

Black and Gold... and Army Green

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This essay investigates the rise and sudden fall of Vanderbilt's Reserve Officers' Training Corps unit around the time of World War I, and illustrates how it serves as an example of general trends in higher education that were occurring in other universities across America while being decidedly exceptional. With information pulled almost entirely from primary sources such as Chancellor James H. Kirkland's handwritten letters and contemporary issues of *The Hustler*, it becomes clear that the administration saw the ROTC program as a way to replace the Methodist Episcopal Church, South as a source of moral education while establishing an ideological bulwark against perceived Bolshevik influences. While Kirkland was successful in bringing an ROTC unit to campus like many of his counterparts at other universities, Vanderbilt's story is almost entirely unique in that the students revolted en masse, ending the program only a few short years after it had been established. In examining the evidence, it was Kirkland's personality that led to his administration's hasty implementation of the program, forcing seemingly unnecessary mandatory military training on the student body without considering its opinion first, a student body already weary from wartime training in a program called the Students' Army Training Corps. In a gritty battle of wills between the Chancellor and the student body, the lifeblood of any ROTC unit, these students stuck to their guns and refused to participate, and the administration simply had to accede to their demands. As soon as it appeared, Vanderbilt's first ROTC unit vanished.

“Army ROTC teaches you how to lead. It’s one of the best leadership courses in the country and it’s part of your college curriculum.”¹ These words adorn the Army Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) homepage, and boil down what has been a more than century-old institution into one memorable tag line. If only it were that simple. Army ROTC is a set of classes and training that select undergraduate students participate in during their college career resulting in their commissioning as second lieutenants upon graduation, thus initiating them into the fraction of 1% of Americans who call themselves officers in the United States Army. ROTC exists at colleges and universities across the country, setting up shop at all types of schools, schools that are private and public, large and small, liberal arts and technical. By nature of its existence as a military establishment woven into the fabric of these civilian institutions, a unique relationship develops between each ROTC unit and its host school, a relationship affected by the environments and cultures of that school, the Army, and even America itself. One relationship worth looking into, one that is slightly different from many others like it in terms of its tumultuous beginning, is that between the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps and the home of the Commodores since 1873: Vanderbilt University.

Vanderbilt has undoubtedly had one of the

more interesting experiences with ROTC, made more so by the fact that it has consistently dealt with ROTC in some form since the program’s inception in the National Defense Act of 1916, and continues to do so today. Chancellor James H. Kirkland, the chief executive of Vanderbilt’s few hundred students and faculty from 1893 to 1937, was a big proponent of bringing military training to campus as the First World War loomed ever closer. He petitioned the Army for a unit in 1917 but got denied in May of that year due to the Army’s inability to spare any officers or soldiers for duty anywhere but the trenches of eastern France.² It was not until December 18th, 1918, just over a month after the signing of the armistice, that Vanderbilt received notification that ROTC was coming to its campus.³ The ROTC program was short lived among undergraduates, coming to a premature end in 1920 as a result of a climactic and controversial student revolt, but would appear soon after at the School of Medicine and steadily generate officers for the Army’s hospitals.⁴ Many Vanderbilt doctors would later go on to serve overseas in the locally renowned “Fighting 300th” General Hospital Unit during the Second World War. Following the war, the United States needed all the soldiers it could get in order to man the massive peacetime army that occupied territory all over the globe. Vanderbilt did its part to supply that force with

officers as it expanded its ROTC program to a General Military Science program in 1954. During the Vietnam War, Vanderbilt's campus, though it had its fair share of students protesting, was nowhere near on par with such famous examples as Kent State University. Chancellor Alexander Heard (1963-82) would even be appointed the Campus Adviser to President Nixon, aiding him in dealing with colleges across the country.⁵ Since then, Vanderbilt ROTC has continued to produce officers for the Army to the present day.

