



Penn State's Anti-Veteran Bias

**By Mark Hyman
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Move over Janet Napolitano. Your Department of Homeland Security is not the only public institution that claims military veterans pose a threat to public safety.

Napolitano has been under fire from veterans groups and others for a DHS document warning counterterrorism and law enforcement authorities of an alleged threat to the U.S. posed by "domestic rightwing terrorists." Included in the group of potential rightwing terrorists are individuals who are pro-life, support the Second Amendment and oppose the flood of illegal aliens.

The DHS pamphlet ("Rightwing Extremism: Current Economic and Political Climate Fueling Resurgence in Radicalization and Recruitment") also singled out veterans who "were disgruntled, disillusioned, or suffering from the psychological effects of war" for possible recruitment into domestic terrorist cells.

Pennsylvania State University has joined the Napolitano school of thought in warning against the dangers presented by military veterans. The university's Division of Student Affairs produced a series of vignettes under the category of "Worrisome Student Behavior." According to the Penn State website, the "vignettes demonstrate common situations where faculty or staff are attempting to help students."

One of the vignettes featured an Iraq war veteran who displayed aggressive behavior toward his instructor. In an office meeting with her department chair, the instructor characterized the veteran as dimwitted, poorly-educated, inattentive to instruction, argumentative and threatening.

Instructor: I'm still having problems with that student I mentioned.

Department Chair: The veteran?

Instructor: Yeah. He's having problems with his papers still. His grammar is really poor and he veers off-subject and he's just not really seeming to understand the assignments....I just feel kind of nervous talking to him. He's very, his tone is very confrontational and I feel like he's always on the verge of losing his temper."

In the video, the veteran threatens the instructor after receiving a C+ on his assignment.

Veteran: I just want the grade I deserve. You know what? You'll see. You'll be sorry. I'm going to get you fired.

The university removed the video from the Student Affairs website after receiving student criticism. It may be viewed here:

What is truly worrisome is how Penn State's Division of Student Affairs, presumably the office that advocates on behalf of students, portrays military veterans as academically-challenged, belligerent and potentially violent. This is an incredibly ignorant tone emanating from academia considering it was the tremendous influx of World War II veterans who helped fuel the enrollment and growth of hundreds of colleges and universities immediately following the war.

Even Penn State has benefited handsomely from veterans-turned-students. The school has been closely associated with military training since passage of the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862. Present-day on-campus military training programs include Army, Navy and Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps programs. The university credits veterans with contributing to the expansion of its 19 extension campuses around the state.

In 2001, Penn State President Graham Spanier announced the school's 5-year, \$453 million contract with the Department of the Army to provide distance learning to an estimated 15,000 soldiers worldwide. The school's "World Campus" program continues today.

The school's anti-veteran bias appears to violate the university's own personnel policies. Policy AD29 State of Intolerance prohibits "discriminatory bias against or hatred toward other individuals or groups based on characteristics such as...veteran status."

Imagine the public outcry if PSU had instead identified the student exhibiting "worrisome behavior" as black, Hispanic, a homosexual or a Jew? Race, religion, ethnicity and employment history are immaterial if an individual behaves inappropriately. Bad behavior is bad behavior. Yet, Penn State authorities felt compelled to identify the aggressive student portrayed in the video titled "I Deserve A Better Grade...Or Else" as an Iraq war veteran.

A representative in the office of President Spanier referred all inquiries to a university public affairs official. A phone call to that individual requesting comment was not returned.

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