

War Eagles: Auburn University's Tradition of Training Soldiers

by

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Abstract

As a land-grant university, Auburn University maintains a tradition of training American soldiers. Its Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) unit was once central to campus life, but in 1969 the university eliminated its mandatory ROTC program. Having offered a remarkable contribution to national defense, as a case study Auburn University Army ROTC embodies an exceptional microcosm for understanding how the United States government has prepared the Army to fight wars requiring mass mobilization. With the old model of cadet training based upon raising a mass army to fight wars in the industrial age and the new model based upon fighting wars with more powerful weaponry but fewer personnel in the modern age of science and technology, examining how these developments within the Army interrelate to the evolution of Auburn University Army ROTC provides an opportunity to consider the significance of how Auburn's commitment as a land-grant university to supporting ROTC has remained constant, although the centrality of Army ROTC to campus life is dramatically different.

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Introduction

Auburn University maintains a long and distinguished tradition of training American soldiers. Unfortunately, the memory of this proud legacy is mostly forgotten today by members of the younger generation. Although alumni who graduated from the university prior to the fall of 1969 - when the university required all able bodied male students to enroll in either the Army or the Air Force basic course Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) – may recall the prominent role that Army ROTC once played on the Auburn University campus, most individuals presently only think of the university in terms of its football team or its distinguished academic standing. The reality is that Army ROTC at Auburn University was once a fundamental institution of the campus that tremendously influenced the student body, faculty, administrators, and visitors.¹

The Auburn University Army ROTC program also represented a remarkable contribution to national defense. For example, many people understandably recognize The Citadel: The Military College of South Carolina as a powerhouse for producing future leaders of the Army, yet during the 1955-1956 school year Auburn University commissioned more Army officers than the Citadel.² Similarly, enthusiasts of the Texas A&M Corps of Cadets enjoy bragging about their proud military tradition; however, concerning the contribution of Auburn Army ROTC to mobilization during World War II, Executive Secretary R. B. Draughon asserted in 1942 that, “as a result of our ROTC

¹ Although this paper constitutes what is primarily a history of Army ROTC at Auburn University, it uses
² Chart of ROTC Units Third Army Area: School Year 56-57, box 25, “ROTC, Misc., 1956-57,” Pres. Draughon Papers. For 1955-1956, Auburn University commissioned 149 officers, while the Citadel produced 143.

For those interested, these 149 from Auburn University were commissioned during a school year when “net resident enrollment” for the university consisted of 8334 men and 2486 women. For more information see Ralph Draughon, President’s Official Report to the Board of Trustees, November 1, 1957, box 25, “Draughon, President’s Official Report to the Board of Trustees, November 1, 1957,” Pres. Draughon Papers.

program we believe we have as high a percentage of officers in proportion to the number of students trained as any institution in the country, even including Texas A. & M.” Indeed, their 1942 graduating class commissioned 177 men who later served on active duty in the Army.³

Finally, as a case study, Army ROTC at Auburn University embodies an exceptional microcosm for understanding how the United States government has prepared the Army to fight wars requiring mass mobilization. The reason lies with its outstanding history of training soldiers, with its status as a land grant university – which means that by federal law Auburn University must provide military training to students –, and with its relationship to the continuum of evolving factors affecting Army ROTC training. As will be fully explained in chapter 1, Army ROTC style instruction and the military training mandate for land grant colleges and universities have the same origin: Norwich University. Senator Justin Morrill employed the example of military training at Norwich as his guide when inserting the military training mandate into his bill establishing land grant universities. Passed during the egregious mobilization difficulties of the Civil War, which resulted in part from a deficiency in qualified officers, Morrill’s bill establishing land grant colleges and universities represented the first major attempt by the United States government to create an effective reserve force of personnel possessing military training. Despite these efforts, land grant colleges and universities never realized the entirety of Morrill’s vision for military training until the National Defense Act of 1916 bestowed a truly capable infrastructure for delivering valuable military training to students: ROTC. Conversely, land grant colleges and universities would later grant

³ R.B. Draughon to President C. B. Hodges of Louisiana State University, October 19, 1942, box 6, file 216, “Duncan, ROTC, Miscellaneous, 1940-47,” Pres. Duncan Papers.

valuable aid to the Army ROTC program by enthusiastically supporting ROTC and by resisting the movement against collegiate military training that, continuing from the 1920s to the present, seeks to obstruct the mission of Army ROTC. Additionally, 2013 marked the beginning of a dramatic transformation in how the United States Army Cadet Command (USACC) approaches cadet training.⁴ With the old model of cadet training based upon raising a mass army to fight wars in the industrial age and the new model based upon fighting wars with more powerful weaponry but fewer personnel in the modern age of science and technology, examining how the transformed Army ROTC program might affect Auburn University provides a useful opportunity to ponder what are the most significant differences between the past and present forms of Army ROTC on the Auburn University campus.

In order to create a holistic narrative of soldier training at Auburn University, this thesis considers the interconnected relationship between four main groups: (1) the Auburn University Army ROTC War Eagle Battalion – principally focusing upon cadre members and the instruction they provided; (2) the university community – chiefly regarding students but including university personnel, visitors, alumni, and members of the surrounding communities; (3) the leading administrators of the university; and (4) the federal government – primarily concerning the strategic plans and directives of the War Department/Department of Defense. The result is a history that primarily focuses on how representative individuals affected or responded to experience.

Since few individuals have written about the history of Army ROTC and virtually no one has published articles or books on the history of a specific Army ROTC program,

⁴ United States Army Cadet Command, USACC Strategic Plan 2013, Major General Jefforey A. Smith, 2013.

this project represents a noteworthy addition to the historiography. Accordingly, this paper relies principally upon primary sources to construct the narrative. The following are the most important source bases: the Auburn Plainsman, the Glomerata, the records of past presidents of Auburn University, Auburn University course catalogues, and interviews. The Auburn Plainsman and Glomerata contribute considerably to understanding the role that Army ROTC played in the culture of the Auburn University campus community. The records of past university presidents furnish the majority of material pertaining to the War Eagle Battalion itself and to the leading university administrators. Being necessary to establish the background context for how national and international events influenced soldier training at Auburn University, secondary sources abound almost exclusively in Chapter 1.

Four chapters comprise the substance of this historical account. To introduce the topic, Chapter 1 covers approximately from the 1860s to the end of World War I, and it examines the search by members of the federal government for an effective means of furnishing the nation with a competent reserve force of officers who could rapidly mobilize in time of war. The chapter also analyzes how these efforts influenced the nature of military training at Auburn University. Chapter 2, using issues of the Auburn Plainsman as its primary source, discusses the interwar years and demonstrates that during this time period university personnel and the ROTC cadre combined to establish Army ROTC as an ever-present fixture of campus community life. Chapter 3 considers the performance of the Auburn University ROTC program during World War II, the additional Army training programs that the War Department established on the campus as part of the war effort, and the wartime strengthening of the bond between Army ROTC

and the university. Chapter 4 chronicles the dramatic transformation of the centrality of Auburn University ROTC to the Auburn campus, with the university administration in 1969 instituting a voluntary program to replace the mandatory one. The conclusion offers a “then and now” discussion of Army ROTC, analyzing the changes sustained by the program since the end of mandatory ROTC at Auburn University. It subsequently considers the manner in which the dramatic post-2013 transformations of ROTC will modify the experience of cadre in the War Eagle Battalion. The sincere desire is that as a result of reading these chapters, individuals will recognize the contribution of Auburn University Army ROTC to national defense, the integral role of Army ROTC to Auburn University as a land grant university, and that Auburn University represents a fine case study through which to acquire a holistic understanding of the history of Army ROTC at land-grant universities.

The Establishment of the Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps

Since founded in 1872 by the State of Alabama as a land grant university, Auburn University has maintained an inalienable connection to military training. The heritage of this military tradition at Auburn University began immediately, with its administrators managing the university as a military institute, yet the foundation of that tradition rests with its identity as a land grant university. Based on lessons learned during the Civil War, the intent behind military training at land-grant universities was to furnish the nation with a competent reserve force of officers who could facilitate rapid mass mobilization in time of war, but it was not until the introduction of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) program at Auburn University in 1916 that the university finally began to fulfill the fundamental intent of its military training. No longer an informal program in which students acquired little actual military training beyond that of drill and ceremony, the implementation of Army ROTC meant that for the first time in its history Auburn University would substantively contribute to providing a qualified reserve of trained personnel that the Army might call upon in time of national emergency. Nevertheless, this convergence of ROTC and military training at land grant universities could not materialize until the innovation of Gen. Leonard Wood, who exemplified the Army's quest during the early twentieth century for increased professionalization and realistically conceived war preparation. Despite the apathy generally displayed by members of Congress and the Army toward his training ideas, Wood tirelessly advocated his unique vision of ROTC style military officer training with the aim of producing an excellent model for training future officers. In 1916, the National Defense Act formally authorized the type of student military training program that Wood had been promoting for several

years. In response to its passage, Auburn University enthusiastically and promptly implemented Army ROTC. The forthcoming dictates of wartime witnessed the temporary disbandment of that program at Auburn University - in place of Student Army Training Corps, which the War Department established on its campus. Upon reinstatement at the end of World War I, the War Department firmly implanted Army ROTC at Auburn University, enabling it to become a basic component of the identity of the university.

One cannot fully appreciate the history of the Army ROTC military tradition at Auburn University without cognizance of these national and international events that were necessary in order to bring about the introduction of Army ROTC at Auburn University, which signified a dramatic transformation in officer training methodology. Understanding this background history is also important because it effectively demonstrates the foundational reasons for why Auburn University Army ROTC serves as an excellent microcosm through which to examine the process by which the United States government prepared the Army to fight wars of mass mobilization. As will later in the chapter be explained in detail, Auburn University Army ROTC is valuable for this type of analysis primarily because of its status as a land-grant university and because of its immediate adoption of Army ROTC. This chapter considers the multifaceted course of events that led to the implementation of Army ROTC at Auburn University.

According to a history published by United States Army Cadet Command, modern Army ROTC originated with the program of military instruction taught by the American Literary, Scientific, and Military Academy - present day Norwich University. Before founding the university in 1819, Alden Partridge had served as the superintendent of the United States Military Academy at West Point, and under his guidance Norwich

became the first civilian university to teach military science in concert with its regular curriculum.⁵ Partridge was a close neighbor and friend of Vermont Senator Justin S. Morrill, and they conferred together on how the federal government could best respond to America's educational needs.⁶ As Morrill constructed his own beliefs on how the government should best foster education, Partridge's influence over Morrill apparently played a significant role.

During the late 1850s Morrill perceived the growing need for the creation of American industrial schools that could teach agricultural and mechanical skills – schools that would operate in a similar manner to the English industrial institutions of this time period.⁷ He believed that America's steadily declining agricultural industry during the 1840s and 1850s resulted from a lack of understanding and expertise on the part of farmers. Morrill asserted that only federal intervention could rectify this untenable situation.⁸ Therefore, on December 17, 1857, he introduced into Congress a "Bill Granting Lands for Agricultural Colleges."⁹ Despite the fact that it passed the House and Senate, President Buchanan vetoed the bill because he sympathized with Southerners who thought the bill called for a marked increase in the level of federal intervention in American society, which they did not want in the South.¹⁰ Morrill tried again in 1861, introducing the Land-Grant College Act on December 16.¹¹ This second bill, differing

⁵ Arthur T. Coumbe and Lee S. Harford, U.S. Army Cadet Command: The 10 Year History (Fort Monroe, Va: Office of the Command Historian, U.S. Army Cadet Command), 1996, 7-8.

⁶ Coumbe, "U.S. Army Cadet Command," 9; J. B. Edmond, The Magnificent Charter: The Origin and Role of the Morrill Land-Grant Colleges and Universities (Hicksville, N.Y.: Exposition Press, 1978), 19.

⁷ Coy F. Cross, Justin Smith Morrill: Father of the Land-Grant Colleges (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1999), 79.

⁸ Cross, "Justin Smith Morrill," 80-81.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 79.

¹⁰ Richard Franklin Bensel, Yankee Leviathan: The Origins of Central State Authority in America, 1859-1877 (Cambridge, Mass: Cambridge University, 1990), 69; Cross, "Justin Smith Morrill," 82-83.

¹¹ Cross, "Justin Smith Morrill," 83.

slightly from the original, gave each state 30,000 acres of federal land for each member it sent to congress, and the bill allocated the proceeds of that land to finance a minimum of one industrial and agricultural college in every state.¹² Southern secession removed most of the original bill's opponents and allowed the new bill to pass easily with President Lincoln signing it into law on July 2, 1862; however, the exigencies of wartime prompted Morrill to insert an important new stipulation into his bill.¹³ The act stipulated that land-grant colleges teach subjects predominantly related to the agricultural and mechanical arts as well as provide a general curriculum of instruction in science, the classics, and military tactics.¹⁴

With the onset of the Civil War, the United States Army had expanded operations to an unprecedented level. Initial wartime demands called for the mobilization of 20,000 officers, but West Point and Norwich combined could only contribute 1,500. The Army's desperate need for officers meant that most regiments possessed inexperienced officers having little or no training. In response, Congress sought to overcome this deficiency in leadership, which culminated in Morrill inserting into his bill the requirement for all land-grant colleges to teach military leadership.

During their first several years of operation, land-grant colleges provided military training that was incapable of complying with Army standards. Although veterans, the trainers were first-and-foremost regular academic professors; they taught military leadership as an after thought to their other duties, which hurt the programs. The most training that students typically received was in drill, and often this was conducted at an

¹² Coumbe, "U.S. Army Cadet Command," 9.

¹³ Coumbe, "U.S. Army Cadet Command," 9; Edmond, "The Magnificent Charter," 21.

¹⁴ Justin Morrill, Transcript of Morrill Act (1862). U.S. National Archives & Records Administration, <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=33&page=transcript> (accessed December 5, 2012). Emphasis Added.

extremely elementary level. These programs further suffered from a lack of definitive purpose, of equipment, and of such basic items as uniforms. It is possible to conclude that even if this program had been able to produce officers in time to enter the war, such officers would have likely not been any more competent than existing leadership.¹⁵

After the Civil War, Congress enacted several steps to improve military instruction at the land-grant colleges.¹⁶ In 1866 Congress approved the allocation of Army officers to land-grant colleges that maintained no less than 150 male pupils.¹⁷ Congress made allowance in 1870 for the provision of small arms and equipment to these programs, and it approved other beneficial changes as well. After 1880, retired officers could teach these military courses, and 1892 witnessed the dispatch of 100 Army officers to serve as military science instructors at land-grant institutions.¹⁸ Notwithstanding these attempts to improve military instruction at these universities, the contribution of the land-grant to the nation's defense needs were generally inadequate. With the cadre at each different university operating under minimal guidelines from the War Department, each program was different.¹⁹ Often the instruction emphasized drill to the exclusion of teaching useful combat skills.²⁰

The military training at these institutions defined their male students' college experiences in many ways. All students were cadets whose daily routine was determined by the university's faculty or board of trustees. At all land-grant universities, military training was compulsory for males throughout their freshman and sophomore years. A

¹⁵ Coumbe, "U.S. Army Cadet Command," 9.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁷ James E. Pollard, Military Training in the Land-Grant Colleges and Universities, With Special Reference to the R.O.T.C. Program (Washington, D.C.: Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, 1964), 15.

¹⁸ Coumbe, "U.S. Army Cadet Command," 9.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

noteworthy distinction is that land-grant colleges in the North typically favored a relaxed atmosphere that restrained the extent to which military training interfered in the lives of their students; often, these cadets only wore the uniform during periods of military instruction and training. In contrast, land-grant universities in the South usually exalted their warrior-leader training with much greater emphasis; for example, southern cadets almost always remained in uniform.²¹

On March 20, 1872, Alabama Governor Robert Lindsay and his board of directors established the Agricultural and Mechanical College of the State of Alabama on the site of what had been the East Alabama Male College.²² (What started as the Agricultural and Mechanical College of the State of Alabama later became the Alabama Polytechnic Institute, which in turn eventually assumed the title of Auburn University. To avoid confusion, this paper hereafter refers to the university using its present name.) As Alabama's first land-grant university, Auburn University fully embodied its status as a land grant university through its curriculum.²³ Initially, the university sustained its military training mandate through the formation of two cadet companies. By 1898 Auburn University had expanded to the extent that it organized the cadets within a battalion.²⁴ Auburn University cadets lived under a highly regimented system. For example, they could not leave campus on the weekends and had to be in bed by 2200 hours. In 1909 the university had further grown such that its cadets composed a regiment.

²¹ Edmond, "The Magnificent Charter," 165.

²² William Warren Rogers, "The Founding of Alabama's Land Grant College at Auburn," Alabama Review 40, no. 1 (Jan 1987): 35.

²³ Kathryn Lindsay Anderson Wade, "The Intent and Fulfillment of the Morrill Act of 1862: A Review of the History of Auburn University and the University of Georgia" (Master's thesis, Auburn University, 2005), 68-71.

²⁴ John H. Napier III, "How They Put the 'War' in War Eagle Being a Short History of the Military at A.P.I.," 1958, 2, Auburn University Special Collections & Archives – Non-circulating collection, Auburn, Alabama.

That same year the university also created the Department of Military Science and Tactics.²⁵

In 1915, one year before Congress passed its bill establishing the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC), Auburn University was holding true to its status as a land grant university. Under the leadership of president Charles Thach, by the 1915-1916 school year Auburn University boasted a thriving academic community of 880 students. While most of these students were local to Alabama, some arrived from other states and a few from countries such as China, Mexico, and Russia.²⁶ In accordance with the Morrill Act and as explained in the university catalogue, "The leading object of the Institute... is to teach the principles and the applications of science." Thus, a large number of these students engaged in scientific and technological studies, with especial focus "to those that relate to agriculture and the mechanic arts."²⁷ Auburn University also provided a liberal arts education through such means as the study of Latin, history and the "mental and moral sciences"; however, the university offered only one Bachelor of Science degree, out of the ten available, that was not primarily technological or scientific in scope.²⁸ The "General Course" degree granted "a general and less technical education" for students either with no particular vocation in mind or with the desire to teach or engage in commercial business activities.²⁹ Bestowing no Bachelors of Art degrees, the other bachelor degrees were in various kinds of engineering, in agriculture, in pharmacy, in chemistry and metallurgy, and in architecture.³⁰

²⁵ Napier III, "How They Put the 'War' in War Eagle," 3.

²⁶ Catalogue of the Alabama Polytechnic Institute, 1915, 5, 46, AU.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 10,61-63.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 63.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 61-62.

Although the Morrill Act does not demand that land grant universities provide any specific amount of military training, Auburn University offered for every physically capable student, “practical instruction in the school of the soldier, of the company, and of the battalion in close and extended order, in guard mounting, inspection, parades, reviews, etc.”³¹ As a result, all able male students were inducted to the university as cadets. Comprising a regiment with two battalions and a band, President Thach was at the top of the chain of command, with Colonel Benjamin Patrick serving immediately under him as Commandant and Professor of Military Science.³² In addition to his general responsibilities for the entire regiment, Colonel Patrick gave special oversight to the surgeon, J. H. Drake; the Band Master, Major A. L. Thomas; and the cadet Regimental Staff.³³ As part of their military training, students could acquire leadership building opportunities and practical experience with military affairs through serving in cadet leadership positions. With 802 cadets in the program, abundant leadership slots existed.³⁴

The commandant selected potential cadet commissioned and cadet non-commissioned officers based upon demonstrated “military efficiency, good conduct, and scholarship.” Cadet commissioned officers always were juniors or seniors, and – although seniority could impact promotion – the university emphasized a merit-based system. Hence, any cadet facing either a promotion or an appointment to a leadership position was subject to a possible examination in which university personnel would scrutinize his “moral fitness, including demerits.” Understandably, no cadet could remain in a leadership position if he accumulated over one hundred demerits in a single

³¹ Ibid., 106.

³² Ibid., 5, 52.

³³ Ibid., 52.

³⁴ Ibid., 47.

session.³⁵ Upon nomination by the commandant, all candidates for leadership had to await final confirmation by the university president.³⁶

Until one's junior year, cadet military training consisted mostly of learning and executing the procedures for drill and ceremony. In a statement, which soldiers past and present will likely find humorous, Auburn University posited this statement about the role of drill in a cadet's life:

There are three regular military drills each week, and all undergraduate students, not physically incapacitated to bear arms, are required to engage in these exercises; privates of the senior class are exempt. The drills are short and the duty involves no hardships. The military drill is a health-giving exercise, and its good effects in the development of the *physique* and improvement of the carriage of the cadet are manifest.³⁷

The university considered drill so important that, of those physically capable, only two types of students were exempt. First, senior class privates of good report who were graduation candidates could attain an excuse from the president. Second, students who were over twenty-one when beginning college and who had received permission to focus their studies on a single field, such as agriculture or engineering, could skip drill provided that they invested the time absent in laboratory work.³⁸ Not only did drill represent a "health-giving exercise," but excellence in it also furnished a source of collective and individual pride. If selected as the soldier most capable at drill, then Auburn University honored that cadet with the Regimental Medal. To the "Best Drilled Company" for each year, the Board of Trustees awarded a sword.³⁹

³⁵ Ibid., 175.

³⁶ Ibid., 106.

³⁷ Ibid., 175-176.

³⁸ Ibid., 175.

³⁹ Ibid., 179.

During a cadet's junior and senior year, he began enrolling in theoretical courses taught by the Department of Military Science and Tactics.⁴⁰ In addition to regular drill, juniors studied for an hour each week both the methods of conducting infantry drill and the procedures for handling small arms. Seniors devoted three total credit hours a week to the following classes: Manual of Military Science, Field Service Regulations, and Manual of Guard Duty.⁴¹ Unfortunately, for any cadet who completed the military training and desired to serve as an officer, the university could not guarantee a commission - either for the regular Army or the militia. In terms of formal processes whereby one could attain a commission, the best hope for such a cadet was for the university to include him with the names of cadets demonstrating extraordinary military service capability, which Auburn University submitted to the Adjutant General of the Army and to the Adjutant General of a cadet's respective state.⁴² Although no guaranteed promise of military service, it was better than nothing.

At a university where the educational model follows that of a military institute, one should not be surprised to find regulations corresponding to the discipline inherent in such a program. With a simple statement provided in the catalogue for 1915-1916, Auburn University explained the rationale behind its regulations: "While every attention is given to the mental discipline of the students...their moral and Christian training will always constitute the prominent care and thought of the faculty." In other words, the "institute thus endeavors to educate as well as to instruct, to form character as well as

⁴⁰ Ibid., 106-107.

⁴¹ Ibid., 107.

⁴² Ibid., 106.

This occurred at a time when the United States Military Academy represented the only collegiate program for training officers that was formally connected to the United States Military.

give information of value.”⁴³ Some of the regulations were clearly of a military nature. For example, when classes were in session, all cadets wore a gray uniform – the same type worn by West Point cadets.”⁴⁴ Additionally, whether lodged at Smith Dining Hall or with a family from the local community, students not only enjoyed the protective and advantageous effects of living with a family, but they also faced the constant hazard of inspection for possible rule violations. In every house was a university appointed inspector who periodically reported to the commandant.⁴⁵ Auburn University prohibited students from transporting or consuming alcohol on campus, and they could not possess firearms other than those related to their military duties. Even the students’ recreational activities were subject to approval. University policy required that students attain faculty consent before partaking in publically available recreational events. Given the popularity of collegiate football – even at this early stage in the history of Auburn University – another intriguing regulation stipulated that students could not publically play football without parental consent.⁴⁶

In order to appreciate the transition of military training at Auburn University from its decentralized, non-standardized roots into the formal, uniform program of the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps, one must understand the role of national and international affairs in the development and passage of the 1916 National Defense Act. In the 1910s, pressure from military and university officials, who sought a more professional system of military training, combined with American society’s rising defense concerns which would become markedly more powerful in the years leading up to America’s entrance

⁴³ Ibid., 10.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 106, 174.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 175.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 174.

into the First World War. To create this transformation, the result was a nation-wide officer program that at Auburn University comprised a high level of conformity to national military standards while concurrently reinforcing its identity as a land grant university.

In the years of the twentieth century preceding World War I, military training at universities was typically disorganized and ineffective. In accordance with the dictates of the Morrill Act, land grant universities continued offering military training, and by 1900 most of them required students to participate for at least one year.⁴⁷ While some private and public institutions also provided military training, as Arthur Coumbe and Lee Harford explain in U.S. Army Cadet Command: The 10 Year History, it was primarily at land grant universities where “the tradition of military training...and the concept of citizen-soldier officer education became the most firmly embedded.”⁴⁸ Unfortunately, military training at all types of universities was often deficient because no uniform standard for training existed, and because the federal government possessed no supervisory role for regulating these collegiate military training programs. With each university’s cadre permitted to instruct in the manner they saw fit, every program – whether at a land grant university or otherwise – was unique. Instead of supplying a sizable force of well-trained civilians who could quickly fill America’s military ranks in times of national emergency, military training at civilian institutions held little significance to the defense preparations of the nation.⁴⁹ In addition to the lack of

⁴⁷ Coumbe, “U.S. Army Cadet Command,” 10.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

standardized training instruction, the shortcomings among these programs also included the inability to requisition modern military equipment.⁵⁰

In 1911 a military board inspected the quality of instruction at universities where the Army had assigned officers as Professors of Military Science, and concluded that the officers commonly fell short of their intended purpose.⁵¹ Instead of yielding quality soldiers with officer potential, the programs principally developed “fine drill corps.”⁵² The board argued that the problem lay with the freedom that the cadre at each university possessed, with the courses of instruction habitually designed according to individual concerns and not the defense needs of the nation.⁵³ The War Department also complained about a perceived “indifference” that a majority of university officials exhibited toward military training.⁵⁴ Although universities might complain about the Army failing to supply training equipment, a study by the War College Division of the Army’s General Staff Corps asserted, in turn, that the universities often demonstrated tremendous apathy for military training by seldom allocating sufficient resources or infrastructure.⁵⁵

University personnel also possessed many reasons to support the creation of a more suitable system of collegiate military training. Instead of sending experienced officers to teach at the universities, the War Department typically assigned officers no higher than lieutenant.⁵⁶ Even at large land grant universities with thousands of cadets, the Army normally sent just a single active duty officer to act as commandant.

Additionally, since time as a university instructor counted very little or not at all toward

⁵⁰ Michael S. Neiberg, Making Citizen-Soldiers: ROTC and the Ideology of American Military Service (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000), 22; Coumbe, “U.S. Army Cadet Command,” 10.

⁵¹ Coumbe, “U.S. Army Cadet Command,” 10.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 10-11.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 11, 307.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁵⁶ Neiberg, “Making Citizen-Soldiers,” 22.

one's promotion, cadre members generally displayed indifference towards their assignments, which adversely impacted the quality of training.⁵⁷ Another problem was that no formal relationship existed between these programs and the process by which either the War Department or state militias selected and commissioned officers.⁵⁸ On average, the War Department commissioned into the Regular Army only one noteworthy cadet from each of the top ten schools with military training. With almost no opportunity to actually apply their training through military service, low student motivation hindered effective military training. Although militias would have been a logical option for these cadets, most state militias were disdainful of college graduates; a college president outlined the problem with this statement: "...The ordinary college graduate usually has difficulty in securing the approval of his untrained and uneducated compeers (in the militia). They naturally look upon him as a college fellow who is trying to show off what he has learned in college."⁵⁹ Despite these shortcomings, the desire by military officials and academics for an efficacious collegiate officer training program operated in concert with American society's partiality toward non-professional officers in order to produce a system of military training that would satisfy all three entities.⁶⁰

To fully understand the impetus behind the Army's newfound desire for a consolidated officer program, one must look back to the unprecedented modernization reforms of the War Department that began during President McKinley's administration. Familiarity with this background is important for three reasons. First, it outlines the evolving culture of the Army that became increasingly focused on modernization, which

⁵⁷ Coumbe, "U.S. Army Cadet Command," 11.

⁵⁸ Neiberg, "Making Citizen-Soldiers," 22.

⁵⁹ Coumbe, "U.S. Army Cadet Command," 12.

⁶⁰ Neiberg, "Making Citizen-Soldiers," 22.

provided opportunities for unconventional leaders like General Leonard Wood to experiment with new ideas concerning military preparedness. Second, this background elaborates on the mobilization problems of the Spanish American War and the subsequent changes that it helped to inspire within the military; this is especially salient since it represented the foundational point of reference for General Wood and Theodore Roosevelt, who were the greatest proponents of what eventually became ROTC style collegiate training. Third, this military reform movement motivated the War Department to create the position of Army Chief of Staff. By occupying that position General Wood acquired the opportunity to test his proposal for a unique system of military training.

Thanks to the reform minded desire of leadership within the War Department, which sought a more efficient and scientific military, the Army and Navy experienced a momentous cultural transformation between 1890 and 1910.⁶¹ The Spanish-American War was an especially important catalyst in this development. Despite waging a successful campaign, the War Department's abysmal mobilization process in the Spanish-American War left much to be desired. The press exposed the egregious lack of coordination, foresight, planning, and competency that characterized the haphazardly organized mobilization. In response to these allegations, the President established a commission to review the matter. The investigators determined, as one authors explains, that "poor leadership and excessive paperwork" caused most of the problems, and they suggested that President McKinley initiate substantial reforms within the War Department. Therefore, with an opening in the position of Secretary of War, on August 1, 1899 the president appointed Elihu Root – a prominent lawyer with proven corporate

⁶¹ Ibid., 22-23.

managerial skills – whom President McKinley rightfully believed was capable of reorganizing and modernizing the department.

Root's changes proved critical in transforming the Army into a competent, well-organized, efficient force capable of successfully executing the increasingly complex warfare of the twentieth century.⁶² The first issue he tackled was the need to improve Army leadership through an integrated system of military education.⁶³ Immediately following the Spanish-American War one out of every three Regular Army officers lacked even the slightest amount of formal military instruction.⁶⁴ In response, Root ordered that every Army duty station of noteworthy size maintain a school for the ongoing education of officers. Outstanding performers at these schools were, in turn, eligible to attend advanced Army training at military bases housing the primary training center for a given branch of the Army. Especially important, Root created the Army War College, which would eventually become the "Army's premier educational institution." Root's intent was for that institution to train the most brilliant officers in the Army as well as to provide intellectual direction and policy guidance for the Army.⁶⁵

Alongside such innovations as the exploitation of more contemporary weapons systems, the War Department also created an improved Army organization with greater centralization of decision-making, which operated in conjunction with the newly established War College in an attempt to solve the many problems confronting the military.⁶⁶ Congressional passage of the General Staff Act of 1903 was key to this

⁶² US Department of the Army, *I Am the Guard: A History of the Army National Guard, 1636-2000*, by Michael D. Doubler, Pamphlet No. 130-1, 2011, 136.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 136-137.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 137.

⁶⁶ Neiberg, "Making Citizen-Soldiers," 23.

reform, which among other things created an Army Chief of Staff. This act was the brainchild of Root who had concluded that, with its increasing prominence as a world power, the War Department critically lacked strong leadership. More specifically, Root explained that, “Our system...makes no adequate provision for the directing brain which every army must have to work successfully.”⁶⁷ For inspiration, Root examined European militaries, finding an excellent model in the German Great General Staff, which embodied the highest standard of military efficiency attained by any nation at that time.⁶⁸ The Great General Staff had demonstrated its potency during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871, and Root began considering how to incorporate a similar leadership apparatus in such a manner that corresponded with the American military system. The result was the General Staff Act, which established a General Staff Corps with an allocated maximum of forty-five officers to serve in the War Department. Replacing the position of Commanding General of the Army, the principle role of the new Army Chief of Staff was to oversee the staff and to act as chief adviser to the secretary of war. According to historian Michael Doubler, this “new staff made significant gains in improving officer education, field maneuvers, intelligence gathering, and mobilization planning.” Also of noteworthy importance, the General Staff Act formally authorized the Army War College and legitimized its significance.⁶⁹

The ongoing modernization process of the War Department notably coincided with the Progressive Movement. In Against the Specter of a Dragon: The Campaign for American Military Preparedness, 1914-1917, John Finnegan asserts that in order to understand fully the reform initiatives that soldiers and civilians espoused on behalf of

⁶⁷ US Department of the Army, “I Am the Guard,” 137.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 137-138.

