

Improving ROTC Accessions for Military Intelligence

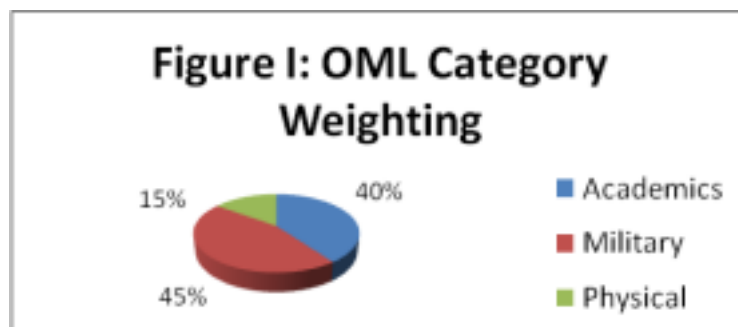
Van Deman Program

MI BOLC Class 08-010

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The author welcomes any and all feedback and is available through AKO.



The Army Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) accessions process does not serve either the needs of the Army or the cadets attempting to get

one of their top branch choices. The accessions process overvalues certain aspects of a cadet's background and puts no value on other aspects that could indicate a cadet's potential. In order to get and retain those cadets who are best suited to be Military Intelligence Officers, the accessions process must be changed to better reflect the key competencies of an MI Officer.

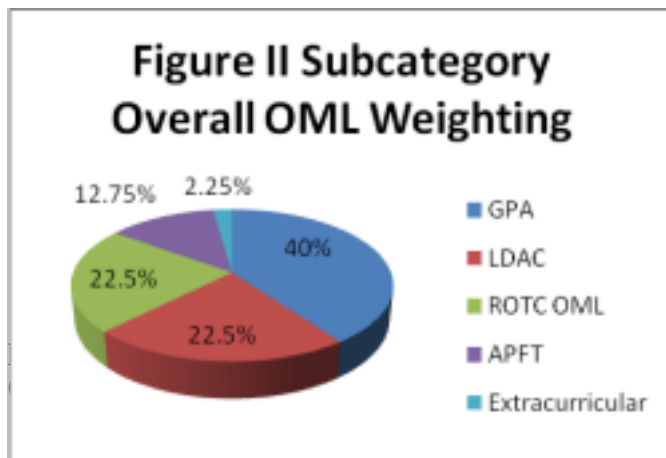
As outlined by the United States Army Intelligence Center (USAIC), the MI Corps has three key priorities for its newly commissioned lieutenants. The first is critical thinkers who have the ability to change as their environment changes, the second is technically proficient officers who understand how to apply their craft, and the third is effective communicators that can clearly state their analysis to decision makers.¹ In order for the MI Corps to achieve these goals in their junior officers it needs to bring in officers who are better suited to serve in and succeed in the branch. Of the roughly four thousand ROTC cadets who commission each year,² the Army must preselect specific qualities for individual branches.

The Current Accessions Process

The current accessions process is based on taking every ROTC cadet in the country that is commissioning in a given fiscal year and creating an Order of Merit List (OML). A cadet's position on the OML determines what branch that cadet will receive. The OML currently incorporates three main categories: academics, military, and physical.³ Each category is given a percentage-based weighting; the three categories together add up to one hundred percent. Within each category are subcategories, also given a weighting within their respective category. Figure I shows graphically how the three main categories break down.

The Academic category is made up of only one subcategory, Grade Point Average (GPA), making GPA count for forty percent of overall accessions. This is calculated by using the overall academic GPA from the first three years of college. There are some exceptions: if a student takes five years or more to graduate, the additional semesters would also factor into their average.

The Military category is made up of two subcategories: a cadet's scores at the Leadership Development and Assessment Course (LDAC) and an Order of Merit List determined by a cadet's cadre at his/her college. LDAC, formerly Warrior Forge, is a month long course that all ROTC cadets go through. The course is designed to measure leadership, physical fitness, and other basic soldiering skills. The ROTC College OML varies greatly college to college and is up to each college's individual cadre to determine what factors will be counted towards that OML. Each subcategory received an equal weighting of 22.5 percent.



The physical category includes two subcategories: Army Physical Fitness Test's (APFT), and extracurricular activities/ Combat Water Survival Test (CWST). A series of APFTs given during a cadet's junior year of college make up 12.75 percent of accessions, CWST and extracurricular activities make up 2.25 percent of accessions. The APFT subcategory's weighting makes up the overall

Issues Inherent in the Current Accessions

Process

There are four main issues that prevent maximum effectiveness within the current accessions process. The first is that it does not take into account a cadet's past experiences, specifically living/studying abroad and foreign language proficiency. The second is that it does not depend on a cadet's academic major. The third is that it does not consider what university or college a cadet attended. Lastly, it relies too much on the ROTC-based OML.