Few historians have touched the topic of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps in real detail, with "just five book-length studies" having been completed before the year 2000.⁶ Michael S. Neiberg did, however, write about it. In his work, *Making Citizen-Soldiers: ROTC and the Ideology of American Military Service*, he claims that ROTC represents an American concern with excessive military influence in civilian affairs inherent in most Americans since the Revolutionary War. By injecting officers who are civilian in education and character into the armed forces, the Reserve Officers' Training Corps itself acts as a bulwark against that influence. Additionally, he discusses the work of those five other authors who had written about the program before him and critiques them for not sufficiently covering the entire breadth of the topic of ROTC. To him, the study of ROTC "presents an opportunity to examine the history of military personnel procurement, American higher education, and American beliefs about the military."⁷ He endeavors to take that opportunity; whereas his predecessors' works focused mostly on the military side of things, Neiberg strives to discuss ROTC's relationship to the university at which it existed and to the broader context of major shifts in American society and culture.

Neiberg can only go so far his attempt to cover the entire history of ROTC from its inception to 1980 and, despite all his concerns with prior works on the topic, he leaves himself open to one major criticism by selecting such a broad subject. In addressing the topic of ROTC, he chooses to use sources from the archives of ten universities that "are all large, public universities," justifying his decision to leave out universities of all other shapes and sizes in saying, "but they offer a variety of geographical settings and relationships to ROTC."⁸ Additionally, he believes that the fact that they are taxpayer-funded holds them more accountable to the American citizen footing their bills and therefore decisions made are representative of the will of the people. According to Neiberg, they are also useful sources in that they keep meticulous records and contributed to

many organizing bodies and committees on the subject of ROTC.⁹ The obvious flaw in this method is that not all schools housing an ROTC program are large, public universities. Plenty of large and small private universities and colleges, or even small public universities have ROTC on campus and have played their own role in shaping the program's history. One example is Vanderbilt University, itself a smaller private university. Neiberg's statement, "I found that public universities of all kinds reacted similarly," also almost completely applies even to Vanderbilt, but fails to address one thing: Vanderbilt's students reacted extremely bitterly to ROTC, so bitterly, in fact, that their opposition to the program brought about its departure from campus after just three semesters.¹⁰

Although military training had never been seen at Vanderbilt before, the linking of soldiering with schooling was not an entirely new concept in other corners of America. From the early 1800s to the present day, the United States has engaged in an ever-changing experiment in military education at civilian institutions. The first major push by the government for such instruction occurred at the outset of the Civil War in response to the sudden need for trained Army officers. The Morrill Act of 1862, more commonly known as the Land Grant Act, sold public land in each state to fund public colleges that would teach, among other things, military tactics. Until World War I, such military training was informal and had no firm, institutional connection to the Army. Only in 1916 with the National Defense Act was that connection made when the Reserve Officers' Training Corps was born. It absorbed and built upon those military programs existing at land-grant schools, generating a pool of men to be commissioned as officers in the reserves. At this early point in the ROTC's history, Neiberg notes that many prominent college heads, "argued that patriotism and a sense of public responsibility were the primary motivations for university officials seeking a unit for their campus. Students seemed to share these sentiments."¹¹ Although the former statement certainly rang true among Vanderbilt's faculty as well as faculty at Neiberg's public schools, the latter statement could not be farther from the truth among Vanderbilt's students by the end of World War I. For many ROTC programs across America, the most turbulent time in their history was during Vietnam War but, although Vanderbilt certainly experienced its share of chaos during the conflict in Southeast Asia, no time was more damaging to the actual ROTC program at Vanderbilt than the year it began, 1919.

As Neiberg describes the period just prior to

America's involvement in the Great War, patriotism and a desire to instill value for civic duty among their students motivated many college administrators as war with Germany crept inevitably closer.¹² Vanderbilt's chief executive officer, the Chancellor, was no exception. Chancellor James H. Kirkland had, by 1917, already made a huge impact on the university since he became Chancellor in 1893 at the young age of thirty-four. Having first stepped on campus in an official role in 1886 as a teacher of Latin, Kirkland gained experience working with Vanderbilt's first generation administrators and professors. A firm character and an incredible—even masochistic—capacity for work fueled his rise to the Chancellorship, causing the outgoing Chancellor to personally nominate him for the position.¹³ Starting in 1904, after some two decades of establishing himself as the adolescent university's leader, he spent his third decade embroiled in a conflict with the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The Church founded the school in 1873 with funding from Cornelius Vanderbilt and had since then retained the power to appoint members to the board of trustees along religious lines, a power now under contention. In 1914, the university severed its ties with the Church and Chancellor Kirkland found himself at the head of Vanderbilt without Methodist bishops looming over his shoulder.¹⁴ Although no one at the time could foresee the long-term consequences of this clash with the Methodist Church, it proved instrumental in preparing the school for ROTC's arrival to campus just a few years later. Before that occurred, however, the First World War emerged to present to him a new daunting challenge of how to best contribute to the war effort from a university campus.

