

Remarks by the Honorable Ray Mabus
Secretary of the Navy
Harvard University
Cambridge, MA
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To my wonderful partner in this pretty amazing endeavor, President Faust, without whose efforts and persistence today would not have come. To the Harvard community and particularly, to those of you in uniform here today, just on a very personal note, I'm always glad to be back here.

I came to Harvard Law School immediately after I left active duty in the United States Navy, and the critical-thinking skills that are learned in both those places and the notion of service that I learned in both those institutions have followed me for the last three and a half decades of my life and my career.

Today, we formally reestablish the Naval ROTC at Harvard and I say reestablish because, as President Faust pointed out, Harvard was one of the first six schools to have ROTC beginning in 1926. And really, even though for the last forty years there has been no formal connection between Harvard and the military, there has been a commitment by Harvard to educate both our active-duty military and our veterans who have served so honorably. We have had connections; it's just nice to make those connections once again.

This relationship, this now renewed formal relationship, has benefitted both of us. It has benefitted the United States Navy and Marine Corps. But I think it's also benefitted and enriched Harvard University.

Seventeen Harvard graduates are Medal of Honor recipients – 17. As President Faust said, trailing only West Point and Annapolis in the number of Medal of Honor recipients. People like Leonard Wood, leader of the Rough Riders, who became the only doctor that would rise to become chief of staff of the Army; Theodore Roosevelt, his fellow Rough Rider, winner of the Nobel Prize, President of the United States; and Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., the only general officer who went ashore in the first wave at D-Day in Normandy. Those are indicative of the types of leaders that Harvard produces, the types of military leaders that have been here, that are here today and who will be here formally, now, in the future.

The stories of so many Harvard graduates are the stories of the American military. Former Marine Captain Seth Moulton and current Marine Captain Barret Bradstreet, both the class of 2001, who did remarkable work in restoring the Iraqi army to professionalism and respect; former Navy Lieutenant Henry Nuzum, who served as a surface warfare officer at the same time he participated in two Olympics as a rower.

Today, Harvard and the military will re-embark on a journey that will serve to create many more officers like the ones I've just mentioned. I cannot stress enough how important that is to our military and how important that is to our nation.

Today would not have come without Drew Faust. It also would not have come without the Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Juan Garcia, who is another Harvard Law School alumnus. You never know where we will crop up.

In order to best serve our nation, the military has to strive to be reflective of the nation it protects. And it does not serve our country well if any part of our society does not share in the honor of its defense.

The NROTC units we have around the country today produce great officers. They come from different geographies, different backgrounds. They bring different perspectives.

But too many undergraduate programs and too many top universities do not have a formal tie to the United States military through ROTC. And too many undergraduates leave college today with too little knowledge of what the American military means and who the American military really is. And these relationships matter. They matter in a lot of ways.

Harvard, the oldest school in the United States; I didn't realize quite how old Harvard was until I was a student here and went to an exhibition in one of the museums that had an honorary degree granted to Benjamin Franklin, and Harvard was already 150 years old when that happened.

It still is one of the finest institutions of higher learning anywhere in the world. It, and so many other of our top universities, produce the leadership of this country in business, in law, in government, in science and technology. And it should produce the leadership in the military of this country.

The education of leaders is about exposure to new ideas, exposure to varied viewpoints and exposure to a full range of possibilities open to graduates. NROTC's return to Harvard is good for Harvard, it's good for the Navy and it's good for our country.

Together, Harvard and the United States Navy have today made a decision to enrich the experience open to Harvard students, make the military better, to make our country far stronger because with this exposure comes understanding. And through understanding, comes true strength.

Thank you all very much.