

# THE CHRONICLE

## of Higher Education

Thursday, July 14, 2011

Subscribe  
Today
[HOME](#) | [NEWS](#) | [OPINION & IDEAS](#) | [FACTS & FIGURES](#) | [BLOGS](#) | [JOBS](#) | [ADVICE](#) | [FORUMS](#)
[The Chronicle Review](#) | [Commentary](#) | [Books](#) | [Letters to the Editor](#) | [Academic Destinations](#) | [Campus Viewpoints](#)

## The Chronicle Review

Home > [Opinion & Ideas](#) > [The Chronicle Review](#)

Search

[E-mail](#) | [Print](#) | [Comment \(18\)](#) | [Share](#)

November 28, 2010

### Basic Training for Academics



Courtesy of Tufts U.

By *James M. Glaser*

**Snapshot:** It has taken me a long time to build up the courage required to take on the "Where Eagles Dare" high-ropes course. Indeed, I am the last person in line. Now everyone is watching me and waiting for me to finish. I am crossing the course without any grace or form, but at least I'm making progress. On one particularly difficult section, I fall off the rope and exclaim loudly. "You sound like you're giving birth," says someone below. "I wouldn't know," I yell back, suspended from a safety cable. "When my wife gave birth, I fainted."

When the professor of military leadership in the Army Reserve Officer Training Corps at Tufts University invited me to participate in a summer leadership "distinguished-educators visit" at Fort Knox, he said, "This one has some 'adventure' training in it." But these high ropes have more adventure than I bargained for.

**Snapshot:** While attempting to scale a 40-foot climbing wall, I look over at the middle-aged admissions director in the next lane. She has struggled mightily—and loudly—to get to the top, and I empathize, as my own muscles are trembling from the effort. She is five feet from the summit but has stalled. In response to encouragement from the crowd below, she jokes, "I don't have to get to the top! I'm happy with myself!" But she reaches into her last reservoir of strength and pulls herself up to the finish. When I get there, we high-five and look out over the landscape.

**Snapshot:** Crossing a stream, a 64-year-old financial-aid administrator very slowly pulls herself across the single-rope bridge our team has put together. Her mod peace-sign glasses clash with her Army fatigues, and are askew as she struggles across. It is a huge effort for her, but at least the acrid smoke bomb that went off as I was crossing has somewhat dissipated. As we unhook her from the rope bridge, she melts in happy relief. Our team is last to finish, but we feel accomplished nonetheless.

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION  
**THE ACADEMIC  
WORKPLACE**

COMING JULY 29

Turn here™  
Sponsored by: **Fidelity**  
INVESTMENTS

#### Most Popular

[Most Viewed](#) | [Most E-Mailed](#)
[Most Commented](#)

1. Judge Sides With For-Profit Colleges in Challenge to 'State Authorization' Rule
2. In Texas, Coalitions Spar Over Governor's Higher-Education Agenda
3. A College Education for All, Free and Online
4. Harvard's Privacy Meltdown
5. U. of Pennsylvania Professor Accuses Colleagues of Slanted Research

#### Past Coverage

[Students are Climbing the Wall at Cornell U.](#) - March 4, 1992

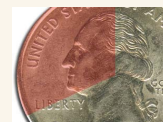
[Colleges Replace Drab Gyms With Sleek, Playful Facilities](#) - February 9, 2001

[Volume 57, Issue 15: December 3, 2010 - November 29, 2010](#)

[A Camp of Their Own](#) - August 17, 2007

[Reboot Camp](#) - September 21, 2005

#### Special Report: CFO Survey



#### Few Finance Chiefs Are Optimistic

Declining federal support and worries about the ability to raise tuition were major concerns.

[Survey Results](#)

- [Optimism in Short Supply](#)

What are 90 "distinguished" educators doing here, bumbling across ropes and rappelling off towers for three days in sweltering Kentucky?

It is easy to see why the military is interested in having us participate in its program. Given its need for a pipeline to the officer corps, our cooperation is critical to its success. Engaging us like this can only help create more-sympathetic university partners. After participating in the challenging activities organized for us, talking with the cadets, and learning about the Army's philosophy and practice of leadership training, we see how meaningful the experience can be for cadets: how much it can contribute to personal confidence, team-building, and the ability to lead, and follow. But what's in it for us university administrators, beyond a little adventure?