ROTC appeared to Chancellor Kirkland as the answer to that question. Minutes from a faculty meeting on the 10th of April, 1917, illustrated the faculty's belief that an ROTC unit would be beneficial to the discipline and citizenship of Vanderbilt's students.¹⁵ Chancellor Kirkland himself was one of its biggest proponents, fighting vigorously to get an ROTC unit on campus. Even the magnitude of his zeal, however, could not compete with the impact of a formal declaration of war. As America entered the Great War, she could spare no officers, soldiers, or equipment to train Commodores to become lieutenants in the reserves,¹⁶ but the man who rose from rookie professor to Chancellor after just seven years was not one to let the largest conflict to ravage humanity to date stop him. Kirkland made his intentions clear to the Adjutant General that he would bring military instruction to campus by any means necessary, even discussing the possibility of bringing in a Cana-

dian officer back from the frontlines or a retired U.S. officer enjoying civilian life to Nashville to train cadets.¹⁷ His prayers would soon be answered as he would see khaki-clad men marching around Vanderbilt's open, grassy campus, but these men would not be ROTC cadets. Rather, they would be members of a different type of Training Corps.

With the outbreak of war, the expansion of ROTC was put on the War Department's backburner in favor of a new program called the Students' Army Training Corps (SATC). Whereas the ROTC was designed to prepare college men to become commissioned officers in the reserves, the SATC, administered by the Committee on Education and Special Training put together by the War Department, served the purpose of quickly preparing college men for enlisted service while giving students the opportunity to become officers if they excelled enough.¹⁸ On the 10th of August, 1918, then Dean H. C. Tolman wrote to Chancellor Kirkland in which he mentions the origins of the SATC at Vanderbilt.¹⁹ Just that day, the Chancellor had just received confirmation that the Army was going to establish one of about six hundred units of the SATC at Vanderbilt, and could rest easy in the knowledge that true military instruction was finally coming to his institution.

The institutions at which the SATC arrived were expected to provide the instruction for their soldiers themselves. For this purpose, the War Department established three summer camps at Forts Plattsburg in New York, Sheridan in Illinois, and Presidio in California, to which schools would send faculty and students for thirty days to learn how to administer the SATC curriculum.²⁰ Charles Cason and Professor W. P. Ott acted as Vanderbilt's faculty representatives,²¹ and would return to assist a Colonel E. S. Benton in administering training to the soldiers then billeted in Kissam Hall.²² The training these student-soldiers experienced was far more focused on military skills and discipline than class work due to the insatiable need for able-bodied young men to quickly fill the ranks of the Army. The SATC would fizzle out after just one semester, however, along with the silencing of the guns over in Europe as it was purely a wartime necessity, it being slated for demobilization on the 21st of December, 1918.²³

With the end of the war seemed to come the end of the military instruction Chancellor Kirkland had fought so hard for. Soon after the armistice, the Army decided to maintain the momentum it had developed and reinstated the ROTC in order to stay prepared for any new emergencies at all times. It seemed Kirkland would not have to find a Canadian officer after all, as

the district under which Vanderbilt's SATC unit fell sent the school an application for an ROTC unit to begin the following semester now that the equipment the SATC soldiers used was already there.²⁴ On December 17th, 1918, the faculty met and passed a resolution that, for the first year of its existence, ROTC would be compulsory for all males except seniors,²⁵ and the next day the War Department would wire Vanderbilt news of its plans to establish an ROTC unit there.²⁶ By the end of 1919, "one hundred thirty-five institutions had been granted ROTC units," but a small percentage of those units would not survive as, "by January 1922, 57,419 students were enrolled in 131 units." Vanderbilt, much to the chagrin of her faculty, trustees, alumni, and the Chancellor himself, would be one of the four schools to lose their ROTC programs during those years.²⁷

