



# ***The Armed Services Associate Degree Program: A Proposal***

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**O**NE of the major problems facing the armed services in the post-Vietnam era is the attainment of prescribed levels of education for military personnel. Because of adherence to the fairly strict provisions imposed by Army Regulation 601-100, Appointment of Commissioned Officers in the Regular Army, the required educational standards of the commissioned officer corps essentially are attainable. Those officers who fail to meet these standards, and who are to be retained as career officers, may acquire the necessary education either at full Government expense through the Officer Undergraduate Degree Program (Army Regulation 350-200, Training of Military Personnel at Civilian Institutions) or under the highly successful Project Bootstrap (Department of the Army Circular 351-5, Officer Undergraduate Degree Civil Schooling Program).

Similarly, as enlisted personnel assignment patterns stabilize after Vietnam, enlisted personnel educational levels will also improve. Those persons enlisting in the Army without a secondary education will have the opportunity and encouragement to pursue the high school equivalency certificate through the General Education Development Program (GEDP) (Army Regulation 621-5, *General Educational Development*).

### The Problem

The primary area of concern, therefore, is that portion of "middle management" occupied by warrant officers and certain senior noncommissioned officers. Paragraph 12, Army Regulation 601-101, *Appointment of Warrant Officers in the Regular Army*, establishes the requisite educational standard for warrant officers as two years of college. Neither the warrant officer corps nor the senior noncommissioned officer corps, however, recruits its members from college-educated groups -most come

up "through the ranks," as, indeed, most should, with only a secondary education.

As the Selective Service Program is reduced or phased out after Vietnam, it will be increasingly difficult to obtain career-motivated enlisted men with any college experience. Rather than attempting to recruit college educated enlistees, therefore, the Army would be more successful in providing some college education for those career soldiers designated for "middle-management" positions.

A partial solution in the past has been to recognize the efforts of individuals toward self-improvement by awarding one and two-year college equivalencies through the GEDP. This is inadequate. While it recognizes and rewards self-improvement, it fails to give the individual the educational tools which will enable him to perform more effectively in an increasingly complex and demanding military environment. The solution to this problem is to devise a program which would provide two years of college education for those persons assigned to, or to be assigned to, warrant officer and designated senior noncommissioned officer positions.



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### Alternatives

One alternative would be to provide a Government-funded program similar to the Officer Undergraduate Degree Program which would assign an individual to an accredited civilian junior college, during which time he could earn the two-year Associate of Arts or the Associate of Sciences degree. The drawbacks to this alternative are considerable.

First, it would be expensive for the services to support this program. Second, the individual would be a loss to the service for two full years. Third, the quality of education offered at civilian junior colleges varies considerably and, more often than not,

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is regrettably low. Too many junior colleges suffer from watered-down curricula designed to provide the adolescent youth with some exposure to a college education. Finally, many of the courses offered—and often required—at these institutions are of little value to the professional soldier.

A second alternative would be to encourage individual participation in a civilian junior college program under the GI Bill without full pay and allowances. Although the cost to the Government would be reduced by reducing the pay and allowances to the student, the other drawbacks noted in the first alternative would remain. This alternative would be further impaired by the inability of most enlisted men or noncommissioned officers to suffer loss of income for two years in order to pursue this program.

### **A Solution**

A third alternative provides a practical solution to the problem: the establishment of an Armed Services Associate Degree Program. This program can provide its students with a solid, two-year Associate degree education. The full program, however, can be completed in a single year of resident study if the program is designed to do so and if the students are mature, motivated individuals. Reducing the program to a single year of resident study would provide a substantial reduction in program costs.

The Associate Degree Institution should employ primarily a civilian faculty with top professional degrees and the ability to teach effectively. It should award an accredited degree of Associate of Arts or Associate of Sciences. Most important, it should provide its graduates with the mental capabilities which will allow them to cope with the expanding management 92 requirements of the increasingly complex military system.

