

ROTC:

An Academic Focus

Major George A. Joulwan, US Army

Then Major George A. Joulwan recounts his experiences as an associate professor of military science at Loyola University during the Vietnam era in this article from the January 1971 edition of Military Review. The Army's application of "Track C" to its Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) program in 1970 was a reasoned response to calls for change, some of which equated "change" with abolishing ROTC from campus.

Political science credit given for Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) courses? ROTC cross-listed under another discipline? Non-ROTC students enrolling in military science classes? Military officers lecturing in other departments? Officers voluntarily teaching at night in an off-campus "Free University" with half the participants members of the Students for a Democratic Society? That sounds absurd if one believes media reports that all ROTC units, particularly those in large urban areas, are under attack, are being downgraded or are struggling for their very existence. Actually, many university Army ROTC programs are thriving—even in the turbulent milieu of large metropolitan areas. One such program exists at Loyola University in Chicago.

Officer education began at Loyola in 1948, and, for nearly 20 years, the university offered a general military science curriculum patterned after either the standard Track A or the modified Track B course outline. But beginning with school year 1968-69, Loyola University, along with 10 other universities nationwide, instituted a new developmental curriculum called Track C.

Mershon Committee

This new curriculum option, however, did not just materialize in 1968. And, most importantly, it was not a reaction to the dissidents who, in 1968, were calling for the abolishment of ROTC on college campuses. Rather, Track C is the product of civilian and military educators working together to design a curriculum which best utilizes the ROTC students'

time. This group was under the direction of the Mershon Center for Education in National Security, and held its first conference in June 1960 at Ohio State University, Columbus. The tone of the conference was set by the remarks of John U. Monroe, dean of Harvard College, Cambridge, Massachusetts, in a paper titled "Strengthening the ROTC Curriculum." He said, ". . . the colleges' own programs are getting stiffer, and better, and we must look for the soft spots in ROTC, and shrink them out . . . we must strive to develop academic courses that are useful to both sides."

To "shrink out" the soft spots in ROTC, a second meeting of the Mershon Committee was held in 1964. This meeting resulted in a report which outlined a dramatic new direction for the ROTC curriculum. It was the committee's belief that there was . . . a need for the development of an ROTC curriculum which is designed to be challenging to the student and responsive to credit requirements of colleges and universities and the military requirements of the armed services.

Track C Courses

The concept finally agreed upon was called Track C. Track C consists of a preprofessional division during the freshman and sophomore years and professional training during the junior and senior years of college. Track C stresses broad career and professional development.

At Loyola, for example, two semesters of "World Military History" for freshmen, and "Foundations of National Power" and "National Security Problems"

for sophomores, replace the technical military courses such as map reading and assembly and disassembly of weapons. Furthermore, the Track C courses give the student an insight into the rationale behind the military profession, its historical perspective, and the military function in a democratic political system.

In addition, Track C instructors at Loyola have a minimum of a master's degree in either history or political science. With these academic credentials, not only does the military service conform to the standards of the academic community, but it also enhances the quality of education for the ROTC student, better utilizes his available time, and expands his overall college education. But there are also bonus effects which have made ROTC at Loyola a truly viable academic curriculum.

One bonus effect has been the cross-listing of both sophomore courses under political science. At a time when academic credit is being questioned for ROTC courses at other universities, the Loyola student not only fulfills his ROTC requirement, but also receives academic credit toward his political science course requirement. Most important, the cross-listing was accomplished at the request of the chairman of the Political Science Department because he felt the courses added to his department's offerings.

This development is in line with the aims of former Army Chief of Staff Harold K. Johnson. In a 1967 letter to institutions participating in the Track C experiment, General Johnson stated, "Our purpose involves more than merely being responsive to the criticism that the present curricula lack challenge and are too vocationally oriented. Rather, we intend the basic courses of the new curriculum be so designed that there will be no question of their being accorded academic credit on a par with other courses offered by the institution, and fully applicable in any of its degree programs."