Such an important decision as to bring the entire able-bodied male population under Army training begs the question of intentions. What spurred Vanderbilt, a reputable institution of higher education based on promoting critical thinking and exploration, to initiate a campus wide program of mandatory military drill, typically understood to be anti-individualistic? It is over this point that Michael Neiberg's narrative actually perfectly lines up with Vanderbilt's own. He says that there arose, "in the late nineteenth century, conflict between the religious orientation of American colleges and universities and a more secular, Darwinian approach," describing a time period in which the relationship between Vanderbilt and its Southern Methodist patrons was beginning its death throes.²⁸ Starting in earnest in 1904, Chancellor James Kirkland, himself open to "Christianized versions of Darwinian evolution,"²⁹ would find himself at the start of that decade long battle with them over control of the university centered around the role of Methodism in hiring faculty and board members. Kirkland's opponents "fought back in behalf of the older Methodism they venerated," but the times were changing, and, "they sensed, quite correctly, that Vanderbilt did not reflect these values, that its professors and students had negotiated an unholy alliance with the world."³⁰ Chancellor Kirkland personally reflected this shift, being a man of "the most tolerant and accommodating wing of southern Methodism without ever moving to an avowed 'modernist' position."³¹ With the Tennessee Supreme Court's 1914 decision finally "divorcing" both institutions, Vanderbilt had finally shaken off its patron organization that had been setting the tone of moral standards for over three decades, perfect timing for the Great War to set Vanderbilt's and the rest of America's universities' moral com-

passes on patriotism in lieu of Christianity.

This moral transition Neiberg describes did not come instantly, and it certainly did not originate from the students at Vanderbilt. Even as Vanderbilt left the Methodist Church, from 1911 to 1914 the students began to participate in the new Young Men's Christian Association's (YMCA) activities at such a rate as to make it the largest organization on campus. It had suddenly grown in response to the rise of the more socially oriented fraternity scene and as the related "issue of moral decay became a central, widely debated issue on campus in 1911." Then in 1915, "the climax of campus moral regeneration paralleled the winning Supreme Court opinion" as the YMCA sponsored the largest campus revival effort in Vanderbilt's history. What this indicated to Paul Conkin is that Vanderbilt students, in a period of major transition in their institution that reflected a larger moral transition in America, were "challenged and confused" by it all, and were searching for something to grab a hold of.³² With the immense task of removal of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South's official influence on campus finally taken care of and the guns across the Atlantic firing their first shots, Chancellor Kirkland was there to provide them with that something, whether they liked it or not.

It seems logical that the school would be prone to setting up military training and the SATC in the name of preparedness before and during America's involvement in the War, but following the Armistice Vanderbilt still proceeded with establishing its ROTC unit. Michael Neiberg's description of the overall picture of ROTC's development is again a startlingly accurate reflection the local situation at Vanderbilt in explaining this phenomenon. He describes the desires of collegiate administrators to serve their country in its time of need in whatever ways possible, Chancellor Kirkland included. Their country needed them not only to combat the Germans, but, as Paul Conkin relates, "By 1919 the hatred of so-called Huns gave way in America to wild fantasies about, and irrational fears of, the terrible Bolsheviks, a new, strange, grotesque subhuman species that had recently staged a successful revolution over in Russia."³³ As the end of the conflict ushered in the post-war period, the new enemy was the Communist, and whereas support for the war and ROTC "imparted patriotism and shielded one from allegations that could lead to dismissal" on the grounds of being German sympathizer, this air of intense nationalism continued on as the Red simply replaced the Hun.³⁴ Conkin mentions "scattered examples of violence by small leftist groups" occurred across America, "But none of this violence came close

to Nashville.” Nevertheless, he describes some Vanderbilt and local officials in Nashville as “almost desperate to join the politically popular crusade,” and they “found a victim in a confused, inarticulate, and idealistic young instructor of French at Vanderbilt, one Russell Scott.”³⁵