⁶⁹ US Department of the Army, “I Am the Guard,” 138.

the War Department one must recognize the influence exerted upon them by the Progressive Movement, which emphasized the need to “rationalize and democratize American life.”⁷⁰ Finnegan explains that military Progressivism exhibited a different affect upon the mindset of soldiers than it did upon their civilian counterparts. Although a majority of civilian Progressives believed that the Progressive Movement was ushering in a new era of world peace, Army officers within the Progressive Movement – who were typically more skeptical of such claims – sought to apply the principles of the movement to developing a more efficient and fully prepared military.⁷¹

General Leonard Wood exemplified this influence of the Progressive Movement upon the Army. Serving as Army Chief of Staff from 1910 to 1914, Wood was distinct from most Army officers in that he was not a formally trained career soldier. As a graduate of Harvard Medical School, he had worked as a physician at the White House, but during the Spanish-American War Wood began his military career by volunteering in Theodore Roosevelt’s Rough Riders, eventually becoming colonel of that unit.⁷² Remaining in the Army after the war, Wood continued to advance up the military ranks thanks to his relationships with prominent politicians like Roosevelt and McKinley.⁷³ As an idealistic, ambitious, and highly competent Chief of Staff, Wood promoted several reforms that would exhibit a lasting influence upon the Army, especially in regard to the education of future officers.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ John Patrick Finnegan, Against the Specter of a Dragon: The Campaign for American Military Preparedness, 1914-1917 (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1974), 9.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 11.

⁷³ John Whiteclay Chambers, To Raise an Army: The Draft Comes to Modern America (New York: Free Press, 1987), 78.

⁷⁴ Finnegan, “Against the Specter,” 11; Chambers, To Raise an Army,” 78.

Through their close friendship, Roosevelt appears to have greatly affected Wood's perspective on the correlation between military experience and American nationalism. In fact, according to Finnegan, having been "schooled in the belligerent nationalism of his friend Theodore Roosevelt," Wood sought an immediate transformation that would enable the Army to compete effectually against any military threat.⁷⁵ Roosevelt's "belligerent nationalism" formed an integral part of his imperialist conception of American nationalism. In American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century, Gary Gerstle describes this ideology as representing a new civic nationalism in which – among other things – Roosevelt advocated a "deeply gendered," masculine conception of nationalism.⁷⁶ Believing men to be the natural leaders of a nation, Roosevelt was greatly troubled by what he perceived as the increasing tendency of America's wealthy men to become effeminate as a result of their desire to adopt a delicately genteel, cultured sophistication.⁷⁷ Rejecting such dangerous aristocratic pretensions, Roosevelt posited the example of his own hyper-masculinity, which he fully exhibited when serving as lieutenant colonel of the First Volunteer Cavalry "Rough Riders" in the Spanish-American War.⁷⁸ In Roosevelt's opinion, the war infused much needed patriotic fervor into the nation, reviving its flagging manhood.⁷⁹ Not only did he consider the battlefield to be the best test of a man's character, but, according to Gerstle, Roosevelt resolutely contended that the strength of a nation "rested on the intense homosocial bonds arising among men sharing the perils of combat."⁸⁰ Eventually, this

⁷⁵ Finnegan, "Against the Specter," 11.

⁷⁶ Gary Gerstle, American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 57.

⁷⁷ Gerstle, "American Crucible," 253.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 26, 54, 253.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 27, 57-58.

new civic nationalism with its acute emphasis on masculinity would converge with the Army's quest to enact an effective plan for national wartime mobilization.

In the several years preceding America's entrance into the First World War, the Army still did not possess a sound plan for large-scale mobilization in the event of war. In 1910 a report by the Secretary of War bluntly summarized that the nation's defense primarily relied upon "volunteer forces composed of entirely untrained citizens commanded in great part by equally untrained officers."⁸¹ This lack of readiness sparked the Preparedness Movement, which sought a remedy. Not surprisingly, Wood and Roosevelt represented the two most important leaders of this movement. As Chief of Staff, Wood focused on the martial questions of how best to implement such a mobilization plan, while Roosevelt promoted Wood's solutions in the public sector.⁸² Progressives in the military, like Wood, believed that incorporating European mobilization methods represented the best option.⁸³ From his experience as a military observer in 1902, Wood had developed a tremendous appreciation for the capabilities of Germany's conscript army.⁸⁴ Borrowing heavily from the mobilization ideas of English General F.S. Roberts, Wood began work on implementing an American system of universal military training that would create a reserve force to be employed during national emergencies and which the Army would train by means of limited rotations as active duty soldiers.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Finnegan, "Against the Specter," 13.

⁸² US Department of the Army, "I Am the Guard," 155; Chambers, "To Raise an Army," 78.

⁸³ Finnegan, "Against the Specter," 13.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 79.

Universal military training corresponded nicely with Roosevelt's Progressive conception of civic nationalism.⁸⁶ Just as Progressives were intent on curbing rampant, self-serving capitalism in order to create a more equitable, just society, Progressive advocates in the Preparedness Movement were ready to utilize both governmental and collective social action in order to meet the nation's defensive needs.⁸⁷ Instead of dwelling upon the possibility of actual service in combat, most Progressives – including Roosevelt at times – emphasized the positive civic benefits of military training.⁸⁸ According to scholars such as John Chambers, one learns that many Progressive intellectuals during this time such as Charles H. Cooley, John Dewey, Walter Lippmann, and Mary Parker Follett were deeply concerned by the chaotic cosmopolitanism of the early twentieth century in which industrial leaders ruthlessly exploited the underprivileged of society, who possessed an egregious lack of personal agency. For instance, Chambers explains that, as in Edward Bellamy's Looking Backward, Progressives called for a “new and larger sense of community to link individuals...into a more interdependent national community.”⁸⁹ For elite Progressives who desired an unprecedented expansion of the power of the central government, this goal provided an excellent justification for such an outcome in order to mold what Dewey labeled a “Great Community.”⁹⁰ Thus, Roosevelt's promotion of universal military training represented a tempting solution when he asserted that the chief benefit “would not be of prime military consequence, but of prime consequence to us socially and industrially.” From an industrial perspective, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce echoed this belief by asserting

⁸⁶ Gerstle, “American Crucible,” Chapter 2.

⁸⁷ Chambers, “To Raise an Army,” 87-88, 101; Gerstle, “American Crucible,” 383.

⁸⁸ Finnegan, “Against the Specter,” 110.

⁸⁹ Chambers, “To Raise an Army,” 90.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 90-91.

that universal military training would “take up this slack of idleness in the industrial field and substitute a period of helpful discipline for a period of demoralizing freedom from restraint.”⁹¹ As for resolving the dog-eat-dog social divisions, universal military training purportedly offered the possibility of exerting the centralized control of the federal government in such a manner that would remove class distinctions and foster a new era of mutual understanding and brotherhood.⁹² Indeed, Roosevelt proclaimed that, “the military tent, where all sleep side by side, will rank next to the public school among the great agents of democratization.”⁹³

This fusion of Progressive adherence to democratization with the Preparedness Movement produced what has become one of the fundamental dogmas of the American military system: that the military ought to reflect the democratic characteristics of the broader society – as opposed to embodying a distinct military caste – thereby undercutting the danger imposed by the presence of a large standing Army.⁹⁴ Along these lines, Wood stated, “Real democracy rests upon one fundamental principle, and that is that equality of opportunity and privilege goes hand in hand with equality of obligation... The army of to-day is the army of the people.”⁹⁵ This new emphasis on a distinctly democratic military united with a renewed interest on the part of the Army in finally resolving the problems underlying collegiate military training. Thus, under Wood’s leadership as Chief of Staff, the General Staff became keenly interested in military training at universities. The General Staff believed that the Army should incorporate a program whereby in the event of rapid mobilization most of the prerequisite

⁹¹ Both, quoted in Finnegan, “Against the Specter,” 110.

⁹² Finnegan, “Against the Specter,” 110-111; Chambers, “To Raise an Army,” 89-90.

⁹³ Quoted in Chambers, “To Raise an Army,” 89.

⁹⁴ Finnegan, “Against the Specter,” 110-111.

⁹⁵ Chambers, “To Raise an Army,” 95.

officers would come from a reserve force that had been trained by civilian universities. This formed one of the guiding principles of the General Staff's examination and evaluation of collegiate military training; however, as a War College study highlighted, the prime concern to the General Staff was how to implement the "central control" necessary "to insure efficiency and standardization," which would be no small task given America's incredibly diverse system of higher education.⁹⁶

To rectify this issue of command and control, as Chief of Staff, Wood promoted a format for instruction that fit within the existing style of collegiate military training.⁹⁷ His efforts involved a two-pronged strategy. The first part of Wood's strategy was to improve the quality of instruction taught at the universities providing military training. He thought that if those universities could relieve students from the monotonous boredom, characteristic of training programs consisting mostly of drill, by providing well-taught instruction on military science, then the students would express renewed interest in military training. In Wood's opinion, the ideal program would combine lecture with the practical application of military science. Finnegan credits these initiatives of Wood as gradually beginning to affect how at least a few universities approached military training. For example, he states that by fall of 1915 Harvard, Yale, and Princeton had begun serious deliberations on the matter. That said, the second prong of Wood's strategy proved much more successful.⁹⁸

Wood believed that summer camps could be an ideal method for providing cadets with a fundamental understanding of the practical basics of military life. In 1913 he established experimental camps at Pacific Grove, California and Gettysburg,

⁹⁶ Coumbe, "U.S. Army Cadet Command," 13.

⁹⁷ Coumbe, "U.S. Army Cadet Command," 13; Finnegan, "Against the Specter of a Dragon," 61.

⁹⁸ Finnegan, "Against the Specter," 61.

Pennsylvania that high school and college students could attend for five weeks in the summer.⁹⁹ With the exception of military supplies, the students financed this training themselves, which entailed weapons training, tactical exercises, and drill.¹⁰⁰ Although intimately connected with the Preparedness Movement, Wood justified the program to an isolationist American public as simply being a means for introducing boys to the masculine, outdoor lifestyle. Even President Wilson approved the camps, choosing to ignore the militant aspects of the training. By summer of 1914, the Army was operating four of these camps for college students.¹⁰¹

Unfortunately for supporters of the summer training camps, as of 1915 members of the War Department remained largely indifferent to the existence of the camps. Believing them incapable of producing a legitimate reserve force, the general sentiment in the War Department was that the camps were nothing more than a publicity stunt by Wood - who by this time had assumed command of the Army's Eastern Department. Similarly, Congress did not apportion any funds specifically for the camps. On the other hand, within the civilian populace, the subsequent sinking of the Lusitania invigorated interest in the camps – especially among businessmen and other professionals.¹⁰² After a group of these men approached Wood about holding a camp in the summer of 1915 specifically for businessmen, he agreed to provide one at Plattsburg, New York – which was within Wood's department – after the student training at that camp had completed for the summer.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Finnegan, "Against the Specter," 61; Coumbe, "U.S. Army Cadet Command," 13

¹⁰⁰ Coumbe, "U.S. Army Cadet Command," 13

¹⁰¹ Finnegan, "Against the Specter," 62.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 63-64.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 63-65.

Beginning in August, for five weeks this group of professionals, which included several of the nation's most influential men, endured the same military training as had the young students. Finnegan characterizes their time at the camps as one in which "the upper-class elite underwent a conversion experience of patriotism, individual responsibility, and collective action."¹⁰⁴ As a result, they recognized the time consuming, multifaceted process that wartime mobilization would involve, and they also became duly impressed with the unifying, democratizing affects of military training.¹⁰⁵

Although containing the initial group of professionals who had first requested to participate in a summer training camp, the Plattsburg camp for businessmen was simply one of many such camps; however, this original group would play a critical role in making Wood's vision of military training a reality. In January 1916, these professionals united with an advisory board of college presidents and with students who had also graduated from these camps in order to form the Military Training Camps Association of the United States (MTCA).¹⁰⁶ A "Governing Committee" directed the organization and included representatives from numerous university presidents, from graduates of the businessmen's camps, and from other individuals working with the student training camps.¹⁰⁷ With Congress and President Wilson already discussing how to proceed with mobilization in the event America entered the war in Europe, the MTCA lobbied forcefully in favor of the creation of a permanent reserve force, with the training camps being a permanent fixture of their training. Thanks to the legacy of the Plattsburg camp

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 66, 68.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 68.

¹⁰⁶ "The Military Training Camps Association of the United States," Orange and Blue, April 15, 1916; Finnegan, "Against the Specter," 70.

¹⁰⁷ "The Military Training Camps Association of the United States," Orange and Blue, April 15, 1916

for professionals, an engaged citizenry was driving the initiative, instead of just military professionals.¹⁰⁸

Auburn University students would have been at least moderately aware of the Preparedness Movement's promotion of a formalized and widely available form of military training, as demonstrated by an April 15, 1916 article entitled "The Military Training Camps Association of the United States," that appeared on the front page of the Orange and Blue – Auburn's student newspaper at the time.¹⁰⁹ The article fully describes the history of the movement and provides details of how the MTCA operated. With the summer fast approaching, the article may have been a subtle attempt to lure students to attend the proposed summer camps, as it explains that the training camps "are essentially democratic and are open to all applicants of good moral character, [who are] physically qualified."¹¹⁰

Further evidence indicates that some Auburn University students were active participants in the summer training camps. Published in the midst of the Preparedness Movement's demand for a proactive and practical system of military training, a February 18, 1916 Orange and Blue article offers insight into what at least some students at Auburn University thought about military training – particularly in terms of the summer training camps. Entitled, "Summer Instruction Camp for College Students," the article is not an advertisement, yet it ardently advocates that students enjoy attending as part of their summer vacation plans one of the camps offered by the Summer Camp for College Men program. Some Auburn students had previously attended these camps, and they

¹⁰⁸ Finnegan, "Against the Specter," 71.

¹⁰⁹ Note: the Orange and Blue was the Auburn University newspaper during this time, being the predecessor of what eventually became the Auburn Plainsman.

¹¹⁰ "The Military Training Camps Association of the United States," Orange and Blue, April 15, 1916.

were “unanimous in their praise of the camps for furnishing recreation, instruction, and enjoyment.” In this case, students who were taller than five feet, four inches, were between ages eighteen and thirty, and were students at such institutions as universities or colleges – or had just graduated high school – could attend the summer camp provided at Ft. Oglethorpe, which began accepting students on July 5th of that year. The article cites the numerous advantages for students who attend. For example, it describes the plentiful time available for recreation after the completion of military duties, the tremendous “physical benefits” that come with the “active, healthful outdoor life of a military camp,” and the enhanced business skills that they would acquire through internalizing habits such as “discipline, obedience, self-control, order, and command.”

Within the article one witnesses a practical example of the far-reaching influence both of Roosevelt’s concept of civic nationalism and of his promotion of the ideology of the Preparedness Movement. Echoing Roosevelt’s vociferous commentary on the source of American strength, the article states,

The benefit of permitting the attendance of these young men is that thereby will be fostered a patriotic spirit, without which a nation soon loses its virility and falls into decay[,] and spread among the citizens of the country some knowledge of military history, military policy, and military needs, all necessary to the complete education of a well-equipped citizen in order that he may himself form just and true opinions on military topics.

Continuing, the article describes the “military asset” that a man becomes upon completion of the military training since he would form part of a national reserve from which the nation could quickly appoint officers in time of war. The article also displays the metaphorical tight rope that members of the Preparedness Movement had to walk in an attempt to appease the Isolationists: “The ultimate object sought is not military aggrandizement, but...to meet a vital need confronting us as a peaceful and unmilitary

people.”¹¹¹ Interestingly, for students at most land-grant universities like Auburn, their participation in camps like this one would place them closer than ever to embodying the military trained civilian force that Senator Morrill had originally envisioned with his land grant act; however, as of yet no official connection existed between the training camps and the universities from which the attendees came.

While Wood was preoccupied with establishing the first summer training camps, President William O. Thompson and Dean Edward Orton, Jr. from The Ohio State University led a movement to resolve finally the long-standing deficiencies that characterized military training at most – if not all – universities. In 1913, at the annual convention of land grant colleges, Orton argued that the federal government should pass legislation to improve the quality of military education and instruction taught at American universities.¹¹² At a minimum Orton wanted such legislation to entail: “two years of military drill; three periods per week of military instruction; strict discipline during drill periods; a week of field training each year; and instruction in small unit tactical exercises.”¹¹³ Orton also desired that all students who completed the full course of military training be commissioned as officers in the reserve. Later, in November of 1915, members of civilian and Army educational institutions gathered in the nation’s capital to draft suitable legislation. With Orton’s proposal providing the guiding framework, this body drafted legislation that would enact a Reserve Officers’ Training Corps. Thanks to receiving ample backing from academic organizations, Congress would

¹¹¹ “Summer Instruction Camp for College Students,” Orange and Blue, February 18, 1916.

¹¹² Coumbe, “U.S. Army Cadet Command,” 13.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

eventually approve this bill upon incorporating it into the National Defense Act of 1916.¹¹⁴

By 1916, the ever-growing possibility of America becoming involved in the European war was affecting popular American perception of the Wilson Administration. While Wilson vehemently rejected the idea of American intervention, he also had to reassure the public that the nation would be ready in the event of war. Thus, Wilson invited the War Department and Congress to formulate and approve new defensive measures capable of meeting any foreign threat.¹¹⁵ As with virtually all major pieces of legislation, an ardent political battle preceded the final product, but on June 3, 1916 Congress managed to compromise in order to enact what is arguably the most important defense legislation ever passed: the National Defense Act of 1916.¹¹⁶

The act fundamentally restructured the military, creating the active duty component, the reserve component, and the National Guard.¹¹⁷ Especially important, it introduced the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC). This new program would fit relatively easily into the existed framework for military training at most universities. The General Staff of the Army highly approved of it, contending that an ROTC program was the only effective means through which to accommodate the vast expansion of military education required to train a reliable reserve force.¹¹⁸ Due in no small part to the lobbying efforts of the MTCA, the defense act allocated federal funds for the summer training

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 14.

¹¹⁵ US Department of the Army, "I Am the Guard," 157.

¹¹⁶ Chambers, "To Raise an Army," 116; US Department of the Army, "I Am the Guard," 158.

¹¹⁷ Neiberg, "Making Citizen-Soldiers," 23.

Note: the reserve component consisted of the Officer Reserve Corps (ORC) and the Enlisted Reserve Corps (ERC). See Chambers, "To Raise an Army," 117 and US Department of the Army, "I Am the Guard," 158.

¹¹⁸ Neiberg, "Making Citizen-Soldiers," 24.

camps, which the War Department and MTCA would cooperatively operate.¹¹⁹ Available to men between 25 and 43, graduates of these camps could be commissioned into the Officers Reserve Corps (ORC).¹²⁰ The act also pleased National Guard supporters since ROTC graduates would principally be available to National Guard units, instead of the active duty Army. Additionally, to the great satisfaction and approval of military educators, the new program would involve standardized equipment and training procedures, representing a marked improvement from the old system.¹²¹

During the 1916-1917 academic year, Auburn University welcomed Army ROTC onto its campus. Operating under the supervision of the commanding general of the Army's Eastern Department, Army ROTC at the university consisted of a regimental size unit under the command of Captain Frank W. Rowell, who was an active duty officer assigned by the War Department to serve as the Professor of Military Science and Tactics. The university, in turn, appointed Rowell to the position of acting Commandant of Cadets.¹²² Assisting Rowell were three sergeants detailed from the Army: Sergeants William G. Mueller, Richard McAndrew, and Thomas P. Bradley.¹²³ The cadets quickly developed a high opinion of these NCOs, with the 1917 Glomerata providing this report: "Their assistance in supervision of the drills has made possible a more personal and individual mode of instruction in military matters, and their work, if kept up in the manner started, will bid fair to bring Auburn to the front in well-trained men."¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ Finnegan, "Against the Specter," 147; Chambers, "To Raise an Army," 117.

¹²⁰ Chambers, "To Raise an Army," 117.

¹²¹ Neiberg, "Making Citizen-Soldiers," 24.

¹²² Catalogue of the Alabama Polytechnic Institute, 1916, 70, AU.

¹²³ Catalogue of the Alabama Polytechnic Institute, 1916, 70, AU; Glomerata, Vol. 20, Auburn, AL: Auburn University, 1917.

¹²⁴ Glomerata, Vol. 20, Auburn, AL: Auburn University, 1917.

Significantly, ROTC altered the nature of military instruction for Auburn University cadets. For example, cadets now only had to enroll in the formal military courses for the equivalent of two years. Nevertheless, even non-ROTC students were still cadets and, therefore, they could continue to enjoy the military model of education, with weekly drill remaining an ubiquitous component.¹²⁵ If a cadet wished to enter the Advanced Course of ROTC, then the president of the university and the Professor of Military Science and Tactics had to select that cadet; in response, that cadet would issue a written statement in which he agreed to pursue the Advanced Course for the rest of his time at the university, to include attending summer training camps.¹²⁶ Cadets interested in this route also had the added incentive of receiving from the Army, for the rest of their time in ROTC, a subsistence stipend “at such rate, not exceeding the cost of the garrison ration prescribed for the Army, as may be fixed by the Secretary of War.” As part of the Advanced Course, cadets enrolled in five credit hours per quarter, and for two summers they went to a military training camp “not to exceed six weeks in any one year.”

Cadets in the Advanced Program did not have to serve in the military upon graduating. As explained in the Catalogue of the Alabama Polytechnic Institute for 1916, the purpose of ROTC was “to educate college men in the duties of a subaltern officer in the Army.” Hence, “After graduation he is as free as any other citizen.”¹²⁷ That said, as with the old system, the university reported the names of cadets exceptionally fit for military service to the Adjutant General of the Army and to the Adjutant General of that

¹²⁵ Catalogue of the Alabama Polytechnic Institute, 1916, 70-71, 140.

¹²⁶ Catalogue of the Alabama Polytechnic Institute, 1916, 70-71

¹²⁷ Ibid., 71.

particular cadet's state. For cadets desiring a commission, with ROTC they gained the option of requesting an appointment in the ORC.¹²⁸

The general opinion of the campus community appears to have been of great appreciation for the newly introduced Army ROTC program. An article in the Orange and Blue, published on September 15, 1917, praised the "excellent record" established by Army ROTC during its first year at Auburn, asserting that, "It was by far the best year of Auburn's military department."¹²⁹ Furthermore, looking back on the introduction of ROTC in 1916, the Class History of the Auburn University 1918 graduates described their experience with these approving words:

The R. O. T. C. was organized with practically the total enrollment of both the upper classes. Col. Rowell adapted himself to the situation and with his generalship and fairness won the love and respect of the entire student body; and converted our nucleus for soldiers into embryo officers.¹³⁰

However, America's entrance into the First World War temporarily halted development of Army ROTC on the Auburn University campus. Due to the rising needs of a mobilizing Army, that program soon gave way to its wartime replacement: the Student Army Training Corps.

In Mars and Minerva: World War I and the Uses of the Higher Learning in America, Carol S. Gruber examines the circumstances that led to American institutions of higher learning becoming directly involved in preparing the Army to fight overseas. She explains that in the early years of the twentieth century, and in those leading up to American involvement in World War I, most Americans believed that academics and the

¹²⁸ Ibid., 72.

¹²⁹ "Our New Commandant," Orange and Blue, September 15, 1917.

¹³⁰ Glomerata, Vol. 21, Auburn, AL: Auburn University, 1918.

courses they taught were only beneficial when providing knowledge and skills that students could practically apply.¹³¹ As a result, when America declared war on Germany, the “special character and claim to legitimacy” of the nation’s modern universities rested upon their “commitment to the ideal of service.”¹³² If they could not convincingly assert their educational importance to providing valuable wartime instruction, then they faced the possibility of losing their students to the war effort. This necessity of offering a curriculum that corresponded the service ideal facilitated a keen desire among members of American universities to play an active role in the mobilization process, with the government coordinating their activities through the War Department Committee on Education and Special Training.¹³³ A product of that committee, the Student Army Training Corps (SATC) was a program whereby the Army sought to address its deficiencies in the number of soldiers possessing highly technical skills, and in the lack of sufficient officer candidates.¹³⁴ Established at 516 colleges and universities, the SATC set aside potential officer candidates and provided advanced technical instruction, making effective usage of the existing infrastructure and course offerings.¹³⁵ All students at these institutions who were over eighteen years old and who were physically fit enough for military service were drafted into the Army as privates on active duty assignment at those universities. The military provided cadre who taught military courses and who enforced rules and regulations. University personnel managed the remaining aspects of the program.¹³⁶ The outcome, as Gruber explains, was that the SATC dramatically

¹³¹ Carol S. Gruber, *Mars and Minerva: World War I and the Uses of the Higher Learning in America*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1975), 43-44.

¹³² Gruber, “*Mars and Minerva*,” 44.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 98.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 215.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 213, 216.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 217.

transformed “the American campuses into military training camps for the War Department.”¹³⁷

On October 1, 1918, the War Department officially instated the SATC at every participating university in the nation, with Auburn boasting the South’s largest SATC program.¹³⁸ With the temporary disbandment of ROTC, Gruber highlights the noteworthy support given to the SATC program among university presidents of institutions previously hosting a ROTC unit. She further asserts that, “the importance of a long-standing presidential commitment to campus military training in facilitating acceptance of the SATC must not be underestimated.”¹³⁹ This statement certainly applies to Auburn University, when considering its long history of sponsoring military training. President Charles C. Thach placed great faith in the possibilities of the training to be provided by the SATC. For example, in response to an inquiry about the military course work that the SATC would offer, Thach expressed the following opinion in a letter written on August 24, 1918: “I advise any young man prepared for college to take as much work as possible and at the same time have the benefit of the military training here. This will give him every advantage possible when he finally is called into active service.”¹⁴⁰

Despite being operational for only three months, the SATC program at Auburn University represented a sizable unit. The student section contained more than 1,000 individuals, and the vocational section consisted of approximately 300 members. Representing a regiment of three battalions with four companies in each, Captain Albert E. Barrs commanded the SATC program at Auburn University. Contained within the

¹³⁷ Ibid., 102.

¹³⁸ Gruber, “Mars and Minerva,” 213; *Glomerata*, Vol. 22, Auburn, AL: Auburn University, 1919, 127.

¹³⁹ Gruber, “Mars and Minerva,” 225.

¹⁴⁰ Charles C. Thach to R. Hays Johnson, August 24, 1918, box 5, file 101, “August, 1918,” Pres. Thach Papers.

Auburn University SATC program were “a medical corps, a motorcycle corps, and a motor corps.”¹⁴¹ Although the short existence of the SATC at Auburn University offered the students only a brief experience with this form of collegiate military training, it is surprising what one learns from it. In remembering the semester following the conclusion of the SATC at Auburn University, the Senior Class Oration of the 1919 Glomerata castigates it as “that trying period of reconstruction” in which they were “struggling that our college might come out of the demoralization of the S. A. T. C. days.”¹⁴² In light of the students’ previous approbation for the ROTC program, one might wonder why they viewed the SATC with such disdain, but such is not too difficult to grasp. The problem appears to have been the intense rules, regulations, and conditions of Army life. In ROTC the students remained civilians with a choice of whether or not to contract with the Army, but in the SATC they had no choice as soldier-students not possessing the liberties of regular students. This reaction by Auburn students to the SATC supports General Wood’s vision for ROTC; attending summer training offered students a taste of the military life without forcing them to relinquish during the school year the freedoms they enjoyed as college students. Despite this general displeasure of Auburn University students with their time in the SATC, an article from the Orange and Blue did admit that, “S. A. T. C. training has done all of us good and our heroism and bravery...will forever remain noble traditions in the history of our school.”¹⁴³

Fortunately for Auburn University students, the cessation of hostilities on November 11, 1918 reduced the SATC to a short existence. The process of demobilizing the SATC at Auburn University began officially on December 4, 1918, and Army

¹⁴¹ Glomerata, Vol. 22, Auburn, AL: Auburn University, 1919, 127.

¹⁴² Ibid., 93.

¹⁴³ “Old Auburn Again,” Orange and Blue, December 6, 1918.

personnel mustered out its ranks from December 7 to December 20.¹⁴⁴ One contributor to the Orange and Blue poignantly described the general mood of the campus during demobilization, explaining that SATC really stood for “Stick Around Till Christmas.”¹⁴⁵ In a statement corroborating Gruber’s characterization of the SATC, the 1919 Glomerata outlines that, “Though proud to be in their country's service, every man was glad to receive his discharge and happy to know that Auburn would once again be Auburn and no longer an Army Post.”¹⁴⁶

This narrative of SATC is important on two other counts. First, it amply demonstrates an important limitation of Army ROTC: the inability to produce sufficient numbers of officers during wartime. Unlike Officer Candidate School in which the Army can simply increase recruitment and production levels as needed during wartime, in order to yield an effectively sized officer corps, Army ROTC is dependent upon long-term strategic policies that account for the potential wartime need for officers. In this regard, and as will be addressed when examining the contributions of Auburn University Army ROTC to World War II mobilization, the War Department enabled Auburn University to produce during the interwar years a formidable reserve force of well-trained officers, which would later display the tremendous capability of Army ROTC to prepare for future wars if directed by an ideal national defense vision. The second noteworthy aspect of the saga of SATC at Auburn University is that it represents the only time since the establishment of Army ROTC that the university has ever been without the program. In fact, one recognizes a manifest irony when allowing a quick foray into the future. World War I prompted the first large-scale removal of ROTC units from universities across the

¹⁴⁴ “S. A. T. C. Being Demobilized,” Orange and Blue, December 6, 1918.

¹⁴⁵ Orange and Blue, December 6, 1918.

¹⁴⁶ Glomerata, Vol. 22, Auburn, AL: Auburn University, 1919, 127.

nation; however, the second dramatic removal of ROTC came about during another war but for reasons exactly opposite from those facilitating the first – as we will see when examining developments stemming from the Vietnam War.

Considered in and of itself, the implementation of Army ROTC on the Auburn University campus may not seem all that noteworthy. After all, the university appears to have incorporated ROTC without much difficulty; however, this single transformative event is overwhelmingly important since it demonstrates the beginning of Auburn University's substantive and on-going contribution to American national defense. Interestingly, Morrill's dream of a collegiate military officer training program began with problems experienced in the Civil War, but it took the disastrous mobilization for the Spanish-American War and the Preparedness Movement's concerns over entering another war – combined with a healthy dose of the reformist spirit of the Progressive Era – before America finally enacted a program that fulfilled his vision. As a land grant university, Auburn University can never remove ROTC from its curriculum – unless Congress enacts another law or another comparable military program replaces it. Just as national and international events paved the way for implementation of a modernized form of officer training at Auburn University, so also throughout its history at Auburn University did outside forces continue to influence ROTC. Recognition of this interplay between local and national historical events provides the critical frame of reference for fully understanding the history of the Auburn University Army ROTC program and how it relates to the larger narrative of how the Army prepared an officer corps capable of successfully waging war on a mass scale.

The Interwar Years

“A new attitude toward drill and military work is beginning to show. The idea that it is a bore and a burden is giving way to that of opportunity. It seems that the ROTC is about the only new form of preparedness that politics is going to allow to continue and it is up to college boys to make that little count for the most. Auburn has come out of the war with a wonderful record for military service and now faces a much finer opportunity for the future.”

– R. H. Turner, “Military Outlook,” Orange and Blue, September 26, 1919

With the disbandment of the SATC and the reintroduction of Army ROTC at Auburn University, the interwar years proved to be the definitive time period that solidified the relationship between Auburn University and its Army ROTC program. Thanks to the establishment by the National Defense Act of 1916 of a modernized, professional method for collegiate military training, the culture and influence of the Army grew in its centrality to the experience of Auburn University students. Covering from the end of World War I to the beginning of World War II in September 1939, this chapter examines the multifaceted nature of the close bond that developed between the campus community and Army ROTC – devoting a special emphasis to the student perspective. This involves consideration of the training and recreation provided by the ROTC program, of the inclusion of ROTC in official university events, and of the resulting experience for students at the university. The discussion also examines the possible level of engagement of Auburn University students in the ongoing national debate between pacifists and proponents of military preparedness, comparing their opinions and subsequent actions with those of individuals from other parts of the nation.

Articles from the Auburn University student newspaper constitute the chief, primary source employed. Proceeding from a meticulous review of nearly 880 editions of that newspaper, the following narrative attempts to permit the sources “to speak for

themselves” as much as possible. Recognizing that historians should always avoid the trap of selectively pasting quotes together, the intent is to integrate a methodology that enables the sources to direct the narrative and commentary – instead of the reverse. Since the Plainsman was the only published venue through which to publicly express the cultural attitudes and activities of the campus, this approach is necessary for imparting to the reader a meaningful understanding of the remarkable influence that Army ROTC exerted upon the culture of the Auburn University community.¹⁴⁷ Given the extreme lack of sources available, attempts at using any other source to acquire an accurate representation of campus activities would involve more speculation than a historian can justify.

