

San Diego State University and the military-university complex

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Over the past several decades, universities in San Diego, a major historic naval hub and headquarters for defense contractors since World War II, have developed into key assets for US militarism.

With encouragement from university administrations, the schools act as spaces for recruiting and training students for the highest occupations in the US military and intelligence apparatus. Schools such as San Diego State University (SDSU) and the private University of San Diego (USD) have become regional hubs for military training programs with exclusive benefits afforded to military affiliates.

The Military Ally Program, sponsored and run by the on-campus Joan and Art Barron Veterans Center at SDSU, was created in 2015 to “provide insight into and awareness of the unique cultural and social background of the military community.” Intended to be open to all faculty and students, including off-campus community organizations and businesses, the program hosts a monthly four-hour seminar about “military culture, [presenting] relevant data and demographic models,” to stress the benefits of having the military on campus and in communities. Those who complete the seminar become a part of the “Military Ally network,” receiving a placard to place in their workspace and a lapel pin to wear as visible indicators of their membership.

The Military Ally Program operates with the stated mission to “bridge the civilian-military gap.” In other words, its goal is to make the military a more regular and comfortable presence to the campus population. This thinly veiled indoctrination program sprung up after an influx of veteran students from the wars waged in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Veterans Center on campus was a small-scale operation in 2000, but it now resides in the administrative center of campus and is

highly accessible to students affiliated with the military.

The effort to make the military a regular campus presence coincides with a national effort to shore up financial incentives for joining the military at the expense of public education funding. Following the 2008-09 financial crisis, the military saw a significant upsurge in enlistment. As university tuition skyrockets and job prospects dwindle, recruiters prey on low-income students, advertising enlistment as a financially viable option to pay for school.

Several San Diego universities host the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program, the premier program grooming students for future officer positions in different branches of the military, with handsome rewards for their participation and mandatory military service. Hosted at SDSU are ROTC programs for the Air Force (Detachment 075) and Army (Aztec Battalion). The Naval ROTC, the region’s largest due to the proximity of Navy and Marine Corps bases, has been jointly run by SDSU and USD since 1982.

SDSU hosts over 3,200 military-affiliated students, including veterans, active duty soldiers, reservists, and military dependents, making up some 10 percent of the student body. Ranking in the top 25 colleges for veterans according to the *Military Times* for the past several years, SDSU and USD are two of over 1,100 campuses across the US participating in the ROTC program. Other university partnerships include the University of California San Diego (UCSD), California State University San Marcos, Point Loma Nazarene University and local community colleges.

Regularly sighted tabling on campuses and at career fairs, the military representatives of the ROTC program advertise it as a financially beneficial way to pay for tuition, maintain physical fitness, and have broader job

prospects after graduation and service. ROTC cadets are given monthly tax-free stipends upwards of \$500 as well as partial to full tuition scholarships. Graduating from the program offers housing and food allowances as well as medical/dental programs for cadet families.

Entry into the ROTC program grants cadets with privileged access to employers. USD held a major conference in 2016 through the Veterans Center and LinkedIn where USD President James T. Harris III declared, “There's probably never been a greater time in our nation's history than right now when our country has needed more liberally educated individuals who've traveled abroad, who've experienced other cultures and speak other languages. Our military-connected students are models for our enlightened citizenship and serve as excellent examples for our entire Torero family at USD.”

Academia and higher education have become a critical center for cultivating the next generation of generals and officers, along with soldiers to be used as cannon fodder for the ruling class.

The United States has been involved for more than a quarter century in uninterrupted wars in the Middle East, from Iraq and Afghanistan, to Libya, Syria and Yemen. These illegal wars of aggression have devastated entire societies, killed millions of people and produced the greatest refugee crisis since World War II. The financial and corporate oligarchy in the US, represented by both the Democratic and Republican parties, have deemed it necessary that young people be acclimated to a life of unending wars.

ROTC, which is found in thousands of high schools and colleges across the country, is used to instill jingoistic and chauvinistic attitudes in students as early as possible. Indoctrination into a militarist and police-state mindset, from sports pre-game celebrations to active-shooter school drills, is the end goal.



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