

The Military on Campus: A Mutually Beneficial Relationship

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Abstract

The purpose of this project is to give the readers a better understanding of the Millersville University Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps program, the cadets currently enrolled, the cadre who serve in leadership positions, and the impact it has both on and off the campus. This project explores the history of the Millersville University Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps program and the benefits the program provides to the military, the students, and the surrounding community. This examination will briefly cover some of the important events in the program's long history and detail some of the trials and successes experienced the program has gone through. The Millersville University Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps program has a rich history dating back to 1918 with the formation of the Students' Army Training Corps program during World War I. The program has fluctuated in size over the years and has even been shut down twice but has always returned to Millersville University, most recently in partnership with Dickinson College and the Blue Mountain Battalion. The benefits of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps program are threefold. Firstly, the military receives quality commissioned officers that already understand military science, tactics, and the values upheld by the armed forces. Secondly, the students enrolled in the Millersville University Army ROTC program learn skills vital to both the military and civilian workforce, regardless of whether or not they make a commitment to military service. Finally, the community is enriched through the outreach efforts of the Millersville University Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps program through sponsorship or volunteer work. Some academic institutions throughout the country have not always supported or approved of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps program. Despite the challenges over through the years, Millersville University has always strived to make a home on campus for active duty, veteran, and future service members.

The Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps (Army ROTC) program has been a part of the Millersville University community for nearly half a century. Some benefits of the ROTC program include the military receiving officers who are educated and versed in military science, the students gain knowledge and skills applicable to their future careers, and the community is

enriched. To fully understand this relationship, we need to analyze the origin of the Army ROTC program and its development at Millersville University through the years.

The military arrived at Millersville State Normal School in the 1918-1919 school year. A program called The Students' Army Training Corps (S.A.T.C.) was established

and was open for any male student between eighteen and twenty-one years of age. The unit had seventy-five men enrolled at the height of the semester in October 1918. Despite a large number of students in the program, on December 14, 1918, the unit was disbanded (The Touchstone, 1919). In 1974, Millersville State College President William H. Duncan announced the Army ROTC program option would be offered in conjunction with Gettysburg College (The Snapper, 1974). In 1996, the Millersville University Army ROTC program was shut down due to military cutbacks; orders were received to close a number of Army ROTC units across the country (Davis, 1996). However, in 1999, the Army ROTC program would return to Millersville University once more, under a partnership with Dickinson College and the Blue Mountain Battalion (Aiello, 1999).

The Millersville University Army ROTC program benefits the military in that it provides quality officers for military service. The Army ROTC program is comprised of two parts: the first part is the Basic Course and has no military obligation, while the Advanced Course requires at least three years of military service after the enrolled student graduates. The curriculum for these courses includes both lecture and hands-on experience. Also, between their junior and senior year, cadets participate in advanced leadership training. Students who complete both parts of the Army ROTC program are commissioned as officers into the United States Army (“Army Reserve Officers”, n.d.). As a result, the military receives educated officers that already have an understanding of military science and tactics. There are also benefits for the students enrolled in the Army ROTC program at Millersville University. In 2010, Millersville University Army ROTC cadets participated in the Field Leaders Reaction Course where they honed their leadership skills. According

to Butterworth (2010), this was accomplished by alternating “leadership positions” and learning to command “as a Squad Leader up to Company Commander” (p. 3). In a study at Pennsylvania State University, the students in the ROTC program demonstrated higher proficiency in effective communication, decision making, trust building, managing conflict, and a number of other skills (Chen, Chen, & Tsao, 2009). Whether students join the military or not, the acquired skills are beneficial to both the employee and employer in the workforce. These skills are developed and honed through the Army ROTC program. Students who participate in the Millersville University Army ROTC program also get to take part in unique educational opportunities during their time in college. In 1999, during a two-day field training exercise, the Army ROTC cadets were able to ride in a United States Army CH-47 Chinook helicopter from Millersville University to Dickinson College (Waltermeyer, 2001). Students enrolled in the Army ROTC also have the chance to attend Airborne training, Air Assault school, as well as Culture and Language internships abroad (Shank, 2011).

The Millersville University Army ROTC program has also worked hard to establish a good relationship with the community around them over the years. In 1992, the Millersville University Army ROTC unit assisted in the building of a playground at Long’s Park in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Approximately twenty-five cadets worked throughout the day to ensure the park was completed for the children of the area (Schwing, 1992). In Spring 2006, the Millersville University Army ROTC helped to coordinate two separate blood drives. The first, in March, had between 300-400 donors and the April drive had twenty-six by the afternoon on the first day (Franz, 2006). Additionally, in November 2006, The Millersville University Army ROTC program hosted a memorial run as well as a ceremony to honor those who

made the ultimate sacrifice and to the veterans of the United States military (Capanear, 2006).

Despite the challenges throughout the half century, Millersville University continued to support the military and the Army ROTC program on campus. In fact, in 2013 Millersville University was listed by Victory Media Inc. as a Military Friendly School. This list is comprised of the top twenty percent of colleges, trade schools, and universities in the nation for their commitment to military personnel and veterans. This information is then presented to military personnel transitioning to civilian life as a resource on where to go for higher education (Blackson, 2013).

The Millersville University Army ROTC program is currently in the Blue Mountain Battalion which consists of the following schools: Dickinson College, Millersville University, Gettysburg College, Penn State Harrisburg, York College of Pennsylvania, and Franklin and Marshall College (“Department of Military Science,” n.d.). There are currently forty-three students enrolled in the Millersville University Army ROTC program. Of those students, twenty are enrolled in the Advanced Course and will be commissioned as officers in the United States Army upon graduating from Millersville University (Rivard, 2019).

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