In Plainsman articles the influence of Army ROTC on the campus community is demonstrated primarily through descriptions of events that involved the ROTC program. With the newspaper not becoming independent until 1985, the persistent presence of a university adviser to the student staff of the Plainsman suggests that the narration of events is generally reliable in terms of what definitively happened.¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, the president of the university and the Professor of Military Science and Tactics often used the Plainsman to voice their directives, concerns, or praise to the students, which indicates the possibility of a high rate of subscription to the paper among students. It also intimates a certain level of approval for the paper from the university administration and the Army ROTC cadre. Further evidence of a large volume of readership among the

¹⁴⁷ The Orange and Blue was renamed the Plainsman after the 1922 spring semester.

¹⁴⁸ “Student Media Opportunities,” Auburn University, accessed April 2, 2014, <http://www.cla.auburn.edu/cmjn/journalism/student-media/>.

students is that the ROTC cadre, campus clubs, and other campus organizations would routinely post information in the Plainsman concerning upcoming meetings and events.

When placing local events within the context of national and international events, by design, this chapter does not include any other information than that acquired from the student newspaper. The hope is that this will permit readers to recognize – through consciously dismissing the benefits of hindsight – the perspective that informed the opinions and actions of Auburn University students as it pertained to military service. Due to the before mentioned evidence that suggests a high rate of readership among students, one can realistically expect the students at minimum to have been aware of the national and international events outlined in the Plainsman. Although the students surely possessed other means of learning what was happening nationally and internationally, the Plainsman is the only news source that was directed specifically to the students. Trying to determine to what other sources a large number of students may have also been exposed would be entirely conjecture. Hence, the desire is to focus on what they as a group likely knew about such events and not on what an unknown number of them might have known.

The Plainsman also represents the only available source for attempting to gauge student opinion concerning the ROTC program at Auburn University, the ongoing debate between pacifists and military preparedness proponents, and the controversy beginning in the 1920s over whether or not universities should either compel ROTC participation or even allow it. Given source limitations, one cannot accurately determine whether or not the opinions of the Plainsman staff represented the overall opinion of the students; however, such statements do indicate the minimal level of diversity of opinion on the campus. Concerning the debate, some of the opinions are those of the staff on the

newspaper and others are from letters submitted to the editor. Unfortunately, since few of the articles cite the name of the contributor, one cannot conclusively say which opinions were those of the staff or of another member of the university community. The views specifically of the Plainsman staff are identified as such in the forthcoming discussions. The diversity of opinion may have been much greater than portrayed in the Plainsman, but ascertaining the nature of such potential opinions would be extremely difficult given the incredible lack of records pertaining specifically to the attitudes of students as exhibited during the late 1910s to the late 1940s.

Of note, since this chapter must encompass a twenty-year time span, only significant and exceedingly representative examples are discussed in detail. Desiring to facilitate a holistic understanding, each different aspect is presented topically, corresponding to a chronological timeline, respectively. The chapter discusses three overall subjects, which often overlap; however, the general arrangement, respectively, is the ROTC program, the events jointly staged by the university community and the ROTC program, and the student perspective regarding issues related to ROTC.

Having been “very popular before the war,” the War Department vigorously reinstated Army ROTC at Auburn University, beginning in earnest during the 1919-1920 school year.¹⁴⁹ Replacing the monotony of the previous method of military training, which consisted mostly of drill, the Army ROTC program now provided branch specific training for field artillery, combat engineer, signal corps, and infantry.¹⁵⁰ The latter two

¹⁴⁹ R. H. Turner, “Military Outlook,” Orange and Blue, September 26, 1919

¹⁵⁰ R. H. Turner, “Military Outlook,” Orange and Blue, September 26, 1919; Catalogue of the Alabama Polytechnic Institute, 1919, 82-83.

Note: to preclude confusion, “branches” within the Army references specific military occupational specialties, and the term should not be confused with the difference between “service branches,” consisting of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard.

were recent additions to the program, with the War Department well preparing the field artillery program earlier that spring through allocating an impressive array of weaponry: “four 3-inch guns, six 3-inch caissons, one 155mm howitzer, one 4.7 inch rifle, one 75mm French gun, two 5 ton tractors, two battery wagons and two escort wagons.”¹⁵¹ Major Spalding, who had been the Professor of Military Science & Tactics (PMS&T) in the spring of 1918, returned from France, and he, along with eight other officers and several non-commissioned officers (NCOs) assigned to Auburn University, oversaw the smooth introduction and operation of these new courses of instruction.¹⁵² The main difference between this new course of instruction and the type implemented upon establishment of ROTC in the 1916-1917 school year was twofold. First, cadets now entered not a general military course curriculum but one specific to whichever branch unit they entered. Second, the university now required all ROTC cadets to enroll in at least two credit hours of physical training, which covered “calisthenics, . . . swimming, boxing, wrestling, fencing, and hand-to-hand combat.”¹⁵³ Stressing group oriented athletic competitions, the intent was to train cadets how properly to react when facing various situations.¹⁵⁴

Over the next several years, the ROTC program continued to evolve both in terms of type of instruction and in size. For example, by 1927 the university had lost both its signal corps unit and, despite an excellent record of performance, its infantry unit.¹⁵⁵ For

¹⁵¹ “Field Guns Arrive,” *Orange and Blue*, May 24, 1919.

¹⁵² R. H. Turner, “Military Outlook,” *Orange and Blue*, September 26, 1919; Catalogue of the Alabama Polytechnic Institute, 1919, 81.

¹⁵³ Catalogue of the Alabama Polytechnic Institute, 1919, 83.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹⁵⁵ “Auburn Unit of Infantry Goes Permanently,” *Plainsman*, May 21, 1927.

the interwar years, the university retained only the artillery and engineer units.¹⁵⁶ Nevertheless, within its field artillery program, the ROTC cadre expanded the course of instruction to include a mounted battery, which they organized in the fall of 1931. Introduced to familiarize students with such operations, a Plainsman article later testified that “The worth of the battery is being proven in the valuable training it is giving the participating members by preparing them for the work that will be required at ROTC camp next summer.”¹⁵⁷ That same year, the program attained the noteworthy distinction of transforming from a single regiment to a brigade consisting of three regiments.¹⁵⁸ The expansion was in response to a significant increase of enrollment in the cadet corps, which brought the size to about 1200 cadets.¹⁵⁹ The Plainsman likewise greeted this change enthusiastically, asserting “The expansion announced today by the military department is one of the most progressive steps taken in this institution in many years. R. O. T. C. at Auburn now rests on a parity, in regard to organization, with any school in America.”¹⁶⁰ To its credit, throughout these adjustments the program maintained its high standards. Regarding the annual inspection of Army ROTC units by the War Department, in the spring of 1933 the Auburn University Army ROTC program boasted the honor of representing the “only school in the Fourth Corps Area to win continuously” a maximum rating since re-establishment after the First World War.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁶ Another evolution of the department that deserves attention, but unfortunately does not fit within this narrative, is the adoption in fall of 1928 of the unit insignia. It was a tiger head positioned on a field of blue, which – except for the color scheme – is essentially the same unit insignia worn today by Army ROTC cadets at Auburn University. For more information, see “ROTC Department Secures Insignia,” Plainsman, December 6, 1928.

¹⁵⁷ “Mounted Battery,” Plainsman, March 9, 1932.

¹⁵⁸ “Military Unit Is Changed from Regiment to Brigade by War Department Ruling,” Plainsman, September 12, 1931.

¹⁵⁹ “1200 Are Expected to Enroll in ROTC,” Plainsman, September 12, 1931.

¹⁶⁰ “R. O. T. C. Expansion,” Plainsman, September 12, 1931.

¹⁶¹ “Fourteen Years,” Plainsman, May 6, 1933.

Indeed, the positive opinion of the campus community toward its ROTC program continued to grow. In reports submitted to the university Board of Trustees during 1921, Auburn University President Spright Dowell exemplified the appreciation for ROTC, which amid the interwar years would characterize the relationship between the university presidents and ROTC cadre. In addition to expressing his appreciation for the quality of instruction, he posited that “the advantages to the college of military units are many and the patriotic duty cannot be dodged.”¹⁶² Dowell also described the importance of Army ROTC to student retention, explaining that the ROTC stipend for cadets in the advanced program “makes it possible for a large number of men to stay in college” since it offered – along with a clothing allowance – “In the Junior and Senior years an additional wage of fifty cents per student per day.”¹⁶³

As for the training itself, PMS&T Major John T. Kennedy contended that, “the student who avails himself of the opportunity offered by the military department of this institution will graduate a better man for himself, for his family and for his country. He will go out better prepared for peace as well as for war.”¹⁶⁴ The cadre attempted to prove this assertion by providing practical training and a variety of instruction. Much of the former came during the routine, weekly drill periods, but cadre also trained the cadets through other means, such as regular trips to a local firing range for practice with machine guns and rifles.¹⁶⁵ Interestingly, the Auburn University Army ROTC engineer unit was the first ROTC unit of its type in the country to conduct a field training exercise

Note: this is an honor that they would continue to possess in the spring of 1939.

¹⁶² Spright Dowell report to Board of Trustees, May 1921, box 1, file 2, “Dowell, Report to Board of Trustees, May 1921,” Pres. Dowell Papers.

¹⁶³ Spright Dowell report to Board of Trustees, February 1921, box 1, file 1, “Dowell, Report to Board of Trustees, February 1921,” Pres. Dowell Papers.

¹⁶⁴ “Military Training Is Large Part of Student Work Here,” Plainsman, February 14, 1929.

¹⁶⁵ “R. O. T. C. Notes,” Plainsman, December 7, 1923.

(FTX) in the form of hiking to a bivouac site. Revealing a high level of enthusiasm for military training from the participating cadets – who consolidated themselves into two companies for the event – it was entirely voluntary with each attending cadet paying one dollar in order to help finance it.¹⁶⁶ A similar example of experience based training was the Battle of Auburn, which the ROTC program staged several times on the campus. On one occasion, the infantry unit split into two teams to conduct a mock attack behind the mansion of the university president. Being part of the festivities surrounding the 1924 celebration of George Washington’s Birthday, many spectators came to watch the event. Although the cadets carried real weapons, the Plainsman elaborated that, “. . .the reason everyone knows this was a sham battle is that not even a Professor got hit with a bullet.”¹⁶⁷

Instructing ROTC cadets must have been at times a difficult and irritating task, as indicated by this description of a cadre member: “Captain Grower is a forcible man. One must be very forcible to keep a Junior R. O. T. C. class awake, but some of the students seated in the vicinity of Captain’s whizzing erasers suggest that he be transferred to the artillery.”¹⁶⁸ Throughout the interwar years, the ROTC program labored to deliver quality instruction to cadets, often asking outside sources to lecture to the students.¹⁶⁹ Sometimes this instruction focused on topics for practical application in the future, such as when in 1934 a field artillery lieutenant taught the cadets about advanced techniques for accurately adjusting artillery fire and engaging enemy batteries.¹⁷⁰ Other times, the instruction stressed lessons learned from past military campaigns, as in the case of a

¹⁶⁶ “Engineer Unit Holds Two Day Encampment,” Plainsman, March 7, 1925.

¹⁶⁷ “Busy Week R. O. T. C.,” Plainsman, February 29, 1924.

¹⁶⁸ “Auburn Footprints,” Plainsman, November 22, 1930.

¹⁶⁹ For example, “Two Hundred Hear Capt. Hones Speak,” Plainsman, March 8, 1933.

¹⁷⁰ “Lieut. Greene Is Featured Speaker,” Plainsman, February 21, 1934.

presentation offered by a colonel from the Fort Benning Infantry School.¹⁷¹ Naturally, the regular course lectures pertained to general military subjects and to branch specific topics. Describing the quality of the instruction, in 1939 a cadet confessed that, “College ROTC classes are a true example of this passing up of something that is really worthwhile. As freshmen we never seem to feel that our ROTC unit is a valuable part of the United States Army.” He explained that this ambivalence remained until “after camp at the end of our junior year [when] we feel ourselves defenders of our country.”¹⁷²

Originally, the War Department required all Army ROTC cadets wishing to become officers to attend “two summer camps, not to exceed six weeks in any one year.”¹⁷³ A brief perusal through the university catalogues reveals that beginning in the 1920-1921 school the War Department elected to reduce the requirement to simply “one summer camp, not to exceed six weeks,” which virtually all advanced cadets participated in during the summer before their senior year.¹⁷⁴ Apparently, for a time cadre members permitted and “strongly urged” students in basic Army ROTC to attend the camps with their upperclassmen, sincerely believing that they would “not only secure valuable training but also...enjoy the camp life.”¹⁷⁵ Unlike the present day, in which at advanced camp the Army intentionally prevents cadets of the same university from assignment to the same platoon, during the interwar years Auburn Army ROTC cadets attended summer camp together, and according to their published accounts they certainly shared many worthwhile character building experiences.

¹⁷¹ “Col. Kelley Will Lecture Tuesday At Langdon Hall,” Plainsman, January 30, 1935.

¹⁷² H.M., “College ROTC,” Plainsman, February 28, 1939.

¹⁷³ Catalogue of the Alabama Polytechnic Institute, 1916, 71.

¹⁷⁴ Catalogue of the Alabama Polytechnic Institute, 1921, 71.

¹⁷⁵ “R. O. T. C. Summer Camps,” Orange and Blue, March 15, 1921.

Much of the cadet's time at camp consisted of advanced hands-on training in general military skills and in branch specific operations. Accordingly, the training schedule for the engineer unit and the artillery unit differed, and a careful examination of Plainsman articles indicates that each unit attended summer camp at a different military installation, until in 1925 when both units began attending summer camp at Fort Bragg.¹⁷⁶ The Auburn Army ROTC cadets' experience at ROTC camp that year is a fine representation of what camp was like. The cadets from both units were at camp from June 12 to July 23. For the artillerymen, their day began with first formation at 0545 and calisthenics afterwards. During camp they learned how to care for horses, practiced good horsemanship, and impressed the regular officers with their rapid familiarization with and utilization of 75 mm guns. Since Auburn University hosted the only field artillery unit at a southern university, its cadre members directed their summer camp activities.¹⁷⁷ Like their engineer counterparts, cadets in the artillery unit finished their last week of camp with an arduous hike in the field.¹⁷⁸ The engineers' training entailed marksmanship, bridging operations, and practicing setting up field fortifications. Not surprisingly, when the officers in charge consolidated Auburn University cadets into a unit with students

¹⁷⁶ "Field Artillery Have Most Successful Camp," Plainsman, September 18, 1925; "Engineers Work at Fort Bragg is Good," Plainsman, September 18, 1925.

Based on these articles and "War Department Changes Summer Camp to Benning," Plainsman, February 19, 1927, Auburn University cadets of both units attended camp at Fort Bragg for the summers of 1925 and 1926. Apparently, for the rest of the interwar years, Auburn University Army ROTC summer camp was at Fort Benning. For examples see "War Department Changes Summer Camp to Benning," Plainsman, February 19, 1927; "158 Auburn Juniors Attend Summer Camp at Ft. Benning," Plainsman, September 9, 1931; "Plans Announced for Summer Camp," Plainsman, April 25; "171 Students Will Attend June Camp," Plainsman, May 19, 1937.

A useful means of determining the relative size of the Auburn Army ROTC program is found in the numbers of students from various universities who attended summer camp, as outlined by the following list taken from "158 Auburn Juniors Attend Summer Camp at Ft. Benning," Plainsman, September 9, 1931: "In camp there were 158 men from Auburn, 38 from the U. of Florida, 31 from the U. of Tenn., 22 from the U. of Alabama, 23 from Georgia Tech, and 1 from Iowa State."

¹⁷⁷ "Field Artillery Have Most Successful Camp," Plainsman, September 18, 1925.

¹⁷⁸ "Field Artillery Have Most Successful Camp," Plainsman, September 18, 1925; "Engineers Work at Fort Bragg is Good," Plainsman, September 18, 1925.

from the University of Tennessee and the University of Alabama, the Auburn cadets were a little competitive with their Alabama brethren; however, they soon overlooked their differences in order to become an effective team.¹⁷⁹

Although the work was trying for the cadets, they also enjoyed the sort of pleasant opportunities that cadets attending Army ROTC summer camp today would likely find quite enviable. For example, summer camps involved a plethora of recreational activities such as swimming, horseback riding, baseball, wrestling, polo, tennis, boxing, and basketball, and the cadets especially enjoyed participating in regularly held dances.¹⁸⁰ Additionally, at all of these camps, cadets typically had the opportunity to visit the sights and scenery of the surrounding area. In light of this multifaceted camp experience, one student summarized their time at camp this way: “We look back upon the camp, hard and unbearable as it seemed, with pleasure, for we had a wonderful experience and gained valuable information along military lines which will greatly aid us in the defense of our flag when we are called upon to do so.”¹⁸¹ Of course, not everyone was enamored with the pain and pleasures of summer camp, prompting another student to pointedly forewarn that, “The date for the last remark about last summer’s R.O.T.C. camp has been set for November the first. Any remarks made after that time will be excuse for justifiable homicide.”¹⁸²

However, Army ROTC summer training in certain cases proved a vexation for more than just fellow students tired of hearing tales of summer camp. Although a hearty advocate of ROTC at Auburn University, an incident involving two cadets who were

¹⁷⁹ “Engineers Work at Fort Bragg is Good,” Plainsman, September 18, 1925.

¹⁸⁰ “Happenings at Camp McClellan,” Plainsman, September 19, 1924; “Auburn at Fort Bragg,” Plainsman, September 19, 1924; “R. O. T. C. Summer Camps,” Orange and Blue, March 15, 1921.

¹⁸¹ “Auburn at Fort Bragg,” Plainsman, September 19, 1924.

¹⁸² “Auburn Footprints,” Plainsman, October 28, 1931.

visiting the university after summer camp was the root cause behind president Dowell's eventual resignation from the university. Having just returned from Army ROTC summer camp at Fort Benning, someone discovered that the two students were drinking on campus, which in that day was grounds for immediate suspension from attending the university. Dowell enforced the rules, but during the following fall semester encountered extreme opposition from students and faculty. Since one of the suspended students was a "favorite quarterback," they vehemently blamed Dowell's adherence to the rules as the cause for the university losing two football games.¹⁸³ To shorten a complicated story, the situation concluded with the Board of Trustees reluctantly accepting the July 1, 1928 resignation of a man whom the board considered "highly competent and efficient."¹⁸⁴ Fortunately, ROTC summer camp more often exhibited a unifying effect upon the campus. For ROTC members of the rising senior class, the time spent together at camp brought them closer together as a group.¹⁸⁵ An obituary, written in 1939 for a student who had become ill and died, exemplifies this ability of summer camp to instill cohesion, when it explains "He was not our close friend, but we were close to him in the sense that all seniors who go through camp together know each other better."¹⁸⁶

In fact, the Army ROTC program often played a prominent role in official Auburn University events, such as the annual ROTC graduation review.¹⁸⁷ Of special importance was the participation of the ROTC program in routine visits by the Governor of Alabama for various university events. For example, on February 22, 1921, the

¹⁸³ Spright Dowell report to Board of Trustees, November 5, 1927, box 2, file 15, "Dowell, Administrative Controversy – Concerning the Campaign in 1927 for the Removal of President Dowell," Pres. Dowell Papers, 22-23.

¹⁸⁴ "Trustees Board Accepts Dr. Dowell's Resignation," Plainsman, November 11, 1927.

¹⁸⁵ The Editor, "Summer Camp at Fort Benning," Plainsman, December 16, 1938.

¹⁸⁶ "Jack Brown," Plainsman, March 3, 1939.

¹⁸⁷ "Awards Named at Last Cadet Event Tuesday," Plainsman, May 13, 1936.

governor visited the campus, among other reasons, to review the cadets and to watch a tactical demonstration.¹⁸⁸ Typically, the governor would review the Army cadets at least once or twice a year. Governor Bibb Graves possessed an exceptionally close relationship with the university and its ROTC program, exhibiting a “keen interest” in the unit.¹⁸⁹ On November 1, 1930, the unit held a review for the Governor, honoring him with seventeen-gun salute. On this particular occasion, Governor Graves also dedicated the newly created Bullard Drill Field as well as attended an initiation ceremony of the local Scabbard and Blade military honor society.¹⁹⁰ In response to the excellent showing and after hearing “many favorable comments,” university president Bradford Knapp expressed that, “I fell under deep obligation to the Military Department and to the entire student body for putting on a very wonderful review and cooperating fully in the morning exercises.”¹⁹¹ Like many of his predecessors, the next governor, B. M. Miller, followed suit in participating in this proud university tradition.¹⁹²

Auburn University also paraded “the War Machine of the Institution” during various other special occasions.¹⁹³ For instance, during an inspection of the university by the Alabama State Legislature Educational Committee, the ROTC unit gave an impromptu review, primarily to honor J.G. Wilkins who was the first woman legislator in the state and as well as acting chairman of the committee. Incidentally, this was the first time in the history of the university – even prior to the establishment of Army ROTC –

¹⁸⁸ “Military Exhibit on Twenty-Second,” Orange and Blue, February 5, 1921.

¹⁸⁹ “Farewell Review for Gov. Graves Be Held Nov. 1st,” Plainsman, October 24, 1930.

¹⁹⁰ “Governor Makes Dedication of New Drill Field,” Plainsman, November 1, 1930.

The Bullard Drill Field was named in honor of Lieutenant General Robert Lee Bullard, a famous alumnus of the university. For more information see Glomerata, Vol. 22, Auburn, AL: Auburn University, 1919, 11; and “General Robert L. Bullard To Visit Auburn March 14,” Plainsman, March 10, 1929.

¹⁹¹ Bradford Knapp, “Prexy’s Paragraphs,” Plainsman, November 5, 1930.

¹⁹² “Governor Miller Reviews R. O. T. C. for First Time,” Plainsman, February 25, 1931.

¹⁹³ “Thunderations by Gum,” Plainsman, March 1, 1933.

that its military program had ever passed in review before a woman.¹⁹⁴ Like this one, sometimes other commemorative events were held for irregular occasions, such as when in 1929 the ROTC regiment marched in Montgomery as part of the festivities surrounding the Florida-Auburn game.¹⁹⁵ With about 1,000 cadets present and wearing new uniforms, the locals in the city were understandably impressed.¹⁹⁶ Other university-held military exercises involved annual celebrations of holidays like George Washington's Birthday, Memorial Day, and Armistice Day. Latter events like these often involved presentations from individuals such as the Alabama State Governor, members of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, Senator Hugo Black, and other distinguished members of the community.¹⁹⁷ The university also hosted in 1927 a series of activities to celebrate Mothers' Day that entailed a special military review.¹⁹⁸ Nevertheless, perhaps the most remarkable military review ever staged during the interwar years was orchestrated in honor of President Franklin Roosevelt who visited the campus on March 30, 1939. He paid the visit when making a few detours while on a trip from Washington D.C. to Warm Springs, Georgia.¹⁹⁹ With Roosevelt preferring to make his address while sitting in his car, the ROTC cadets did not formally pass in review before him; however, the approximately 1,500 cadets at Bullard Field were "lined up in impressive military

¹⁹⁴ Photo Caption, Plainsman, May 12, 1923.

¹⁹⁵ "R. O. T. C. Unit Will Parade Streets of Montgomery before Fray Begins," Plainsman, October 11, 1929.

¹⁹⁶ "Military Unit Invades Montgomery Friday," Plainsman, October 15, 1929.

¹⁹⁷ "Memorial Day Exercises Held," Plainsman, May 1, 1925; "Fitting Program Held Here on Armistice Day," Plainsman, November 13, 1925; "Governor to Review R. O. T. C. on Washington's Birthday," Plainsman, February 19, 1927; "R. O. T. C. Will Hear Black in Armistice Day Program," Plainsman, November 11, 1927; "Gov. Graves is Speaker on Washington Birthday Program," Plainsman, February 21, 1930; "Students and Officials will Participate in Memorial Day Friday," Plainsman, April 23, 1930; "Armistice Day Be Celebrated with Ceremony," Plainsman, October 26, 1935.

¹⁹⁸ "Exercises Are Held in Honor Mothers' Day," Plainsman, May 7, 1927.

¹⁹⁹ "Roosevelt Visits API Thursday," Plainsman, March 28, 1939.

formation before him and other members of the student body of thirty-three hundred, members of faculty, and a large crowd of visiting spectators.”²⁰⁰

Alas for the cadets, approbation for splendid performance at these periodic university events came at the cost of many hours devoted to practicing on the drill field. Although many cadets might have cherished their time spent marching others apparently developed the following attitude:

I use to hate the old drill field
And choking dust galore,
But now I kinder like the thing.
I never did before.
Just why I’ll tell you folks. I am
Not marching any more.²⁰¹

Saturday drill was for a time a mainstay at the university - although the actual day of the week set aside might have varied.²⁰² Professor of Military Science & Tactics, Major Kennedy, outlined in 1927 that he wished for each such drill session to also involve some form of martial display, whether marching in review or performing calisthenics. He hoped that the entire ROTC unit acting in concert during these activities would help them become “a smooth operating unit.”²⁰³ Although members of the surrounding community frequently attended the reviews by the ROTC unit, review such as these were sometimes strictly military in purpose – as opposed to being part of an official campus-wide event.²⁰⁴ One example is Major Kennedy ordering a special review for Saturday drill as a

²⁰⁰ Photo Caption, Plainsman, April 4, 1939.

²⁰¹ Redlig, “Poems from Student Body,” Plainsman, October 5, 1932.

²⁰² For another example see “Military Review to be Held Saturday,” Plainsman, October 19, 1932.

²⁰³ “Review to be Held Every Saturday,” Plainsman, November 4, 1927.

²⁰⁴ “Cadets Will Direct Traffic at Parades,” Plainsman, April 22, 1936.

means of honoring the legacy of General Leonard Wood, “the father of our present system of citizen military training.”²⁰⁵

With few written accounts describing drill available, determining exactly what drill looked like is a little difficult; however, one student did submit this brief portrayal:

“The drill field resembled a youthful army camp. A perspiring platoon of engineers was trying to learn to execute a difficult movement, accompanied by the exasperated shouts of an officer. A group of Artillerymen peeped thru range-finders.”²⁰⁶

Understandably, a few cadets approached their time at drill very seriously. Such was the case of one unnamed student who, to the

surprise of his fellow cadets, participated in drill in spite of the blood dripping from the side of his body. Refusing to reveal the source of his bullet wound, he departed the field after drill muttering that he “could take it.”²⁰⁷ Other cadets were not always as serious,

which was revealed by “one of the celebrated colonels in the artillery unit” who fell asleep at drill He quickly gained the opprobrium of his regiment after forgetting to dismiss them by the regular time.²⁰⁸ The coeds – that is, the female students – also

represented another potential problem for the cadets during drill, compelling one



²⁰⁵ “Major Kennedy Orders Review Held Saturday,” *Plainsman*, October 7, 1927.

²⁰⁶ Benjamin Provost, “Meditations on This and That,” *Plainsman*, January 13, 1929.

²⁰⁷ “Valiant Soldier Displays Loyalty at Drill Tuesday,” *Plainsman*, February 22, 1933.

²⁰⁸ “Auburn Footprints,” *Plainsman*, November 25, 1933.

exasperated cadet to exclaim, “One can’t play at war seriously with girls looking at one’s soldiers.”²⁰⁹

One cannot discuss the Auburn University student experience as a cadet without also mentioning one of the more enduring and contentious issues surrounding it. Army ROTC uniforms possessed the capacity either to boost or to lower morale – and not just that of the cadets wearing them. Apparently, 1928 was the first year in which the uniforms represented an important concern to the students, with a contributor to the Plainsman arguing that one reason for cadets demonstrating a “sloppy appearance” was that the uniforms were “unattractive and drab.”²¹⁰ To the pleasure of cadets and other members of the community, the Army ROTC department soon secured in 1929 much nicer looking uniforms.²¹¹ Happy endings such as this one were not the norm when it came to the uniforms. According to student accounts, even the finer quality uniforms lacked the comforts of home, which the following joke highlights: ““Frosh: May I have an R. O. T. C. uniform? Sergeant: How do you want it—too large or too small?”²¹² Indeed, cadet dissatisfaction over uniforms culminated in one of the more humorous exchanges between the students and the cadre. The conversation began with this anonymous submission to the Plainsman:

Major Franke, Lord Sublime,
Have you in the summer time
Ever worn a shirt of wool—?
Really now it’s not so cool.
Marching in the sun is hot.
And shirts of wool is all we got.

²⁰⁹ “Thunderations by Gum,” Plainsman, October 7, 1932.

Cartoon taken from the November 4, 1938 edition of the Plainsman.

²¹⁰ “It Is Impossible to Improve Present R. O. T. C. Uniforms,” Plainsman, December 9, 1928.

²¹¹ “New Uniform Will Boost R.O.T.C.,” Plainsman, September 7, 1929.

²¹² “Auburn Footprints,” Plainsman, December 7, 1932.

Note: “frosh,” referred to the campus freshmen.

We humbly pray that you will get.
Some shirts that will not make us sweat.²¹³

PMS&T, Major Frank in a later issue of the Plainsman responded with his own poetry:

To the student who wrote the rhyme:
Major Franke in summer time
Has woolen shirts worn off and on
For twenty years this August gone.

When the weather gets cold you'll be darn glad,
For woolen shirts will not then be bad.
They may bring out the perspiration
But prevent too rapid evaporation;
Thereby they keep you well and strong.
Now can't you see wherein you're wrong?
His sympathies for you are great,
But a man of you sweat's bound to make.

What can he do? He has not pull
To get you shirts that aren't wool..
It'll take more dough from Uncle Sam
To get light shirts for you, by damn!!!

The cadet, in turn, replied by confessing that he actually loved the shirts but that, nevertheless, "sir, I'm here to tell Those woolen shirts are hot as Hell."²¹⁴ Although time may heal some wounds, this one just reversed poles, with the same anonymous student later informing Major Franke that, "my oh-so-hot wool shirt of a month ago has been amazingly transformed into a refrigeration device."²¹⁵ To the benefit of the university, this appears to have been the most egregious division between the cadre and cadets, given that numerous Plainsman articles convey the generally high regard felt toward them by Auburn University students.

Cadets of good character and military ability could experience social activities perhaps more pleasing than drill. Established on May 5, 1924 during a special installation

²¹³ "Deadly Deductions by Derf," Plainsman, September 20, 1933.

²¹⁴ "Deadly Deductions by Derf," Plainsman, September 30, 1933.

²¹⁵ "Deadly Deductions by Derf," Plainsman, November 11, 1933.

ceremony, the Auburn University “‘L’ Company, 5th Regiment” chapter of the Scabbard and Blade was a national military honor society that became active on the campus.²¹⁶ The organization originated in 1905 at the University of Wisconsin, and by 1924 had chapters on 59 different campuses, consisting of slightly over 5,000 members.²¹⁷ The goal of the organization was to promote high military training standards, to strengthen the bonds between military science programs, to uphold good officer traits, and to build esprit de corps among fellow cadets. Eligibility for cadets depended upon their exhibiting “military efficiency” and “qualities of character and manhood.” Holding two initiations a year, the Auburn University chapter conducted a public initiation and, at least for some period of time, a “formal initiation” that they held during “an all night hike out of town.”²¹⁸ The public portion of the initiation was typically a source of great comedy enacted in full view of the campus community.²¹⁹ For example, the 1939 initiation involved a mock battle between the new members, with one team dressed in kilts as “Ladies from Hell” and the other dressed as “invaders from Mars.”²²⁰ Additionally, cadre members occasionally subjected themselves to the ordeal of initiation.²²¹ Regular social events for the group entailed such activities as celebrating Scabbard and Blade Day or periodically venturing out on horseback for early morning, Sunday “breakfast rides.”²²²

²¹⁶ “Scabbard and Blade Install Local Chapter,” Plainsman, May 2, 1924; “Scabbard and Blade Installation Held,” Plainsman, May 9, 1924.

²¹⁷ “Scabbard and Blade Installation Held,” Plainsman, May 9, 1924.

²¹⁸ “Know Your Campus Organizations,” Plainsman, October 14, 1933.

²¹⁹ “Unique Parade is Enjoyed by Local Citizens,” Plainsman, October 30, 1926; “Scabbard & Blade Initiation is Held at Morning Dance,” Plainsman, October 4, 1929; “Pledges to Scabbard and Blade Given Free Entertainment Today,” Plainsman, October 5, 1935.

²²⁰ “Blade Initiation Planned for Friday Week,” Plainsman, April 11, 1939.

