

ROTC: change or risk elimination

It is good to see it happening. University administrators and students around the nation are speaking out against the discriminatory policies of campus ROTC programs, and it seems to be having some effect.

Anti-ROTC sentiment is growing and this spring has seen the eruption of riots, sit-ins and faculty votes to have ROTC programs removed from a number of university campuses.

While all this is happening, the Pentagon is deciding how to reduce the number of students involved in the ROTC program because of federal military spending cuts. Initially the Pentagon contemplated eliminating up to 100 of its 400 ROTC programs, but now officials are considering asking students who don't plan on joining the military after they graduate to drop out of the program.

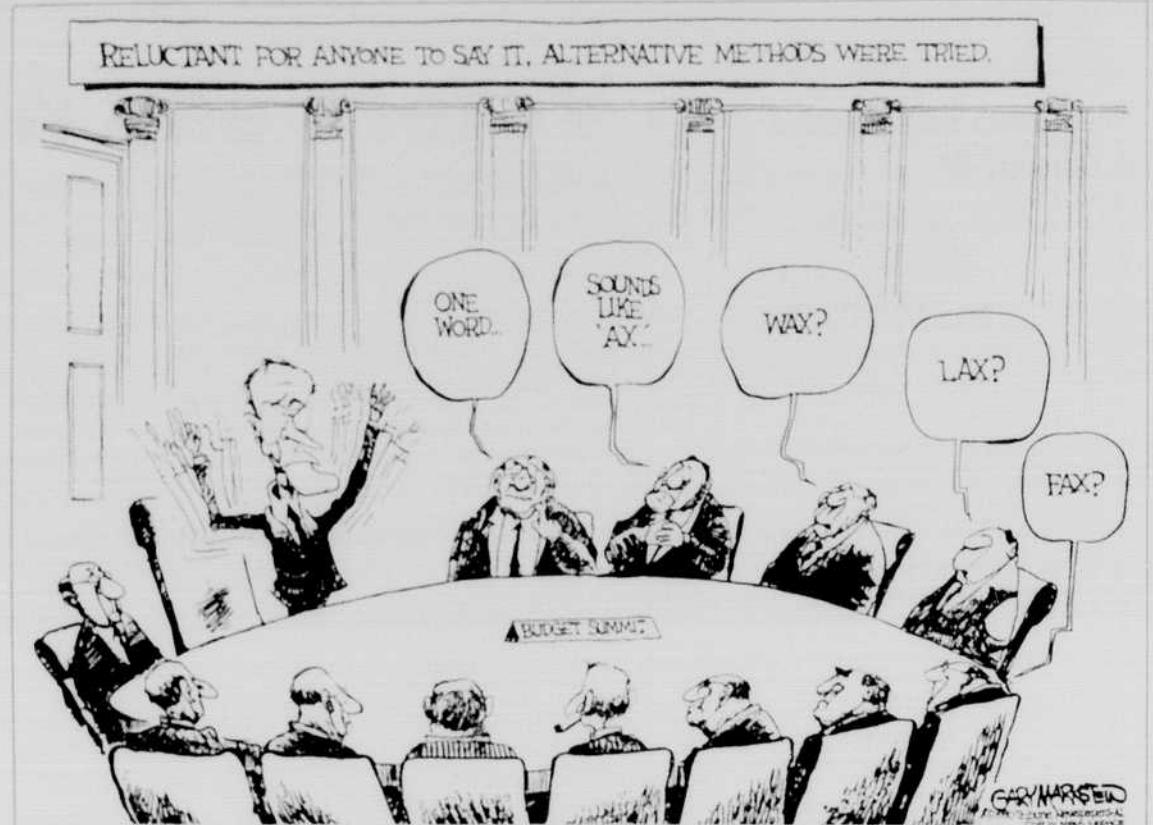
While all this is fine and well, it does not begin to address the problem of discrimination in the program. Not only does the Reserve Officer Training Corps exclude gays and lesbians from enrolling in its programs, but the U.S. Department of Defense, which operates the ROTC program demanded that students must repay their ROTC scholarships after they disclose they are not heterosexual. Fortunately the ROTC reversed its policy and decided not to require repayments from three former students who admitted they were gay.

It is more than time the U.S. military begin to accept reality and start letting all Americans into the military service. The military is supposed to protect American citizens so why can't all citizens join the military? There are already many gays and lesbians enlisted in the military and enrolled in ROTC; they just can't admit it for fear of being kicked out.

Pressure is being applied from many different segments of the national university community. In April, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Provost John Deutch sent a letter to Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney warning that if ROTC does not change its antigay policies, many universities will withdraw from the program. Deutch's letter earned nationwide recognition and support.