For one thing, our students benefit tangibly from ROTC programs. ROTC offers full scholarships to attend college, particularly for study in science, math, and engineering. ROTC also offers rigorous, meaningful training that supplements what we do on college campuses. Students in the corps may also take advantage of other experiences, like the summer leadership programs at Fort Knox or Maxwell Air Force Base and summer internships in far-flung places. The leadership programs are demanding in terms of time and energy, but students clearly leave them enriched. We faculty and administrators should know about the opportunities available to students interested in a military career.

Second, as intellectuals, we simply should understand the military better. Some of our ignorance is born of a general distaste for the institution. The two cultures are certainly different, and they are hard to bridge, partly because our worlds are so separate (except for on-campus ROTC chapters). The military tends to promote uniformity, teamwork, and hierarchy, while in universities, we tend to value free expression, individuality, and informality.

Moreover, the recent history of the relationship has been rocky, going back to the anti-Vietnam War activities on college campuses in the 1960s and 70s. That, of course, was the environment in which some of our senior faculty members went to college, and some of their resentments have lingered on.

But even those faculty and administrators who are not hostile do not understand the military as an institution. Few have served in its ranks (I myself had never set foot on a military base before last year and did not know a colonel from a major). Given the military's prominence and importance to our society, security, and economy, our ignorance is problematic. And given the military's role as an engine of social progress for racial and ethnic minorities and working-class men and women, there is some potential common ground between the military and academe.

Finally, it seems to me that we have a lot to learn from the military, particularly from its leadership education. As we educators discussed at Fort Knox, leadership education on many of our campuses is often handed over to the student-affairs division. Of course, colleges and universities want leadership to be part of the undergraduate experience, but it is not centrally located in our curricula. Where it is part of what we teach, it does not get out of the classroom much, and the challenge is to connect the theoretical to the practical. We can teach leadership theory from books and lectures, but it is hard to evaluate leadership qualities on examinations and papers. So, on many campuses, leadership is a side dish, not the main course.

To my eyes, the Army is doing something quite right with leadership education. True, its style of leadership is more directive, but it also involves significant teamwork and trust. The assessment stage of the military's leadership training is well thought out and executed. There are feedback loops and opportunities to track and improve one's performance. Self-assessment and peer assessment are built into the process. And attention is paid to different dimensions of leadership—the ability to plan ahead, to problem-solve "on the fly," to motivate and persuade others of a course of action, to delegate responsibility, and to direct triage in a stressful situation. Those skills are all relevant in military situations, of course, but they translate to other environments as well.

I am very happy that I went to Fort Knox. It was an exercise in humility (as well as humidity). While I have no great desire to do it again, I am proud to have conquered the challenges, even if I looked ugly doing it.

Most important, the experience got me to think more critically about the relationship between

- [Faculty Productivity Under Scrutiny](#)

- [A Minority Reports Belt-Tightening](#)

- [Complete Results](#) 📄

#### Campus Viewpoint

Information provided by participating institution



Case Western Reserve University is among the country's top research institutions. Located in Cleveland's University Circle, we offer nationally ranked and recognized programs in arts and sciences, dental medicine, engineering, law, management,...

- [View Campus Viewpoint](#)

the military and academe, and I suspect that is true for my colleagues who shared the adventure. I came away from the high ropes, the climbing wall, and the rope bridge believing that what is happening in military education is important. We need to learn what the armed forces are doing right, particularly with regard to leadership education, and to get beyond the stereotypes that have led to knee-jerk reactions to the military on our campuses.

Moreover, we need to recognize that the military, in turn, benefits from our values, a good-enough reason to support and encourage those of our students who are heading into military careers.

*James M. Glaser is the dean of academic affairs for arts and sciences at Tufts University.*

 E-mail  Print  Comment (18)  Share

## Comments

1. mjohnso9 - November 29, 2010 at 01:15 am

This article seems a bit celebratory and less than critical in its assessment of the role ROTC plays within institutions of higher education. And while the skills, abilities and knowledge that ROTC programs impart are valuable as the author observes, I must disagree with the statement that "...given the military's role as an engine of social progress for racial and ethnic minorities and working-class men and women, there is some potential common ground between the military and academe". The resentment that some academicians feel towards ROTC is that Glaser's observation is factually wrong and diametrically opposed to the evidence. The inclusion of ethnic minorities was accomplished, not by the initiative of the military but by Presidential Directive of Franklin D. Roosevelt. And even then, the separate but (un)equal policy continued to be the status quo for many in which minorities served in exclusively support roles as cooks, janitors, etc. So historically the military has never been an engine for social progress, but rather a highly recalcitrant and socially reluctant participant in change as is evidenced only recently by debates over the discriminatory policy of Don't Ask, Don't Tell. Moreover the hierarchical nature of the military evokes images, for many academicians, of politically indoctrinated robots, as has been reported at the US Air Force Academy regarding the pervasive atmosphere of religious intolerance. And I need not go into detail over the still unresolved, complex issues of gender discrimination towards women. Thus the cumulative results is a very real and valid skepticism towards ROTC units, both on campuses and off, and the role that they play in the larger mission of the university, ONE of whose objectives is the development of independent, critical thinking and intellectual curiosity.