²²¹ “Scabbard & Blade Initiation is Held at Morning Dance,” Plainsman, October 4, 1929; “Scabbard and Blade Elects Army Men,” Plainsman, October 8, 1930.

²²² “Military Society to Celebrate Scabbard and Blade Day,” Plainsman, October 25, 1933; “Scabbard and Blade to Stage Ride Soon,” Plainsman, May 1, 1935; “Military Group is Host at Breakfast Ride,” Plainsman, February 21, 1939.

The annual military ball was another opportunity for cadets to enjoy the finer benefits of military service, furnishing “the Senior R.O.T.C. Cadets a chance to strut.”²²³ First held in 1926, the military ball is a tradition that the Auburn University Army ROTC continues to practice today. Attending that initial military ball were the majority of the senior cadets, the cadre members, some faculty members who were officers in the Army Reserves, and several coeds and girls from out of town. In a marked difference from current day War Eagle Battalion military balls, “The gym was decorated with the Regimental colors, flags, and guidons of the companies and batteries of the regiment. Machine guns and light field weapons were placed around the walls to add a military touch to the occasion.”²²⁴ A mock military court was held.²²⁵ Accordingly, the military balls were often grand affairs, considered by the students to be “one of the most brilliant” social gatherings of the year.²²⁶ Lavish decorations representative of the military life remained one of the many attractions, as further exemplified with this description of the 1932 military ball:

“Decorations for the Military Ball...will depict a scene from the war which is now being waged in China...The orchestra will be surrounded by a barricade of sand bags over the top of which numerous rifles will protrude. At either end of the floor will be seventy-five millimeter guns of the type used in the field artillery unit, and various pieces of lighter artillery will be placed around the floor...Behind the orchestra will be...painted a Chinese battle scene, and sand bags will have to be surmounted to gain entrance to the ball room.”²²⁷

²²³ Tom Bigbee, “Little Things,” Plainsman, January 31, 1930.

²²⁴ Present day Auburn University Army ROTC military balls are much less grandiose. The type of uniform worn and the ceremonial customs are formal, but the general environment is comparable to that of a formal civilian event, with the main exception being the posting and retiring of the colors by an honor guard.

²²⁵ “Officers and Cadets Hosts at Military Ball,” Plainsman, February 27, 1926.

Incidentally, station WAPI broadcast the dance over the radio, with it being the first time that announcers from the station had ever broadcasted a dance.

²²⁶ “Committees are Appointed for Annual Military Ball,” Plainsman, February 21, 1929.

²²⁷ “Chinese War to be Theme of Military Ball Decorations,” Plainsman, February 27, 1932.

Normally, the Army ROTC unit extended invitations to individuals such as the local Army Reserve officers, Army officers from Fort Benning and Maxwell Field, the Alabama State Governor, and other distinguished persons.²²⁸ Of course, one particular set of guests typically mattered most to the cadets. With bylines like, “Many Southern Belles Expected for R. O. T. C. Ball” and “Many Girls Expected,” the cadets – who at this time were still all males – were clearly excited, and commonly “a large number of girls from all over the state” accepted invitations, which might be another reason why the cadets viewed this military dance as “one of the outstanding events of the social calendar.”²²⁹ The unpleasant downside to this eagerly expected influx in population was a university regulation stipulating that all females traveling to the ball from within 70 miles of campus had to return home that evening. This inspired one student to compose a lengthy editorial against the “asinine” regulation.²³⁰ Notwithstanding such minor irritations, many cadets greatly enjoyed the annual military ball. In fact, one cadet who did not appreciate the thought of marching in drill the next morning posited this idea: “I am for having a parade during intermission instead of the next morning. Post a yellow-haired gal by the flag and I’ll do ‘Eyes Right’ all night.”²³¹

Although they had various opportunities to enjoy life as a cadet, Auburn University students were constantly reminded by the very nature of their military instruction that someday Uncle Sam might require them to apply that knowledge in actual

²²⁸ “Committees are Appointed for Annual Military Ball,” Plainsman, February 21, 1929; “Everything in Readiness for Third Annual Military Ball,” Plainsman, March 7, 1929; “Many Southern Belles Expected for R. O. T. C. Ball,” Plainsman, February 25, 1930; “Notice!,” Plainsman, February 25, 1931; “Gov. Graves Will be invited Here for Cadet Dance,” Plainsman, February 23, 1935.

²²⁹ “Many Southern Belles Expected for R. O. T. C. Ball,” Plainsman, February 25, 1930; “Auburn Knights to Furnish Music at Military Ball,” Plainsman, February 21, 1931.

²³⁰ Herr Diogenese Geufelsdrockh, “Thoughts in Silhouette,” Plainsman, February 21, 1930.

²³¹ “Thuderations by Gum,” Plainsman, March 1, 1933.

combat.²³² Many Americans hoped that the First World War would be “the war to end all wars,” but events in Asia and Europe gradually transformed that desire from optimistic hope to anxious concern. A similar phenomenon occurred on the Auburn University campus, with the exception that the general opinion on the campus seems to have been a hope combined with emphasis on military preparedness, which many campus lectures reinforced.²³³ Student opinion on campus seems to have reflected the larger debates in the country, and throughout the world in the 1920s and 1930s. A Plainsman article from 1927 offers an excellent example of this attitude through a series of short editorials refuting the pacifist ideology that was especially active in other parts of the nation at the time.²³⁴ In response to this mindset and to the persistent military preparations occurring around the world, some members of the university community felt tremendously disturbed and expressed their fears with statements like one from 1929, which is consistent with sentiment associated with pacifist movements at the time: “We commemorate the ending of the most godless blood festival by preparing for another one. God! What a sordid, unimaginative world of fools we are!”²³⁵ Of course, another student was quick to contend in the following issue that only “power through preparedness” could enable to America to promote global peace, and in remarkably prescient statement asserted, “Unless humanity changes astoundingly, America will be forced to arms again...”²³⁶ Not easily persuaded by comments like these, pacifist students maintained a persistent voice on campus.

²³² Cecil Strong and Walter Brown, “Cabbages and Kings,” Plainsman, December 15, 1934.

²³³ For examples see “Armistice Program Very forceful,” Plainsman, November 16, 1923; “Captain Althaus Makes Armistice Day Talk to Rats,” Plainsman, November 13, 1925; “Major Smith Makes Talk to Upperclassmen,” Plainsman, April 3, 1926; “General Bullard is Guest Speaker at Convocation Today; Program is Presented During Kiwanis Luncheon,” Plainsman, February 28, 1934; “Defense Subject Used by Starnes in Address Here,” Plainsman, November 13, 1935.

²³⁴ “Auburn Footprints,” Plainsman, January 17, 1927.

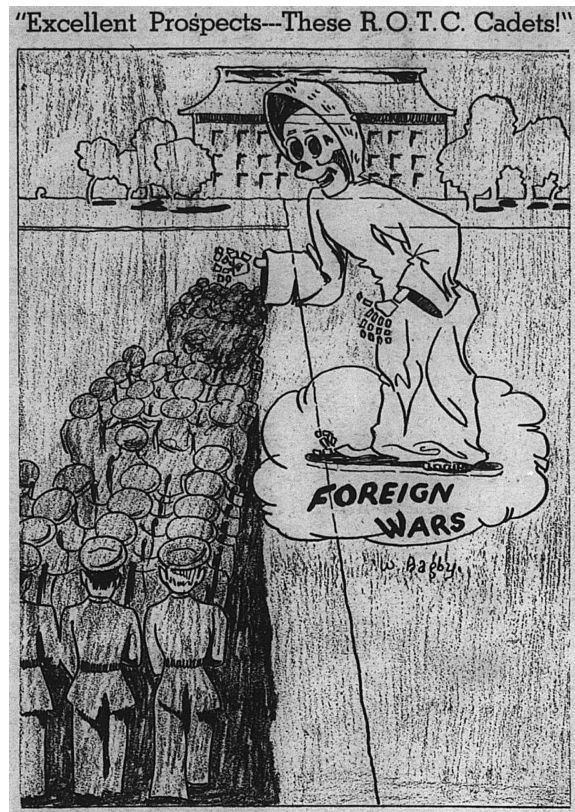
²³⁵ Aaron Billowheel “Well, I’d Say This,” Plainsman, November 12, 1929

²³⁶ Tom Bigbee, “Little Things,” Plainsman, November 15, 1929.

Offering perhaps another indicator that students recognized the tentative nature of world peace in their day, another observed Armistice Day with an article postulating that, “Peace cannot, and will not survive as long as we cherish such selfish ideals as patriotism and nationalism.”²³⁷ Similarly, after learning that Congress was considering an expansion of the Navy, one editorial advised “as many students as possible to take advanced R. O. T. C.; second lieutenants make the most palatable cannon fodder.”²³⁸ In contrast to these two factions, university president Bradford Knapp supported a middle ground position, stating that, “I hope there may be the intelligence and the high-mindedness which will make our America a leader for peace. I hope we may be prepared to defend our ideals and our honor only in case these are really at stake.”²³⁹

In 1931 the official position of the Auburn University newspaper asserted that,

In respect to world peace, *The Plainsman* stands firm in favoring it in its entirety... It has been proven, however, that peace cannot be insured by disarmament with the world mired within the state she finds herself at the present. World peace can only be insured by providing a defense sufficient to instill within all other nations a desire for universal brotherhood; a weakened defense invites disaster.²⁴⁰



²³⁷ Haakon Provost, “Solitary Speculations,” *Plainsman*, November 12, 1930.

²³⁸ Haakon Provost, “Solitary Speculations,” *Plainsman*, December 17, 1930.

²³⁹ Bradford Knapp, “Prexy’s Paragraphs,” *Plainsman*, November 6, 1931.

²⁴⁰ “In Defense of Militarism,” *Plainsman*, November 6, 1931.

By contrast, during the years following the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 and the rise of Hitler in 1933, one notices a definitive increase in rhetoric either leery of war or directly against it. One student in 1934 claimed to be representing the approximately 170 cadets who would soon commission when he discussed how they all became “ardent pacifists” during tense international political situations. He wrote that, “they aren’t exactly scared but—well, bullet holes don’t improve the look of any kind of uniform. We’re not afraid—just shaky.”²⁴¹ The following year, university students across the nation protested against the threat of a future war by means of a strike for peace that occurred on April 12. At 11:00 A.M. all participating students walked out of their classes as “a demonstration against war.”²⁴² An article in the Plainsman vociferously advocated that Southern students join the protest rather than reveal that students from the East and Midwest were more intelligent than their counterparts in the South who lacked “enough sense to stand up for their rights.” The author lamented that, “students from other sections will give vent to bloody yells which will inform the world that they are pacifists while we Southerners will sit idly by and let everybody say we don’t care whether or not we have to fight.”²⁴³ Contemporary reports indicated that at some universities, such as UCLA, the strike turned disconcertingly violent, but the protest at Auburn University was very peaceful, perhaps due to the fact that only one student participated.²⁴⁴ As evidenced by the fact that more than half of the senior class was enrolled in Army ROTC, most

Of note, the available sources do not outline to what extent – if any – that this statement was representative of anyone other than the student members of the Plainsman; however, it does reveal another opinion to which Auburn University students would have been exposed regarding this issue.

Cartoon editorial taken from the November 3, 1937 edition of the Plainsman.

²⁴¹ “Deadly Deductions by Derf,” Plainsman, February 17, 1934.

²⁴² “Peace Strike to Halt Class work at Many Colleges,” Plainsman, April 10, 1935.

²⁴³ “They’re Striking,” Plainsman, April 10, 1935.

²⁴⁴ Cecil Strong and Bill Emrey, “Cabbages and Kings,” Plainsman, April 17, 1935.

students at Auburn University were more in favor of preparedness than pacifism.²⁴⁵

Nevertheless, campus pacifists continued to preach against war, and their pleas sounded even more desperate after events like the sinking by Japanese warplanes of the gunboat Panay in China in 1937, which a student discussed in the article “Stay out of War!”²⁴⁶

Another group of individuals also disliked what advocates of military preparedness were doing to the nation. Distinct from the pacifists, yet by no means mutually exclusive, campaigners against mandatory ROTC became active during the 1920s and 1930s, and by 1928 they were forcefully opposing compulsory ROTC training.²⁴⁷ A thorough examination of Plainsman articles reveals that the first mention of agitation against mandatory ROTC printed in the paper was most likely in the article, “Military Training Under Discussion,” which appeared on February 27, 1926.²⁴⁸ The article expounds upon a recent movement against mandatory ROTC at both the University of Washington and the College of the City of New York, which had garnered “considerable comment in the press.” For the rest of the interwar years, Auburn University students continued to stay abreast of this ongoing battle against compulsory collegiate military training. Sometimes, the news releases pertained to universities like Ohio State University or the University of Minnesota that excused conscientious

²⁴⁵ Of the senior class of 1935, 124 of the 127 enrolled in the advanced course satisfactorily passed the 1934 summer camp. 214 graduated that following May. See “127 Auburn Junior R. O. T. C. Cadets Attend Benning Camp,” Plainsman, September 7, 1934 and “214 Graduates Will Receive Degrees on Monday, May 27; Alumni to Meet for Annual Session in Langdon Hall,” Plainsman, May 11, 1935. For a more accurate but slightly different comparison that exhibits the same rationale, please see “Military Course,” Plainsman, September 22, 1934.

²⁴⁶ “Stay Out of War!,” Plainsman, December 15, 1937.

In another fascinating sign of the times, one student submitted this anti-war letter to the Plainsman, stating, “I do not believe a war can end war; only peace can do that. Public opinion is the only weapon. Education and eugenics are the only two possible avenues to freedom. From “Cabbages and Kings by Cecil Strong and Bill Emrey,” Plainsman, April 27, 1935.

²⁴⁷ “Snappy Uniforms Sell R. O. T. C. Work to College Students,” Plainsman, October 21, 1928.

²⁴⁸ I say “most likely” since human error is an ever-present possibility when examining such a large source base.

objectors from drill.²⁴⁹ Other times, they discussed the movements against mandatory ROTC at universities such as University of Oregon, University of Minnesota, Washington University, Ohio State University, and University of Oklahoma.²⁵⁰ One of the more significant demonstrations against this mandatory training occurred in 1931 when approximately 10,000 students, representing 55 collegiate institutions, signed a petition to eliminate compulsory ROTC training from all American colleges and universities. Consisting of students from “Swarthmore, Byrn Mawr, Harvard, Yale, Johns Hopkins, George Washington, and the University of Wisconsin,” 45 delegates of this movement formally delivered the petition to President Hoover’s secretary in Washington D. C. Their rationale was threefold:

1. That military training teaches doctrines contrary to the best principles of the principles [sic] of the American people;
2. That military training idealizes war and is thus inconsistent with the Kellog pact outlawing war;
- and 3. That the majority of student opinion is opposed to military training.²⁵¹

The Plainsman also exposed Auburn University students to the arguments happening outside of the university either supporting or opposing compulsory military service. For example, one article reprinted from the Florida Gator applauded the following report: “Former President Coolidge is opposed to compulsory military training for school or college students and to anything that stimulates a military spirit in the youth

²⁴⁹ “Student Excused from Drill for Pacifist Ideas,” Plainsman, November 11, 1931; Billie Thomas, “With Other Colleges,” Plainsman, November 1, 1933.

²⁵⁰ “What Of It?,” Plainsman, May 2, 1929; “College Students Involved in Anti-R.O.T.C. Row Suspended,” Plainsman, March 21, 1931; “With Other Colleges,” Plainsman, October 28, 1931; “Without the Pale,” Plainsman, October 10, 1934; “Minnesota Abolishes Compulsory R.O.T.C.,” Plainsman, October 24, 1934; “Optional ROTC retained by Vote at Washington U.,” Plainsman, March 13, 1935; “Without the Pale: Oregon Campaign Against Drill Fails,” Plainsman, April 27, 1935.

One of the more comical reports regarding these agitations concerned a coed at University of Minnesota who refused to sign a petition against compulsory ROTC, stating, “I like the pretty uniforms.” Found in “With Other Colleges,” Plainsman, March 23, 1932.

²⁵¹ “Fight on R. O. T. C. Taken to Capital,” Plainsman, March 7, 1931.

of the land.”²⁵² In contrast, another Plainsman article juxtaposed pro-military training arguments from the Citadel Bull Dog with that of Mississippi Congressman Ross Collins who opposed collegiate military training; positing the final word, the Plainsman asserted that, “The argument of the Bull Dog sounds more convincing than that of the politician.”²⁵³ Plainsman reports also outlined possible outcomes of this ongoing debate. At Emory, the university accommodated student protests in 1930 through implementing a mandatory physical fitness regimen to replace its compulsory military education program.²⁵⁴ Princeton University applied a different approach in 1936. In conjunction with its ROTC department, university personnel incorporated two classes on “peace” into the military training program in order to pacify antagonists of military preparedness.²⁵⁵

Unlike the leaders of some of the colleges and universities in the Midwest and East, Auburn University administrators firmly supported the compulsory Army ROTC program. According to a 1927 Plainsman article, “Auburn has never reacted against the preparing of her young men for national crises.” Instead, the official policy of the university declared that,

Military training teaches the proper respect for men in authority and recognized leaders, stresses precision and accuracy in the discharge of duty, promptness and reliability in meeting engagements, high standards in manhood and morality, and the ability to think clearly, logically and analytically along with other essential qualities that are fundamental in the development of leadership so necessary at the present time in our modern complex civilization.²⁵⁶

²⁵² “Coolidge on the military,” Plainsman, October 17, 1930.

²⁵³ “Across the Campus by Axel,” Plainsman, February 7, 1931.

²⁵⁴ “Military,” Plainsman, March 14, 1930.

²⁵⁵ “ROTC Reconciliation,” Plainsman, January 15, 1936.

²⁵⁶ Photo Caption, Plainsman, April 2, 1927.

Note: this official policy was recited in an unusually lengthy photo caption that commemorated the disbandment of the Auburn University Army ROTC Infantry Unit.

Nonetheless, this commitment to the military training program may not have precluded the possibility of instating a voluntary ROTC program. In the Auburn University records associated with president Bradford Knapp exists an official opinion from Attorney General of the United States, William D. Mitchell. Composed in a letter written June 20, 1930, the opinion addresses the legality of whether or not land-grant universities must maintain a compulsory “military tactics” course of instruction. With the salutation simply addressed to “Sir,” one cannot definitively determine from president’s Knapp’s papers whether he wrote the initial letter to the Attorney General or if someone else passed along the final opinion to him; however, its presence in Knapp’s papers suggests that the Auburn University president was, at least, evaluating his options. Of particular interest, the letter asserts that the first noteworthy display of discontent with compulsory ROTC occurred in 1923 when the Wisconsin State Legislature enacted a law that eliminated mandatory military training at the state university. In the absence of opposition to that law from the federal government Wisconsin effectively established a precedent for the legal removal of mandatory military training at land grant colleges and universities. Thus, the Attorney General recommended an elective program as a viable alternative.²⁵⁷

Auburn University was not isolated from these debates on university campuses about the status of mandatory ROTC. Perhaps the earliest public example of disaffection with the Army ROTC program was this commentary submitted to the Plainsman in 1923:

Now all R. O. T. C. is rotten—take my advice,
Those fellows will tell you anything’s nice.
Be non-R. O. T. C. and be something keen.
Join our ranks—you jelly bean.”²⁵⁸

²⁵⁷ Attorney General of the United States, William D. Mitchell to unspecified recipient, June 20, 1930, box 3, file 34, “Reserve Officer Training Corps ROTC, 1930; Department of Justice Opinions on Compulsory ROTC Courses, 1930,” Pres. Knapp Papers.

²⁵⁸ “Bevo,” “What a Freshman Hears about R. O. T. C.,” Plainsman, September 21, 1923.

As was true with the campus debate over pacifism versus military preparedness, much of the commentary directed toward the Auburn Army ROTC program supported it as necessary to national defense and beneficial to the character of young men – although the approaching threat of another war did correspond to an increase in voiced opposition to participation in ROTC. Perhaps alluding to their southern identity, when students “from the campuses of the large northern and western universities” were rising against mandatory ROTC, in 1927 this Plainsman contributor rejoiced, “that we are not prone to advance extremely precarious hypotheses on the injustice of the government in forcing us to take military training.” Admitting that “grumbling is habitual” during days set aside for drill, the author expressed the generally felt opinion of the students that they had attained an ideal medium between the “curse of pacifism” and the “equally undesirable curse of militarism.”²⁵⁹ Another article, written in 1932, likewise admired the difference between Auburn University and other campuses. From their perspective, “Practically every college newspaper in the country is at present actively engaged in a wrangle over the question of the Reserve Officers Training Corps,” and “there is no denying that the greater portion have taken an opposing view.”²⁶⁰ Wishing no part in this faction, they staunchly professed their “sympathy with the R. O. T. C. movement, as a plan of national defense, as a benefit to young manhood, and as a vital factor of education,” and they affirmed that such was “the opinion of the majority of Auburn students, and bids fair to

²⁵⁹ “Justification of Auburn R. O. T. C. is By Its Works,” Plainsman, April 2, 1927.

²⁶⁰ The article, “Invictus by Casual Observer” from the March 8, 1933 edition of the Plainsman described the situation this way: “The average college newspaper is one of the greatest targets for the annual flood of rabid pacifist propaganda in the country.”

remain so.”²⁶¹ Considering the general run of opinion in the various articles appearing on this subject throughout the rest of the interwar years, they were correct.²⁶²

Likely due to the persistent ideological attacks against ROTC – both compulsory and elective, the Department of Interior sent a questionnaire to ROTC graduates all across the country in order to gauge public opinion concerning the benefits of ROTC training. The department received more than 10,000 responses, with 256 from Auburn University alumni. As of 1932, all but two of the Auburn University graduates agreed that “R. O. T. C. training had a definite educational value,” and 225 supported the two-year mandatory program. This attitude closely corresponded to the overall national opinion.²⁶³ Additionally, in 1932 an article reprinted in the Plainsman from the Birmingham News provided an example of what public opinion may have been in regions of Alabama besides Auburn. The article highlighted the lesson to learn from the recent events in China where “Japan’s tough-minded and seasoned troops stepped in and wrested Manchuria away from these folk too peaceful for their own good.” Disavowing any desire for a standing Army, it outlined the need for “a great breed of civilian soldiers, like these trained at Auburn and other colleges... as a powerful nucleus about which to build regiments and divisions in time of possible need.” As a concession, however, the article did concede to the possibility of dismissing compulsory ROTC “until need for it should arise.”²⁶⁴

²⁶¹ “ROTC and the Press,” Plainsman, March 19, 1932.

²⁶² “Military Course,” Plainsman, September 22, 1934; “Has Reached the South,” Plainsman, December 14, 1935; L. E. Foster, Jr., “Benefits of Military Training,” Plainsman, April 30, 1937; “Sorry We Missed It,” Plainsman, November 29, 1938; “The Editor’s Mailbox,” Plainsman, December 2, 1938.

²⁶³ “Alumni of Auburn Voice Approval of R. O. T. C. Training,” Plainsman, March 23, 1932.

²⁶⁴ “The R. O. T. C.’s Value in Piping Times of Peace,” Plainsman, April 27, 1932.

While much of the commentary in the Plainsman supported the Auburn University Army ROTC program, one can still find a series of remarks and discussions revealing the unease with which some students viewed the training. Consider this poem for example:

The ROTC
May be a good thing;
We learn much marching, shooting,
And skirmishing,
Statistics, ballistics,
First aid, parade,
A wealth of things,
And yet I'm afraid
In the frenzy of war
There's more to be said
For a two year course
In dodging lead.²⁶⁵

A number of articles in the pages of the Plainsman conveyed the presence of this line of thinking.²⁶⁶ However, as the old adage says, “actions speak louder than words,” and one sees in occasional reports of particular incidents the degree to which a minority of students showed irreverence toward the ROTC program. With the drill field representing one of the more public and frequent sites for ROTC activities, this was also where individuals committed some of the most blatant acts of disrespect against the military training program. As explained earlier, visitors would often attend drill in order to watch the cadets on parade. Spectators’ social mores of that day typically ensured that they still displayed patriotic respect during, for instance, the passing of the American flag. In 1926,

²⁶⁵ “Auburn Footprints,” Plainsman, October 11, 1938.

²⁶⁶ For more examples, see “Cabbages and Kings by Cecil Strong and Walter Brown,” Plainsman, November 24, 1934; “Cabbages and Kings by Cecil Strong and Walter Brown,” Plainsman, December 15, 1934; “New War Film Teaches Object Lesson About War Horrors,” Plainsman, September 24, 1937; “Scabbard and Blade Acts Against Plan of Handling Military in Glomerata,” Plainsman, November 29, 1938; “The Editor’s Mailbox,” Plainsman, November 29, 1938; “Board Gives Decision in Matter of Glomerata Military Section,” Plainsman, December 2, 1938; “The Editor’s Mailbox,” Plainsman, December 2, 1938; “ROTC Seniors Vote Down Plan; Schwartz Makes Statement,” Plainsman, December 6, 1938.

however, “two youths and their feminine companions” sat in their vehicles one Saturday morning, rather than watching the review chose to conduct a “‘necking’ party.” These individuals, as well as a few others present, demonstrated none of the traditional signs of respect, thereby gaining the great ire of at least the contributor who wrote the Plainsman piece about it.²⁶⁷ Another example from several years later reveals the persistent nature of this behavior, describing spectators who did not stand at attention during the playing of the national anthem or the passing of the American flag. The article from 1934 asserts, “This attitude of neglect has been carried far enough and we would recommend that all individuals...adhere to the proper gestures at future drill formations.”²⁶⁸

Although examples of disaffection toward the Auburn University Army ROTC program exist, when considering the relationship of the program with the students and the university administration one is struck by the overwhelming evidence of amicable cooperation. Accordingly, the year 1939 embodies a powerful testimony of the extent to which Army ROTC had become firmly entrenched as a permanent fixture of Auburn University.²⁶⁹ Resulting from their performance during the annual Army ROTC inspection, that year the Army ROTC unit earned an “Excellent” rating from the War Department, the twentieth time in a row that the program had received such a rating. Forth Corp Area Commanding Officer Major General S. D. Embick praised the program, stating, “That there should be such uniform and continuous excellence evidenced in the

²⁶⁷ “Flagrant Disrespect,” Plainsman, May 4, 1928.

²⁶⁸ “Patriotism,” Plainsman, April 28, 1934.

²⁶⁹ Another excellent example of this is the following statement from the article “‘Justification of Auburn R. O. T. C. is By Its Works,’” which appeared in the April 2, 1927 edition of the Plainsman: “It has often been said that military training made Auburn what it is today. Certainly it cannot be doubted that the military department is one of the most important and popular branches of the college. In fact, the officers seems to get in closer touch with the vital interests of the student body than the majority of the professors of the college.”

ROTC in this corps area is gratifying indeed to all at this headquarters.” He also commented to Auburn University president L. N. Duncan that,

All here are aware of the cooperation and interest displayed by yourself and your faculty, of the zeal and industry of the professor of military science and tactics (Col. C. Wallace) and his officers and enlisted assistants, and of the high morals and sustained endeavor of the student membership of the corps.²⁷⁰

That May the Army, in turn, received 136 newly commissioned officers from Auburn University – out of a senior class of 457 students.²⁷¹ With the date of America’s entrance into a global confrontation fast approaching, Auburn University Army ROTC was furnishing the Army with a tremendous number of well-trained officers who could ably lead soldiers when the time came.²⁷²

The best way to summarize how Army ROTC prepared the capabilities and character of Auburn University students for the coming war is through a Plainsman student-author’s description of what happened in May of 1939 during a parade held for the Alabama State Legislature Appropriations Committee. The author confessed that “even to the best soldier there sometimes comes an urge to desert,” which proved true that day. Increasingly dark clouds accompanied by occasional lighting and thunder invoked “a distinct stir of uneasiness” among the cadets on the drill field. With each unit

²⁷⁰ “ROTC Unit Given Excellent Rank for 20th Time,” Plainsman, May 12, 1939.

²⁷¹ “136 Cadets Receive ORC Commissions,” Plainsman, May 19, 1939.

²⁷² A useful means of determining the relative size of the Auburn University Army ROTC program is found in the numbers of students from various universities who attended summer camp, as outlined by the following list taken from “158 Auburn Juniors Attend Summer Camp at Ft. Benning,” Plainsman, September 9, 1931: “In camp there were 158 men from Auburn, 38 from the U. of Florida, 31 from the U. of Tenn., 22 from the U. of Alabama, 23 from Georgia Tech, and 1 from Iowa State.”

The only other record available through which to make a comparison concerns the commissioning numbers for the 1956-1957 school year. That year, Auburn University commissioned 149, University of Florida 68, University of Tennessee 63, University of Alabama 81, and Georgia Institute of Technology 119 (Iowa State University was not included on the list). Chart of ROTC Units Third Army Area: School Year 56-57, box 25, “ROTC, Misc., 1956-57,” Pres. Draughton Papers.

waiting its turn to pass in review before the cadet colonel, one student remarked, “I hate to lose anybody any money, but if it rains I’m leaving.” Immediately after that statement,

Suddenly the water came down in sheets. As the wind was already blowing directly into the faces of the men, the rain became almost blinding. Remembering what the men had vowed, an officer said, “Look on the road behind the reviewing stand fellows.” The men looked. There in the road, alone now since the spectators had sought shelter and without a raincoat, stood Colonel Wallace. That same torrent beat on him, too, but he stood at attention, unnaturally rigid in the high wind, and saluted each time the colors passed. You know what happened. Every man marched in those drenching blasts until his uniform was a sogging mass, some of the platoons even had a better line than they had ever had before.²⁷³

The metaphor is obvious. As Plainsman articles indicate, Auburn University students recognized the situation in Poland and the rest of the world.²⁷⁴ In spite of the looming war clouds, many of these students still pursued commissions through Army ROTC, which enabled Auburn University Army ROTC to contribute a significant number of officers during the coming war. The university leadership and the ROTC cadre played an important role in encouraging students to make this decision. When summarizing the lesson to learn from the above encounter at drill, the author posited, “To men in uniform a sounding bugle and a waving flag might come to be mere emblems, but add to them an inspiring leader and even the elements can’t win.”²⁷⁵ Although referring to Colonel Wallace, the statement prompts one to consider the leadership of the university and the ROTC program. Through their cooperation, they gave meaningful direction and purpose to the national preparedness intent of the military training mandate of the Morrill Act, transforming military training at Auburn University into an effective means of preparing for mass mobilization in wartime. Thus, Auburn University Army ROTC was able to

²⁷³ Battery Commander, “The Editor’s Mailbox,” Plainsman, May 12, 1939.

²⁷⁴ For another example, see John Godbold, “Before Tomorrow,” Plainsman, May 2, 1939.

²⁷⁵ Battery Commander, “The Editor’s Mailbox,” Plainsman, May 12, 1939.

fulfill General Leonard Wood's mission intent by creating a viable reserve force for the nation to summon in time of national emergency. As the next chapter will discuss, this relationship between Auburn University and its ROTC program enabled them both to effectually participate in America's national defense efforts during World War II.

World War II

“It is everyone’s duty to give complete support to our nation in this time of national emergency. It is our responsibility as a college and as individuals to do gladly everything we are called on to do. We are in a war which we must win. It won’t be easy.”²⁷⁶
– Professor Ralph B. Draughon, Executive Secretary Auburn University

With the German invasion of Poland triggering World War II in Europe in September 1939, the Auburn University community suddenly became aware that they might soon be involved in another global struggle. In response the campus administration wholly committed the university to contributing to the national defense, initiating a war effort so intense that it attracted nation-wide attention from other colleges and universities. The Auburn University Army ROTC program played a substantial role in this effort by immediately furnishing large numbers of critically needed commissioned officers, by continuing to provide students with a basic level of military training, and by serving as a pre-existing apparatus through which the War Department could readily institute the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) for enlisted personnel.

Since university actions during the Second World War displayed the greatest manifestation of the earnest desire of Auburn University to fulfill the national preparedness mandate of land grant universities, the focal point for this chapter is the relationship between the university and military training, as prominently displayed through Army ROTC during the war. The contributions of the ROTC program were three-fold. It supplied commissioned officers for the war effort, continued to train students in the basic course throughout the war, and provided the infrastructure and existing relationship with the War Department that was necessary for the university to host and train a special detachment of soldiers during the war. This unity of action and of

²⁷⁶ “Auburn and the War---Comments by Duncan, Draughon, Yarbrough and Allen,” Plainsman, December 9, 1941.

national service intent displayed by Auburn University and its ROTC program is arguably the finest example of the contribution of collegiate military training at Auburn University to national defense. The experience overwhelmingly strengthened the association between Auburn University and the Army. One must appreciate this national defense mindset as exhibited by the university during World War II in order to appreciate the intense bond between the university and its Army ROTC program, and to better recognize the significance of events during the 1960s that dramatically altered the form of that relationship. This chapter also reveals in more detail the record of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps at Auburn University and highlights the significant wartime contributions of Auburn University during World War II.

