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Military recruits sought at school Lawsuit defends diversity

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The military, in recent years, has been extremely aggressive in recruiting young men and women, due to the unfortunate circumstances that occurred on 9/11. This ongoing war between the United States and Iraq has accounted for the deaths of many American soldiers, as well as innocent citizens of Afghanistan and Iraq. The pressure mounts for recruiters to find nearly 200,000 volunteers due to the number of casualties. Since 2003 the death toll in Iraq has surpassed 1,300 dead and over 10,000 wounded. The Army with the support of the federal government is willing to go to great lengths by visiting schools and running numerous advertisements in order to persuade young people to join the military. The officers are well trained to analyze students and motivate them to join by offering job training, adventures, signing bonuses, service to country and scholarships. Recruiters not only visit campuses, but also target young people in their hang out spots, sporting events, shopping malls and convenience stores. Those who sign up for five years get a bonus of \$12,000 including up to \$70,000 for college aid. One high school described the Army recruitment as "a product that can be sold." The U.S. Defense department spends nearly \$2.6 billion each year just for recruitment expenses, including administrative costs, advertising and college funds.



The military searches for educated talent to serve in the current war in Iraq.

Many schools disagree with the way the military recruits soldiers and want to stop them from visiting their campus. They have realized these young men and women are being put in danger for a war that should have never taken place to begin with.

The United States infiltrated Iraq with false intelligence information of having weapons of

mass destruction and might have targeted the wrong country for revenge of 9/11. After realizing this, the Supreme Court has ruled unanimously that colleges must accept military recruiters on campus if the schools desire to continue receiving federal funds. This new law may stem from the recent shortfalls in the Pentagon's recruiting as well as officials worrying about military preparedness being threatened. The Defense Department has already denied federal funding to two law schools who were opposed to having recruiters on their campus. Currently, universities are receiving about \$35 billion a year from federal programs mainly for research and expansion.

Penn State may not have a policy for controlling military recruitment without losing funding, but the school does have a policy for Army Reserves that are called for active duty. After presenting the school with a military order, the students are permitted military withdrawal. This allows the students to get their full tuition back and automatic re-entry into the university. The students that are called to duty will retain any financial aid they were given and are let out of their housing contract free of charge, and they are refunded money for their room and board. Employees of Penn State also have policies to protect them if called for duty. They are given their previous or a position of equal status by Penn State upon returning.

The military said it has pressing needs for educated talent with highly specialized skills, such as translators, engineers and lawyers. The Pentagon has suffered recent shortfalls in its recruiting, and officials worry that military preparedness may be threatened. They say schools are free to ban the government from campus, but they should not continue receiving government money if they do. Over the past year, as casualties in Iraq have filled the news, recruiting has become much more difficult. For the 2003-04 recruiting year, which ended in September, the Army's active-duty and reserves recruiting effort narrowly met its quota, but the Army National Guard missed its goal of 56,000 soldiers by about 5,000 -- its first shortfall in a decade.

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A Penn State University student is causing some controversy at University Park. The Alliance Defense Fund (ADF) filed suit against Penn State University's alleged violation of student A.J. Fluehr's free speech rights. The suit was filed against Penn State on behalf of Fluehr on Feb. 22. The lawsuit claims, "the university's anti-discrimination and intolerance policies violate the First Amendment by Preventing Fluehr from openly expressing his political, cultural, and religious opinions." Fluehr belongs to a student organization that allows its members to express their feelings that may offend other students on certain diversities such as, gender, race, sexual orientation and religion.

According to the lawsuit, the policy of intolerance is preventing Fluehr from his freedom of speech rights. Penn State defines intolerance as an "attitude, feeling or belief in furtherance of which an individual acts to intimidate, threaten or show contempt for other individuals or groups based on characteristics such as age, ancestry, color, disability or handicap, national origin, political belief, race, religious creed, sex, sexual orientation or veteran status."

