



Foundations of Leadership, Character, and Service: My Journey in JROTC

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Leadership, character, and service have been pivotal not only during my time in JROTC (Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps) but also in shaping my everyday life. Over the past two years in the program, I have had the opportunity to deeply reflect on what these values mean to me and how they have influenced my growth as an individual. These characteristics, when applied, align seamlessly with the mission of JROTC: "To motivate young people to become better citizens." This mission has guided my journey inspiring me to embody these principles in all aspects of my life.

Leadership, to me, is the ability to inspire and guide a team toward achieving a shared goal by providing purpose, direction, and motivation. This philosophy defines my approach in JROTC, where I serve as a platoon sergeant and unarmed regulation commander. These roles require not only responsibility but also a commitment to teamwork and resilience. To lead effectively, I created a "System of Leadership," which consists of three steps: explaining the purpose of the goal, outlining a clear strategy, and providing motivation. For example, at a junior cadet leadership camp (JCLC), my platoon was tasked with completing as many push-ups as possible in ten minutes. I began by explaining the goal's significance, emphasizing how winning would contribute points toward the "Best Platoon" award and

earn additional recognition for the team. I then proposed a strategy: forming a circular rotation where each cadet would take turns completing five pushups, starting with the first squad leader. Finally, my second squad leader and I encouraged the team with words of support and compassion, maintaining high morale throughout the challenge. This experience reinforced my belief that leadership is not about commanding from above but working alongside the team, like someone pulling a cart with their team, rather than sitting in it and dictating orders. True leadership fosters trust, collaboration, and success through shared effort and mutual respect.

Character, in my view, is the set of mental and moral qualities that define a person's essence and guide their actions. It represents the traits that distinguish individuals and shape their reputations. In JROTC, character is not built overnight; it is developed over time through consistent actions, discipline, and adherence to core values. As cadets, we embody our character through deeds, not words. Personally, I strive to align my actions with the Army Values, particularly loyalty, respect, and responsibility. These principles form the foundation of my decision-making and influence how I am perceived by others. As a result, I have often been described as scholarly, professional, and trustworthy by my peers. The significance of character lies not only in how others view you but in how it shapes the decisions that determine your future. I often compare this concept to riding a horse: your mind is the rider,

and your body and future are the horse. If you can control the rider, you can guide the horse to your desired destination. In other words, the small, consistent decisions you make shape the overall trajectory of your life. Through JROTC, I have learned that character is the foundation of personal growth and the compass that directs one's path toward success.

In its truest form, service is the selfless act of helping others without expectation of reward or obligation. Within JROTC, service plays a vital role in our connection to our community and our ability to make a positive impact. To me, service is more than completing tasks- it is about creating a ripple effect of kindness that inspires others to do the same. It reflects the principle of "You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours," but in its purest state, it does not rely on reciprocity. For example, on September 11, 2023, after a long day, I noticed my neighbor struggling to raise an American flag outside his home. Although I was tired I offered to help and completed the task. When my neighbor reached for his wallet to compensate me, I politely declined. This moment encapsulates what service means to me: contributing to the well-being of others at one's own

expense, without expecting anything in return. Service, especially within the context of JROTC, embodies the selfless dedication to community and country. It is through acts like these that we foster connections, build trust, and inspire a culture of giving.

Overall, leadership, character, and service are not just values upheld in JROTC—they are principles that shape who I am. By embodying these ideals, I strive to lead with purpose, act with integrity, and contribute selflessly to the betterment of those around me. These values are more than lessons; they are a way of life that guides me in all endeavors.

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