

Army ROTC at the University of Maryland: The Past, Present, and Future

by

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I'd like to say good evening to Dean William Cohen, Lieutenant Colonel Larry Rentz, to the 29 graduating Army ROTC cadets, and to all other cadets of the University of Maryland. It's great honor and pleasure for me to be here as your guest speaker this evening. You are truly an inspirational group.

I'd like to begin this presentation by sharing some important perspectives of Army ROTC with you. I will focus my comments this evening on three aspects of Army ROTC—they are the past, the present, and the future.

Let me begin by discussing the past. In fact, we would like to honor Army ROTC's past. You may already know some of these facts, but I wanted to highlight these facts because of their importance.

Firstly, this year, 2016, is the 100th Anniversary of Army ROTC. It was originally established back in 1916. President Woodrow Wilson created the ROTC program when he signed into law the National Defense Act of 1916. There were 35 initial programs. Since that time, there are now some 275 host Army ROTC programs in every state, as well as in Guam and Puerto Rico.

During this 100 year period Army ROTC has commissioned well over 600,000 second lieutenants. Moreover, ROTC has been the foundation for six Chiefs of Staff of the Army, two Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, a Supreme Court Justice, and many other national leaders. In fact, 40% of all Army general officers are from ROTC. Let me

say a word about military education at the University of Maryland. It began in 1862 with the Morrill Land Grant Act which required universities who were receiving federal aid to teach agriculture, mechanical arts, and military tactics. Students wore uniforms and drilled for a short time each week and later training was increased to two hours a day.

After World War II, Army ROTC left the University of Maryland, students who wished to participate in Army ROTC had to go to Johns Hopkins, Georgetown, or Bowie State Universities. In 1973, ROTC was opened to women. In 2001, Army ROTC returned to the University of Maryland, with the formation of the Terrapin Battalion. This program has commissioned 223 officers since its re-activation.

Secondly, let us look now at the Army ROTC program that presently exists at the University of Maryland. Since 2001, the Army ROTC program has sent many cadets to Army Specialty Schools to learn new skills and enhance leadership. These skills include Airborne and Air Assault training. In addition, many cadets have broadened their cultural understanding and language proficiency by studying in other countries. Cadets have also taken advantage of internship opportunities with Federal departments and agencies.

Cadets have participated in the Army 10 Miler and won the Ranger Challenge Competition several times and were ranked first in the 4th Brigade Ranger Challenge Competition. To the 29 graduating Army ROTC cadets I commend you for a job well done at the University of Maryland. Eight of you are Distinguished Military Graduates

and five of the eight of you are Distinguished Military Graduates in the top 10% of the nation. You have selected military duty with the Active Army, the Army National Guard, or the U.S. Army Reserve. Your Army branch selections are quite varied from the Adjutant General to the Transportation Corps. All of these paths will provide exciting career options. Again, I applaud you for a job well done!

And finally, I'd like to address the future. As each of you leave the Terrapin Battalion you have earned, the right of passage into the U.S. Army. Each of you will answer our nation's call for service. You will be prepared to lead Army forces in defense of our freedom. Employ all that you have learned from Army ROTC! As you go forward you should read and learn about your profession and the challenges of the Army. For the female cadets, you will have new responsibilities, since the several combat arms branches have now been open to you. We wish you, the best with these new opportunities.

Each of you new second lieutenants should find a mentor. This is extremely important. A mentor will help you to navigate your military career. You should also thank your families, for their support, during your military education. You will need their backing and encouragement, particularly during stressful duty assignments.

Finally, I want to congratulate each of you and wish you the very best as you go forward into your military careers. Good luck! God bless you! God bless the United States of America!