In what came to be known as a notoriously dark blemish on Vanderbilt’s story, Russell Scott, a British citizen with some ties to a small labor movement in Nashville, was suspended from his position at Vanderbilt for intending to speak at a rally of the aforementioned labor movement. He was never able to, as the rally was shut down before it started, but in his desire a legitimate explanation from the authorities he attracted too much attention to himself and the president of the board at Vanderbilt had him suspended without ever bringing any charges against him. Although Chancellor Kirkland was away during the entire event, and Conkin says he would have handled the situation differently, it is reasonable to believe that these intense feelings of suspicion that were strong enough to fuel such excessive action against a perceived Bolshevik could fuel the desire to train a corps of cadets as a bulwark against Bolshevism itself.³⁶

As Vanderbilt discovered in December of 1918 that it was to be the proud new owner of such a bulwark, an Army ROTC unit of the Coast Artillery Corps, it came time to tell the students in preparation for their return on January 2nd, 1919. Only four days before, Charles Cason, one of the faculty who had assisted with the training of the SATC, sent a letter to the students of Vanderbilt University who were home for Christmas, saying, “I am writing this to give you some information about it.”³⁷ He did not mention that it would be compulsory for all returning students who were not seniors. The same students who had been drilling with the SATC for the previous semester and expected to return to a normal college life in 1919 were surprised to be issued a uniform and told to report for another formation with no war to fight, and they did not take kindly to it. Paul Conkin illustrates that “Kirkland found the returning students unusually restless and excitable, the most unmanageable yet encountered at Vanderbilt,” whose behavior reached a climax in the form of “a student rebellion against the new Reserve Officers Training Corps... Never before had they so openly defied him or his faculty.”³⁸ In March of that year, only two months after its beginning, the students had already boycotted drill and held a mass meeting in order to develop grievances to be presented to the faculty. The Chancellor appointed a committee “to hear protests in person, to advise with you, and to otherwise go over the whole

subject and recommend to the faculty such changes in present rules as may seem desirable.”³⁹ Drill was made optional for the rest of the spring term, but would resume in earnest the next year, being compulsory for freshmen and sophomores. As time went on, student resentment continued, and “The compulsory aspect grated most.”⁴⁰ Though the administration did try to make amends, they had lost the trust of their students and the ROTC would be gone after the 1919-20 academic year.

A remarkable change revolving around the Great War occurred in the psyche of the Vanderbilt student by 1919, succinctly summed up in Conkin’s statement, “a campus that in 1917 had gone all out for drill now echoed with charges of coercion and militarism.”⁴¹ The male, able-bodied Vanderbilt student’s level of patriotic fervor and desire for military instruction on campus started out in line with the rest of the country’s, but a nightmarish experience with the SATC and Kirkland and the administration’s failure to understand how the students felt were the prime factors in their plummeting after the Armistice.

Vanderbilt students in 1917 expressed numerous times their willingness to do what they could to serve their country, and accurately reflected Neiberg’s claim that students across America largely supported military drill in school. As early as February 14th, 1917, months before America’s entrance into the war, there appeared in *The Vanderbilt Hustler*, the school’s student newspaper, an article entitled, “Summer Camps Expected To Attract Many,” describing military training camps at which several Vanderbilt students were already in attendance.⁴² A week later on February 28th, a mass meeting was held in order to ascertain students’ attitudes toward bringing military training to campus and “ninety-nine unconditionally pledged themselves to join a military organization at Vanderbilt.”⁴³ With war declared in April of 1917, members of the Tennessee National Guard drilled the students sans uniforms or weapons up until the summer of 1918.⁴⁴ There is clearly no reason to believe that there was any inherent difference between Vanderbilt students and students at other universities that Neiberg describes as sharing sentiments of patriotism and public responsibility. October of 1918 and the arrival to campus of the SATC changed all that, ultimately catalyzing the reversal their opinion and sinking of morale.

Although Neiberg barely skims over the subject of the Students Army Training Corps in his book about ROTC, it is critically important to know what Vanderbilt students thought of the SATC in the context of understanding the ROTC’s initial foray at Vanderbilt.