The start of World War II filled many Americans with a growing sense of unease as they witnessed the nation's increasing commitment to the Allied cause. According to the 1941 President's Report to the Board of Trustees, Auburn University students were no different:

The uncertainties of the National situation, the unrest that the War has caused among all citizens has naturally been reflected in the student body, but in general wholesome conditions have continued to exist, and the tradition of Auburn students of readiness to serve the needs of the Country and the college in time of crisis has been steadfastly maintained. The students have been remarkably free from many of the "isms" that are upsetting students throughout the country.²⁷⁷

Evidence of such "unrest" appeared in many Plainsman articles during the two years preceding America's entrance into the war. An early example is the January 1940 article "Students Believe We Can Stay out of War," which cites a national student opinion survey demonstrating that 68% of students believed America could abstain from "the

²⁷⁷ Luther Duncan report to Board of Trustees, June 2, 1941, box 6, file 202, "Duncan, President's Report to the Board of Trustees, 1941," Pres. Duncan Papers.

present European war.”²⁷⁸ One student-writer in the Plainsman reminded his readers that in the event of intervention by the United States, “It’s we who’ll be the glorious dead, but dead just the same.” He further outlined that, “If the US is ever in danger of invasion, we’ll be there when the shooting starts, but until that real danger is upon us we figure that we can do more here, trying to improve something that we have.”²⁷⁹ Other articles decried the undue favoritism that many American political and business leaders extended to the British, which blinded the United States to British violations of international law and brought America closer to “a war which we swear we don’t want or need.”²⁸⁰ An article entitled, “The First Die is Cast,” argued that permitting Americans either to send ships into conflict areas or to offer financial credit to belligerents was an initial step toward entering the war. The contributor rhetorically and sarcastically asserted that, “Maybe we can even save the world for democracy again.”²⁸¹

Representing what appears to have been the minority opinion, not every contributor to the Plainsman in these years saw all forms of involvement in the war as something to avoid. A couple of noteworthy examples of support for the allied cause exist. After the federal government announced that it would begin sharing the latest American flight technology with France and Britain, one individual portrayed the fight as being between “democracies” and “totalitarianism,” which meant, “America does have a stake in the war” and that “selling materials now may save us from sending men later.”²⁸²

Almost a year later, another article advocated a more pro-active approach to the European

²⁷⁸ “Students Believe we Can Stay Out Of War,” Plainsman, January 16, 1940.

²⁷⁹ Herbert Martin, “Plains Talk,” Plainsman, April 16, 1940.

²⁸⁰ John Ivey, Jr., “Well?,” Plainsman, April 19, 1940; “Britain is Guilty Too,” Plainsman, April 26, 1940.

²⁸¹ “The First Die is Cast,” Plainsman, April 30, 1940.

For more examples of commentary written in the hope of avoiding war, see “American Undergraduates More and More in Favor of Staying Out of War,” Plainsman, May 14, 1940; Vivian Stallworth, “War—Right or Wrong?,” Plainsman, April 25, 1941.

²⁸² “You, Me and The War,” Plainsman, March 29, 1940.

situation. Employing the final scene from Alfred Hitchcock's Foreign Correspondent as the guiding illustration for the commentary, that author mused, "It's all very well to say that we wish to preserve democracy, even if we must fight to do so. But do we really believe this?" Juxtaposing the isolationist desires of innumerable Americans with the urgent pleas by some for American intervention, the individual asked, "When are we going to wake up?"²⁸³

Like the rest of the country, Auburn University students recognized the path to war on which the nation was headed. One student from the university gained a glimpse of the German war machine during a ski trip to the German Alps that coincided with the German invasion of Austria.²⁸⁴ As fascinating as such first-hand accounts are, Auburn University students only had to pay attention to the news to realize the seeming inevitability of war. Responding to German aggression against Poland, President Franklin Roosevelt's September 8, 1939 declaration of a minor "national emergency" signaled a definitive change.²⁸⁵ The following year, one far-sighted student advised, "Follow the diplomatic moves by the United States toward matters arising out of Japan's moves toward the Dutch possessions nestling in the Asiatic waters. Things are beginning to pop in that vicinity."²⁸⁶ In October 1941, an entire page of the Plainsman, dedicated in honor of Navy Day, conveyed a sense of conclusiveness when elaborating that, "the Navy has been able to accept and meet the swift challenge of the dangers to this nation lurking in the second World War."²⁸⁷

²⁸³ "When Are we Going to Wake Up America?," Plainsman, February 4, 1941.

²⁸⁴ Paul Weisz, "Auburn Student Finds Adventure on Skis in Europe's Theatre of War," Plainsman, April 12, 1940.

²⁸⁵ Louis E. Keefer, Scholars in Foxholes: The Story of the Army Specialized Training Program in World War II (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1988), 4.

²⁸⁶ John Ivey, Jr., "Well?," Plainsman, April 19, 1940.

²⁸⁷ "Navy Day to be Observed Monday," Plainsman, October 24, 1941.

The university also encountered the challenges of preparing for war. One of the first problems, which would plague the university throughout the war years, was losing quality faculty and staff to military service. The 1941 President's Report to the Board of Trustees explains that, "There have been some losses of excellent faculty members through the demands of the Military Services, and through the National Defense Program. This has...[left] the institution with a difficult problem of making adequate replacements." For instance in early 1941 B. M. Cornell, head professor of the Aeronautics Department, left to become Director of Ground Training at an Army airfield in Camden, South Carolina.²⁸⁸ Despite ongoing limitations, the university effectively employed its resources to support national defense initiatives. This was facilitated by the fact that, "In these times of national emergency and world-wide chaos, there has been a growing recognition upon the part of the Government, the people, business, labor and industry, of the peculiarly effective training available in the Land-Grant Colleges." An excellent illustration is the Engineering Defense Training Program. Part of a statewide initiative conducted in cooperation with various universities in Alabama. Auburn University acted "as trustee for the administration of the courses," which they provided at night to men "who are anxious to aid in the national emergency by fitting themselves for a vital engineering defense job." Additionally, through its Civilian Pilot Training program – sponsored in conjunction with the Civil Aeronautics Administration – the university by June 1942 had trained 225 students during the past year and a half.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁸ David Allen, "Our Flying Lieutenant Cornell is Leaving Us--The Army Calls," Plainsman, January 17, 1941.

²⁸⁹ Luther Duncan report to Board of Trustees, June 2, 1941, box 6, file 202, "Duncan, President's Report to the Board of Trustees, 1941," Pres. Duncan Papers.

The national emergency likewise affected the Auburn University Army ROTC program. With the Army preparing for war during the 1940-1941 school year, the ROTC program lost seven of its active duty personnel. Only three remained, and the Army replaced them with thirteen Reserve officers who were alumni of the university. Fortunately, the cadre maintained the high standards of the program in the face of accommodating these changes, with the program attaining an excellent rating that year for its twenty-second consecutive time. That year they commissioned 116 second lieutenants, with twenty-two more from that class expected to commission soon.²⁹⁰ Due most likely to the anticipated war, upon their commissioning the War Department activated all of these individuals – except those receiving a deferment – to active duty for one year.²⁹¹

On December 7, 1941, “All Auburn woke up...to find the United States in war again.” Understandably, “No one was particularly surprised about it.”²⁹² A few of the university administrators offered their outlook on the war in comments made the following day. Among other statements, President Duncan avowed that, “Of course the Alabama Polytechnic Institute, in keeping with its long tradition, will cooperate fully in support of the international policy proclaimed by our President and our Congress.” The Auburn University Executive Secretary, Ralph Draughon, implored everyone to willingly do their duty, and he commended the recent military expansion by praising “the wisdom

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ “Corps Area Commanders to Order to Duty All Senior Graduates in ROTC,” Plainsman, May 21, 1941.

²⁹² “To the Students,” Plainsman, December 9, 1941.

of President Roosevelt in recognizing that in this world today we are dealing with forces who know no law and order.”²⁹³

The students had their own thoughts on the war. First, they all wondered how long it would last. Disregarding the optimism of some of their peers, the Plainsman staff wrote, “we’re inclined to be more pessimistic... We think it’ll either be a matter of a couple of weeks—or a long, long time.”²⁹⁴ Their second main topic of conversation pondered what should be their immediate response. Several articles published in the next few days after the attack encouraged the students to remain at school.²⁹⁵ President Duncan advocated this proposition, stating that “I admonish our young men and young women students to view this matter soberly and calmly, to keep their feet on the ground and to go steadily ahead with their college work until they are called upon by the Government.”²⁹⁶ Most students heeded his advice, with only a few withdrawing from school; “eight were drafted, two volunteered, two went to enlist in the Royal Canadian Air Force, one enlisted in the U. S. Army Air Corps, one joined the RAF, and one left, ‘On account of the war’.” In contrast to the conventional narrative of mass enlistments in reaction to Pearl Harbor, at Auburn University “The general attitude of the students seems to be one of grim determination to go steadily ahead with the job at hand until called upon by their country.”²⁹⁷ A Plainsman article reinforced this mindset by

²⁹³ “Auburn and the War---Comments by Duncan, Draughon, Yarbrough and Allen,” Plainsman, December 9, 1941.

²⁹⁴ “To the Students,” Plainsman, December 9, 1941.

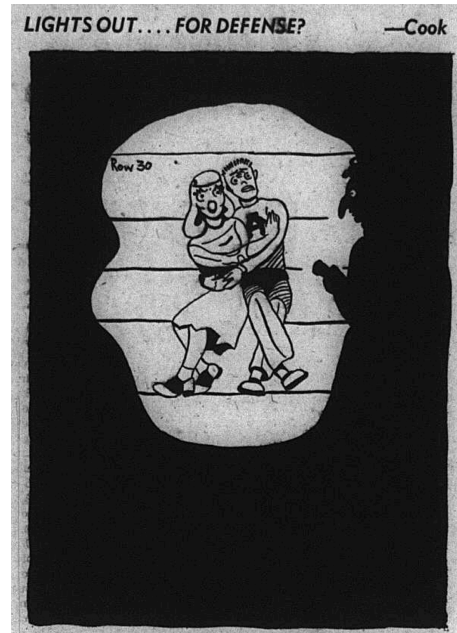
²⁹⁵ “What Then Are Your Odds in This War,” Plainsman, December 9, 1941; “And Now What?,” Plainsman, December 12, 1941; Jimmy Pasteur, “Only Fifteen Students Leave Auburn for Military Reasons,” Plainsman, December 19, 1941.

²⁹⁶ “Auburn and the War---Comments by Duncan, Draughon, Yarbrough and Allen,” Plainsman, December 9, 1941.

²⁹⁷ Jimmy Pasteur, “Only Fifteen Students Leave Auburn for Military Reasons,” Plainsman, December 19, 1941.

emphasizing that students with college experience were more likely to become officers after either enlisting or being drafted.²⁹⁸

Auburn University quickly adopted several wartime measures. Some of these were relatively simple additions to campus life. For instance, the Home Economics Department worked with the Red Cross to provide classes in canteen service and nutrition, and the university administration formed a campus Committee for Civilian Defense to prepare for possible air raids.²⁹⁹ Some war related changes, however, were more significant. For example, on



January 13, 1942, President Duncan submitted a “war-time proposal” that fundamentally restructured the courses of instruction at Auburn University.³⁰⁰ Previously, as part of a nation-wide effort among American universities to secure a viable role in the war effort, the Committee on Military Affairs of the National Committee on Education and Defense had cosponsored with the United States Office of Education the National Conference of College and University Presidents on Higher Education and the War, which met between January 3-4.³⁰¹ The resolutions and recommendations of this conference prompted president Duncan to implement a new education model whereby “in June 1942 the

²⁹⁸ “To the Students,” Plainsman, December 19, 1941.

²⁹⁹ “New Defense Courses Begin on Monday,” Plainsman, January 9, 1942; “What’s the Use of Air Raid Precautions?,” Plainsman, February 20, 1942; “Campus Civilian Defense is Organized,” Plainsman, February 17, 1942.

³⁰⁰ Charles Edwards, “Special Features of Auburn’s War-Time Program,” box 6, file 209, “Duncan, Quarter System – Policy, 1940-42,” Pres. Duncan Papers.

³⁰¹ Keefer, “Scholars in Foxholes,” 13; Committee on Military Affairs of the National Committee on Education and Defense and the United States Office of Education, Resolutions and Recommendations Adopted by the National Conference of College and University Presidents on Higher Education and the War, 1942, box 6, file 209, “Duncan, Quarter System – Policy, 1940-42,” Pres. Duncan Papers.

college would go on a continuous program of instruction with the year divided into four quarters of twelve weeks each.”³⁰²

The three main features of this new program were accelerated academics, which provided a “four-year” degree in three years; daily physical training; and military instruction and drill, which remained exclusive to able-bodied male students.³⁰³ As Auburn University Executive Secretary Draughon later clarified, the new program was “based upon the contemplation that the destination of every able-bodied male student is in the armed forces”³⁰⁴ Nevertheless, Auburn University also incorporated the system with women in mind; in addition to being subject to the faster paced academic schedule, they also participated in the enhanced physical fitness regimen because president Duncan believed that “After leaving college our graduates, both men and women, will go into branches of the armed forces, take jobs in the defense industries, or do other work in which a sound body will enable them to give maximum effort during the emergency.”³⁰⁵ For men, the university required four hours per week of physical fitness, entailing “calisthenics, mass games, ...heavy apparatus and sports fundamentals,” road marching, and a 650 yard obstacle course that the university built for the new regimen.³⁰⁶ Despite these intrusive wartime alterations of campus life, the hardest felt change for the students was probably the cessation of intercollegiate football for the duration, with one student

³⁰² Charles Edwards, “Special Features of Auburn’s War-Time Program,” box 6, file 209, “Duncan, Quarter System – Policy, 1940-42,” Pres. Duncan Papers.

³⁰³ “API to Go on Quarter System in June,” Plainsman, January 16, 1942.

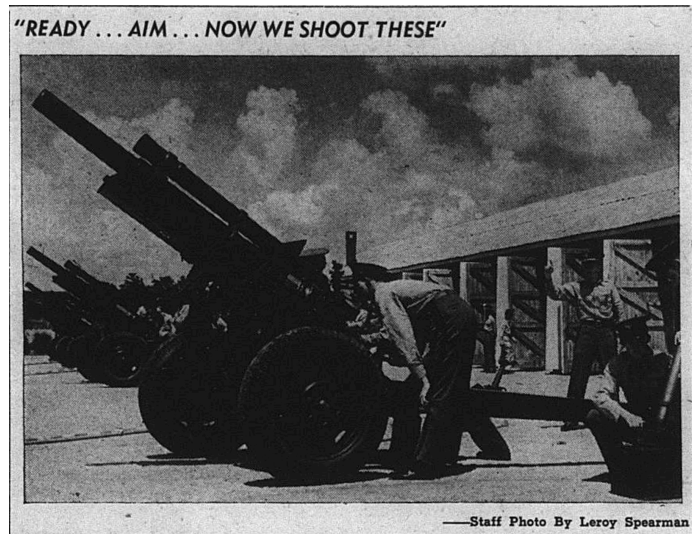
³⁰⁴ R.B. Draughon to President C. B. Hodges of Louisiana State University, October 19, 1942, box 6, file 216, “Duncan, ROTC, Miscellaneous, 1940-47,” Pres. Duncan Papers.

³⁰⁵ Charles Edwards, “Special Features of Auburn’s War-Time Program,” box 6, file 209, “Duncan, Quarter System – Policy, 1940-42,” Pres. Duncan Papers.

³⁰⁶ Charles Edwards, “Special Features of Auburn’s War-Time Program,” box 6, file 209, “Duncan, Quarter System – Policy, 1940-42,” Pres. Duncan Papers; ; David Allen, “At Last! We Finally Got Our Obstacle Course,” Plainsman, July 7, 1942; “Cadet Gray Gives Way to Khaki for ROTC Uniforms,” Plainsman, June 8, 1943.

lamenting, “in all corners of the globe Auburn men bow their heads in sincere shame and regret that their Alma Mater should have to submit herself to such humiliation.”³⁰⁷

Wartime demands also prompted several changes to the Auburn University Army ROTC program. Having served with the unit since 1939, PMS&T Colonel Waterman retired from active duty after 36 years of service; however, by order of the War Department, he remained at his post for the rest of the war.³⁰⁸ The first significant wartime difference came with the announcement on February 13, 1942 that the War Department had cancelled Army ROTC junior summer camp for both the duration as well as six months afterwards. Colonel Waterman elaborated that the cancellation was due to the numerous colleges and universities that had reduced by a year the time required to graduate.³⁰⁹ A few days later on February 17, the PMS&T further announced that the Army had decided to lower the minimum



commissioning age from twenty-one to eighteen, qualifying many additional individuals to commission that May. All of the new officers – except those with deferments – would receive orders for active duty service.³¹⁰

For advanced cadets and other students who were enlisted in the Army Reserves, when the Army would activate them was an important question. In a statement released

³⁰⁷ “It Gives Us An Empty Feeling,” Plainsman, July 9, 1943.

³⁰⁸ “Waterman Retires from Active Duty,” Plainsman, January 16, 1942.

³⁰⁹ “Junior Summer ROTC Camps are Cancelled,” Plainsman, February 13, 1942.

³¹⁰ “Army Commission Age Lowered to 18,” Plainsman, February 17, 1942.

Photo from “New 105-MM Guns Arrive for ROTC Training,” Plainsman, July 24, 1942.

by Colonel Waterman in January 1943, the Secretary of War outlined this process. The senior cadets simply waited until commissioning before going on active duty. For the junior cadets, the Army sent them to basic training at a replacement training center, which took the place of second year advanced course ROTC. They would afterwards attend Officers Candidate School (OCS). With the War Department prohibiting any more cadets from entering advanced ROTC for the rest of the war, civilian junior level advanced cadets could volunteer for the enlisted reserve in order to participate in this final opportunity through ROTC to become an officer. Enlisted students studying in the medical fields possessed opportunities for remaining in their work. For freshmen and sophomores not in those fields, the War Department sent them to basic training after the Winter Quarter, but the department allowed those who were qualified to return and pursue special course work for the Army.³¹¹

During this time, Auburn University administrators expressed the hope that the numbers of such individuals returning to school for military training might provide the university with a significant role in the mobilization process. Early in 1943, Executive Secretary Draughon visited Washington D. C. specifically for this purpose. He acquired information pertaining to effective utilization of their ROTC program, and of particular importance to the university, he investigated the prospect of Auburn University hosting either an Army Air Corps cadet unit or a new Army training program. Not surprisingly, the university appears to have been well connected to a few key Army personnel. Draughon described one general who, having a son at Auburn University, was “red hot to

³¹¹ “Waterman Gives New War Status,” Plainsman, January 5, 1943.

help us” and working “to shake something loose.”³¹² The Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) was the most valued prize.

In Scholars in Foxholes: The Story of the Army Specialized Training Program in World War II, Louis E. Keefer examines the history of the ASTP in order to examine the reasons for its creation, the nature of its operation, and the reasons why the Army dismantled it after approximately a year. He critically evaluates the program, considering the ASTP’s affects upon the soldiers it trained and its effectiveness to mobilization as a whole. Keefer argues that, in the early days following the attack of Pearl Harbor, college and university professors offered the soundest ideas for how to resolve the manpower needs of the nation. They were motivated, at least in part, by the recognition that a mass exodus of students into the Army could prove disastrous for college enrollment.³¹³ With the financial problems of the Great Depression still manifest, such tremendous enrollment drops could – and did in some cases – instigate the financial collapse of universities.³¹⁴ Thus, they sought a substantial means of contributing to the war effort.³¹⁵ To be fair, regarding institutions boasting a vibrant relationship with military training, like Auburn University, one may convincingly argue that their leadership also supported this goal based upon patriotic fervor and first-hand knowledge of the benefits of on campus military training.

By late 1942, leaders from multiple universities issued a statement directed toward the War Department, proposing that “a college training corps be set up to function in as many institutions as possible,” which would offer “technical training with the armed

³¹² R.B. Draughon, Trip to Washington, February 5, 1943, box 6, file 216, “Duncan, ROTC, Miscellaneous, 1940-47,” Pres. Duncan Papers.

³¹³ Keefer, “Scholars in Foxholes,” 13.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 31.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

forces.”³¹⁶ President Roosevelt, in turn, asked Secretary of War Henry Stimson to consider the idea.³¹⁷ While this served as an additional goad to action, the Army had already begun pondering the issue. Brigadier General Joe N. Dalton, Personnel Director for the Army Service Force, contended during October 1942 that, “no other single problem which faces us is as important to the Army and the Nation as this problem of education under an Army college-training program.”³¹⁸ After a process of deliberation, on December 17, 1942 the federal government disseminated its plan in a publication entitled the “Joint Statement of the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Navy on Utilization of College Facilities in Specialized Training for the Army and Navy.”³¹⁹ Army Chief of Staff General Marshall outlined the purpose of the program. The Army intended for the ASTP to overcome “a shortage of men possessing desirable combinations of intelligence, aptitude, education, and training in fields such as medicine, engineering, languages, science, mathematics, and psychology” by ensuring “that there would be no interruption in the flow of professionally trained and technically trained men” proceeding from colleges and universities.³²⁰

On February 12, 1943, the Plainsman revealed president Duncan’s announcement that the War Department had selected Auburn University to provide engineering

³¹⁶ Ibid., 27.

They offered this recommendation in the form of an official statement from the American Council on Education.

³¹⁷ Ibid., 27-28.

³¹⁸ Ibid., 28, 292.

³¹⁹ Ibid., 37.

Note: both the Navy and Army had their own versions of the specialized training program; however, this paper is only concerned with the ASTP. For those interested, an examination of president Duncan’s Report to the Board of Trustees for 1943 and 1944 indicates that Auburn University did not host the Naval Version of the specialized training program, but it did provide aviation and radio training to seamen.

³²⁰ Ibid., 40.

instruction to a unit of the ASTP.³²¹ Members of the university community also soon learned that Auburn University would maintain an ASTP veterinary unit.³²² Based on the correspondence that followed, these new programs, which exhibited a remarkable similarity to ROTC, must have confused some university personnel. Accordingly, Duncan received from the Army a letter dated February 4, 1943, which delineated several of the particulars for how the ASTP would affect the Auburn University. Written by Brigadier General Edward E. Smith, Executive for Reserve and ROTC Affairs, the letter affirmed that for the ASTP program the Army would employ every college and university offering advanced course ROTC. Given that general policy, the following statement may have been praise that universities other than Auburn received as well: “The contribution which your institution has made over the years to an adequate national defense is distinctly recognized by the War Department and is one of the most compelling factors in selecting your institution in its educational program.” At any rate, the letter further explained that the ASTP would not coopt ROTC but instead operate alongside it, utilizing the ROTC “system and its framework to the maximum consistent with the Army Specialized Training Program.” Despite the cessation of advanced course ROTC, for the rest of the war the basic course would continue to prepare male students for military service, typically until they were drafted or old enough to enlist. Although intended to elucidate matters, the general further posited, “The name ‘R.O.T.C.’ will be retained in the A.S.T.P. as well as in the basic.”³²³ From this statement, one can readily comprehend why numerous individuals erroneously thought that the ASTP would allow

³²¹ “API to Train Army Engineers for WMC,” Plainsman, February 12, 1943.

³²² “Sixty-Five Men Enrolled in Army Veterinary Training,” Plainsman, June 8, 1943.

³²³ Brigadier General Edward Smith to Luther Duncan, February 4, 1943, box 6, file 216, “Duncan, ROTC, Miscellaneous, 1940-47,” Pres. Duncan Papers.

soldiers an opportunity to attend Officer Candidate School – as opposed to being principally a program to train enlisted personnel.³²⁴

To populate the ASTP units, the Army originally sent soldiers from various training camps directly to the universities. This initial plan proved unsatisfactory after a large number of under-qualified soldiers entered the ASTP. Realizing that the “field selection boards” lacked the prerequisite cognizance of contemporary university standards, the Army assigned Specialized Training and Reassignment (STAR) units at twenty-two different colleges.³²⁵ Auburn University was one of these universities, and from April 15, 1943 to September 1943 its STAR unit processed over 5,000 soldiers who would either enter the ASTP or return to regular duty.³²⁶ The STAR units’ specific purpose was for “receiving, housing, classifying, and instructing personnel selected by Army Specialized Training Program field selection boards” as eligible to enter the ASTP. Within these duties, the chief function was “the testing and classification of trainees.” While there, the trainees might participate in activities such as military training, sundry duties, and refresher courses. They also enjoyed liberty from 1600 Saturday to 1830 Sunday. Recognizing that the college environment might appear “less demanding” than their previous training assignments, one directive stressed that STAR units reinforce this “strong sense of discipline” by occupying these soldiers incessantly with meaningful activity.³²⁷

³²⁴ Keefer, “Scholars in Foxholes,” 71-78.

³²⁵ Keefer, “Scholars in Foxholes,” 52.

³²⁶ Luther Duncan report to Board of Trustees, June 7, 1943, box 6, file 204, “Duncan, President’s Report to the Board of Trustees, 1943,” Pres. Duncan Papers; Luther Duncan report to Board of Trustees, June 5, 1944, box 6, file 205, “Duncan, President’s Report to the Board of Trustees, 1944,” Pres. Duncan Papers.

³²⁷ Information: S.T.A.R. Units Army Specialized Training Program, box 6, file 215, “Duncan, ROTC, Army Specialists Training, 1943-44,” Pres. Duncan Papers.

Although successful in their primary mission, the STAR unit at Auburn University may have created a less than austere impression in regard to their latter assignment, as highlighted by the July 1943 article, “‘STARs Have Easy Life’ Says the Hardened Infantryman.” The contributor concluded that for soldiers temporarily assigned to Auburn University “it certainly does seem like a G. I. vacation to most of the boys who come here straight from maneuvers, a permanent camp, or worst of all, a replacement training center.” They tremendously appreciated the chance to gain plenty of sleep and to eat the excellent food. These trainees also enjoyed the environment. On the one hand, they could enjoy the company of “men whose intelligence and abilities are above those of the average soldier.” On the other hand, they thoroughly valued the “tactical advantage” of being stationed near a town where the trainees could interact with civilians – “particularly female[s].”³²⁸ Such was hardly the experience at STAR units nation-wide. Keefer explains that for some soldiers the qualification and evaluation process was truly miserable, but he chose Auburn University as a particularly striking example of the reverse, offering this statement from a letter sent home: “I don’t believe it. This place is beautiful. Miracles never cease. I never dreamt army men could enjoy the kind of living that goes on here. It’s better than paradise!”³²⁹

On July 8, 1943, Auburn University began a three-day orientation program for its first class of ASTP trainees. The university would provide these 400 men with 36 weeks of basic course engineering instruction, consisting of three twelve-week terms. In addition to the typical orientation procedures necessary to prepare the soldiers for their first day of class that following Monday, the university also provided a warm welcome

³²⁸ Pvt. Peter H. Weidenreich, “‘STARs Have Easy Life’ Says the Hardened Infantryman,” Plainsman, July 9, 1943.

³²⁹ Keefer, “Scholars in Foxholes,” 56.

for the soldiers during a formal reception at president Duncan's home. Under the leadership of the Women's Student Government Association, coeds also provided the newcomers with hospitality.³³⁰ Understandably, like those sent to the STAR unit, the trainees reporting to the Auburn University ASTP unit quickly developed a favorable opinion of the campus. According to a Plainsman article, their general opinion was that "Everyone in Auburn seems to go out of their way to help the service man."³³¹

The faculty and staff at Auburn University whole-heartedly gave their full support to the program. In an evaluation conducted after the disbandment of the ASTP at Auburn University, Draughon would later affirm, "This institution takes some pride in the fact that it gave its best facilities, a picked faculty, and its best services to the ASTP."³³² A memo from Draughon to president Duncan corroborates this assertion. Because he expected the trainees arriving at the STAR and ASTP units to be of exceptional intellect, Draughon argued that their professors should likewise "be of superior attainments."³³³ In response, the president requested that all deans and department heads "cooperate to the fullest with Mr. Draughon" regarding any personnel requests.³³⁴ With the commitment of the best resources of the university to the ASTP, the trainees also had to exert their best effort in order to remain in the "tremendously intensive" program. Draughon explained that course work for ASTP students consumed 48 hours a week – as opposed to 18 hours for the civilian college students.³³⁵ In a letter to his father, one Auburn University ASTP

³³⁰ "ASTP Engineering Unit Invades Auburn," Plainsman, July 9, 1943.

³³¹ "Crossed Cannon and Castles," Plainsman, July 9, 1943.

³³² R. B. Draughon, Criticism of ASTP, August 2, 1944, box 6, file 215, "Duncan, ROTC, Army Specialists Training, 1943-44," Pres. Duncan Papers.

³³³ Memorandum by R. B. Draughon, June 2, 1943, box 6, file 215, "Duncan, ROTC, Army Specialists Training, 1943-44," Pres. Duncan Papers.

³³⁴ Memorandum by Luther Duncan, June 2, 1943, box 6, file 215, "Duncan, ROTC, Army Specialists Training, 1943-44," Pres. Duncan Papers.

³³⁵ "Draughon Outlines API's Part In All-Out War," Plainsman, October 1, 1943.

student confirmed that, “We go from 8:00 in the morning ‘til 8:40 at night. They really slap it on you fast...I know a lot of fellows have said they would rather be back in the infantry. I am almost inclined to think so myself.”³³⁶

The burdensome workload exacted a relatively high toll upon these soldiers, with approximately 50% failing during this first term.³³⁷ Seeking a resolution to this excessive washout rate, Draughon explained to Colonel J. W. Harrelson, the Assistant Chief of the A.S.T. Branch, Fourth Service Command, that the attrition rate revealed “the severity of the curriculum” and not “the real ability of the trainees.”³³⁸ Perhaps due to improvements in the course curriculum, the second ASPT term performed much better with approximately 10% flunking.³³⁹ Nevertheless, the performance of the Auburn University ASTP unit on standardized Army tests consistently distinguished the university as ranking among the best of all the ASTP host institutions. To illustrate, Auburn University “ranked [either] first or second in chemistry among 43 colleges tested in Term 1 curriculum”; “[either] first or second...in Term 1 physics, mathematics, and geography”; and “in Term 1 English it placed among the first three.” Over the course of four terms, these high marks ranked Auburn University in quality of instruction alongside universities such as Vanderbilt, Stanford, Princeton, Yale, and Georgia Tech.³⁴⁰ This performance also credited Auburn University with possessing the top ASTP unit in the South.³⁴¹

³³⁶ Keefer, “Scholars in Foxholes,” 229.

³³⁷ “Over a Thousand ASTs Will be In New Term; Some Leave for AAF,” Plainsman, January 7, 1944.

³³⁸ R. B. Draughon to Colonel J. W. Harrelson, September 1, 1943, box 6, file 215, “Duncan, ROTC, Army Specialists Training, 1943-44,” Pres. Duncan Papers.

³³⁹ “Over a Thousand ASTs Will be In New Term; Some Leave for AAF,” Plainsman, January 7, 1944.

³⁴⁰ “ASTP Unit Remains at the Top,” Plainsman, March 17, 1944.

³⁴¹ Luther Duncan report to Board of Trustees, June 5, 1944, box 6, file 205, “Duncan, President’s Report to the Board of Trustees, 1944,” Pres. Duncan Papers.

In the face of an extremely burdensome academic schedule, the ASTP students still managed to build close bonds with the campus community during various social events that they sponsored. A fine example is the variety show they presented for the residents of Auburn at Langdon Hall in December 1943. This was the soldiers' way of conveying their appreciation for the hospitality of the community.³⁴² ASTP students also sponsored several dances, which offered them the opportunity to build amicable relationships with the coeds.³⁴³ The latter might easily have been their chief priority alongside their military training, if this comment from the Plainsman is any indication: "There is another aspect about Auburn that rates very highly with the soldiers—the girls...Several soldiers declared that they were 'the prettiest gals we've seen since we've been in the Army'."³⁴⁴ From the other perspective, one account asserts that the women did not entirely feel the same way at first. The coeds did not appreciate the ASTP students acting "as if they owned the place" or the ASTP formations marching to class forcing the coeds out of their way. Fortunately, the ASTP soon delivered a more favorable impression as they managed to fit into the campus way of life, with one female student stating that after a while, "we realized the ASTs were a rather nice bunch of fellows after all." As a testament to the relationship between the ASTP and the regular students, the 1944 Glomerata included a 24-page section devoted to the ASTP students. Of course, no relationship is perfect, as this coed explained: "We do have one complaint,

³⁴² "AST Unit to Present Show for Auburn," Plainsman, December 10, 1943.

