



FEMALES TAKE THE LEAD IN ROTC

Senior Stella Hesse, the Commanding Officer of ROTC, and other ROTC members honor the living and the fallen that were involved in the 9/11 terrorist attack.

Terri Washington

by REEMA SALEH

As the recently appointed Commanding Officer, Stella Hesse has been placed in the highest leadership role in the program.

“It’s weird because for as long as I can remember and as long as anyone else can remember, there has usually been a male in control. Not to say there hasn’t been female commanders, but I’m the first one in a long time,” Hesse said. “It was weird at first because, I’m so used to answering to males in positions of power and now people answer to me”

Starting ROTC from middle school onwards, Hesse believes that placing women in higher positions in the organization inspires more women to join ROTC.

“I think seeing females of high position and power and being able to take control and kind of delegate power is a really good testament for them and we set a pretty good example for ROTC.”

While women have been placed in ROTC throughout leadership roles, for the first time in the last six years, a woman has been named Commanding Officer of ROTC. Because of this, Operations Officer Keidy Gonzalez believes that people have an incorrect preconception about ROTC within the school.

“It emulates the military, therefore people assume females struggle more than the guys,” Gonzalez said. “But our unit this year has many girls in it. There’s probably more girls than there are guys because they look around and see we have many female officers.”

Commander Stephen Anderjack explains more about the gender ratio of ROTC.

“Last year was our first year where we had more females than males and I believe the same is true again this

year,” Anderjack said. “I’m hoping that ROTC will motivate more girls to realize that this is not a male dominant society anymore. When I first went into the military, it was a male dominated organization and slowly but surely, we have had females taking over on the ships, running aircraft, [and] on board submarines.”

While Hesse believes that none of her fellow cadets or officers treat her differently, she does believe that people outside the school could treat her differently based on her gender.

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**STELLA HESSE
SENIOR**

“Sometimes we have recruiters coming in here and they regard me a little differently,” Hesse said. “They’re so used to just [expecting] to see a male come through the door and it’s a female.”

Even after bans on women serving in ground combat units brought an official end to the Combat Exclusion Policy in 2013 and directed military branches to fully integrate the armed forces, women can still face barriers because of their gender. Anderjack explains how the military often has

to deal with issues of gender discrimination.

“Unfortunately, we still have issues within the military and I see it on a daily basis. I still get reports from the active duty military where we still have that bias in the military, where I see officers and the enlisted getting into trouble because they’re sexually harassing females or on board ships and duty stations where females have been harassed sexually or just based on their gender,” Anderjack said. “It still happens and it will take a while before we can actually get everybody on the same page.”

On female integration into the military, Hesse believes that gender should not matter when assigning women positions in the military.

“That’s what we try to do with last names in the program. If you just hear my last name, it has no gender. It could be a boy or it could be a girl,” Hesse said. “So I think with integration, it’s not so much integration, but just forgetting that there is a difference in gender.”

While the school year has just started, Hesse believes that female officers in the program this year can serve as role models for women hoping to strive forward in ROTC.

“It’s really just about giving your all and doing what’s best for ROTC as a whole. Whoever can get the job done whether it’s a boy or it’s a girl, it should be whoever can get the job done,” Hesse said. “So if you feel that you can give the most back to this program, then you should strive to be a leader in ROTC.”