

ROTC program facing local, national changes

University to study homosexual discrimination in military programs

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Staff Writer

A committee has been appointed to examine the University of Richmond's position toward the Department of Defense policy barring homosexuals from the Reserve Officers' Training Corps.

The Department of Defense policy states that "homosexuality is incompatible with military service" and "separation is mandatory" if someone in the armed forces is found to be a homosexual. ROTC cadets must sign a form stating that they are not homosexual when they become contracted by the program, Lt. Col. Walter Sullivan said. A cadet is contracted junior year or when benefits from a scholarship are first received.

The committee was selected by David Leary, dean of the faculty of arts and sciences, after a motion was made by members of the faculty. The motion requested the dean "to appoint a committee to explore the possible violations of our students' rights that may occur as a result of Department of Defense policy."

The motion at the faculty meeting was stimulated by a recent newspaper article, said Martin Ryle, a history professor who submitted the motion. The other two sponsors were Robert Alley, chairman of area studies, and Frank Eakin, chairman of the religion department. The article, by the New York Times news service, quoted an admiral as saying that lesbians were among the Navy's best performers, but that they must go anyway.

The committee has been asked to find out more information about the policy, its effects on students and the University policy towards discrimination, Leary said. There is apparently no University policy regarding such issues at present, according to Michael Spear, the chairman of the committee and a journalism professor.

The other members of the committee are Ryle, Sullivan, Joan Gurney, a sociology professor, and Warren Hopkins, director of

'[The] committee will explore the possible violations of our students' rights...'

-David Leary

psychological services. The committee will meet for the first time Oct. 9, Spear said, and its final report is due at the faculty meeting Dec. 6. The committee was set up to include representatives from all sides of the issue according to Leary.

Similar actions have been taken at other universities across the nation, according to Paul Hendley, a representative of the national office of the American Civil Liberties Union. Hendley said the following was occurring at other universities:

The strongest actions in opposition to this policy have come from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The faculty voted to sever ties with ROTC if the discriminatory policy is not changed. The faculty has not yet voted on when the policy must be changed. MIT's decision is important to the military because the school has strong ties to the Department of Defense.

Another anti-ROTC action was taken at Washington University in St. Louis. James Holobaugh, was disenrolled from ROTC when he made his homosexuality public. The service not only forced Holobaugh out of the program, it demanded that he return the money he received as a scholarship. The military claimed that Holobaugh had falsely represented himself when he was enrolled into the ROTC program.

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will not be enough to force the Department of Defense to change its policy, Ryle said, but the University actions combined with actions at other universities may be very powerful.

"I don't think there is any headlong rush to dissolve ROTC," Ryle said, but the University can't condone the homophobia the policy is all about. The ideal outcome for the actions of the universities would be to pressure the Department of Defense into changing its policy, Ryle said.

"We definitely should have a

policy against discrimination," Amy Young, a junior, said.

"I don't necessarily agree with the military anyway," Buffy Baumann said. The sophomore agreed that there should be a school policy against discrimination.

"I don't know if this campus is ready to get rid of its ROTC program," Greg Fedele said. Military discrimination is bad, the business school junior said, but set policies by the administration are not the best answer.

The provost of the university wrote a letter to the ROTC program to protest the treatment of Holobaugh because of his sexual preference. The military has since dropped its demand for the return of the money because of the public pressure. A student referendum failed in opposition to the ROTC program, but the students did pass a measure to lobby against the policy in the future.

Fifty-two students were arrested at the University of Wisconsin at Madison after they held a sit-in at the Chancellor's office. The protest was held because the Chancellor refused to put a disclaimer against the

policy on university literature. Faculty at the school voted to dismantle the program unless the policy is changed by 1993. The Regents of the school, who have more power over the university, want to lobby for change instead of cutting ties with the program.

There is no move to review the policy at present according to Sullivan, but there is a procedure by which Department of Defense policies are changed. That involves the use of congressional and departmental reviews.

The actions of the University of Richmond