



October 2, 2008

Mr. James S. Crown  
President  
Henry Crown & Company  
222 N. LaSalle Street  
20<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Chicago, IL 60601

Dear Mr. Crown:

ROTC and national service have been much in the news, thanks to recent statements from both presidential candidates at Columbia University. In the wake of substantial public attention to these topics and widespread acknowledgment of the important role of such service, the American Council of Trustees and Alumni asks you and your fellow board members to reconsider the standing of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps program on the University of Chicago's campus.

As you are undoubtedly aware, Chicago is one of a handful of institutions that have, for some decades, forbidden ROTC to conduct its programs on campus. As a consequence, students at Chicago who wish to explore a career in the military—or to benefit from the substantial scholarships offered by ROTC—are forced to participate in programs elsewhere, often at considerable inconvenience and personal sacrifice. Senators Obama and McCain, as well as the editorial boards of the *Washington Post* and *Wall Street Journal*, agree that students should have the same opportunity to explore military careers as they do any other career path, and ROTC is an indispensable part of that opportunity.

In the words of Sen. Obama, “The notion that young people...in any university, aren't offered the choice, the option of participating in military service, I think is a mistake.” Now is the time to correct that mistake.

In the past, trustees have demurred on this topic, suggesting that this decision belongs to faculty or administrators. That is not the case. As a trustee, you are ultimately responsible for ensuring the well-being of your institution and the basic welfare and rights of students. We urge you, in this spirit, to take up the issue of ROTC on campus, and to address it as a board.

As a trustee, you have a singular opportunity to advance students' rights to make their own decisions about whether to participate in ROTC, as well as whether to support or oppose the “Don't ask, don't tell” policy imposed on the military by Congress. At a time when there is broad support for public service, continued refusal to permit students to

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perform military service on campus—service that helps preserve the cherished freedoms that all members of the campus community enjoy—seems neither fair nor wise.

At the same time, the relative dearth of graduates of elite universities in the military means institutions like Chicago lack what former Clinton administration official Kathy Roth-Douquet has called “a moral connection to those Americans we send into harm’s way.” When there is a disconnect between those making important military decisions and those charged with carrying them out, America’s ideal of self-government is undermined.

ACTA is a non-profit, non-partisan educational organization with a network of more than 5,000 college and university trustees around the country. We thank you for your service to American higher education and would welcome the opportunity to discuss ROTC on campus with you. We look forward to hearing from you on how you will address this critical issue.

Warm best wishes.

Sincerely,



Anne D. Neal

President

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