2. achapnick - November 29, 2010 at 10:23 am

Those interested in efforts to make the academy more understandable to the military might be interested in the following article:

Adam Chapnick and Barbara Falk, "Academics 101: An Introduction for the Military Community." *Canadian Military Journal* 10,4 (Autumn 2010): 26-35.  
<http://www.journal.forces.gc.ca/vol10/no4/06-chapnick%20falk-eng.asp>

The article is available in English and French

3. gpage - November 29, 2010 at 10:28 am

mjohnso9 brings up interesting points, but negates to reflect on higher education's historical issues as well. W.E.B. Du Bois would counter that higher education in America has been (historically) resistant to social change in a similar vein as illustrated in the comment above.

Where I think the military (and article) resonates is in the American dream of \*individual opportunity\* in regards to social change/improvement, not that the institution itself promotes social change. Those who have few options in life due to lack of money or other barriers can benefit from the skills gained from the military (now), in a similar way to how people who are not well off can benefit from higher education; opportunity to advance and excel in many

venues. While neither is perfect, they are options for those less fortunate.

4. gavery - November 29, 2010 at 10:54 am

I am an academic who has served as a consultant to one of the warfighting commands, working with field-grade and general officers from all branches of the military, and found that the officers are as well educated as my academic colleagues, and in fact are far more open-minded and intellectually curious than most academics. Ideas are not abstractions to them, but have real world application and life-or-death consequences, which makes thinking less of a game and more of a reality. Academics could learn a lot by having a few majors or lieutenant colonels around to talk to.

As far as the previous commentor goes, I grew up in the military (my father was a career Air Force and Army NCO) and found it far more integrated than civilian life, and certainly far better at exhibiting a race-blind meritocratic attitude than a modern University. The sort of racial preferences we see implemented for the purposes of "diversity" would be disastrous in the military environment, where less competent leadership - even in peacetime, where fatalities in training accidents are not unknown - could easily mean the unnecessary deaths of soldiers or civilians. Even in the 1970s, I witnessed less racial tension, less self-segregation, and more mutual respect on a military base than on a campus I have taught at - probably because no one was stigmatized (internally or externally) as the beneficiary of preferences and thus less deserving.

As far as desegregation goes, that began in the army BEFORE the Roosevelt order, which did NOT require the desegregation of the military (which became law under the Truman administration as a result of the 1947 National Security Act). It began as a military necessity, when the unrealistic manpower projections in World War II resulted in a shortage of infantrymen due to higher than expected casualties. This became critical during the Battle of the Bulge in December 1945, and resulted in the transfer of soldiers from Service and Supply units to infantry billets. Many of these were black soldiers who volunteered for the transfer to a combat role. There had been a number of black combat units (independent Tank Destroyer and Engineer Battalions for the most part) but this marked the beginning of fully integrated units. The military had promoted black officers to General officer rank long before the war, and certainly before most of our "elite" universities had appointed their first black assistant professor, much less a Dean or President.

It should be also noted that integration of the whole military went surprisingly smoothly following the 1947 Act, certainly far smoother than in the civilian sector. In the South, many if not all bases responded to segregated schools by establishing integrated ones on the base. I can recall in my elementary years in the early 1970s how astounded the adults were at the problems of integrating the off-base schools, because ours had been integrated for decades. Our base housing was integrated long before the civilian world got around to it - I cannot recall EVER not having black and asian neighbors and playmates growing up.

Racial integration was not the only way that life is more integrated in the military than at a civilian university. There is far more class-level integration as well, with work roles and private life roles more separated. I can recall my Dad, then a TSGT and president of the base riding club, giving directions to a Lt. General on where to spread a trailer load of manure on a workday, and watching the two trade jokes while cleaning out their horses adjoining stalls. In Alaska, the NCOs and Officers in a SAC attachment Dad was a part of routinely got together for parties on weekends. In High school, I got to play poker regularly with the senior NCOs and Officers in his last squadron. Such interaction between grad students and faculty is a rarity on campus, where becoming too familiar with students is somehow seen as undercutting the role authority of the faculty - even though that relationship is far less critical than in a military unit.

