country honorably when called, just as America's citizen soldiers have done in other wars. Perhaps having "unrepentant" veterans around is problematic for the convoluted radical psyche; the stark contrast between bravery and cowardice might be noticed by students, younger colleagues, and alumni. Or, perhaps, when confronted with the situation, these human rights' hypocrites still despise veterans as much now as they did during the divisive years of the Vietnam era.

PAYING THE PRICE FOR PATRIOTISM

Unfortunately, the long-term costs of military service during the Vietnam era–to veterans, their families, and the nation–have been high. A 1990 research publication by Joshua Angrist, then at Harvard, documented that, "long after their service in Vietnam was ended, the earnings of white veterans were approximately 15 percent less than the earnings of comparable non-veterans." Fifteen percent! Each and every year, these veterans can look forward to taking home 15% less than those who didn't serve the nation during the Vietnam War, to providing 15% less for their families. Their career earnings will be hundreds of thousands of dollars less (Trewyn 1994). Their retirement benefits will be less.

These costs are not trivial; nor should they persist.

As stated by Myra MacPherson in her 1984 book entitled LONG TIME PASSING: "Above all, Vietnam was a war that asked everything of a few and nothing of most in America." Regretfully, little has changed over the years; everything is still being asked of the few. However, the anti-military culture of the academy makes the price of service to country needlessly high. The young ROTC cadet who confronted his English professor experienced a double bind. On one hand, the rigors of military training posed a formidable set of challenges. On the other hand, this cadet began to realize that joining the military could cause a professor to lower a course grade. Low grades create other problems: e.g., canceled fellowships, a less distinguished military career, or a lower paying civilian career.

In the current technological economy, career military personnel, reservists, and the national guard find themselves increasingly dependent on the campus–for reeducation, for job advancement, for training. This tension between the campus and the military must be addressed; and constructive integration established. In spite of the pretensions of some on campus, colleges and universities do not live in a world where the military can be ignored or jettisoned. Military personnel serve all the people, including those on the campus. For this service, they immediately require, at minimum, equitable, evenhanded treatment. Longer range reforms of the campus should be based on the premise that military citizenship is one of the highest forms of citizenship. This should be not only enshrined as doctrine at the university, but translated into a campus-based ethical norm. Without these reforms, the costs of military service are not only needlessly high, but the national security is jeopardized.

Notes

[1] When asked to provide copies of veterans' employment data (the VETS-100 reports) required by federal regulations (41 CFR 61-250) to document contractor performance in meeting the requirements of the 1974 law, the Office of the General Counsel, Harvard University, responded, 30 June 1994, that Harvard had just begun collecting the information.

[2] For any who believe that the "city on the hill" concept is absent from the affirmative action agenda of the 1990s, one should review President Clinton's speech on affirmative action, 19 July 1995. Serving as the spokesperson for higher education, he stated that, "if (young people's) colleges look like the world they're going to live and work in, and they learn from all different kinds of people things that they can't learn in books, our systems of higher education are stronger" (Jaschik, S., The Chronicle of Higher Education, pp. A28-A29, 28 July 1995). Nowhere in his speech did the President comment on the congressionally mandated affirmative action rights for veterans.

[3] University testimony, 14 June 1993, to Select Committee #51 of the Ohio Senate and House of Representatives. Also, The Ohio State University VETS-100 report for 1992.

[4] Ohio Colleges and Universities Veterans Affairs General Questionnaire, submitted by Vice President Linda Tom, The Ohio State University, 26 July 1993, to Representative Mark A. Malone, Chairman, Ohio House and Senate Select Committee #51. The complete response to the question of terminations was: "Between February 1, 1992 and January 31, 1993 (our VETS-100 reporting period) total veteran terminations were: 51 Vietnam-era veterans, 0 disabled veterans, and 135 other military veterans."

[5] Ohio Colleges and Universities Veterans Affairs General Questionnaire, submitted by Vice President Njeri Nuru, Cleveland State University, 13 July 1993, to Representative Mark A. Malone, Chairman, Ohio House and Senate Select Committee #51. Total employees, veteran and non-veteran, were reported to be 1,553.

[6] According to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System survey (Form IPEDS-S), filed 11 February 1994, the grand total of all employees at the institution as of 1 October 1993 was 1,551. The most recent VETS-100 document provided 6 May 1994 was the one for 1992 (for the period 4/1/92 to 3/31/93), and it reported that only 2 Vietnam-era veterans were employed full-time or part-time. Two of 1,551 equates to 0.1%.

[7] The grand total of all employees on all Montgomery College campuses was noted to be 1,234 in the 1993 Higher Education Staff Information EEO-6 Report. The VETS-100 report for the period 2/19/92 to 2/18/93 indicated that 68 Vietnam-era veterans were employed full-time or part-time; 5.5% of the total.

[8] According to the institution's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System survey (Form IPEDS-S), the grand total of all employees as of 1 October 1993 was 19,023. The VETS-100 report for the period 2/28/93 to 2/28/94 indicated that 173 Vietnam-era veterans were employed full-time or part-time; 0.9% of the total.

[9] Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System survey (Form lPEDS-S), filed 13 January 1994.

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