³⁴³ An Auburn Coed, "Auburn Coed Finds ASTs 'All Right,'" Plainsman, February 18, 1944; "Private's Prom to Feature 'Pin-Up-Girl,'" Plainsman, March 10, 1944; "ASTs Give Boost to Saturday Night Dances in Gym," Plainsman, March 28, 1944.

³⁴⁴ "Crossed Cannon and Castles," Plainsman, July 9, 1943.

and that is we wish they wouldn't whistle and 'eyes right' when a girl walks by, but maybe that's the same as saying we wish wolves wouldn't howl."³⁴⁵

Despite the apparent success of the Auburn University ASTP unit, in 1944 president Duncan received a memo from the Army Chief of Staff, who explained that

I am aware of your strong feeling regarding the Army Specialized Training Program. However, I wish you to know that in my opinion we are no longer justified in holding 140,000 men in this training when it represents the only source from which we can obtain the required personnel, especially with a certain degree of intelligence and training, except by disbanding already organized combat units. I recognize that it would be desirable, if circumstances permitted, to withdraw personnel from the Army Specialized Training Program only as they complete scheduled terms of instruction; however, our need for these basically trained men is immediate and imperative.³⁴⁶

Keefer outlines that the manpower crisis of 1943 precipitated the decision of the War Department to massively reduce the ASTP. Needing about 446,000 additional soldiers by the end of the year, Army leadership sought to enhance their combat strength through reorganizing units in such a manner as would release every unnecessary soldier for combat duty. The 7.7 million-man limit that Congress had imposed on the Army necessitated this internal approach. By the middle of January 1944, Chief of Staff General Marshall learned that the European Theatre needed an extra 50,000 combat troops within the next couple of months.³⁴⁷ This abrupt requirement meant the Army could not wait for potential draftees to finish training, but they had no more replacements available. With no other option, on February 10, 1944 General Marshall officially asked

³⁴⁵ An Auburn Coed, "Auburn Coed Finds ASTs "All Right," Plainsman, February 18, 1944.

³⁴⁶ Memorandum for the Secretary of War from the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, February 10, 1944, box 6, file 215, "Duncan, ROTC, Army Specialists Training, 1943-44," Pres. Duncan Papers. Emphasis in original.

³⁴⁷ Keefer, "Scholars in Foxholes," 168.

Secretary of War Stimson to dissolve the ASTP.³⁴⁸ President Roosevelt approved the plan on February 18, 1944.³⁴⁹

Understandably, some members of the academic community were hardly pleased when the Army announced its plan to reduce the ASTP from 145,000 to 35,000 trainees.³⁵⁰ Keefer, who was in the ASTP during World War II, asserts that much of their protest actually regarded how the change might adversely affect the financial situation of colleges and universities, instead of expressing concern for the soldiers themselves.³⁵¹ For Auburn University the financial situation imposed by the loss of the government contract for the ASTP does not appear to have been a particularly great concern. First, the university had a steadily increasing rate of women students who helped to compensate for the men who left the university due either to the draft or to enlistment. For example, between the 1933-1934 school year and the 1942-1943 school year women enrollment grew from 241 to 1101. Second, the university maintained contracts to provide other forms of military training, such as aviation and radio training. Third, the university believed that of the thousands of men already discharged from the service and in the state at least some of them would soon enroll at Auburn.³⁵² As far as the Army was concerned, Keefer contends that most of its leadership felt ambivalent toward the program.³⁵³ General Lesley J. McNair, Commander of the Army Ground Forces, was possibly the most outspoken Army officer against it, believing that college training did not

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 168-169.

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 169.

³⁵⁰ Keefer, "Scholars in Foxholes," 181-182; Major General J. A. Ulio to Luther Duncan, February 24, 1944, box 6, file 215, "Duncan, ROTC, Army Specialists Training, 1943-44," Pres. Duncan Papers.

³⁵¹ Keefer, "Scholars in Foxholes," 182.

³⁵² Luther Duncan report to Board of Trustees, June 5, 1944, box 6, file 205, "Duncan, President's Report to the Board of Trustees, 1944," Pres. Duncan Papers.

³⁵³ Keefer, "Scholars in Foxholes," 31.

significantly increase a soldier's combat prowess.³⁵⁴ Keefer argues that, although well intentioned, the ASTP “was probably established more because of politics and having the ‘right people’ in favor of it than because high-ranking Army personnel felt it possessed true military purpose.”³⁵⁵

On March 28, 1944, the Plainsman announced the immediate disbandment of the Auburn University ASTP engineer unit, which represented its largest contingent of the ASTP.³⁵⁶ The Plainsman staff dedicated that issue to the departing ASTP soldiers, allowing Private Robert L. Thompson to serve as editor. The following poem commemorated the ASTP participants' collective feeling about the sudden news of their transfer:

Say goodbye [sic] to the slide rules and textbooks,
Say goodbye to the Auburn coeds and classes,
And take one last spree
As you finish term III,
For you're going right out on your—ear.

It will make little difference to study,
You're just like the rest of the dupes,
For win, lose, or draw,
You'll be eating it raw,
And heading right back for the troops.

The dear days at Auburn are over,
The profs and the T-squares are gone
So cry in your beers,
You poor engineers,
You'll be digging a ditch from here on.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 31-33.

³⁵⁵ Ibid., 31.

³⁵⁶ Mimi Simms, “Auburn's ASTP Students Leave This Week,” Plainsman, March 28, 1944.

Of note, the veterinarian unit remained at Auburn University a little longer. The Plainsman announced its disbandment on June 9, 1944 in the article “Vet ASTP Unit is Disbanded.”

³⁵⁷ “Say Goodby,” Plainsman, March 28, 1944.

The university community was likewise sorry to see them leave. President Duncan described “the source of real happiness” that associating with the ASTP trainees had provided and stated that as part of the university war effort, “nothing we have done in this entire program has given us more pleasure or real joy than to participate in your training.”³⁵⁸ In this edition of the Plainsman, PMS&T Colonel Waterman also expressed his regret over the departure of a unit that had markedly impressed him, as revealed in a previous statement: “I’ve dealt with a great many young men in the last 50 years...but these boys are the best appearing and are more serious minded in their work than any with whom I have been associated. My work with them has been a pleasure.”³⁵⁹ The rest of the Auburn community also received a final opportunity on March 28, 1944 to convey their best wishes, when the ASTP unit marched from the campus to the train station in companies with the Auburn Band at the lead. A Plainsman article depicted the scene as

reminiscent of one of those tear jerkin’ I’ll-be-waitin’ when you-come-marching-home-Johnny-dear movies. It would be hard to say when Auburn has seen such another mass exodus—or such concerted interest on the part of the students and townspeople.³⁶⁰

Responding in kind, an Army official later articulated his service branch’s tremendous appreciation for the professional and steadfast support that Auburn University had extended toward the Army. Major General Uhl, Commanding General of the Army Service Forces Headquarters, Fourth Service Command, praised the Auburn University war effort, stating that,

The Institute has been one of the main factors in the Army Specialized Training Program since its inception during the Spring of 1943. The wholehearted cooperation and assistance given the Army by the

³⁵⁸ Luther Duncan, “‘A Warm Place in Our Hearts’,” Plainsman, March 28, 1944.

³⁵⁹ John J. Waterman, “It’s Been a Pleasure, Men,” Plainsman, March 28, 1944; “Military Personalities,” Plainsman, February 18, 1944.

³⁶⁰ Dottie Woodall, “Band, Bikes, Dogs, Gals, Say Goodbye to AST Pals,” Plainsman, March 31, 1944.

administration heads and the faculty of the Institute has contributed materially to the war effort, and merits the highest commendation.³⁶¹

The university had also distinguished itself through numerous other programs that it had sponsored alongside the ASTP. The following chart offers a cursory overview of the Auburn University war effort as of June 5, 1944:

Civilian Pilot Training.....	378 Trainees
Army Air Corps, Marine Corps, and Naval Aviation Training.....	1,031 Trainees
Naval Radio Training.....	2,725 Trainees
Signal Corps Pre-Radar Training.....	375 Trainees
Vocational Training for War Production.....	2,944 Trainees
Engineering Science & War Management Training (In 28 Alabama cities).....	26,050 Trainees
Army Specialized Training.....	1,392 Trainees
Total.....	34,895 Trainees ³⁶²

When surveying these numbers, one might recall President Duncan’s statement on the day after the attack on Pearl Harbor. In his affirmation of the commitment of the university to contributing wholeheartedly to the war effort, Duncan had prefaced his assertion with the expression, “Of course.”³⁶³ Those two words speak volumes about the past history of the university. For Auburn University contributing to national defense was nothing new. As a land-grant university, the very identity of Auburn University rested upon military preparedness, and the integration of Army ROTC into its culture during the interwar years had made those preparations ubiquitous to campus life. Therefore, in 1942 Draughon confidently boasted that “as a result of our ROTC program we believe we have

³⁶¹ Major General F. E. Uhl to Luther Duncan, February 26, 1945, box 6, file 216, “Duncan, ROTC, Miscellaneous, 1940-47,” Pres. Duncan Papers.

³⁶² Luther Duncan report to Board of Trustees, June 5, 1944, box 6, file 205, “Duncan, President’s Report to the Board of Trustees, 1944,” Pres. Duncan Papers.

Given these numbers, one can understand why Draughon stated that, “It is our sincere belief that no college in the country has in proportion to its faculty and staff made a greater contribution to the war effort than the Alabama Polytechnic Institute.”

Found in R.B. Draughon to President C. B. Hodges of Louisiana State University, October 19, 1942, box 6, file 216, “Duncan, ROTC, Miscellaneous, 1940-47,” Pres. Duncan Papers.

³⁶³ “Auburn and the War---Comments by Duncan, Draughon, Yarbrough and Allen,” Plainsman, December 9, 1941.

as high a percentage of officers in proportion to the number of students trained as any institution in the country, even including Texas A. & M.”³⁶⁴ Maintaining an annual commissioning rate of around one hundred – and often larger – for the previous ten years, the university had been providing a sizable contribution to national defense through its Army ROTC program for years before the war.³⁶⁵ This prior history of ROTC training provided the bulk of the contribution of the Auburn University Army ROTC advanced course to the war effort, while the basic course continued throughout the war to introduce students to Army life before they in most instances were drafted or decided to enlist. For this reason, the ASTP as a detachment operating under the supervision and existing infrastructure of ROTC represents the greatest singularly, locally displayed contribution of ROTC to World War II. Without its Army ROTC program, Auburn University would not have possessed the prerequisite relationship with the War Department necessary to host an ASTP unit.

Indeed, the history of Army ROTC at Auburn University is intimately connected to the history of the university itself because both entities enable the other to more effectively contribute to the greater good of society - regionally and nationally. During World War II, this close relationship culminated in what is arguably the finest example of the contribution of collegiate military training to national defense. The experience overwhelmingly strengthened the association between Auburn University and the Army. President Duncan’s statement to General Uhl near the end of the war illustrates this relationship:

³⁶⁴ R.B. Draughon to President C. B. Hodges of Louisiana State University, October 19, 1942, box 6, file 216, “Duncan, ROTC, Miscellaneous, 1940-47,” Pres. Duncan Papers.

³⁶⁵ The sources available do not offer a means of comparing these numbers with similarly sized land-grant universities; however, footnote 125 in Chapter 2 contains information that suggests what might have been the relative size of the Auburn University Army ROTC program.

May I express...the appreciation of the institution for the opportunity to serve and especially for the most cordial and cooperative spirit uniformly maintained by the officers with whom we have dealt in carrying out this program. One of the real pleasures of my administration during this period has been the opportunity of meeting these fine representatives of the Army...³⁶⁶

Although events in the 1960s would later test the perseverance of this bond, Auburn and the Army through the medium of ROTC would continue to accommodate one another for their mutual benefit.

³⁶⁶ Luther Duncan to General F. E. Uhl, March 2, 1945, box 6, file 216, "Duncan, ROTC, Miscellaneous, 1940-47," Pres. Duncan Papers.

The Decentering of ROTC

In the years immediately following World War II, the course of development for the Army ROTC program at Auburn University followed a similar pattern as it did during the interwar years. The technology and infrastructure changed, but the fundamental nature of the training remained the same. Concurrently, the university developed a closer relationship with the War Department – which eventually became the Department of Defense – through welcoming the establishment of Navy and Air Force ROTC. This chapter briefly outlines these developments, but the primary focus is the decision by the university leadership in 1969 to replace its compulsory ROTC training program with a voluntary one. This dramatic year of change for Auburn University coincided with the persistent national trend of universities abolishing their mandatory ROTC programs and paralleled the pronounced distrust that many Americans in the late 1960s – particularly those on campus – felt toward the United States military. To gain insight into the 1969 decision that removed ROTC from the center of campus life for Auburn male students, this chapter examines the multifaceted nature of Auburn University’s decision to adopt a voluntary ROTC program, paying special attention to the national political situation occurring during the time of the decision, and to the many individuals connected with the university who contributed to the decision making process.

The primary source supporting this chapter is the Auburn University records associated with president Harry Philpott, which chronicle the leading role that university administrators played in the 1969 decision. These records in conjunction with articles from the Auburn Plainsman indicate that student actions opposing mandatory ROTC came in response to initiatives from the university professors and administration. For

example, an Auburn Plainsman article from May 1969 explains, “The suggestion to replace the present compulsory basic two-year ROTC program with an optional one was first proposed by Project ’67, a university self-study.”³⁶⁷ Similarly, the Auburn University Student Government Association passed on January 13, 1969 a resolution in support of a voluntary ROTC program, which occurred after the January 7, 1969 appointment of the university ROTC Study Committee.³⁶⁸ This suggests that the faculty and staff represented the driving force behind the removal of mandatory ROTC at Auburn University.

Secondary sources outline that their actions corresponded with the growing disaffection that many university communities throughout the nation exhibited toward ROTC during this time as a result of American involvement in Vietnam. University records specify that they acted in response to the national and regional trend of land grant universities replacing their mandatory ROTC programs with elective programs during the 1960s. This chapter will examine the international, national, and regional context of these developments after providing an overview of Auburn University Army ROTC from 1945 to 1965.

Auburn University Army ROTC (1945-1965)

“Please be assured that it is the desire of the Alabama Polytechnic Institute that Advanced Course ROTC be reactivated and strengthened and that the excellent tradition of military training at this institution, which has played so vital a part in the lives of so many of our students, be continued.”³⁶⁹

– Auburn University President L. N. Duncan to Commanding General, Fourth Service Command, November 14, 1945

³⁶⁷ Pat Randall, “University Senate approves voluntary ROTC proposal,” Auburn Plainsman, May 8, 1969.

³⁶⁸ Report of the ROTC Study Committee, Auburn University ROTC Study Committee, 1969, 6, box 46, file “ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

Memorandum by L.P. Burton, April 8, 1969, box 46, file “ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

³⁶⁹ Luther Duncan to Commanding General, Fourth Service Command, November 14, 1945, box 6, file 216, “Duncan, ROTC, Miscellaneous, 1940-47,” Pres. Duncan Papers.

In November 1945, Auburn University president Duncan learned that the Army would reactivate advanced course Army ROTC at Auburn University on January 1, 1946.³⁷⁰ Unlike in years past, the Army would no longer represent the only officer training program on campus. Earlier that year, on May 3, 1945 the Navy had notified Duncan of their selecting Auburn University for a Naval ROTC program, which they planned to instate on November 1, 1945.³⁷¹ The Navy chose Auburn University because of its distinguished engineering curriculum and because of its “unusual and remarkable” history of supporting national defense.³⁷² This latter statement intimates that the relationship of Auburn University to Army ROTC helped create an academic environment conducive to Naval collegiate training. Having proven themselves during World War II, the Auburn University leadership was “exceedingly proud” of their contributions to national defense and regarded seriously their major objective of providing military preparedness training.³⁷³ This willingness on behalf of the university to accommodate fully the wishes of the military would distinctively characterize Auburn University until the latter 1960s.

Other than the requirement of coordinating with other ROTC programs, the principle difference between Auburn University Army ROTC during the postwar era and the interwar years was the incorporation of advanced technology into the training. In addition to branch specific training for combat engineering and field artillery, the postwar program also included a curriculum for the “Air Force, Signal Corps, and Armored

³⁷⁰ Major A. D. Sanders to Luther Duncan, November 19, 1945, box 6, file 216, “Duncan, ROTC, Miscellaneous, 1940-47,” Pres. Duncan Papers.

³⁷¹ Vice Admiral Randall Jacobs, Chief of Navy Personnel to Luther Duncan, May 3, 1945, box 6, file 217, “Duncan, ROTC, Naval, 1945,” Pres. Duncan Papers.

³⁷² Luther Duncan to Judge Robt. K. Greene, November 22, 1945, box 6, file 217, “Duncan, ROTC, Naval, 1945,” Pres. Duncan Papers.

³⁷³ Luther Duncan to General George Marshall, Army Chief of Staff, April 5, 1945, box 6, file 217, “Duncan, ROTC, Naval, 1945,” Pres. Duncan Papers.

Cavalry.”³⁷⁴ For example, the cadre no longer offered instruction in horsemanship. Instead, they trained cadets using tanks.³⁷⁵ Army ROTC lost its Air Force program on July 1, 1949 when Air Force ROTC officially became available at Auburn University as a result of the Army Air Corps’ transformation into the United States Air Force in 1947; however, in 1957 Auburn University Army ROTC did introduce the Army Aviation Flight Training Program.³⁷⁶

Given the significant contribution of Army ROTC to World War II mobilization, the Army recognized it as “a vital and essential source of the officer material for our country’s post-war armed forces,” and in 1946 the Commanding General of U.S. Army Ground Forces intended for postwar Army ROTC to commission officers at a higher rate than before the war.³⁷⁷ Simply put, the Army wanted the universities during the postwar years to keep doing what they had been doing before the war, but to do it better if at all possible. Auburn University gradually did fulfill this desire, albeit not always consistently. For a basis of comparison, recall that Auburn University commissioned 136

³⁷⁴ Ralph Draughon, President’s Official Report to the Board of Trustees, October 1, 1948, box 25, “Draughon, President’s Official Report to the Board of Trustees, October 1, 1948,” Pres. Draughon Papers.

³⁷⁵ As of March 1949, the Army ROTC program had received several vehicles from the government, to include tanks. See Memorandum by Colonel Geo M. Williamson, Jr., March 29, 1949, box 26, “Draughon, ROTC, Army, 1947-59,” Pres. Draughon Papers.

By fall of 1954, they possessed a large tank driving area, and during that same time the ROTC program acquired four modern M-47 medium tanks. See respectively Ralph Draughon, President’s Official Report to the Board of Trustees, October 22, 1954, box 25, “Draughon, President’s Official Report to the Board of Trustees, October 22, 1954,” Pres. Draughon Papers and Ralph Draughon, President’s Official Report to the Board of Trustees, November 4, 1955, box 25, “Draughon, President’s Official Report to the Board of Trustees, November 4, 1955,” Pres. Draughon Papers.

³⁷⁶ Ralph Draughon, President’s Official Report to the Board of Trustees, November 4, 1949, box 25, “Draughon, President’s Official Report to the Board of Trustees, November 4, 1949,” Pres. Draughon Papers; John H. Napier III, “How They Put the ‘War’ in War Eagle Being a Short History of the Military at A.P.I.,” 1958, 6, Auburn University Special Collections & Archives – Non-circulating collection, Auburn, Alabama; Ralph Draughon, President’s Official Report to the Board of Trustees, November 1, 1957, box 25, “Draughon, President’s Official Report to the Board of Trustees, November 1, 1957,” Pres. Draughon Papers.

³⁷⁷ General Jacob L. Devers, Commanding General, U.S. Army Ground Forces, to Luther Duncan, June 25, 1946, box 6, file 216, “Duncan, ROTC, Miscellaneous, 1940-47,” Pres. Duncan Papers.

officers in 1939, having a total cadet corps of approximately 1500.³⁷⁸ While the President Draughon Papers do not include the commissioning totals for the years between 1949 and 1955, those records do outline that during those years the advanced program consistently maintained between 200 and 300 cadets.³⁷⁹ From this, one logically can assume that their yearly commissioning numbers averaged, at least, between 100 and 150 commissioned officers. For the 1955-1956 school year, the program commissioned 144 officers, having a total cadet corps of approximately 1,254.³⁸⁰ As a basis of comparison with other Army ROTC programs, during the 1956-1957 school year Auburn University Army ROTC commissioned 149 officers, making it the top officer producing program in the entire Third Army Area, which consisted of colleges and universities in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. The three schools coming closest were the Citadel with 143, Clemson Agricultural College with 124, and Georgia Institute of Technology with 119.³⁸¹

Although the commissioning numbers sometimes did fluctuate to below interwar year levels, the compulsory program at Auburn University corresponded to a generally

³⁷⁸ “136 Cadets Receive ORC Commissions,” Plainsman, May 19, 1939; Photo Caption, Plainsman, April 4, 1939.

³⁷⁹ See Ralph Draughon’s Official Reports to the Board of Trustees for 1949-1955, from box 25 of the Pres. Draughon Papers.

³⁸⁰ Ralph Draughon, President’s Official Report to the Board of Trustees, November 9, 1956, box 25, “Draughon, President’s Official Report to the Board of Trustees, November 9, 1956,” Pres. Draughon Papers.

³⁸¹ Chart of ROTC Units Third Army Area: School Year 56-57, box 25, “ROTC, Misc., 1956-57,” Pres. Draughon Papers.

For a further basis of comparison, the University of Alabama commissioned 81, ranking 6th in the Third Army Area.

Also, for those interested, these 149 from Auburn University were commissioned during a school year when “net resident enrollment” for the university consisted of 8334 men and 2486 women. For more information see Ralph Draughon, President’s Official Report to the Board of Trustees, November 1, 1957, box 25, “Draughon, President’s Official Report to the Board of Trustees, November 1, 1957,” Pres. Draughon Papers.

high rate of commissioned officers.³⁸² At the same time that Auburn University Army ROTC was noticeably increasing, on the national level students were becoming increasingly disaffected with collegiate military training. As a result, in 1964 Congress passed the Vitalization Act. A noteworthy development in ROTC affairs, the Department of Defense designed it in an attempt to raise the annual number of officers commissioned through ROTC.³⁸³ Congress approved the act in hopes of counteracting the increasing trend of universities rejecting mandatory ROTC, and of making up the recent shortfalls in the production of commissioned officers.³⁸⁴ Nevertheless, implementation of the action coincided with the gradually increasing unease that many Americans felt regarding the conflict in Vietnam, which negated some of its intended affects.³⁸⁵

Auburn University Army ROTC (1965-1974)

“February 27, 1969, this committee voted six to one, to recommend that Auburn University adopt a voluntary basic ROTC program. [Among] the primary factors influencing the decision were...A recognition that Auburn University is one of a small number of major institutions, even land-grant institutions, which has not responded to a trend, begun in 1923 but accelerating with surprising rapidity during the last six years, away from compulsory to voluntary basic ROTC.”³⁸⁶

– Report of the ROTC Study Committee, Auburn University

American involvement in the Vietnam War, and its resulting political and social upheaval, provides the international and national context for understanding the national

³⁸² For examples of fluctuations see Ralph Draughon, President’s Official Report to the Board of Trustees, October 6, 1961, box 25, “Draughon, President’s Official Report to the Board of Trustees, October 6, 1961,” Pres. Draughon Papers and Ralph Draughon, President’s Official Report to the Board of Trustees, November 9, 1962, box 25, “Draughon, President’s Official Report to the Board of Trustees, November 9, 1962,” Pres. Draughon Papers. Ironically, during these two years of lower commissioning numbers, the cadet corps simultaneously experienced a dramatic increase, as noted in those two reports.

³⁸³ Michael S. Neiberg, *Making Citizen-Soldiers: ROTC and the Ideology of American Military Service* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000), 85.

³⁸⁴ Arthur T. Coumbe and Lee S. Harford, *U.S. Army Cadet Command: The 10 Year History* (Fort Monroe, Va: Office of the Command Historian, U.S. Army Cadet Command), 1996, 221.

³⁸⁵ Neiberg, “*Making Citizen-Soldiers*,” 86.

³⁸⁶ Report of the ROTC Study Committee, Auburn University ROTC Study Committee, 1969, 1-2, box 46, file “ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

and regional developments occurring at numerous universities concerning their ROTC programs that facilitated the controversy over Auburn University's mandatory ROTC program. Growing discontent over the American military's engagement in Southeast Asia eventually manifested itself on university campuses and began to adversely effect the ROTC program as a whole. ROTC units were the most visible and accessible example of the American military available to students, and for on campus anti-war activists those units were logical targets.³⁸⁷ The Tet Offensive of 1968 proved a major turning point in American opinions about the war, with public support for U.S. military involvement in Vietnam plummeting. This period provides evidence of a large shift on many campuses in student opinions toward ROTC.³⁸⁸ Traditionally at many colleges and universities ROTC had been a respected part of campus life, but that began to change after early 1968.³⁸⁹ For example, at one university the hatred toward ROTC was so intense that the ROTC personnel wore civilian clothes when walking from their cars to their building and then changed into their uniforms once inside.³⁹⁰ The Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) were perhaps the most notable organization that helped lead the charge against ROTC on university campuses. As conveyed in one of their directives, the SDS believed that, "a nationwide attack against ROTC would severely hurt the military."³⁹¹ Dissidents launched an incredible number of such attacks during the 1969-1970 school year. A U.S. News and World Report article from 1970 compiled the number of on-campus incidents that ROTC personnel considered significant enough to warrant a report to the Pentagon,

³⁸⁷ Coumbe, "U.S. Army Cadet Command," 33.

³⁸⁸ Neiberg, "Making Citizen-Soldiers," 113.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 113-116.

³⁹⁰ John Hepler, "'..Crippled, Defeated, and Silenced': A Professor Views the National Dangers Posed by Mindless Attacks on the ROTC," Army Magazine, September 1969, 24. The author did not state the name of the university.

³⁹¹ Kenneth Y. Tomlinson, "ROTC Under Attack," Reader's Digest, November, 1969, 234.

and the article calculated that seventy-six college ROTC units suffered 145 “attacks resulting in property damage or personal injury;” seventy-three attempts “to burn or blow up buildings provided by the schools for ROTC use;” and sixty-seven counts of vandalism at ROTC offices. These statistics marked a notable increase from the pre-Tet Offensive demonstrations that had produced, “a total of 95 anti-ROTC incidents of all kinds recorded by the Pentagon in 1968-69, including 20 attempts to destroy buildings by fire or bombs.”³⁹²

At some universities during this time, the campus movements directed toward ROTC sought not the abolition of ROTC but the establishment of an elective program. As outlined in chapter 2, this particular movement began in 1923, but an official statement issued from the Department of Defense reinvigorated it.³⁹³ During 1960 the Department of Defense in a letter to the presidents of colleges and universities, as a point of clarification, explained that the department was ambivalent about the issue of mandatory versus compulsory ROTC, preferring that the administration at each university decide which option to pursue.³⁹⁴ That same year the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Charles C. Finucane, similarly stated that, “Compulsory Basic ROTC is not needed to meet quality standards nor is it needed to produce the number of officers required.”³⁹⁵ In a memorandum sent to the Auburn University Board of Trustees in May 1969, Auburn University President Harry Philpott attributed the announcement of this policy as the chief reason why state universities and land-grant colleges began adopting

³⁹² Behind the Drive to Destroy ROTC,” *U.S. News and World Report*, June 26, 1970, 20.

³⁹³ Report of the ROTC Study Committee, Auburn University ROTC Study Committee, 1969, 7-8, box 46, file “ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

³⁹⁴ Report of the ROTC Study Committee, Auburn University ROTC Study Committee, 1969, 8, box 46, file “ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

³⁹⁵ Report of the ROTC Study Committee, Auburn University ROTC Study Committee, 1969, 7, box 46, file “ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

elective ROTC programs.³⁹⁶ As an example of the change, an official Auburn university committee learned that in 1963 fifty-one out of the sixty-eight land-grant universities maintained a compulsory program, but in 1969 only fifteen still possessed compulsory programs.³⁹⁷ To compare this with all college ROTC programs in the nation, for the 1968-1969 school year, only one-third mandated ROTC; ten years prior, two-thirds of them had mandated it.³⁹⁸ Additionally, by 1969 Texas A & M and Virginia Polytechnic Institute – universities with exceptionally distinguished military traditions – had removed their mandatory ROTC curriculum. As of April 1969, three more universities were also in the process of reevaluating whether or not to maintain mandatory ROTC.³⁹⁹

Around July 1967, the growing trend against compulsory ROTC began to affect Auburn University. Unlike some universities that sought to expel ROTC from their campuses entirely, the debate over Auburn University's ROTC program consistently centered on whether or not the university should still require male students to complete the ROTC basic course. In 1967 an Auburn University self-study report, known as "Project '67," proposed that the university adopt a voluntary ROTC program but not do so immediately "in view of the present world situation."⁴⁰⁰ Nevertheless, the ongoing

³⁹⁶ Memorandum by Harry M. Philpott, May 28, 1969, box 46, file "ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969," Pres. Philpott Papers.

³⁹⁷ Report of the ROTC Study Committee, Auburn University ROTC Study Committee, 1969, 11-12, box 46, file "ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969," Pres. Philpott Papers. These fifteen universities were "Auburn University, Mississippi State University, Clemson University, South Carolina State University, University of Tennessee at Martin, Agricultural Mechanical and Normal College, University of Arkansas, Louisiana State University & A & M College, Cameron State Agriculture College, Southern University and & A & M College, Panhandle State College of A & AS, Prairie View A & M College, Lincoln University, South Dakota State University, [and] University of Nevada."

³⁹⁸ Report of the ROTC Study Committee, Auburn University ROTC Study Committee, 1969, 11, box 46, file "ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969," Pres. Philpott Papers.

Note: the total number of colleges with ROTC programs for 1968-1969 was 268.

³⁹⁹ Report of the ROTC Study Committee, Auburn University ROTC Study Committee, 1969, 12, box 46, file "ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969," Pres. Philpott Papers.

These three were "the University of Mississippi, Mississippi State, and the University of Arkansas."

⁴⁰⁰ Pat Randall, "University Senate approves voluntary ROTC proposal," Auburn Plainsman, May 8, 1969.

movement in favor of elective ROTC eventually prompted Auburn University's Vice President for Academic Affairs, W.S. Bailey, to appoint an official committee composed of administrators, faculty, and students to examine the issue.⁴⁰¹ In the January 7, 1969 memorandum that he sent notifying individuals on their appointment to the ROTC Study Committee, he offered an interesting rationale for why the topic rated a formal committee.⁴⁰² Downplaying the interest of faculty members concerning ROTC on campus, he posited that the debate had "been the subject of considerable discussion... among students and, to some extent, faculty groups." Upon task completion, the committee would submit a concluding report to the University Senate by means of its Curriculum Committee. Afterward, the university president, Harry M. Philpott, would consider whether or not to approve the recommendations of the report.⁴⁰³

Several months later in 1969, Philpott explained to the members of the Board of Trustees the situation that had prompted the establishment of the ROTC Study Committee. Referring to the issue as "particularly troublesome," Philpott stated his partiality toward a compulsory ROTC program but expressed that,

I have reluctantly come to the conclusion that without backing for this position from the Department of Defense, with the fact that almost all of the major land-grant colleges and state universities have moved to a voluntary program, and with a clear majority of our students and faculty favoring such a move, I feel that I must concur...

Preserving mandatory ROTC at Auburn University had not presented a problem for Philpott as long as universities in the surrounding region maintained such programs.

⁴⁰¹ Given the sources available, the identify of the original person or persons who inspired Bailey to take this action is unknown.

⁴⁰² Memorandum by L.P. Burton, April 8, 1969, box 46, file "ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969," Pres. Philpott Papers; Memorandum by W.S. Bailey, January 7, 1969, box 46, file "ROTC - General 1969-77," Pres. Philpott Papers.

⁴⁰³ Memorandum by W.S. Bailey, January 7, 1969, box 46, file "ROTC - General 1969-77," Pres. Philpott Papers.