There is a lot we can learn from DoD, if academics can bring themselves to admit that they can learn from someone else, an intellectual humility far too many of us are too insecure to admit.

5. robertusa - November 29, 2010 at 11:35 am

The major obstacle posed by the US military to academia is the culture of American imperialism, now boldly pursued by mercenaries, corporations, politicians of both parties, and war criminals. Little wonder that so many academics are content to just sit back and watch the empire crumble.

6. drnels - December 02, 2010 at 06:16 pm

It's already been mentioned in the comments, but as long as DADT exists, I'm not allowed to take part in any military activities even if I wanted to do so. It's hard to celebrate any organization that is so exclusionary. And I grew up in a military household and have been on several bases many times. None of the men in my immediate family have a problem with me being gay, but they do have a problem with the fact that an organization that mattered to them won't allow me to be a part of it. My father was hoping I'd go ROTC before I came out to him, and I came out to him partly because I couldn't face coming home with a dishonorable discharge.

7. lost\_angeleno - December 02, 2010 at 06:55 pm

One person's experience is by definition anecdotal, but that does not make it wrong. For many years I've taught at a college where the ROTC program is highly prized, for its "Americanism." Over the years, the students have fallen into a continuum of good to bad. However, it has not been a bell-shaped curve. Cadets have tended strongly to be the less accomplished of the student cohort. They usually resist creative and critical thinking, and want things spelled out for them. They usually want a formula they can apply to the situation handed them. They are the least tolerant of new ideas, social and intellectual.

Over the last few years, the cadet corps has been the hotbed of racism and homophobia. Several have spread "white power" hogwash, and engaged in racist and homophobic tagging and verbal attacks on others. Several have physically threatened other students and faculty members. The administration takes a "see no evil" attitude, because the cadets are so "American," and so complaints go unresolved. And it's right to condemn the whole for the few, because even when complaints are prosecuted, the rest of the cadets claims to know nothing, refuses to "snitch," and do gives personal support to the malefactors. This is not tolerable in a serious intellectual environment.

Faced with this kind of ugly militaristic attitude, it's no wonder there's a divide in the university. It's not created by the faculty; those of us who have been around here know them too well for what they are. They are the problem.

8. jtester - December 02, 2010 at 09:05 pm

Let's not get off target here--the article is about how the military, as an organization, have taken a lot careful thought in how to develop leadership education (they would say "training") and how that process could be of value to academia and graduates. I served in the military for 9 years before becoming an academic for the past 16 years. I can say with certainty that (officer) training in leadership, logistics, and management is a much better background for developing institutional administrators than usual the lack of training (of any kind) for traditional academic faculty, from which administrators are derived.

Academic faculty could learn volumes about how to motivate and adminstrate organizations by taking some military training. I don't mean the classic boot-camp type of experience, but rather some of the short-topic, learning experiences offered at Squadron Officer School or the Command and Staff college. I believe a set of leadership and management courses, adopted from a military leadership program, is a good idea for helping university administrators guide their institutions through these very volatile times.

9. lost\_angeleno - December 02, 2010 at 10:03 pm

Just to be clear, the first half of the article is all about ROTC programs and what they instill. Therefore, a comment on the kind of "leadership" developed in ROTC is dead-center on target. And in my (anecdotal) experience with a big ROTC program, it instills racism and homophobia. Which is "leadership" of a sort...

10. cocomaan - December 03, 2010 at 11:13 am

"After participating in the challenging activities organized for us, talking with the cadets, and learning about the Army's philosophy and practice of leadership training, we see how meaningful the experience can be for cadets: how much it can contribute to personal confidence, team-building, and the ability to lead, and follow."

The military's philosophy and practice of leadership training, bolstering personal confidence and building teams serves one purpose: to train potential soldiers to be better killers. In case the author has forgotten, the purpose of the military is to be the killing apparatus of the state. The military is not the Peace Corps, a trade school or a leadership training camp. For some reason, this is never mentioned in this article, and my guess is that the author is uncomfortable with this fact.

The mainstream practice of lionizing the modern military as \*something other than\* a cadre of trained killers is exactly why "distinguished academics" are uncomfortable with the military in the first place.

11. jffoster - December 03, 2010 at 11:23 am

Cocoman (10),

The U S Coast Guard is also one of the military services of the United States. And the U S Air Force maintains search and rescue units and has a uniformed civilian auxiliay, the Civil Air Patrol, which specializes in low and slow SAR operations. And all the armed forces personnel can become eligible for the Humanitarian Services Medal. Yes, the purpose primary of the armed forces, particularly the DOD ones, is to fight and win wars. But they, as life, are more complicated than dismissing them as trained killers. And that's not what Dean Glaser's article was about and I see no reason in it to guess whether he is comfortable with the War purpose of the armed forces or not.

