

ROTC HISTORY



The tradition of military instruction on civilian college campuses began in 1818 when Captain Alden Partridge, former superintendent at West Point, established the American Literary, Scientific, and Military Academy, which later became Norwich University. The idea of military instruction in civilian colleges soon spread to other institutions, including Virginia Military Institute, The University of Tennessee, and The Citadel. The Land Grant Act of 1862 (Morrill Act) reinforced this tradition by specifying that

courses in military tactics should be offered at the colleges and universities established as a result of this act.

Although 105 colleges and universities offered this instruction by the turn of the century, the college military instruction program was not directly associated with Army needs. The National Defense Act of 1916 turned away from the idea of an expandable Regular Army and firmly established the traditional American concept of a citizen's Army as the keystone of our defense forces. It merged the National Guard, the Army Reserve, and the Regular Army into the Army of the United States. Officers for this expanded citizen's Army were to be given military instruction in colleges and universities under a Reserve Officers' Training Corps. Army ROTC was firmly established in the form in which it is known today.

By the beginning of World War I, ROTC had placed some 90,000 officers in the reserve pool. In 1917 and 1918, the majority of these were called to active duty.

At the outbreak of World War II, more than 56,000 Army ROTC officers were called to active duty within a six month period. By the end of World War II, more than 100,000 had served. Since 1945, more than 328,000 men and women have received commissions through Army ROTC.

In 1945, Congress passed the ROTC vitalization Act, which made the ROTC program more effective by establishing an attractive scholarship program, introducing the two year program and providing monthly financial assistance to Advanced Course Students.

Today, the importance of the ROTC program to national security is highlighted by the fact that about 75% of all officers commissioned each year come from ROTC sources. The national resurgence of interest in ROTC is also clearly evident by the involvement of over 70,000 college students in ROTC courses and by the more than 300 college institutions and 600 cross-enrolled schools which offer the ROTC program on their campuses.