Another bonus effect of cross-listing has been the enrollment of non-ROTC students. This mix of students provides for interesting and challenging classroom lectures. In fact, the editor of the student newspaper plus members of the Students for a Democratic Society sat in the same classroom with future Army officers.

Because of their academic and military credentials, military officers at Loyola have also been requested to lecture in other departments. This gets the military officer involved in the mainstream of academic life; he becomes a contributor to the university community. Civilian professors reciprocate and lecture in military science classes. To date, history and political science professors have lectured in the basic course while psychology professors have lectured in the junior classes and sociology professors in the senior classes.

Professor of Military Science Participation

The Loyola Professor of Military Science (PMS) and the Military Science Department are behind this interdisciplinary approach to military science. The PMS and his officers initiate and request, coordinate and plan. The PMS functions as a department chairman and the Military Science Department as a truly academic department. Last spring, Loyola's chapter of the Blue Key National Honor Fraternity so recognized Loyola's PMS by selecting him to receive their annual honorary award. The award read in part: "He has transformed the military science department into a truly academic effort making Loyola a model for other schools' military science departments. The initiation of the 'Option C' program exemplifies the qualities of academic excellence and personal integrity needed of our future Army officers."

Still another bonus effect of Track C is the participation of the Military Science Department in an avant-garde "Free University." The Free University is a voluntary, no-credit program offered in an off-campus coffeehouse whose classroom is a living room. In September 1968, one of the Track C officers was asked if he would give three lectures in the Free University. He agreed and titled his lecture series "The Military Instrument." With such a title, the course drew most of the dissidents on campus. But because of his academic as well as his military background, he was able to hold his own.

Popular Program

In fact, the course became the most popular one offered by the Free University, and the officer actually gave over 25 lectures last school year. Needless to say, the first few sessions were tense, but all parties involved soon grew to respect each other, and the meetings developed into a real learning experience. This involvement has done much to improve the image of the military services and enhance ROTC on campus. It has also given the ROTC student pride in his department, military instructors, and future profession.

ROTC at Loyola University of Chicago is one of the many Army ROTC programs which is progressing and thriving in even these turbulent days. And Loyola's program was not the result of student protest, but the work of concerned civilian and military educators. Let me not be misunderstood. Current criticism of the ROTC program is not necessarily unpatriotic nor is dissatisfaction with the ROTC curriculum necessarily disloyal. On the contrary, critical analysis can be productive. The end result can be a stronger ROTC program.

We must be able to differentiate between those who want ROTC completely off campus because it

Army ROTC cadets receive a military science lecture from the professor of military science at Loyola University, circa 1971.



US Army

“taints” a university and those who desire change in the curriculum in order to bring it up to the standards of the academic community and to improve the college education of the student and the future Army officer. My contention is that the latter group comprises the majority of our college administrators, faculty, and students. It is to this group that the Army must address itself, not just reacting to the actions of a dissident minority, but taking the initiative in meeting the justifiable wants of the concerned majority.

Finally, given the academic credentials, the military officer can contribute to and enhance the over-all university curriculum. We can destroy the allegations of those professors who blatantly state that the military

officer is not equipped to discuss subjects intellectually, is narrow, or lacks freedom of expression. Most important, by our academic as well as our military professionalism, we can motivate college students toward careers in the Army.

All we, as military officers, ask are the means which, in the university community, are the academic credentials. With the credentials, we can structure and teach the type of program which can compete with other professions for quality college students. The costs are relatively low; the benefits in producing better officers and instilling professional pride are high. ROTC at Loyola University of Chicago is a bright example of what can be accomplished. **MR**

General George A. Joulwan is the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, headquartered in Belgium, and commander in chief, US European Command, Stuttgart, Germany. He previously served as commander in chief, US Southern Command. He was a student at the US Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, when he wrote this article.