As the short experience from October to December of 1918 was so poignantly memorable to those who participated, it is easy to capture students' opinions of the unit. In a letter of 1928 from a former lieutenant L. B. Smelser to former members of Vanderbilt's SATC, he writes in the guise of the secretary of the Alumni Association, inviting those men who trained on campus in 1918 back to Vanderbilt for a reunion. His language clearly, if through sarcasm, illustrates the generally negative opinion of the SATC at the time:

This letter is for the purpose, not of irritating any old sores, but to remind you that ten (10) years have elapsed since we suffered together, and that if there be any sentiment at all in you for the institution vulgarly known as the S.A.T.C, or for the fellows of your company who ate beans with you in Kissam Hall barracks, you ought to come back to the Vanderbilt Campus on Monday, June 11, if only to see how different things are now from what they were then.

He invites them back to reminisce about their sojourn there, "however uncomfortable... from the happy distance of a decade."⁴⁵ The Vanderbilt administration of 1918 received clear signals that the students abhorred military drill by that point, and in a letter from Charles Cason to all students returning in January of 1919, he writes one very telling statement, saying, "In the first place, it should be clearly understood that the R.O.T.C. is in no way related to the S.A.T.C.... It is without the discipline and restrictions of the S.A.T.C."⁴⁶ Although the administration clearly observed and understood how unpopular military training was among the students, Kirkland and his faculty chose not to acknowledge their grievances as legitimate, and instead attempted to force a square peg into a round hole. In the end, that critical failure to empathize with the students would manifest itself in their openly rebelling, as Charles Cason's assurance would not be enough to temper the students' new hatred of the Army life and the faculty resolution's surprise clause making ROTC mandatory.

A telling article in *The Vanderbilt Hustler* from February 8th, 1919, just over a month after the beginning of the school year, illustrates how Vanderbilt student opinion differed entirely from Neiberg's analysis of the majority of American ROTC students' dedication to patriotism and public service. The article begins saying, "With deepest regret we hesitate to announce that at last a commanding officer of the R. O. T. C. [Major Glenn P. Anderson] has arrived for duty... The old cor-

ridors of Kissam are as quiet as if in mourning over some great misfortune." The author states that, "An abhorrence of all things military still lingers from the S. A. T. C. Even without the regulations and discipline of that defunct organization, the thought of mere drill is obnoxious." To prove that it was actually the SATC that was one prime factor in shaping the students' mindsets and not some character flaw unique to Vanderbilt's southern, cultured youth, the writer qualifies his rant with, "Were the war in progress all would enthusiastically enter into it to get the best there is out of it."⁴⁷

After just one month under Major Anderson's tutelage, the students could stand the ROTC no more and, on March 3rd, boycotted en masse ROTC's military athletics that took place on Dudley Field. Instead, they held a mass meeting and, after several students recited passionate speeches "condemning the course of the university in making this work compulsory for most of the students in the academic and engineering departments," appointed five representatives to draw up a list of four grievances that they presented to the Chancellor the next day.⁴⁸ The most important of these grievances was the last one, stating, "The Student Body feels that it has been misled into believing that the R.O.T.C. would be optional."⁴⁹ Clearly, the administration's extremely hasty procurement of ROTC and its final decision to make it compulsory over the winter break between semesters was another direct cause in the upheaval that would eventually lead to the downfall of Vanderbilt's first ROTC unit. Following the incident, *The Vanderbilt Hustler* continued to put out tirades against the program, culminating in a two-sentence article just over one year after the issuance of the grievances, on March 6th, 1920. It stated: "The Student Council is still busy on the resolutions to abolish the R. O. T. C. for the coming year, and a committee from the council is now handling the matter with the faculty. They hope to have a favorable report to make within a short time. 'Pay Your Commodore Dues.'⁵⁰ By the summer of 1920, "new costs for storage warehouses, for needed new classroom space...and for extra drill officers" accompanied the year old student resentment, impelling Vanderbilt to finally cancel its ROTC contract with the War Department. Conkin states, "It is impossible to gauge how much the student protest motivated the decision," but it is quite clear that, although financial issues hastened ROTC's departure from campus, student disillusionment provided the major impetus to close the ROTC unit, as student participation is ultimately its lifeblood.⁵¹

How could Chancellor Kirkland and his faculty so totally miss the mark in establishing a unit of the