At Behrend, diversity is highly respected. Andres Herrera, Director of Education Equity and Diversity Programs here at Behrend, encourages students to express their opinion, "We here at Penn State respect freedom of speech with any student. You can express your opinion but try to maintain some level of respect." Herrera worked to create a new diversity web

page to support Penn State diversity policies that will help students share their opinions on diversity and take a stance on diversity.

The Behrend College definition of diversity states, "We acknowledge that while individuals are distinguished by a myriad of factors -- such as ethnic heritage, gender, sexual orientation, age, religious beliefs, ideologies, socio-economic status, life experiences and physical characteristics and capabilities -- we demand that no one should be defined or narrowly perceived by these terms."

Behrend strives to maintain a high level of respect in terms of diversity. The play, "The Laramie Project" helps students understand the significance of diversity and is being performed here at Behrend. "The Laramie Project" is a story that expresses how crucial it is to understand diversity. The play is about the

kidnapping, brutal beating and the death of Matthew Sheppard by teenagers in his town of Laramie, Wyoming because of his sexual preference. Herrera feels this play helps to bring awareness to the importance of diversity, "This is something that will help people understand that these things happen all the time. This happens throughout the nation. There is a lot of bigotry. This is what happens when we don't work on trying to understand each other."

Fluehr is seeking damages and an injunction against the policies. According to Tysen Kendig, the Penn State spokesman, Penn State University does not have a Speech Code because people are entitled to their free speech rights and the intolerance policy does not violate Fluehr's free speech rights. However, the lawsuit will not be settled until the University changes its policies.

We here at Penn State respect freedom of speech with any student. You can express your opinion but try to maintain some level of respect.
~Andy Herrera

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Behrend boasts best registration numbers

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Behrend is the fastest growing college campus in town, according to registration numbers over the past few years. The number of students offered admission to Penn State Behrend so far has increased 32 percent; from 1,614 at this time in 2005 to 2,134. This is apparent because of a campus wide increase in applications at all locations in the Penn State University system. Allegheny College in Meadville is expecting its third consecutive year of record applications. Currently, they have received more than 3,600 applications, with 150 students already indicating their intent to enroll. At this time in 2005, Allegheny only boasted 120 students with intent to enroll. About 2,465 students have applied to Mercyhurst in Erie so far, similar to 2005's numbers, said J.P. Cooney, Mercyhurst's director of admissions.

An incoming class of 700 to 715 "puts us up to capacity," says Cooney. Gannon University, in downtown Erie, and Edinboro University are also seeing the effects of the growth of the education market.

The number of students who have already committed to attending Behrend is up 13 percent from this time in 2005, said Behrend's director of admissions, Mary-Ellen Madigan in a recent interview. "We're on our way to a record-breaking class," she added. "It's probably one of the strongest applicant pools we've seen in the last couple of years." This rise is most likely attributed to the fast growth of the school, including more housing buildings and the new Research and Economic Development Center (REDC).

Part of the reason for such high enrollment and application is much higher standards in the workplace. Even some entry-level jobs require, at a minimum, an associate's degree. It seems now that one cannot get far without some form of higher education.

With higher enrollment and higher graduation

numbers in post graduate studies, including master and doctorate degrees, the market is being flooded with highly educated workers. Behrend also sees a higher level of postgraduate studies than in previous years.

High schools in the area are urging their students to continue their education as well. The Erie school district is not quite up to par with the national average concerning students continuing their education at the college level. In addition, the school's average in SAT scores is also below the national average. Because of the No Child Left Behind Act pushed forward by President Bush, all

public schools are now given a "report card" known as the Adequate Yearly Progress targets, or AYP. According to the PAAYP website, www.paayp.com, "Adequate Yearly Progress is a key measure of school performance established by the Federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The Pennsylvania Accountability System evaluates all Pennsylvania public schools annually for Adequate Yearly Progress based on the results of the spring PSSA testing cycle and indicators of participation, attendance, and graduation". All of these report cards are posted on the AYP website.



The student populations continues to grow at Behrend as well as at Edinboro University and Gannon University.