12. cocomaan - December 03, 2010 at 11:54 am

I'll give you the USCG (which is DHS, but under DoD when we're at war) but not the Civil Air Patrol's search and rescue operations, which is something that the police should be doing. However, that's kind of a moot point, because the author is not advocating training with either. He's training with the Army, and writing as if the discomfort with the military some academics feel is because they don't understand their leadership programs. This is silly. Many are not comfortable because the leadership program's purpose is to train people to carry out the primary purpose, as you put it, of the military. No matter how many Humanitarian medals are handed out, that's always going to be their purpose. When someone writes an article about training with the Coast Guard or the police, maybe we can talk!

13. 11240163 - December 03, 2010 at 12:12 pm

Two other issues not yet mentioned: officers in the Army, Air Force, and other services have engaged in unconstitutional proselytizing of evangelical Christian beliefs to their soldiers (see e.g. the web site of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, or of Americans United for Separation of Church and State.)

Secondly, since the thrust of the article seems to be to promote ROTC on campus, we should remember that a number of universities, such as Yale, decided that they could no longer allow ROTC on campus because the DoD would not agree to reverse its policy of appointing faculty and determining curriculum. No self-respecting university can allow outside agencies to make those decisions for it.

14. knight75 - December 03, 2010 at 01:31 pm

Cocomaan--it always gives me a chuckle when folks talk about the military's mission as if it is some venomous secret we don't like to discuss. What do you propose SHOULD be the military's mission? It also makes me laugh when I meet (either in person or in a forum such as this one) supposedly "enlightened" individuals who are, in reality, more rigid and intolerant in their views than anyone I've ever met in nearly 20 years of active military service. Take care not to leave your ivory tower, lest you encounter the real world--where not everyone is as enlightened as you.

15. cocomaan - December 03, 2010 at 02:31 pm

knight75

The military has succeeded in whitewashing its mission, and our author is attempting, quite valiantly, to place the university within a militant American society. That's fine, and by all means, he can keep trying; however, many (if not most of those on campus who oppose the military) do so solely because of its mission. Once again, I quote the article:

"as intellectuals, we simply should understand the military better. Some of our ignorance is born of a general distaste for the institution. \*\*\*The two cultures are certainly different, and they are hard to bridge, partly because our worlds are so separate (except for on-campus ROTC chapters).\*\*\*"

This is silly. Distaste for the military on campus isn't because there are "two cultures", as if we're talking about two fraternities living side by side. This distaste isn't because the military promotes uniformity over free thought. The distaste quite obviously stems from the fact that bastions of progressivism like universities don't look fondly upon institutions whose purpose is to kill other people. Furthering their goals by "training" university administrators in "leadership" is a hilarious act of propaganda, and I'm glad to point that out.

Bottom line: I find it ludicrous to say that university life isn't always fond of the military simply because the latter is sadly \*misunderstood\*. As you said, Knight75, it's no big secret.

16. dpwalton - December 03, 2010 at 06:50 pm

After spending a morning photographing the ROTC from the University of Oregon campus, I can say that the students involved certainly showed more discipline and leadership skills than most of the other students I see. Here's the link to what I saw that day:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/wolframburner/sets/72157623842321107/with/4566879029/>

17. lost\_angeleno - December 04, 2010 at 12:19 am

The Fascist Brown Shirts also showed discipline and leadership. Look where that led.

Don't confuse d&l with intelligence, integrity, or compassion. There is no necessary overlap from d&l to these other qualities.

18. knight75 - December 09, 2010 at 07:45 am

Thank you, cocomaan and lost\_angeleno, for making my point. To you, and to others like you, anyone who disagrees with your view of the world is automatically wrong and should therefore be muzzled. You're comparing American Soldiers and officers-in-training to "Fascist Brown Shirts"? Really? Your comment about "bastions of progressivism" is laughable as well. You're so blinded by your own prejudices and intolerance that you cannot hear how naive you sound. Go back to Berkeley and take your intolerance with you.

Add Your Comment

Commenting is closed.

College Radio



Left of the Dial

The Chronicle Review



On Excuses and Empathy

Teaching



The Number Coach

Copyright 2011. All rights reserved.

The Chronicle of Higher Education 1255 Twenty-Third St, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20037