ROTC? The Chancellor was an experienced administrator who had successfully taken on the Methodist Church, but the events regarding ROTC from 1917 to 1920 indicate that he was totally incapable of identifying with his own students. What seems like a grave misunderstanding, however, was not a misunderstanding at all. Every decision he made was a conscious, calculated one in which student opinion took a back seat to the broader circumstances that permeated American culture at the time, circumstances in which patriotism, civic duty, and anti-Bolshevism characterized ideal citizenship. Kirkland and his administration fall well in line with how Neiberg described other college administrators of the time, in that they genuinely believed that what they were doing was best for both the school and the country, and that Vanderbilt's students' opinions went against the greater good and were wholly illegitimate, saying in a letter to Major Matson (an officer of Vanderbilt's Military Science Department) in a letter dated February 19th, 1920:

Opposition to all forms of military training has seemed something like a mental infection since the war ended. This was first expressed by the boys who had been in service. From them it has been carried on to younger students who have never seen service. I have listened to all they have said on the subject and read all criticism accessible to me. I still remain unconvinced. They have failed utterly to make out their case.⁵²

Chancellor Kirkland was not the only one to diagnose this mental infection, and would find support from alumni and patrons of the university. A day after the March 3rd mass meeting, James G. Stahlman, a Sigma Chi alumnus from the class of 1904 (and future President of the Board of Trust), wrote a splendidly candid tirade to the undergraduate brothers of the Alpha Psi chapter, a tirade not tempered with political correctness, but with its intentions clearly illustrated. He wrote:

The spirit of that student revolt against the constituted authority of the university as vested in the Chancellor and its indirect rebellion against the military authority of the United States government, without first resorting to some reasonable means or appeal or conciliation, is the same spirit that animates the Bolshevik; that impels the anarchist to wield his weapon against any representative of the government or its laws; that is daily manifest in the workings of the I.W.W. It is a spirit which this nation

must not and will not foster and is a spirit which college men should loath and detest and do all in their power to drive from the face of the earth.⁵³

Kirkland, upon receiving a copy of this letter, wrote back to Stahlman expressing his gratitude and saying of him, "when I find a man who is willing to say the needful thing and do the right thing without any thought of praise or popularity, I want to tie him to my soul with hooks of steel."⁵⁴ Stahlman, because of his ability to do so within the personal relationship between fraternity men, merely stated what Kirkland was thinking all along, but could not say to his students because of the nature of his position as Chancellor.

