AF ROTC Drill Replaced By Service Work

Last year USC's Air Force ROTC cadets began marching off the drill field and into the community.

Now the University's experimental program, in which Air Force cadets transfer some drill field time to volunteer community service, has been endorsed for implementation nation-wide by Air Force ROTC Headquarters.

This school year the USC Department of Aerospace Studies initiated the concept that cadets learn leadership and management skills by organizing and directing community projects. Historically, drill and ceremonies training has served as the prime vehicle for teaching responsiveness to authority, teamwork, poise, and other behaviors important to military officers.

"Reception to the program in the Columbia area, plus very positive evaluation of the activity led the the recommendation to adopt the program nationally," according to Colonel Clyde P. Evely, head of the USC Air Force ROTC unit. USC plans expansion of community service activities beginning this fall, he added.

Carolina cadets involved in the program during the past school year worked with a volunteer project at Caughman Road Middle School in Columbia to offer the children there new educational experiences. One group of cadets, for example, introduced the basic principles of flight to the children, helping them design and build a 28-foot wingspan glider.

Another group of cadets worked at the school to teach children mini-bike maintenance and safety while still other cadets provided remedial training and tutoring for students including children who lacked eye-hand coordination.

The idea of teaching management skills to ROTC cadets through volunteer programs was conceived by two USC faculty members, Lt. Col. Richard T. Fernald, and Maj. Robert W. Fernald, who is now assigned to McCall Air Force Base, Washington.

Concerned with the cadets' disinterest toward drill as a training device, the two aerospace instructors wanted to introduce a method that would enhance the image of the Air Force ROTC while achieving training goals.

Their first proposal for a community service training project was rejected by military traditionalists. However, USC's Col. Evely later suggested that the concept be tried.

Drill will still remain a small part of the program for Air Force cadets at USC, but as Fernald says, "a majority of the cadets will be marching into the community to serve and learn to the beat of a different drum."

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