Many universities, like ours, have strong affirmative action programs and anti-discrimination policies. The ROTC rule prohibiting acceptance of gays and lesbians violates these policies and students are demanding that their universities enforce anti-discrimination policies.

It is time that we joined in the efforts. In last month's elections students passed an anti-discrimination ballot measure. The University needs to look at ROTC policies and demand that ROTC either change its policy or leave the campus. If the University wants to develop a strong affirmative action policy, it will have to apply these standards to all programs on campus, including the ROTC.



University Day — a deserving cause

Students, administration and staff have an opportunity to help the campus and help themselves Thursday during University Day.

University Day participants will repaint light standards, power wash grimy or moss-covered benches and walkways, spruce up flower beds, plant trees and clear the University grounds of litter. But a bright, shiny campus is not the main goal of the students organizing Thursday's activities.

Rather, organizers hope that all the painting, planting and power washing will unite a campus that sometimes seems fragmented into disparate, isolated groups.

It just might work. University Day organizers are not raising money for anyone or anything; they're not trying to call attention to any controversial cause. They're simply trying to break down some of the walls that separate different groups at the University and clean up the campus in the process.

Just about every student group, academic department and administrative office can throw its support behind those ideals without fear of criticism or political retribution.

Admittedly, our student body is much more diverse today than it was earlier this century when a fairly homogeneous band of white, upper-middle class students worked

together once a year to lay sidewalks and install plumbing in campus buildings. But that doesn't mean that for one day, despite our differences, the various groups on campus can't join forces behind a common cause.

The Greeks have already shown their wholehearted support of University Day by including it on their schedule of Greek Week events. Many other student groups, academic departments and administrative offices have also pledged to take part Thursday.

That's not to say participation is reserved for members of distinct groups. If you are an average University student, trudging your way to campus each day, muddling through your classes and observing the sometimes petty campus controversies with dispassionate detachment — University Day wants you too.

That's the whole point of University Day anyway — once you check in and pick up your paintbrush or your power washer, you're not University president or a member of the Greek system or MEChA or OSPIRG or GALA; you're a part of the University community.

University Day is a worthy idea; we hope we succeed.

Letters

Metamorphosis

Springfield resident Glenda Scott's letter (*The Register-Guard*, May 10), promoting "National Prayer Day" established by Congress in 1952, claims polls show 92 percent of Americans believe in "God." Christian concern prompts her to ask whether the other 8 percent work for local media or "... our city library."

Such mythic ruminations fire my atheist batteries. Scott may be assured no Enlightenment understanding has pierced the Biblical darkness that holds sway with her municipal library director and staff.

Three years of effort to impress upon Springfield's library director his occupational responsibility to guarantee the intellectual integrity of the

Springfield library collection by assuring a fair representation of atheist argument refuting theist claims, produced one legitimate atheist book — Gordon Stein's, *An Anthology of Atheism and Rationalism*. *Freethought Today* and *The Humanist* are the only atheist periodicals. Many religious titles and magazines are available.

My letters expounding atheist reasoning and experience generally elicit "pro/con" correspondence from readers. Jews, Muslims and Hindus have not registered concern, but Christians invariably inform me I am the object of their prayers.

Christians should rather read a book or magazine — any book or magazine other than the Bible and religious tracts offers prospect for enlightenment.

The courageous, willing to face the reality of their exploitation, should read George Smith's *Atheism: The case against god*, a book guaranteed to shed light into the dark cocoon of fear, ignorance, superstition and myth in which theists enmesh themselves. Such reading can help them metamorphose from what the Pope calls a "religious dupa" into a beautifully iridescent rational butterfly. Amen.

Bert Tryba
Eugene

Good job

I would like to take this time to say something positive about a job well done. Encourage other students to try it sometime, as all I read is negative letters.

I want to commend Sports Editor Tracy Sumner and his staff for his job with the *Oregon Daily Emerald*. Sumner has taken a lot of time out of his own life to help make the paper what it is today. We will sorely miss Sumner next year, and hopefully, we can make an adequate replacement. Thanks for all the good work.

Kevin Cory
Leisure studies

Thanks, Hurwit

At a recent Faculty Senate meeting, Art History Professor

Jeffrey Hurwit spoke out on behalf of the American Studies program. In the face of an administration that is obviously committed to eradicating the AMS department, it was both a courageous and commendable action.

As one of many American Studies majors, I would like to thank Hurwit and let him know that we students greatly appreciate his support. Together, we will not let the American Studies program die, nor let an unconcerned administration invalidate our field of study.

Jobi Cooper
American studies

Letters Policy

Letters to the editor must be limited to no more than 250 words, legible, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is submitted.