The relationship between Vanderbilt and the Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps parallels entirely Neiberg's description of the overall experience schools across America had, except for the important distinction that Vanderbilt's students uniquely abhorred the program due to the administrations handling of its installment, ultimately catalyzing its departure from their campus. This hatred stemmed from Chancellor James H. Kirkland and his faculty's total disregard for student willingness to participate in compulsory military training in favor of lofty ideals of service to the country and the promotion of ideal citizenship among Vanderbilt men. Part of this is because of the Chancellor's own personality and work ethic, having been described as one who "enjoyed power and loved to gain influence and use it for what he believed were righteous goals,"⁵⁵ one of those righteous goals being the establishment of a military organization on campus to instill patriotism and guide his students morally in the absence of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. His work ethic also similarly influenced him to consider his students lazy and victims of a mental infection rather than holders of real grievances. Though it was a project for him, his faculty, and the university's patrons, their view of the grand scheme of things did not take into account the fact that the boys marching with Enfield Model 1917s around campus wanted to be plain old students at the close of the Great War, and they further worsened their position as they hastily instituted the ROTC without due warning to the students who would be forced to participate. There was no misunderstanding, the administration just decided to confront student opinion head on, but, in doing it the wrong way, they engendered student resentment so much so as to bring about a climactic, mass outburst of frustration and disobedience. With room for only one victor in such a deliberate battle, the students revolted and came out on top.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Army ROTC Homepage. 2012. Army ROTC. <http://www.goarmy.com/rotc.html>. (accessed March 19, 2012).
- ² "War Department Rejection to Kirkland," Record Group 300 [hereinafter RG], Chancellor's Office [hereinafter CO], Box 104, File 64. Vanderbilt University Archives, Nashville, Tennessee. [hereinafter VUA]
- ³ "Kirkland to Quartermaster," Ibid.
- ⁴ "Adjutant General of Army to College Presidents," RG 300 CO, Box 104, File 60, VUA.
- ⁵ Brush, Peter. "Vanderbilt Register: Another Faraway War Got a Different Response at VU." *Jean and Alexander Heard Library*. Web. 28 Feb. 2012. <http://www.library.vanderbilt.edu/central/Brush/VURegisterArticle.htm>
- ⁶ Neiberg, Michael, *Making Citizen-soldiers: ROTC and the Ideology of American Military Service*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2001) 6.
- ⁷ Neiberg, 6.
- ⁸ Neiberg, 9.
- ⁹ Neiberg, 10.
- ¹⁰ Neiberg, 9.
- ¹¹ The information in this paragraph comes from Neiberg, pages 21 and 24.
- ¹² Neiberg, 24.
- ¹³ Paul Keith Conkin, Henry Lee Swint, and Patricia S. Miletich, *Gone With the Ivy: A Biography of Vanderbilt University* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1985) 95-7.
- ¹⁴ "Vanderbilt University Chancellor Search: Biography of James H. Kirkland <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/Chancellorsearch/kirkland.html>
- ¹⁵ "Faculty Meeting Minutes," RG 300 CO, Box 104 File 59. VUA
- ¹⁶ "War Department to Kirkland," RG 300 CO, Box 104 File 64. VUA
- ¹⁷ "Kirkland to Johnston," Ibid.
- ¹⁸ United States, War Department, The Committee on Education and Special Training, *The Students Army Training Corps*. 2nd ed. 1918. Print.
- ¹⁹ "Tolman to Kirkland," RG 101 Centennial History [hereinafter CH], Box 27 File 35. VUA
- ²⁰ "Charles Cason to Senator D. McKellar," RG 935, Alumni Relations [hereinafter AR], Box 2748 File 78. VUA
- ²¹ "Kirkland to Incoming Students," RG 935, AR, Box 2748 File 75. VUA
- ²² November 1918 *Vanderbilt Alumnus*, "Students' Army Training Corps" RG 935, AR, Box 2748 File 78. VUA
- ²³ "Rees to Institutions with SATC," RG 300 CO, Box 104 File 64. VUA
- ²⁴ "Lang to Presidents of SATC Institutions," RG 300 CO, Box 104 File 64. VUA
- ²⁵ "Suggestion for ROTC to be taken up at Faculty Meeting," RG 300 CO, Box 104 File 65. VUA
- ²⁶ "Kirkland to Haskins," RG 300 CO, Box 104 File 64. VUA
- ²⁷ Neiberg, 26.
- ²⁸ Ibid.
- ²⁹ Conkin, 97.
- ³⁰ Conkin, 149.
- ³¹ Conkin, 97.
- ³² Conkin, 219-222.
- ³³ Conkin, 237.
- ³⁴ Neiberg, 25.
- ³⁵ Neiberg, 25.
- ³⁶ Conkin, 237-8.
- ³⁷ "Cason to The Students of Vanderbilt University," RG 300 CO, Box 104, File 65, VUA.
- ³⁸ Conkin, 237.
- ³⁹ "Kirkland to Student Committee," RG 300, CO, Box 27 File 38, VUA.
- ⁴⁰ Conkin, 238.
- ⁴¹ Ibid.
- ⁴² "Summer Camps Expected To Attract Many," *The Vanderbilt Hustler* [hereinafter VH], February 14, 1919, Vol. XXVIII, No. 32.
- ⁴³ "Move Begun To Get V.U. Military Co.," *VH*, February 28, 1919, Vol. XXVIII, No. 36.
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- ⁴⁵ "Smelser to Former SATC Students," RG 935, AR, Box 2748 File 78, VUA.
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- ⁴⁷ "Drill Will Start Immediately," *VH*, February 8, 1919.
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- ⁵² "Kirkland to Major Matson," RG 3, CO, Box 11 File 2, Special Collections
- ⁵³ "James G. Stahlman to Brothers of Alpha Psi Chap-

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