

ROTC decisor broadly based

Editor of the Times:

The Palo Alto Times editorial (Feb. 21) regarding the secretary of the Navy's decision to limit officers attending universities as graduate students referred to that decision as "inevitable" and "logical." It seems to me (and apparently to the secretary of Defense who has overruled the Navy decision) to be neither inevitable nor logical.

The decision to end ROTC programs was not based on "the actions of a handful of revolutionaries," but was broadly based, requiring a vote by the entire faculty. While there were many factors involved, important academic considerations were at stake—specifically the need for the university to give academic credit for courses where faculty appointments and course content were decided externally.

The editorial didn't mention it, but other universities that have made the decision to end Naval ROTC included many of the great independent universities of the country such as Harvard, Columbia, Brown, Yale, Princeton and Dartmouth. One of the important attributes of our system of mixed public and private higher education is and must continue to be that the universities are free to disagree with the government on some issues without punitive response.

But even if one were to ignore this important point of

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principle, who will suffer if these officers are denied access to these universities? To Stanford, the 15 naval officers represent a useful diversity in our graduate student body. And we want our university to be open to the best qualified students from whatever segment of society. But like all graduate students they absorb some of the university's own funds in their education since their tuition does not fully cover costs. The main result would be to deny the officer, as a student, his choice of a most effective education. As the Armed Forces Policy Council, headed by Secretary Laird said Feb. 23: "If it is in the best interest of the armed services, we will send individuals to the most appropriate graduate school."

If Stanford fails to measure up as an effective educational institution then the naval officer, and every other student, should indeed look elsewhere.

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