There are two likely alternatives for the location of the Associate Degree Institution, both with advantages and disadvantages. First, the school could be established in a location remote from existing Army population centers, possibly at a recently deactivated military facility or one scheduled for future deactivation. The location could then be selected from an almost unlimited number of possible sites and could be designed to provide an environment highly conducive to study. This alternative, however, would be costly because of the need to establish and maintain the additional military facility. Without a nearby troop population, there would be the added cost of recurring permanent changes of station for all students.

### **Military Facility**

The second alternative would be to establish the school on or near an existing military facility. This would avoid the cost of activating and maintaining a separate facility and would reduce the number of student permanent changes of station. The main disadvantage to this alternative is that attendance at the school may be restricted to those persons normally assigned to that military facility. Further, it is questionable whether or not an on-base facility would provide the most desirable educational environment.

It would be inappropriate to suggest which of these two alternatives should be pursued without a complete cost analysis of the entire program. The ultimate decision as to the location of the school would, of course, be further influenced by a number of political considerations beyond the realm of the Department of the Army.

In order to minimize the length of time spent in residence at the institution, the three-semester-per-year or “trimester”

<b>Hypothetical Curriculum for the Associate Degree Program</b>			
Preparatory Readings: Six Credit Hours			
<i>First Trimester</i>		<i>Second Trimester</i>	
English I—Composition and Grammar	3	English—Literature	3
Mathematics—College/Business	3	History—US History	3
History I—Western Civilization	3	Political Science II—American Government	3
Political Science I—Introduction	3	World Geography	3
Speech—Public Speaking	3	Business Administration	3
Elective	3	Elective	3
	Credit Hours 18		Credit Hours 18
<i>Third Trimester</i>		<i>Electives</i>	
Political Science III—US in World Affairs	3	International Relations	
Sociology	3	Typing	
Psychology	3	Computer Science	
Principles of Economics	3	Statistics	
Principles of Management	3	Laboratory Sciences	
Elective	3	Education	
	Credit Hours 18	Philosophy	
		Advanced courses in all fields	
		Others as required	

system of approximately 15 weeks each in length is proposed. This program would allow the student to take the civilian school equivalent of one and one-half years' work in a single year, or 45 weeks of classroom instruction. By making the fullest use of available time, the entire two-year program could be readily accomplished in a single year of resident study.

A hypothetical curriculum is suggested in the chart. The preparatory readings administered by correspondence would be designed to provide some common background of relevant material for

all incoming students. This would also serve to eliminate the unmotivated applicants before they enter the program. The preparatory readings could be accomplished any time before the start of classes.

The student would carry a course load of six courses each "trimester" for a total of 18 credit hours. The six credit hours for preparatory readings plus 54 credit hours earned in the three "trimesters" of resident study would total 60 credit hours, or the equivalent of the civilian two-year junior college. This would fulfill the Associate

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degree requirement for accreditation and would be an unusual, but effective, program of study.

Hard work for the student? Yes, but rewarding both for the student and the services. Expensive? The benefits to the services will far outweigh the limited costs of establishing and administering the program. A residual return on the investment would probably be a somewhat higher reenlistment rate by those attracted to a vastly improved educational opportunity within the service.

A further byproduct of this program would be the opportunity to upgrade the educational standards of the Reserve components. Many career Reserve officers, especially those serving as full-time technicians, do not have a college education. They could be allowed to enroll at the institution at little Government expense—perhaps something like Project *Bootstrap*, or with a state subsidy for National Guard officers—and acquire the Associate degree. This would provide a substantial

improvement in officer education levels within the Reserve program and subsequent improvements in unit management.

The ultimate question is, of course, will Congress appropriate sufficient funds during a period of reduced military spending? No one can answer that question with assurance, but this much is certain: In the opinion of influential members of the House Armed Services Committee, the proposal would receive a favorable reception by the committee and whole House.

Congress, over the past 25 years, has acted consistently to support higher educational standards for the armed services. Even in the present period of economic austerity for the armed services, military education ranks high with all elements of the political spectrum.

The goal is better armed services. One means is through better education. The Armed Services Associate Degree Program will significantly advance military education in a neglected area.

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