A cadet's past experiences living or studying abroad can offer the MI Corps a unique opportunity to bring a new officer who has personal and in-depth experience with a foreign culture. In the counterinsurgency fights that the Army is currently engaged in, being able to understand and assimilate a foreign culture is essential to winning the local population and defeating the insurgencies. The knowledge gained by a cadet living in a foreign country only comes from spending time in that foreign culture and cannot be replicated in a book. Being able to speak a foreign language is a major benefit for intelligence officers. When an officer can read or understand things in a host nation's original language it prevents valuable information from being lost in translation and gives a better understanding of the cultural undertones a given document or conversation might have.

The knowledge set that a cadet gains while studying a particular major in college is specific to that major, and gives a cadet a framework for how and what they think. This is why certain majors are better suited for intelligence officers than others. There are certain mental frameworks that are better suited to intelligence than other disciplines. Majors that have a strong analysis or foreign studies focus are particularly well suited for Military Intelligence.

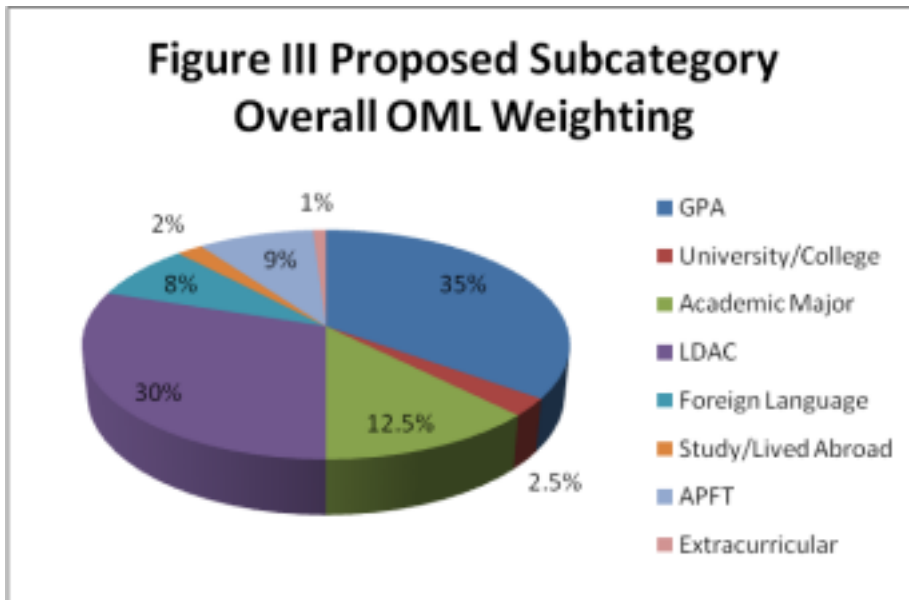
There are two hundred seventy two colleges and universities that offer Army ROTC in the United States and its territories.⁴ There is a huge span of quality among these schools. Cadets who attend the best schools in the nation should be given an advantage in the OML over their counterparts who attend lower-tier schools.

The ROTC school OML is overly subjective. It has no single standard and varies ROTC program to program. At some programs it can be very objective, based on things like grades

from military science classes, APFT results, etc; at other schools it can be based on peer evaluations and ROTC cadre evaluations.

Solutions

By reevaluating, adding, and removing components from the accessions model a new model that better reflects the needs of the MI Corps is made. This new model rewards those cadets with specific majors for Military Intelligence, those who attended a top-tier school, have experience with a foreign culture. It also removes the subjectiveness of the ROTC OML, removes the CWST, and adjusts the weight for extracurricular activities.



The subcategories contain the most important changes and Figure III displays these changes graphically. The academic category has seen several major changes. The first change is that the category would be worth fifty percent. There would be three subcategories within academics: GPA, university/college attended, and academic

major.

GPA is currently worth forty percent of overall accessions. In the proposed model GPA's weight would be reduced to thirty five percent. However, it would still be based on a cadet's overall academic GPA from the first three years of college.