Although the Auburn University administration was under little pressure to change its ROTC program after the University of Alabama removed mandatory ROTC in 1966, the issue became an important topic on the Auburn campus after “Tennessee, Georgia, and Florida” adopted voluntary programs.⁴⁰⁴ Philpott also attributed the recent elimination of compulsory ROTC at Texas A & M and Clemson as the most significant impetus behind faculty and student advocacy for a voluntary program.⁴⁰⁵

While the Auburn University ROTC Study Committee was considering the issue of mandatory ROTC, the Department of Defense was also reevaluating ROTC.⁴⁰⁶ Elected in 1968, President Richard Nixon supported abolition of the draft, which alarmed many individuals within his administration because the draft provided a substantial incentive for participation in ROTC.⁴⁰⁷ Responding to a recommendation from the Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, this new concern – coupled with the growing turbulence on college campuses concerning ROTC – compelled Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird to appoint the Special Committee on ROTC, which he tasked with reassessing the nation’s ROTC program in order to determine the best means of improving the reputation of ROTC within the academic community and the responsiveness of ROTC to student needs.⁴⁰⁸ The Special Committee on ROTC would

⁴⁰⁴ Philpott did not specify the proper names of these universities.

⁴⁰⁵ Memorandum by Harry M. Philpott, May 28, 1969, box 46, file “ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

Of note, the Board of Trustees for Clemson decided in March 1969 to implement a voluntary program, beginning during the 1969-1970 school year. Like Texas A & M, Clemson had a widely recognized reputation because of its military tradition. Report of the ROTC Study Committee, Auburn University ROTC Study Committee, 1969, 11, box 46, file “ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

⁴⁰⁶ Coumbe, “U.S. Army Cadet Command,” 33-34.

⁴⁰⁷ Neiberg, “Making Citizen-Soldiers,” 130.

⁴⁰⁸ Coumbe, “U.S. Army Cadet Command,” 33; Roger T. Kelley to presidents of ROTC host institutions, September 15, 1969, box 46, file “Philpott, ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

then offer its suggestions to the Department of Defense.⁴⁰⁹ Of note, the Department of Defense had since 1949 maintained an advisory panel on ROTC education, which submitted reports to both the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs and to the Reserve Forces Policy Board. This panel already exhibited its significant influence when the Department of Defense incorporated into the Revitalization Act of 1964 some of the major policy changes that they proposed.⁴¹⁰ A member of this panel, George Benson, chaired the Special Committee on ROTC, and the special committee eventually acquired the informal title, “Benson Committee.”⁴¹¹ Among his many qualifications to chair the committee, Benson had been president of Claremont Men’s College since 1946 and also a member of the ROTC Advisory Panel of the Army.⁴¹² Several academics from Ivy League universities as well as high-ranking military personnel served on the committee.⁴¹³ According to a Department of Defense news release, the committee’s official purpose was “to appraise the interrelationships of the ROTC programs of the Services, and their relations to university faculties, students, and administrators.” Holding its first meeting in early July, the Department of Defense hoped that the Special Committee on ROTC would be ready to submit its final report before universities began the fall semester.⁴¹⁴

⁴⁰⁹ Coumbe, “U.S. Army Cadet Command,” 33.

⁴¹⁰ Roger T. Kelley to presidents of colleges and universities having ROTC units and to professors of military science, naval science, and aerospace studies, July 8, 1969, box 45, file “Philpott, ROTC, Army 1969-70,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

⁴¹¹ Neiberg, “Making Citizen-Soldiers,” 130.

⁴¹² Roger T. Kelley to presidents of ROTC host institutions, September 15, 1969, box 46, file “Philpott, ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

⁴¹³ U.S. Department of Defense, Secretary Laird Authorizes Establishment of Committee to Appraise ROTC Programs, Melvin Laird, June 25, 1969, News Release from the Office of Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), box 45, file “Philpott, ROTC, Army 1969-70,” Pres. Philpott Papers; Neiberg, “Making Citizen-Soldiers,” 130.

⁴¹⁴ U.S. Department of Defense, Secretary Laird Authorizes Establishment of Committee to Appraise ROTC Programs, Melvin Laird, June 25, 1969, News Release from the Office of Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), box 45, file “Philpott, ROTC, Army 1969-70,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

In examining the debate over mandatory ROTC on the Auburn University campus, one cannot overlook the supporting role played by Bill Nichols, Alabama's Fourth District member of the House of Representatives. Nichols possessed close ties to Auburn University, where he had earned his bachelor and masters degrees.⁴¹⁵ Commissioning from Auburn University as an Army officer, he served with distinction during World War II, earning the Bronze Star. Nichols also received the Purple Heart after a land mine blew off one of his legs.⁴¹⁶ In 1947 he retired from the Army as a Captain.⁴¹⁷ Later, he served on the Auburn University Executive Committee and as a member of its Board of Trustees.⁴¹⁸ In fulfilling his duties to the university, he regularly used his connections in Washington D.C. to aid the university in whatever manner appropriate.

Nichols' main contribution to resolving the ROTC controversy were his actions to ensure that Auburn University's Executive Committee and Board of Trustees possessed as much helpful information as possible concerning the matter, such as by forwarding to members of the Executive Committee copies of a relevant article that he found from

⁴¹⁵ "Rep. Bill Nichols, 70; Led Pentagon Inquiry," New York Times, December 14, 1988; Auburn University Special Collections & Archives, "Guide to the William F. Nichols Papers, RG 194," Auburn University, <http://www.lib.auburn.edu/archive/find-aid/194.htm> (accessed December 5, 2012).

⁴¹⁶ Bill Nichols to Roger T. Kelley, October 20, 1969, box 46, file "Philpott, ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969," Pres. Philpott Papers; "Rep. Bill Nichols, 70; Led Pentagon Inquiry," New York Times, December 14, 1988; Auburn University Special Collections & Archives, "Guide to the William F. Nichols Papers, RG 194," Auburn University, <http://www.lib.auburn.edu/archive/find-aid/194.htm> (accessed December 5, 2012).

⁴¹⁷ Auburn University Special Collections & Archives, "Guide to the William F. Nichols Papers, RG 194," Auburn University, <http://www.lib.auburn.edu/archive/find-aid/194.htm> (accessed December 5, 2012).

⁴¹⁸ Bill Nichols to Roberts. H. Brown, October 25, 1969, box 46, file "Philpott, ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969," Pres. Philpott Papers; Bill Nichols to Roger T. Kelley, October 20, 1969, box 46, file "Philpott, ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969," Pres. Philpott Papers.

Army Magazine.⁴¹⁹ More importantly, Nichols kept them abreast of what he learned from his communications with Benson – chairman of the Special Committee on ROTC – and Roger T. Kelley – Assistant Secretary (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) for the Department of Defense. Benson provided Nichols with especially salient information. Regarding the steady trend of universities eliminating their mandatory ROTC programs, Benson wrote that of the 360 universities with ROTC on campus, by the fall 1969 only fifty still possessed mandatory programs. He also outlined that,

the officers of the services have pointed out...three advantages of voluntary basic ROTC: 1. It requires less regular service personnel for instruction. 2. It is less of an irritant on campus. 3. Experience has indicated that we probably get more officers from a voluntary unit which has a higher esprit de corps. The disadvantages of voluntary basic ROTC are: 1. Less students have the advantage of having some contact with the military. 2. There probably are some potential officers who would not come into contact with a strictly volunteer ROTC.⁴²⁰

In a letter to the chairman of the Auburn University Executive Committee, Roberts H. Brown, Nichols further disclosed what he had learned from Benson, describing an important distinction between the various branches regarding the topic of mandatory ROTC. During this time, the Navy operated a highly selective voluntary ROTC program and the Air Force tended for financial reasons to favor a voluntary program.⁴²¹ In contrast, the Army “being an old line service” with a high level of dependency upon ROTC for producing officers, generally preferred a mandatory ROTC program because it

⁴¹⁹ Bill Nichols to Harry M. Philpott, October 20, 1969, box 46, file “Philpott, ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969,” Pres. Philpott Papers. For anyone interested, the article was John Hepler’s “..Crippled, Defeated, and Silenced’: A Professor Views the National Dangers Posed by Mindless Attacks on the ROTC” from the September 1969 issue of Army Magazine.

⁴²⁰ George C. S. Benson to Bill Nichols, October 23, 1969, box 46, file “Philpott, ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

⁴²¹ From the context of the source, “Navy” appears to refer to the Department of the Navy and would, therefore, include Marine ROTC training.

offered military training to a large number of individuals who could be mobilized during a national emergency.⁴²²

Additionally, Nichols relayed to Philpott the findings of Congressional “Subcommittee No. 2,” which had investigated the ROTC controversy and submitted a report to the Armed Services Committee. The subcommittee highlighted two particularly important findings. First, many individuals at universities objected to applying the term “professor” to Professors of Military Science since ROTC personnel did not have to “earn” that title in the same way as regular professors. Second, a significant number of people objected to seeing cadets wear uniforms and conduct drill on campus.⁴²³

On April 18, 1969, L.P. Burton, Chairman of the Auburn University ROTC Study Committee, submitted the committee report to Bailey, who then forwarded it to the Curriculum Committee of the Auburn University Faculty Senate.⁴²⁴ The report contained the rationale undergirding the recommendations of the committee members who, during their fourth meeting on February 27, 1969, voted six to one in favor of a voluntary ROTC program.⁴²⁵ Through a brief discussion within the report, the committee explained the perspective and methodology that produced the majority opinion. They explained that no bias against ROTC tainted their deliberations, but rather every member acknowledged the crucial worth of ROTC to national defense.

The report presented three recommendations for university action, stating

⁴²² Bill Nichols to Roberts. H. Brown, October 25, 1969, box 46, file “Philpott, ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

⁴²³ Bill Nichols to Harry M. Philpott, August 7, 1969, box 46, file “Philpott, ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

Words in quotation marks are the precise language of the committee.

⁴²⁴ Memorandum by L.P. Burton, April 8, 1969, box 46, file “ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969,” Philpott Papers.

⁴²⁵ Report of the ROTC Study Committee, Auburn University ROTC Study Committee, 1969, 1, box 46, file “ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

we admit to the value of two of the main themes of ROTC instruction: (1) the need for students to understand the concept of “force” as it relates to the National defense; and (2) the need for students to understand the advantages of a predominantly “citizens” as opposed to a “professional” military establishment.⁴²⁶

Nevertheless, the majority opinion expressed their overriding belief that the students “should and do develop proper value judgments toward the military establishment through their academic work and general reading.”⁴²⁷ The committee’s seven weeks of research involved activities such as visiting the University of Tennessee and the Georgia Institute of Technology which had both recently switched to a voluntary program, examining the reports of other universities that had investigated the matter, discussing the matter with Army ROTC command level staff, and deliberating upon secondary sources like newspapers and magazine articles.⁴²⁸

The first recommendation of the ROTC Study Committee was for the implementation of a voluntary ROTC program.⁴²⁹ They believed that this change would best serve the “dignity” of male students through enabling them to assess their own personality in regard to the military before exercising their choice on the matter. Resulting from extensive research into outcomes at other universities that had eliminated mandatory ROTC, their belief that a voluntary system would enhance the quality of cadets while still producing a sufficient number of commissioned officers was the other critical element supporting this first recommendation.⁴³⁰ Their “conviction” was that

⁴²⁶ Report of the ROTC Study Committee, Auburn University ROTC Study Committee, 1969, 3, box 46, file “ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

⁴²⁷ Report of the ROTC Study Committee, Auburn University ROTC Study Committee, 1969, 3-4, box 46, file “ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

⁴²⁸ Report of the ROTC Study Committee, Auburn University ROTC Study Committee, 1969, 4-5, box 46, file “ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

⁴²⁹ Report of the ROTC Study Committee, Auburn University ROTC Study Committee, 1969, 1, box 46, file “ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

⁴³⁰ Report of the ROTC Study Committee, Auburn University ROTC Study Committee, 1969, 1-2, 4-5, 7, 9-10, box 46, file “ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

“with continued support from the University faculty and administration, a voluntary ROTC program at Auburn University will produce each year, as it has at many other institutions, an appropriate number of high-caliber commissioned officers.”⁴³¹

Department of Defense ambivalence on the issue further supported their argument, with the report explaining that neither Congress nor the Department of Defense “find it necessary to require or even encourage compulsory ROTC programs.”⁴³² In the opinion of the ROTC Study Committee, the change would yield no “adverse effect” on either Auburn’s ROTC units or Auburn’s students; this reflected “the confidence of the Committee in Auburn students.” Furthermore, in the past six years many other colleges and universities of the same caliber and size as Auburn University had already eliminated their compulsory ROTC programs - including southern land-grant universities with longstanding military traditions; thus, the committee likewise desired to correspond to this new norm among academic institutions. The committee’s second recommendation simply reaffirmed that the standard course credits toward graduation should still apply for completing the ROTC basic course.⁴³³ For the third recommendation, the committee requested that the university incorporate a voluntary program as quickly as possible.⁴³⁴

In defense of their recommendations, the ROTC Study Committee referenced several different sources. The leading evidence they cited in support of the first

⁴³¹ Report of the ROTC Study Committee, Auburn University ROTC Study Committee, 1969, 1, box 46, file “ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

⁴³² This may have been true in the past; however, Nieberg quotes Melvin Laird from an April 30, 1969 news article in which the recently appointed Secretary of Defense stated, “We are not prepared to see the ROTC program degraded in any way.” “Nieberg, “Making Citizen-Soldiers,” 138. Of note, Assistant Professor of Military Science, Lieutenant Colonel George B. Anderson, in the minority report for the Auburn University ROTC Study Committee, cited a similar quote from Secretary Laird - as revealed later in this chapter.

⁴³³ Report of the ROTC Study Committee, Auburn University ROTC Study Committee, 1969, 2, box 46, file “ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

⁴³⁴ Report of the ROTC Study Committee, Auburn University ROTC Study Committee, 1969, 3, box 46, file “ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

recommendation was a resolution passed by the Auburn University Student Senate on January 13, 1969, which asked that “the newly formed ROTC committee recommend to the University Senate Curriculum Committee that ROTC be placed on a voluntary basis.” According to the resolution, the following points expressed the feeling among Auburn University students concerning mandatory ROTC: “(1) It is of questionable academic, spiritual, physical or mental value, hence incongruent with the rest of the University curriculum. (2) It is often an unnecessary drain of a student’s time and government’s resources.”⁴³⁵ The ROTC Study Committee further buttressed their assertions with quotes from the findings of a research project that a committee of the Louisiana State University (LSU) Student Government Association conducted concerning the controversy of mandatory versus voluntary ROTC.⁴³⁶ Near the end of the report, the committee extensively cited Lieutenant Colonel Morgan J. Cronin, Executive Secretary of the Army Advisory Panel on ROTC affairs, who had written to LSU’s president on October 25, 1968 about the issue. When asked what might be the outcome of adopting a voluntary ROTC program, Cronin emphasized the multifaceted nature of any outcome; the results would rest upon factors such as “student-faculty dissidence” and the levels of ideological support for the program from the entire university community. Referencing the chief question of the ROTC Study Committee, Cronin wrote:

If it is the character of the school to support a strong defense establishment, instill citizenship and adhere to traditions that hold military training as an integral part of the curriculum, the compulsory course is defensible and probably desirable.

⁴³⁵ Report of the ROTC Study Committee, Auburn University ROTC Study Committee, 1969, 6, box 46, file “ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

⁴³⁶ Report of the ROTC Study Committee, Auburn University ROTC Study Committee, 1969, 8-9, box 46, file “ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

However, if the philosophy recognizes and encourages the student to make his own commitment the matter of compulsory ROTC is less defensible.⁴³⁷

Regarding these two characterizations, Auburn University appears to have been amidst a transformation from one to the other. Although the former statement certainly characterized the history of the university from the 1910s to the 1950s, the latter statement more closely corresponds to the rationale exhibited in the majority opinion of the ROTC Study Committee.⁴³⁸

Appendix A of the ROTC Study Committee report contained Auburn University student Robert C. Hicks' opinion on the matter. One of two students represented on the committee, he was moreover a cadet captain in Air Force ROTC. In his remarks, he confessed that at the time of his appointment to the committee he whole-heartedly supported mandatory ROTC. He believed that ROTC effectively introduced students to military life in a fashion that enabled them to objectively decide whether or not to pursue the advanced program. For him, the ability of ROTC to build student character proved another valuable asset. Hicks also postulated that ROTC at Auburn University significantly correlated with "the traditional conservative atmosphere that surrounds the Auburn campus" and that, "With compulsory ROTC abolished, this atmosphere would gradually disappear and be replaced with the current ultra-liberal atmosphere of some of the campuses on the West Coast." From his perspective, the majority of the on campus

⁴³⁷ Report of the ROTC Study Committee, Auburn University ROTC Study Committee, 1969, 10, box 46, file "ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969," Pres. Philpott Papers.

⁴³⁸ For example, regarding the former sentence in Cronin's statement, Auburn University clearly exhibited this characteristic as exemplified by the following statement from 1945: "The record of our students in this war more than justifies the serious manner in which the program has been handled here... We feel... that the very system of self-responsibility and initiative which we have encouraged here in connection with our regular [compulsory] ROTC program has contributed much to the qualifications of the several thousand students of this institution who are now commissioned officers in every branch of the armed forces." R. B. Draughon to President F. D. Patterson of Tuskegee Institute, February 12, 1945, box 6, file 216, "Duncan, ROTC, Miscellaneous, 1940-47," Pres. Duncan Papers.

opposition to voluntary ROTC appeared comparable to “the hippies which are prominent on the West Coast.”⁴³⁹ Nevertheless, based on the reports of other universities that eliminated mandatory ROTC, he determined that participation in basic ROTC after the change had “not dropped a great deal.” He observed no difficulties in those universities’ ROTC programs attaining their quotas for commissioning officers. Like others, he concluded that a voluntary program enhanced ROTC units since only motivated students enrolled.⁴⁴⁰ In his final words of advice, Hick’s warned that if Auburn University implemented the committee’s recommendations, then the ROTC programs would require increased recruiting and the university would need to exercise greater vigilance over male students and the general campus environment as a result of the loss of military discipline.⁴⁴¹ He also recommended that upon adoption of the new program the university completely cooperate with the ROTC unit in order not to “cause any more interference with students’ choices to get into the program than...absolutely necessary.”⁴⁴²

Lieutenant Colonel George B. Anderson, Assistant Professor of Military Science and member of the ROTC Study Committee, authored the committee’s minority report. He stressed the vital responsibility of ROTC in providing the increased number of commissioned officers required due to the Vietnam War, believing that “It is essential to our national security that an effective ROTC program be maintained.” Employing the traditional defense of collegiate military training, Anderson additionally cited several character and civic benefits students acquired through ROTC. He argued that a

⁴³⁹ Report of the ROTC Study Committee, Auburn University ROTC Study Committee, 1969, 13, box 46, file “ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

⁴⁴⁰ Report of the ROTC Study Committee, Auburn University ROTC Study Committee, 1969, 14, box 46, file “ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

⁴⁴¹ Report of the ROTC Study Committee, Auburn University ROTC Study Committee, 1969, 14-15, box 46, file “ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

⁴⁴² Report of the ROTC Study Committee, Auburn University ROTC Study Committee, 1969, 14, box 46, file “ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

compulsory program allowed students first-hand experience through which to accurately determine whether ROTC was worth pursuing, and such a program also instilled a sense of patriotism in those students. Thus, he maintained that, “The advantages derived from the required program outweigh, by far, the imposition the program places on the university facilities or the students’ time.”⁴⁴³ While the majority report correctly described the Department of Defense’s posture concerning mandatory ROTC, Anderson clarified that the new Secretary of Defense, Melvin R. Laird, was alarmed by the recent downward trend in ROTC affairs. He quoted Laird as stating that, “The ROTC program is essential in producing a major portion of the Commissioned Officers and future leaders for our Armed Forces.”⁴⁴⁴ As a result, Anderson wrote, “I cannot conscientiously support the recommendation of the Study Committee.”⁴⁴⁵

Given the longstanding, intimate association between Auburn University and its Army ROTC program, no investigation of this issue could be complete without learning what the Professor of Military Science (PMS) thought about the findings of the ROTC Study Committee.⁴⁴⁶ His opinion was especially important since the effects of adopting a voluntary program would adversely affect Army ROTC disproportionately more than the other branches, which might experience little or no significant change. PMS Colonel Andrew W. LaMar, Jr., provided historians with an excellent record of his thoughts on the matter. Scheduled to present his views before a Faculty Senate meeting on May 6, 1969, a debilitating leg injury left him unable to attend. Instead, LaMar articulated his

⁴⁴³ Report of the ROTC Study Committee, Auburn University ROTC Study Committee, 1969, 17, box 46, file “ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969,” Pres. Philpott Papers

⁴⁴⁴ Neiberg, “Making Citizen-Soldiers,” 138: Neiberg cites a similar quote from Laird, which states, “We are not prepared to see the ROTC program degraded in any way.”

⁴⁴⁵ Report of the ROTC Study Committee, Auburn University ROTC Study Committee, 1969, 18, box 46, file “ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

⁴⁴⁶ Only heads of Army ROTC units possess the title “Professor of Military Science.” The other service branches use a different term to designate a ROTC unit’s highest-ranking officer.

beliefs in a short essay that he forwarded to the meeting in his absence.⁴⁴⁷ He approached the issue not just from the position of PMS but also from his background as an Auburn University alumnus and the parent of an Auburn University student.⁴⁴⁸ LaMar prefaced his remarks by strongly emphasizing that his opinions were completely his own and not intended to reflect in any way the views of the Department of the Army.⁴⁴⁹

LaMar began his critique of the ROTC Study Committee's report with his belief that it was overall "a very fine report" but overlooked two important aspects of the matter. First, the report inclined readers to believe that the personnel at universities who had switched from mandatory to voluntary were pleased with the results; LaMar cautioned that a significant number of individuals at those universities would rather return to a mandatory program. Second, he believed that any change in the program must seek the advice and approval of alumni and parents since Auburn University was "a state supported institution, existing mainly to serve the people of Alabama." LaMar believed that ignoring their opinions in the committee's final report was a critical error.⁴⁵⁰

Entering into the mix of differing opinions, LaMar presented his own thoughts on the potential merits of a voluntary program. He agreed that the benefits would include "better motivated" cadets, a "more flexible and meaningful" system of teaching leadership and drill, a diminished financial burden, and "elimination of student gripes...and possible future unrest." Regarding the latter benefit, LaMar asserted that at

⁴⁴⁷ Memorandum by George B. Anderson, May 2, 1969, box 46, file "Philpott, ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969," Pres. Philpott Papers.

⁴⁴⁸ Lamar entered as a student in 1941 but did not graduate from Auburn University due to his appointment to West Point in 1943; however, he maintained close ties to the university for the rest of his life. Guy Rhodes, "La Mar - 'and here I am again'," Auburn Plainsman, October 27, 1968.

⁴⁴⁹ Andrew W. LaMar, 1969, essay presented at Auburn University Faculty Senate, Auburn, AL, 6 May 1969, box 46, file "Philpott, ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969," Pres. Philpott Papers.

⁴⁵⁰ Andrew W. LaMar, 1969, essay presented at Auburn University Faculty Senate, Auburn, AL, 6 May 1969, box 46, file "Philpott, ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969," Pres. Philpott Papers.

present the students were generally ambivalent about whether or not to enact a voluntary program. Although told upon becoming PMS at Auburn University in the fall of 1968 that mandatory ROTC represented “the ‘burning’ issue on...campus,” his personal experience with the matter supported the opposite conclusion. He gave the example of his attending a public, campus forum that the ROTC Study Committee organized in order to elicit student input in their investigation. Of the twenty in attendance, “four...girls, six...cadets, four...faculty, and six other” were present, and of these “others,” several “were the long hair, far left types.” LaMar judged the situation to comprise nothing more than another “example of the small dissident groups prevalent on campus’ today, pushing for elimination of many policies and proven establishments.”⁴⁵¹

LaMar believed that Auburn University should continue with mandatory ROTC. In his opinion, ROTC trained students in important life skills such as “self-discipline, bearing, and good appearance,” which would enhance their success no matter what career they chose. Additionally, LaMar extolled ROTC’s inculcation of the American values of “patriotism and citizenship” as an excellent advantage to students. Like Lieutenant Colonel Anderson, LaMar similarly couched his support of mandatory ROTC in terms of preserving student choice, arguing that the university’s requiring all male students to participate in the program enabled those students to gain “first hand information and experience” from which to knowledgably decide whether they wanted to pursue a commission. To support his point, Lamar explained that the Auburn University Army ROTC cadre had asked their senior cadets “if they would have enrolled in ROTC if it had been elective when they were freshmen. Fifty percent said they would not have taken

⁴⁵¹ Andrew. W. LaMar, 1969, essay presented at Auburn University Faculty Senate, Auburn, AL, 6 May 1969, box 46, file “Philpott, ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

ROTC.” He finished supporting his arguments with a lengthy passage from John Locke’s “Freedom Related to Reason.” The quotation argued that freedom without knowledge or discernment reduces someone to a status below that of “brutes”; hence, young people should submit to their guardians until capable of making wise decisions on their own. Lamar closed his remarks with the “undisputable fact” that “Whatever the decision is on our basic ROTC, I and my staff will support this decision one hundred percent.”⁴⁵²

Within the period that the ROTC Study Committee members were conducting their research and immediately after they revealed their findings, several Auburn University professors wrote letters to Philpott expressing their own opinions regarding the debate.⁴⁵³ These letters yield a glimpse into what might have been the overall consensus among professors. Asserting themselves in the face of what one professor labeled as “patently absurd charges of lack of patriotism,” the vast majority of these letters promoted the adoption of a voluntary ROTC program.⁴⁵⁴ On an interesting note, professors from the History Department account for most of these letters. Of the twelve letters in this file from professors regarding the debate, eight came from members of the History Department. Overall, several general themes emerge. A few of the professors emphasized the benefits that ROTC would enjoy through a voluntary program since only motivated, interested students would participate, thereby improving cadet morale.⁴⁵⁵ Other professors invoked the need to conform to modern trends, remarking that most land-grant universities no longer mandated ROTC participation and that even the federal

⁴⁵² Andrew W. LaMar, 1969, essay presented at Auburn University Faculty Senate, Auburn, AL, 6 May 1969, box 46, file “Philpott, ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

⁴⁵³ The letters discussed here came from box 46, file “ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

⁴⁵⁴ Robert R. Rea to Harry M. Philpott, May 21, 1969.

⁴⁵⁵ Robert R. Rea to Harry M. Philpott, May 21, 1969; W. Harold Moon to Harry M. Philpott, May 29, 1969; Brit. A. Storey to Harry M. Philpott, May 23, 1969.

government was gradually shifting away from mandating military service through the draft.⁴⁵⁶ Moreover, others asserted the overriding responsibility of protecting the academic, political, and social freedom of students, which precluded compulsory ROTC.⁴⁵⁷ For example, Associate Professor of History, Edward C. Williamson argued that, “The right to dissent is a precious right in any society, a must in a democratic society. Such a right is violated by the concept of compulsory ROTC insofar as the student is concerned.” He wrote this statement from the perspective of someone who had been “in the reserve” for thirty years and who had served in two wars.⁴⁵⁸ President Philpott subsequently forwarded to each member of the Board of Trustees a copy of every letter he received from faculty and staff concerning the debate.⁴⁵⁹

On April 14, 1969 the Curriculum Committee of the Auburn University Faculty Senate unanimously approved the ROTC Study Committee report. The next step was for the Faculty Senate to discuss the report. Clarence Scarsbrook, the Faculty Senate president-elect who would preside over the deliberations, explained, “The report will not be delayed by the senate... We will consider the report at our May 6 meeting... If necessary we will hold a special meeting in May to act on the recommendation and pass it on to President Philpott.” When asked whether or not he personally approved of the recommendation, Philpott refused to comment, explaining that he did not wish to potentially influence the outcome of the senate vote. He did state, however, that, “If the proposal for voluntary ROTC is not approved by the senate, there will be no need to

⁴⁵⁶ W.C. Sugg to Harry M. Philpott, May 28, 1969; William H. Maehl to Harry M. Philpott, May 21, 1969; Chester W. Hartwig to Philpot, May 29, 1969

⁴⁵⁷ William H. Maehl to Harry M. Philpott, May 21, 1969; Edward C. Williamson to Harry M. Philpott, May 22, 1969; W.C. Sugg to Harry M. Philpott, May 28, 1969; Chester W. Hartwig to Philpot, May 29, 1969.

⁴⁵⁸ Edward C. Williamson to Harry M. Philpott, May 22, 1969.

Professor Williamson did not specify in which military branch he had served.

⁴⁵⁹ Harry M. Philpott to M. J. Burns, May 13, 1969.

present it to the Board of Trustees... They would not want to consider it unless the senate favors it.”⁴⁶⁰ By a vote of thirty-five to twenty one, the Auburn University Faculty Senate on May 6 approved the recommendation.⁴⁶¹

On May 28, 1969, Philpott sent a memorandum to the members of the Board of Trustees to update them about the passage of the recommendation and to present his overall assessment of the situation. He explained that about 62% of the university departments favored adoption of an elective ROTC program, with faculty from the departments of Education, Arts and Sciences, and Business generally taking this side. The loudest opposition came from individuals in the schools of Veterinary Medicine, Engineering, and Agriculture. Given the “fundamental attacks” that other universities in the nation were currently directing at ROTC, Philpott conveyed his great displeasure over the timing of the debate at Auburn and over its resulting in a majority position against compulsory ROTC. Nevertheless, he assured the trustees that “I can detect among the faculty and the students very little sentiment against having the ROTC program at Auburn, against giving it academic credit, or against according the program and personnel full academic status.”⁴⁶² Overall, they were still committed to the ROTC program, but those favoring an elective program believed that it offered more advantages both to the cadet and to the student wishing to abstain from ROTC.

Some members of the student body feared that the margin of approval might not be great enough for Philpott to endorse the Faculty Senate’s resolution in favor of it, but on June 2, 1969 Philpott presented the recommendations of the report to the Executive

⁴⁶⁰ Jimmy Reeder, “Senate Gets Voluntary ROTC Report; Action Expected Before Board Meets,” Auburn Plainsman, April 18, 1969.

⁴⁶¹ Pat Randall, “University Senate approves voluntary ROTC proposal,” Auburn Plainsman, May 8, 1969.

⁴⁶² Memorandum by Harry M. Philpott, May 28, 1969, box 46, file “ROTC, Voluntary-Compulsory Controversy 1969,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

Committee of the Auburn University Board of Trustees.⁴⁶³ The Executive Committee investigated the matter until the November 7, 1969 meeting of the Board of Trustees. Whatever conclusions the Executive Committee reached would determine whether or not the Board of Trustees would approve the recommendations of the ROTC Study Committee.⁴⁶⁴ In a six to three vote, the Board of Trustees on November 7, 1969 approved the recommendation that Auburn University ROTC become voluntary. Representative Nichols – along with Roberts H. Brown and Robert C. Bamberg – cast a dissenting vote. The new elective program became effective during the summer of 1970.⁴⁶⁵

Adoption of the voluntary program demanded that Auburn University Army ROTC exercise considerable vigilance in order to ensure the maintenance of their commissioning standards. To aid this process, on July 8, 1970 Philpott wrote on LaMar's behalf to the Department of the Army and requested that LaMar's three-year tour be extended another year so that he could remain until the end of the 1971-1972 school year. Representing an official request from the Auburn University, Philpott explained that the request was "because of the superior service rendered by Colonel LaMar in the performance of his duties, and because of the transition from the compulsory to the voluntary ROTC program." Philpott assured that Auburn University would greatly benefit from LaMar's continued assistance during the initial two years of implementing "the voluntary program as we endeavor to maintain a high level of official productivity in

⁴⁶³ Pat Randall, "University Senate approves voluntary ROTC proposal," Auburn Plainsman, May 8, 1969; "ROTC Proposal Gets More Study," Auburn Plainsman, June 20, 1969.

⁴⁶⁴ "ROTC Vote Friday," Auburn Plainsman, November 6, 1969.

