Recruitment: A Call to Arms

The correct word may be irony. We as an institution wish to publicize EMU and recruit students to attend school here. One way to accomplish this is by allowing a variety of organizations to recruit on campus as part of College Night. Among these organizations are various divisions of the armed forces. The presence of these military recruiters causes members of the EMU community to respond with counter-recruitment methods.

What comes next in this sequence of recruitment?

A number of people feel betrayed and confused by the decision the administration has made regarding College Night. After all, many were under the impression that hosting the college fair with the inclusion of military recruiters would not be repeated again, at least not without prior open discussion.

For many in the Mennonite Church and here at EMU, the presence of military recruiters on campus seems to compromise a central tenet of Mennonite faith. The Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective states that “As disciples of Christ, we do not prepare for war, or participate in war or military service.”

This does not mean that EMU as a Mennonite-based institution shuns persons in the military. Some students and faculty on this campus support the military, and there are students on campus who are members of the armed forces.

Because of the majority opinion here on campus, we often forget these perspectives. As a school committed to education, seeking truth, and caring for one another, we must work to provide opportunities to dialogue with people who adhere to these perspectives.

But College Night is not that sort of intentional opportunity. In light of the recent events, it has become a learning experience that challenges our responses and provides us with a way to encounter differing points of view.

Due to the events of this past week, we must examine the method and range of the dialogue that occurs on campus. We are forced to question our mission and duties as an institution in the Mennonite Church. Has it become an indicator that this university chooses economics over ideals? How does community operate in an institution? How do we integrate the beliefs of business, faith, and education?

EMU’s interaction with issues regarding College Night says a lot about this school.

Where we go after this will say even more. We could easily segue into another level of recruiting and promotion: look at us and see how “Mennonites” respond. But that merely repeats the recruitment cycle. Irony should not easily segue into another level of recruiting and promotion. The presence of these military recruiters says a lot about this school.

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