Of the remaining 15 percent, 12.5 percent would be allotted to academic major. These points would be allotted based on a four-tiered major system. For example the top-tier (tier IV) MI majors would receive the full 12.5 percent. The majors deemed the least applicable, tier I, to MI would receive only 3.125 percent. Tier II majors receive 6.25 percent and tier III majors get 9.375 percent. There is a likelihood that tiering majors would raise some controversy; the list this researcher offers for potential top tier majors is not necessarily exhaustive and certainly not immutable. The majors chosen for tier IV represent those that have a strong focus in foreign events, cultures, and analytical thinking: International Studies, Computer Science, Statistics, International Political Science, and Operations Research.

The school a cadet attended would determine the final 2.5 percent in the academic category. The system would be based on a five-tiered system, with all 2.5 percent going to those cadets at top schools and .5 percent for those cadets at the lower ranked schools. There are several ways to categorize schools. *US News and World Reports*, and the more recent ranking system from *Forbes* magazine, are readily-adaptable ranking systems. Cadet Command could also create a system individually tailored to its needs.

The military/language category would only be worth 40 percent of accessions, and have three subcategories: LDAC, foreign language, and study/lived abroad. Of the 40 percent LDAC would make up 30 percent. With LDAC being the only training event that every cadet attends, it

is an excellent benchmark used to compare cadets, as opposed to more arbitrary measurements that vary school to school.

The new OML would not consider the ROTC OML. It is an uneven metric that measures the same types of things that LDAC measures. Replacing the ROTC OML would be the foreign language, and study/lived abroad subcategories.

Foreign language would be eight percent of overall accessions. Using the Defense Language Institute (DLI) category for languages, which are categorized I through IV (one being easier languages),⁵ category I languages earn two percent, four for a category II, six for a category III, and all eight for a category IV. Again using the same standards as DLI, cadets would have to score a 2+ or better on the Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT) to receive credit. Studying or living abroad would make up the remaining two percent. If a cadet had lived abroad for three months or longer or had studied abroad for one semester or quarter they would receive the full two points.

The physical category would see the least amount of change. It would be worth only 10 percent, instead of 15. With 9 percent going towards the series of APFTs a cadet takes, and the remaining 1 percent allotted for extracurricular activities. The Combat Water Survival Test would no longer be included.

This accessions model better reflects the three priorities of MI officers. This model would bring a good diversity of critical thinkers, those with an analytical background, as well as those with an understanding in foreign affairs. Having incoming officers with strong analytical and foreign affairs backgrounds will allow learning about analysis and foreign culture in the basic officer leader course to move faster and be more in depth, leading to officers who are better

trained on the technical aspects of the intelligence profession. Additionally, rewarding time spent abroad will attract officers who can speak from personal experience when addressing commanders, ultimately making them more effective communicators.

Potential Issues

There are three major potential issues with this proposed accessions program. The first is the other fifteen basic branches would have to create their own accessions models. The second is that the Commanders of ROTC units would lose some of the power they held over the accessions process. The third is the matter of ranking schools in a way that all those involved find to be fair and accurate.

The proposed accessions model is designed to select for what the MI Corps finds desirable in its junior officers, not for what the Infantry, Adjutant General, Military Police, or other branches want to select for. For this proposal to work each branch would have to use the same categories and subcategories but adjust the weighting for each to suit the needs of their specific branch. As arduous as this might sound, the new system would be beneficial as it would allow each branch to get officers more suited for service in that branch.

The ROTC Commanders may take issue with the perceived loss of control over their cadets if they are unable to rank them in an ROTC OML. However, those same officers still have a great deal of power over those cadets; they decide if that cadet will be able to contract into ROTC, if they will go to LDAC, and ultimately if they will commission.

The matter of ranking colleges and universities without bias and as objectively as possible is already an issue that is hotly contested among universities. One potential solution is

to take a mix of published college rankings across a variety of publishers. This would avoid a bias in any one ranking system and give a mix of measurements.

Conclusions

The accessions process as currently constructed is not putting cadets in the branches they could best serve in. By adopting this new accessions model cadets would be able to better control a branch they could go to, while giving the Army an officer who would be well suited for that branch. This model achieves the balance between the needs of the Army and the wants of the cadet. Officers who are satisfied with their branch choice are likely to remain in the Army longer and perform better than those officers who get a branch that they never wanted. With extended conflicts it is important that the Army considers new ways to keep its soldiers and officers in the Army, and this accessions model is one way to do exactly that.

¹ (United States Army Intelligence Center 2008)

² (White 2005)

³ (United States Army Cadet Command 2006)

⁴ (United States Army Recruiting Command 2009)

⁵ (Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center 2006)

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