⁴⁶⁵ John Samford, "Voluntary ROTC Plan to Replace Compulsory," Auburn Plainsman, November 13, 1969.

the program.”⁴⁶⁶ In a response arriving shortly afterward on July 23, 1970, the Army granted LaMar’s extension, planning to replace LaMar as PMS upon his intentioned retirement after the 1971-1972 school year.⁴⁶⁷

According to an April 18, 1969 article from the Auburn Plainsman, LaMar envisioned that the adoption of a voluntary program would result in no considerable change in the 125 officers annually commissioned through Army ROTC “because of the present world situation and male military obligations.” He further expounded that, “Most students realize the advanced program is one of the best ways to fulfill their military obligations.”⁴⁶⁸ Nevertheless, Auburn University Army ROTC annual reports to the university president portray a gradual reduction in their enrollment and commissioning numbers. During the academic year 1969-1970, Army ROTC comprised a corps of cadets with 1500 students, an advanced program with 330, and a commissioning rate of 167 during the past four quarters combined.⁴⁶⁹ Academic year 1970-1971 witnessed a decline that resulted in 530 students in their cadet corps, 246 advanced cadets, and 152 commissioned that year. The report attributed the decrease “primarily to the

⁴⁶⁶ Harry M. Philpott to Director, Officer Personnel Directorate, Office of Personnel Operation, Department of the Army, July 8, 1970, box 45, file “Philpott, ROTC, Army 1969-70,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

⁴⁶⁷ J. N. Conmy, Jr. to Harry M. Philpott, July 23, 1970, box 45, file “Philpott, ROTC, Army 1969-70,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

⁴⁶⁸ Jimmy Reeder, “Senate Gets Voluntary ROTC Report; Action Expected Before Board Meets,” Auburn Plainsman, April 18, 1969.

⁴⁶⁹ Andrew W. LaMar to Harry M. Philpott, “Army ROTC Report, Auburn University School Year 1969-70,” November 14, 1969, box 45, file “Philpott, ROTC, Army 1969-70,” Pres. Philpott Papers. This actually reflected a reduction from previous years. Prior to the 1969-1970 school year, after Naval ROTC selected the desired students for its program, Army ROTC received 55% of the remaining male students and Air Force ROTC received 45%. Due to a mutual agreement between Army and Air Force ROTC, beginning in the 1969-1970 school year the split became an even 50%; as highlighted in the Army ROTC report for 1970-1971, the elective system removed this division since the students could then decide for themselves which ROTC service branch to enter. Note that Auburn University used to divide the academic year into four “quarters” as opposed to its current division into two primary “semesters.”

implementation of an elective ROTC program.”⁴⁷⁰ Army ROTC witnessed an even greater decline during academic year 1971-1972 with the results being 269 total cadets in the corps, 164 in the advanced program, and 139 cadets commissioned. Once again, the report stated that the reason for the lower numbers was “due primarily to the elective ROTC program,” but it also pointed to the detrimental impact of “the status of the draft bill at the start of the current quarter.”⁴⁷¹ The losses prevailed into the 1972-1973 academic year, which saw a cadet corps of 240, an advanced program with 100, and a commissioning rate of 111. Echoing the prevailing trend, the report credited the problem as “due primarily to the elective ROTC Program and current draft requirements.”⁴⁷² Finally, by the 1973-1974 academic year, the “elective ROTC Program and the draft termination” had reduced Auburn University’s Army ROTC program to a cadet corps of 181, an advanced program of 69, and a commissioning rate of 59.⁴⁷³ To some extent, these numbers reflect the national situation for Army ROTC at the time. From academic years 1967-1968 to 1972-1973, total Army ROTC enrollment descended from 165,430 to 41,294 (approximately seventy-five percent).⁴⁷⁴

As undesirable for Auburn University Army ROTC as these declining commissioning numbers may seem, in reality the Army was already in the process of reconsolidating its force structure in a manner so that it no longer needed such high commissioning rates. To understand this evolution of Army commissioning needs, “The

⁴⁷⁰ Auburn University Army ROTC, “Army ROTC Report, Auburn University School Year 1970-71,” box 45, file “Philpott, ROTC, Army 1971-1974,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

⁴⁷¹ Auburn University Army ROTC, “Army ROTC Report, Auburn University School Year 1971-1972,” box 45, file “Philpott, ROTC, Army 1971-1974,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

⁴⁷² Auburn University Army ROTC, “Army ROTC Report, Auburn University School Year 1972-1973,” box 45, file “Philpott, ROTC, Army 1971-1974,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

⁴⁷³ Auburn University Army ROTC, “Army ROTC Report, Auburn University School Year 1973-1974,” box 45, file “Philpott, ROTC, Army 1971-1974,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

⁴⁷⁴ Coumbe, “U.S. Army Cadet Command,” 36.

Army 1974 Year-End Report” provides valuable information. The report outlines that by 1974 the Army had been an all-volunteer force for two years, with the last draftee who wished to leave the Army being discharged in November 1974. The Congressionally authorized limit for the active duty Army in 1974 was 781,600 soldiers, which had been slowly decreasing over the years. For example, in 1964 the Army contained about 985,000 soldiers, and in 1971 the Army contained 850,000 soldiers.⁴⁷⁵ What these numbers do not explain is the massive officer reduction initiative implemented by the Army as it gradually disengaged from the Vietnam War. Despite involuntary separation of 5,000 officers from the Army, during 1972 the officer to enlisted ratio for the Army attained 1:5.7. As of 30 June 1974, the Army had reduced it to a ratio of 1:6.4 by means of involuntary separation of another 4,900 officers and by curtailing officer production. Moreover, projected force reduction for 1976 necessitated releasing an additional 2,143 officers.⁴⁷⁶ These numbers explain that shortly after the elimination of mandatory ROTC at Auburn University the Army had already initiated its post-Vietnam drawdown. The program suffered initially in terms of meeting its officer production quotas, but the demand for officers was going to decline soon regardless. Similarly, although Army leadership believed it should enlarge “its conventional combat power within existing manpower limits” so as to “increase our combat preparedness in Europe” and other parts of the world, they applied an internal approach whereby they streamlined and reorganized existing command and support units.⁴⁷⁷ Consequently, the Army possessed more officers than required.

⁴⁷⁵ US Department of the Army, Army 1974 Year-End Report, 1974, ii.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, II-6.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, III-1, III-4.

Despite this surplus of officers, as of late 1973 the Auburn University Army ROTC program had not yet adjusted its recruitment efforts to accommodate the decline in demand. In November 1973, the devastating loss in enrollment and commissioning numbers compelled PMS Colonel George G. Tucker, Jr. to appeal to Auburn University's administrative vice-president, Ben T. Lanham, for assistance. Tucker assured Lanham that his aid was "urgently needed" because "despite determined efforts" Army ROTC participation continued to decline. Previous efforts by the Army ROTC program to halt the decline included,

Increased academic credit, a significant reduction in the amount of dismounted drill for freshmen and sophomores, increased pay, a massive mail-out program for incoming freshmen and transfer students, lengthened and improved summer orientation sessions, and greatly increased advertising on TV and in local media.

Responding to the potential allegation that the ROTC cadre could be to blame, Tucker emphasized their high student retention average. Rather, he argued, "Our problem is that we simply don't get many to start with." Based on this assertion, Tucker posed his specific plea for help. In his opinion, the "critical point" of the matter rested with the counseling sessions conducted by professors with entering freshmen and transfer students during which they formulated the student's first class schedule. He believed that if Lanham and "the other faculty advisors were to recommend Army ROTC as an elective, [then] our enrollment would increase significantly."

Tucker then proceeded, in an attempt to garner Lanham's support, to respond to the many arguments that existed against ROTC and to detail the copious benefits that accrued to ROTC cadets, including even those who only pursued the basic course. Acknowledging that, "I know from past experience that some members of our faculty

will question the value of ROTC,” Tucker also presented a brief defense of the purpose of the Army, making the case that the Army was analogous to the policeman’s relationship to crime or a doctor’s to illness. His letter concluded with an additional plea for assistance and an invitation to discuss the matter further.⁴⁷⁸

From this perspective, Auburn University’s Army ROTC program faced what appeared to be some daunting days ahead; however, what Tucker may have been encountering was not bias against ROTC but rather a lack of the favoritism that the university had customarily shown the program in the past. The language of the Auburn University ROTC Study Committee report had demonstrated that faculty support for the rights of students to make an individual decision about ROTC coincided with an expressed desire to see the ROTC program improved through the benefits of an elective program. As a result, the loss in numbers may not have been due to any failure on the part of the faculty to support ROTC. Lacking definitive evidence to the contrary, Tucker’s depiction of a potentially maligned Army ROTC program is not conclusive. Just as possible is that the faculty sought to promote student choice through ensuring that students understood all options available, as opposed to pressuring them to enroll in ROTC – or in any other particular course. In this regard, the decentering of ROTC away from the focal point of campus life was likely the greatest change that Tucker and the other cadre members were experiencing.

Nevertheless, Auburn’s rich military tradition did suffer what some viewed as a tremendous blow with the Board of Trustees’ decision to adopt a voluntary ROTC program – a decision that occurred after Auburn had maintained a mandatory military

⁴⁷⁸ George G. Tucker to Ben T. Lanham, November 26, 1973, box 45, file “Philpott, ROTC, Army 1971-1974,” Pres. Philpott Papers.

training program for ninety-seven years. From the early days of military instruction at Auburn University in the 1870s to its formation as a formal Army ROTC unit after passage of the National Defense Act of 1916, Auburn life was in many ways an encounter with Army life. One alumnus – writing in 1969 immediately before deploying to Vietnam – stated in a letter to the Auburn Plainsman that the pride that comes with membership in the Army “stems from three basic military principles: 1) Accomplishment of an assigned mission. 2) Acceptance of responsibility. 3) Respect for authority.” He recommended that, “Instead of associating this pride with the military, let’s call it Auburn Pride, because that is where it was first instilled in me.”⁴⁷⁹ Arguably, the military values that permeated Auburn University from the very point of inception became a part of its own steadfast values.

Implementation of an elective ROTC program at Auburn University would gradually separate the universal memory of male members of the Auburn University community from one of the sources that had helped to establish and “to foster the Auburn spirit.”⁴⁸⁰ Traditionally, and currently, every Auburn University Army ROTC cadet can be viewed as an example of living history. Each one shares a common experience with their predecessors and keeps alive the recognition that the identity of Auburn University is irrefutably linked to military service. Despite their presence on campus, the loss of the recognition of that legacy of soldier training proved to be the real tragedy of the 1969 decision. For example, discussions with students on campus today reveal that most possess only a vague sense of the link between Auburn University and the tradition of collegiate military training; conversely, ask someone who attended Auburn University

⁴⁷⁹ G. T. (Ted) McDonald letter to the editor, Auburn Plainsman, May 1, 1969.

⁴⁸⁰ “To Foster the Auburn Spirit” appeared under the newspaper title of the Auburn Plainsman during 1969 editions.

prior to 1969 about the relationship between the university and military service, and one can hear all sorts of stories about military life on campus. When it was a universal experience for able-bodied male students, the visibility and ubiquitous nature of ROTC represented a potent reminder for students and alumni that military training, as enacted through ROTC, is essential to the identity of Auburn University. Currently, the story of the dramatic change to Auburn University Army ROTC after 1969 is one that few individuals associated with Auburn know anything about. Revisiting the climatic transformation of Army ROTC at Auburn University in 1969 is important since, by outlining the decline in influence of a tradition fundamental to the identity of Auburn University, one understands the critical shift in the mindset of the university leadership that redefined the role of military training on the campus. The university would no longer hold ROTC training on a pedestal like it previously did; however, the commitment of the university to the ROTC program would remain strong into the future.

With relatively few colleges and universities retaining compulsory ROTC in the wake of the Vietnam War, a new norm for collegiate military officer training emerged, which continues into the present. While the post-1969 transformation of Army ROTC and its presence on campus life had consequences that could be perceived as drawbacks, in accordance with the new standard, Auburn University Army ROTC would continue among non-Senior Military Colleges to represent a top-performing program in the early years of the 21st Century. During this time, the Army's requirements for officer production would alternate away from an emphasis on high quantity in preference for the development of high quality, adaptable officers capable of leading troops in a more technologically and scientifically advanced style of warfare. In the midst of these many

changes to the Auburn University Army ROTC program, the university would continue to provide a hospitable, supportive environment. Indeed, the conclusion for this thesis will discuss how the present-day higher quality Army ROTC program manifests benefits that members of the 1969 study committee predicted would result from adopting an elective program.

Conclusion

“If we do not develop leaders well we cannot build quality units, design cogent campaigns, or execute effective operations in theater. While the past 12 years of combat have honed the skills of both our troops and our leaders, we must sustain and improve upon the Army’s proven advantage in leadership as we complete combat operations in Afghanistan and re-orient the force to the expanding set of global challenges.”⁴⁸¹
– Army Leader Development Strategy 2013

In the early years of the 21st Century, from 2001 until present-day 2014, Auburn University Army ROTC has been indirectly engaged in the global War on Terror as well as affected by it. Having adapted to the new model of elective ROTC designed to accommodate the force needs of an all-volunteer Army, the War Eagle Battalion continues to represent a top-performing program. The principle differences between Auburn University Army ROTC past and present are twofold. On the university level, the elective program has reduced the size and accompanying visibility of Army ROTC. As regards Army strategic policy, the needs of the Army are no longer based solely upon preparation for and execution of conventional style 20th Century warfare. Nevertheless, the relational commitment of Auburn University to Army ROTC is fundamentally the same. In order to understand how the program has evolved due to these changes while still enjoying a tremendous level of commitment and support from the university community, this conclusion examines the current status of the program as well as how it is projected to adapt in response to strategic imperatives resulting from Congressional limitations on the budget and size of the Army.

For this final consideration of Auburn University Army ROTC, the source base consists of official documents from the United States Army, an interview with the War

⁴⁸¹ US Department of the Army, Army Leader Development Strategy, Sergeant Major of the Army Raymond F. Chandler III, United States Army Chief of Staff General Raymond T. Odierno, Secretary of the Army John M. McHugh, 2013, 3.

Eagle Battalion Professor of Military Science (PMS), Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey Copeland, and sundry other sources such as Auburn Plainsman articles. Of note, some of the information contained in this chapter will not be directly footnoted since it is based upon first hand observation and knowledge that is common to members of the Auburn University Army ROTC program.⁴⁸² Moreover, source limitations preclude a detailed quantitative comparison between the measured quality of the program in the past versus the present; thus, a general comparison will have to suffice.

As of 2014, the Army has again been engaged in the process of reconsolidating force structure in order to maintain combat capabilities.⁴⁸³ Examining the anticipated downsize of the active duty Army offers both a useful comparison in light of past commissioning needs as well as outlines the strategic concerns undergirding the future role of Army ROTC. The “Army Posture Statement” for 2014 states that the Army is currently “reducing end strength as rapidly as possible,” in accordance with Congressional stipulations; at the height of operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, the active duty Army possessed 570,000 soldiers. While still a large number, this denotes a marked decrease in officer production compared to the 781,600 soldiers in the Army during 1974, given that a substantial number of officers must accompany any sizable force.⁴⁸⁴ Before the start of fiscal year (FY) 2015, the Army intends a further reduction in force to 490,000 soldiers.⁴⁸⁵ If current policies remain in effect, then by FY 2019 the Army will

⁴⁸² For almost two academic school years, the author has been an advanced course cadet in the War Eagle Battalion.

⁴⁸³ US Department of the Army, Army Posture Statement, Secretary of the Army John M. McHugh and United States Army Chief of Staff General Raymond T. Odierno, March 25, 2014, 3-4.

⁴⁸⁴ US Department of the Army, Army 1974 Year-End Report, 1974, ii.

⁴⁸⁵ US Department of the Army, Army Posture Statement, Secretary of the Army John M. McHugh and United States Army Chief of Staff General Raymond T. Odierno, March 25, 2014, 3.

compose a force of 450,00 active duty soldiers, which will also accompany personnel cutbacks in the Army National Guard and Army Reserve.⁴⁸⁶

In light of these current and projected force needs of the Army, United States Army Cadet Command (USACC), which is in charge of the Army ROTC training program, ascertains how many officers it will need each of its eight brigades to commission. The War Eagle Battalion operates under 6th Brigade, which includes all Army ROTC programs at universities in the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama.⁴⁸⁷ Therefore, 6th Brigade then notifies its university ROTC programs of the “commission mission” for every program. For Auburn University Army ROTC that mission requires the cadre to commission 26 officers annually. As a basis of comparison, the annual commissioning rate for the War Eagle Battalion has in the past averaged 30 officers over a 3-year period, 26 over a 5-year period, and 23 over a 10-year period.⁴⁸⁸ This number represents a dramatic drop from the average annual commissioning rate of 125 that Auburn University Army ROTC accomplished as of 1969; however, as explained above, the operational environment has changed for the Army – and not merely in terms of numbers.⁴⁸⁹ For example, women could not enroll in Army ROTC until September 1972, but now they are one of many factors that USACC considers when trying to produce an officer corps that is

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid., 3-5.

From FY 2014 to FY 2019, the Army National Guard is projected to decrease from 358,200 to 335,000 soldiers and Army Reserve to decrease from 205,000 to 195,000 soldiers.

⁴⁸⁷ “Brigades,” United States Army Cadet Command, accessed March 30, 2014, <http://www.cadetcommand.army.mil/brigades.aspx>.

⁴⁸⁸ Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey Copeland, interview by author, Auburn, Alabama, March 7, 2014.

Of note, the minimum annual commissioning number for an Army ROTC program to remain in good standing is 15.

⁴⁸⁹ Jimmy Reeder, “Senate Gets Voluntary ROTC Report; Action Expected Before Board Meets,” Auburn Plainsman, April 18, 1969.

representative of the demographics of the Army as a whole.⁴⁹⁰ USACC also focuses on developing officers who represent the broader ethnicity of the Army.⁴⁹¹

Due to the plethora of factors that Cadet Command must consider when establishing the commissioning mission for each ROTC unit, the Auburn University Professor of Military Science (PMS), Lieutenant Colonel Copeland, explains that USACC considers the War Eagle Battalion a “blue chip program” because of its ability to contribute to the diversity requirements of the Army. For example, the level of ethnic diversity within the undergraduate student population at Auburn University is 12.7%, but the Army ROTC program contains a diversity level of 18.2%. Additionally, the program is especially suited to attracting science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) degree students. Given the scientifically and technologically complex nature of the present-day military, in an October 2013 statement the former Commanding General (CG) of Cadet Command, Major General Jefforey Smith, understandably stressed that the modern Army requires a larger percentage of officers with these skills.⁴⁹² In this recruiting effort, on average 20% of cadets commissioned through the War Eagle Battalion are from these majors, as compared to the 16.1% average among USACC brigades as a whole.⁴⁹³

Along with examining the commissioning numbers of an Army ROTC program, the other criteria for evaluating a program is in terms of the quality of cadet performance at the ROTC advanced course Leadership Development and Assessment Camp (LDAC)

⁴⁹⁰ “Women in the U.S. Army,” The Official Homepage of the United States Army, accessed March 30, 2014, <http://www.army.mil/women/newera.html>; Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey Copeland, interview by author, Auburn, Alabama, March 7, 2014.

⁴⁹¹ Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey Copeland, interview by author, Auburn, Alabama, March 7, 2014.

⁴⁹² Gary Sheftick, “Cadet Command Boldly Changing ROTC Program” Army News Service, October 24, 2013, accessed March 30, 2014, <http://www.army.mil/article/113856/>.

⁴⁹³ Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey Copeland, interview by author, Auburn, Alabama, March 7, 2014.

and as compared with all other ROTC cadets by means of the national Order of Merit List (OML).⁴⁹⁴ Thus, when asked what he thought about the commissioning numbers at Auburn University compared to the 1960s and if he would prefer a higher commissioning rate, Lieutenant Colonel Copeland expressed that he was exceedingly pleased with the current status of the program because, “More is not better when you take a look at quality.” He then elaborated on the performance of the seniors in the program who had attended LDAC during the summer of 2013. Out of the 39 ROTC programs in 6th Brigade who participated in LDAC 2013, Cadet Command ranked the War Eagle Battalion 6th in its brigade based upon camp performance. Of the 29 cadets from Auburn sent to camp, 11 exceeded the standards for evaluation and 6 earned Recondo, which is a special award for performing exceptionally high on all graded events.⁴⁹⁵ More importantly, all Auburn cadets passed each event on the first attempt, and none of them were evaluated as needing overall improvement; to the best of Lieutenant Colonel Copeland’s knowledge, this was a first for the War Eagle Battalion. The battalion also received recognition from the 6th Brigade commander for attaining the highest land navigation test scores out of the entire brigade. In terms of overall quality that includes academic excellence, 11 cadets in the program will be designated as Distinguished Military Graduates, which only cadets ranked in the top 20% of the OML receive.⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹⁴ Note, the OML numerically ranks every cadet based upon such factors as camp performance, level of achievement when taking the Army Personal Fitness Test, extracurricular activities, academic achievement, etc.

⁴⁹⁵ Note, the Army designates cadets with one of three overall ratings: “N” for needs improvement, “S” for satisfactory, and “E” for exceeds the standard. Annually, 26.9% of Auburn cadets earn E’s at camp compared to the national average of 23.7%. For the previous 3, 5, and 10 years, 57%, 58%, and 51% of Auburn cadets have been ranked in the top-half of the national OML.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid.

Fundamental to these attainments is commitment on the part of Auburn University Army ROTC cadets. When further outlining why he favors a voluntary ROTC program, Lieutenant Colonel Copeland used the present-day commitment of Army ROTC cadets as an example of why the War Eagle Battalion improved as a result of the 1969 transformation of ROTC. Commitment is the main, subjective quality that the cadre members assess in a cadet. As PMS, Lieutenant Colonel Copeland wants cadets whose “hearts” are invested in what they do as cadets. He contends that in a mandatory program, “morale, welfare, good order and discipline, and training are not going to be as high” in terms of quality. Given the decline in the commission needs of the Army as well as these favorable aspects of the elective ROTC program at Auburn University, it appears that the decision of the 1969 Auburn University ROTC Study Committee did prove beneficial to the program, as the majority opinion had speculated. Echoing one of the main arguments of the faculty and staff during 1969, Lieutenant Colonel Copeland summarized the advantage of the current program by affirming that the “commitment piece is something that you are not going to get if ROTC is compulsory”⁴⁹⁷

This emphasis on acquiring a higher quality of cadet corresponded in 2013 with the overriding desire of former USACC CG, Major General Smith to reinforce the recruitment of high quality cadets with that of providing higher quality training.⁴⁹⁸ As the 2013 Army Leader Development Strategy explains, “leadership underpins everything the Army does,” and therefore even with severe budgetary restraints the Army is committed

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁸ United States Army Cadet Command, USACC Strategic Plan 2013, Major General Jefforey A. Smith, 2013, 4.

to investing in leader development.⁴⁹⁹ Possessing no definitive idea of what the future looks like in terms of Army capabilities or combat operations, the top Army leadership argues that the only assured way to maintain readiness is to cultivate leaders who exhibit the critical traits of “being adaptable, agile, flexible, responsive, and resilient.”⁵⁰⁰ Responding to this necessity, 2013 marked the beginning of a dramatic transformation in how USACC approaches cadet training. In the 2013 USACC Strategic Plan, Major General Smith offered his vision for how Cadet Command would evolve from its “pre-transformation state in 2013.” Employing similar language to the 2013 Army Leader Development Strategy, he explained that

Changes to Cadet Command and ROTC were initiated in 2013 by the Army’s need for higher quality, adaptive leaders and resource constraints associated with reduced defense spending. Although pre-2013 ROTC met out Army’s needs, [sic] it did so with considerable attrition and unacceptable fiscal inefficiency. The primary measure of success was quantity, and the quality of training and development of our Army’s future leaders suffered.⁵⁰¹

The new vision contains many operational changes, but in terms of the broader continuum of ROTC style training, arguably the most revealing plan is for cadets to attend ROTC summer camps not only the summer of their junior year but also the summers after their freshman and sophomore years. These additional training camps, as well as a few alterations to LDAC, are probably the greatest ways in which cadets at Auburn University will be affected by this new strategic vision. Becoming fully operational in 2016, rising sophomores will attend Cadet Initial Entry Training (CIET),

⁴⁹⁹ US Department of the Army, Army Leader Development Strategy, Sergeant Major of the Army Raymond F. Chandler III, United States Army Chief of Staff General Raymond T. Odierno, Secretary of the Army John M. McHugh, 2013, 1.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

⁵⁰¹ United States Army Cadet Command, USACC Strategic Plan 2013, Major General Jefforey A. Smith, 2013, 4.

which will emphasize basic individual combat skills. Available by 2017, rising junior cadets will participate in a Cadet Leader Course (CLC) involving tactical training and instruction in special topics.⁵⁰² What makes these developments, which began in 2013, truly remarkable is that they demonstrate the prescience of General Leonard Wood who exactly one hundred years earlier in 1913 first experimented with ROTC style summer training camps and found them the critical factor to improving existing military training programs for young men. This action on the part of USACC to mandate additional summer training actually corrects a problem with Auburn University Army ROTC that a contributor to the Plainsman, almost eighty years prior, in 1934 wrote concerning freshmen cadets:

Three years here as a cadet warrior will do little more than give him a rather hazy idea of the theory of war, and will do little towards causing him to regard his work as a soldier seriously...it remains for that much discussed camp after his Junior year to convince him that he is the property of Uncle Sam, and that he is an integral part of the national defense. If there were only some way in which our ... [average freshman] could be imbued with this spirit of fellowship with the U.S. Army, he would find his war classes much more interesting, and infinitely more valuable.”⁵⁰³

One aspect of the War Eagle Battalion that certainly has not changed is the level of commitment shown by the university toward the program. Given his experience as PMS for the past three years, when asked to describe the relationship of the program with the university, Lieutenant Colonel Copeland emphatically asserted, “I couldn’t ask for anything better.” For example, the cadre have full access to university facilities and possess a phenomenal level of support from the university administration. He further explained that not only do a large number of the university administrators have military

⁵⁰² Gary Sheftick, “Cadet Command Boldly Changing ROTC Program” Army News Service, October 24, 2013, accessed March 30, 2014, <http://www.army.mil/article/113856/>.

⁵⁰³ “Cabbages and Kings by B. S,” Plainsman, September 12, 1934.

backgrounds but Auburn University President Jay Gogue is also a graduate of the War Eagle Battalion, which better enables him as president to satisfy the needs of Army ROTC at the university. Particularly beneficial to the program was Dr. Gogue hiring retired Lieutenant General Ron Burgess as a special assistant to the president. Himself a graduate of the War Eagle Battalion, in addition to being in charge of university cyber operations, Lieutenant General Burgess is the university director for military affairs, which includes supervising the ROTC program. As Lieutenant Colonel Copeland explained regarding the general, “He takes care of us, and our needs are communicated to the president.”⁵⁰⁴ For these reasons, the university demonstrates in the present-day an exceptional level of commitment to its Army ROTC program.

What has changed is the public visibility of the Army ROTC program. The present-day War Eagle Battalion contains around 120 cadets in contrast to the approximately 1500 that it contained both in 1939 and 1969.⁵⁰⁵ As a result, Army cadets are perhaps most likely to be recognized by the general campus community as representing a collective group of cadets, encompassing Army, Naval, and Air Force ROTC at Auburn University. For example, the three ROTC units act in unison for events such as marching on parade during Tiger Walk and executing flag detail prior to local football games. They also collaborate for the annual Auburn University President’s Day festivities each May, which entail a motivational run in the morning and a military review held that afternoon in honor of the university president. Nevertheless, the Army ROTC program is also active on the campus in other ways. Every Wednesday during the

⁵⁰⁴ Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey Copeland, interview by author, Auburn, Alabama, March 7, 2014.

⁵⁰⁵ Photo Caption, *Plainsman*, April 4, 1939; Andrew W. LaMar to Harry M. Philpott, “Army ROTC Report, Auburn University School Year 1969-70,” November 14, 1969, box 45, file “Philpott, ROTC, Army 1969-70,” Philpott Papers.

semester, when Army ROTC cadets participate in the “lab” portion of their training – formerly referred to as drill – the cadets wear their uniforms, which helps to sustain visibly the legacy of soldier training at Auburn University. Army cadets can also be seen raising or lowering the flags behind Samford Hall on weekdays – an honor that the different ROTC units share on a rotational basis.

In truth, cadets tending to flag detail at Samford Hall symbolize the general understanding most individuals have in regard to Army ROTC on the Auburn University campus. They see it in action every now and then, but do not understand the full history. For example, in 1927 Auburn University Army ROTC cadets in Scabbard and Blade and in the Engineer unit erected the first flagpole for the campus. Based on the available records, the original flagpole was located almost, if not exactly, in the same spot where it is today.⁵⁰⁶ Moreover, one of the compelling reasons for acquiring the flag was the War Department awarding the Army ROTC unit a distinguished rating for seven years in a row.⁵⁰⁷ Auburn University possesses not just an ordinary history of soldier training but rather one characterized by high achievement and contribution to national defense throughout its entire existence.

Collegiate soldier training as enacted at Auburn University is a direct result of attempts by the United States government to prepare for mass mobilization warfare. Senator Morrill inserted the military training provision into his land-grant bill as a means of preventing another mobilization fiasco like that of the early days of the Civil War; however, land grant colleges and universities never realized the entirety of Morrill’s vision for military training until the creation of Army ROTC in 1916 provided a truly

⁵⁰⁶ “New Flagpole Comes to Rest,” Plainsman, April 30, 1927; “Presentation of Flag Made by Legion Here,” Plainsman, May 21, 1927.

⁵⁰⁷ “Honor Society to Erect Flagpole on Campus,” Plainsman, March 12, 1927.

capable infrastructure for delivering valuable collegiate military training. During the interwar years, the Army ROTC program became a central part of Auburn University campus life, and the many officers commissioned at Auburn University during the latter part of the interwar years represented an important reserve force, which American could and did call upon in time of war. That close relationship with Army ROTC proved to be one of the key factors that enabled Auburn University during World War II to contribute to the national war effort on a large scale by means of the Army Student Training Program, since it already contained the military infrastructure and personnel necessary to run such a program. During the tumultuous 1960s, while some campuses removed their ROTC programs entirely, the longstanding affect of the Morrill Act was evident in that debate at Auburn University revolved not around possible removal of ROTC but on how to protect the rights of students while also increasing the quality of the program. Although the decentering of ROTC on the Auburn University campus may have seemed like a downward turn, the subsequent product of that decision was a higher quality program. In response to the modern day preparedness needs of the Army, the Auburn University ROTC program is likely to continue to improve. Whether furnishing the high quantity of officers required by mass mobilization wars of the 20th Century or the high quality of officers demanded by scientifically and technologically advanced warfare in the 21st Century, Auburn University and its Army ROTC program have adapted to fulfill the military preparedness provision of the Morrill Act.

As a land-grant university, with its countless scientific, mechanical, and agricultural accomplishments, Auburn University maintains an enviable record of working for the betterment of the surrounding and national community, going above and

beyond what one might normally expect from a public university. It is unfortunate that most people only regard Auburn University in terms of its football team. Of course, a lasting testament to the martial background of the university is the often-heard exclamation, “War Eagle!” As the university website explains, it is “Auburn’s battle cry,” not simply a cheer.⁵⁰⁸ People may debate the origin of the expression, but its military character is clear, and every time someone hollers “War Eagle!” they indirectly help keep alive the heritage of the university’s connection to the military. Accordingly, despite what some individuals might say, the overwhelmingly important contribution of Auburn University is not about its football team attaining another win for its own fan base but rather that of contributing to victories that the broader society may enjoy, whether on the agricultural field, the engineering field, or the battlefield. Similarly, Lieutenant Colonel Copeland asserts that, “You know, everybody knows about the Auburn football team, [but] we’re a division I competitive formation right here. Our ROTC program is one of the best in the nation.”⁵⁰⁹ This high quality of officer instruction and training is reassuring, given that former cadets from Auburn University Army ROTC currently are, and likely will be in the future, engaged in combat operations overseas. In fact, such a possibility for graduates of the War Eagle Battalion becomes even more real when considering that the second to last sentence in the 2014 Army Posture Statement warns of the “high likelihood” of America being at war within the next twenty years.⁵¹⁰ Fortunately, a Plainsman article from January 1944 offers some final comforting words of hope in regard to Auburn University and its Army ROTC program:

⁵⁰⁸ “Traditions,” Auburn University, accessed March 30, 2014, <http://www.auburn.edu/main/welcome/traditions.html>.

⁵⁰⁹ Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey Copeland, interview by author, Auburn, Alabama, March 7, 2014.

⁵¹⁰ US Department of the Army, Army Posture Statement, Secretary of the Army John M. McHugh and United States Army Chief of Staff General Raymond T. Odierno, March 25, 2014, 32.

Auburn...It has seen the women of the town and the girls of the school serve as nurses; it has watched the Army come and the students go into Army uniform. It has been altered with each war, yet the essential spirit of War Eagle has never changed. The part Auburn has played in these wars has been great; but the preparation of her young men [and women] to go into a world of either war or peace has been her greatest gift.⁵¹¹

⁵¹¹ "Three Down and One to Go," Plainsman, January 14, 1944.

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