

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-14-93](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

ROTC is the largest source of newly commissioned officers for DOD. GAO's analysis of DOD data identified more than 9,000 officers commissioned from ROTC in fiscal year 2012. ROTC is critical for producing officers from the nation's colleges and universities to meet the leadership and readiness needs of the armed forces. The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013 mandated GAO to review the services' ROTC programs. This report assesses the extent that ROTC programs (1) met goals and minimum annual requirements for producing officers over a 5-year period, (2) have established performance measures and conducted evaluations for managing ROTC programs, and (3) are subject to oversight and have effective processes for communicating with key stakeholders. GAO analyzed ROTC production data from fiscal years 2008 through 2012; reviewed relevant legislation and DOD and service policies and guidance for ROTC; and reviewed and discussed assessments of ROTC efficiency and effectiveness, and oversight of ROTC with officials from OSD and the services.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making six recommendations to DOD, to include establishing clearly defined performance measures and conducting routine program evaluations; reexamining oversight roles and responsibilities; and developing a strategy for communicating with Congress and other key stakeholders on program performance. DOD concurred with each of GAO's recommendations.

View [GAO-14-93](#). For more information, contact Brenda S. Farrell at (202) 512-3604 or farrellb@gao.gov.

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MILITARY PERSONNEL

Actions Needed to Improve Evaluation and Oversight of Reserve Officers' Training Corps Programs

What GAO Found

From fiscal years 2008 through 2012, each military service met at least 91 percent of their overall Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) goals for producing the number of officers needed to meet service end strength authorizations, but each has reported challenges in commissioning officers for some certain occupational specialties, such as engineers and nurses. Further, GAO's analysis found that half of the Department of Defense's (DOD) ROTC units did not meet DOD's minimum average annual production requirement over the 5-year period reviewed. Further, cost per commissioned officer varies greatly depending on unit production. For example, excluding tuition costs, the average cost per officer produced across all units was about \$68,000, compared to an average cost of about \$95,000 per officer for units that produced fewer than 15 officers on average annually from fiscal years 2008 through 2012.

DOD's instruction specifies factors to consider before closing ROTC units, but these factors do not constitute clearly defined performance measures that provide a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness and efficiency of ROTC programs, and service evaluations of ROTC programs are ad hoc. DOD's instruction specifies that in assessing units for closure, the services are to consider the quality of officers produced by a unit but it does not clearly define characteristics that comprise quality, which has led to the inconsistent application of the measure by the services. The services conducted 11 evaluations over the past decade to assess performance and identify units for consolidation or closure. However, the evaluations have largely occurred on an ad hoc basis because the services have not established a systematic process to routinely evaluate ROTC program performance. Key attributes of successful performance measures include clearly, defined measures. Moreover, results-oriented program management practices include routine program evaluations that determine how well a program is working. Without clearly defined performance measures and routinely conducted evaluations, it will be difficult for the services to accurately determine if ROTC programs are effectively and efficiently operating.

The Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) conducts some oversight functions, such as setting policy for the ROTC program. However, although specified in guidance, OSD does not review the services' methodologies for closing ROTC units because OSD officials believe this is a service responsibility. Further, the services do not consistently communicate with key stakeholders, such as members of Congress and schools, about performance of ROTC programs, except when closure decisions are being considered. This may have contributed to the difficulty the services have experienced in gaining political support for such closures. GAO has noted that regular communication with stakeholders helps build trusting relationships to gain buy-in. Without clearly delineated responsibilities for oversight of ROTC programs and a formal strategy to communicate with key stakeholders on ROTC program performance, DOD will find it difficult to obtain the support that is needed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of ROTC programs.