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## Hypocrisy 101: Military Recruiters on Campus

By Anne Neal

While the academy offers open arms to the likes of Ward Churchill, Michael Moore, and other academic frauds, partisan hacks, and pornographers, there's one group of folks that is simply unacceptable: the men and women of the United States Armed Forces.

While universities accept billions of taxpayer dollars in grants and contracts from the Defense Department and other agencies, many elite schools want to forbid military recruiters on campus. Faculty and administrators at places like Harvard, Stanford, Yale, and Columbia argue that the government's "don't ask, don't tell" policy violates their anti-discrimination policies.

But these institutions shouldn't have it both ways. And those in charge—namely the trustees—have the power to do something about it.

Today, the Supreme Court will hear oral arguments in *Rumsfeld v. FAIR*, a case that will determine the legality of universities' desire to bar recruiters while still accepting federal funds under the Solomon Amendment. At most large research institutions, federal funding accounts for 70-80 percent of all sponsored research. At the University of Pennsylvania, for example, more than \$496,517,000 were

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awarded in grants last year alone. Similar numbers could be found at Columbia, Harvard, and a host of other schools.

But whether the Court decides yea or nay—a decision it will not likely reach for many months—it’s time for trustees to step up to the plate and do what fiduciaries are supposed to do: act in the best interests of students and the public. It defies logic how a university like Yale can claim it is educating its students when it is denying them basic information about possible careers in the defense of our country.

Rather than hiding behind the faculty and administrators, trustees should guarantee students the right to learn about military careers. Indeed, to do otherwise allows the political activism of administrators to undermine the fundamental right of students to think for themselves and make their own decisions—including whether or not they support or oppose the military’s “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy.

The essence of a university experience should be the free exchange of ideas and principled debate. But when it comes to military recruiters, it appears that too many of our colleges believe that there should be no debate—and no cost—to adhering to “principle.”

Members of our military know all too well that principles are often protected at a great price. It’s time for the academy to learn that lesson, as well. If they’re going to accept government money with one hand, then they can’t hold the door shut with the other.

*Anne Neal is the president of the [American Council of Trustees and Alumni](#).*



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