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With more than 273 host programs, and 1,100 partnerships and affiliate schools across the country, Army Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) produces 60 percent of Second Lieutenants in the United States Army, Army Reserve, and Army National Guard. The Radford University Army ROTC program, established in 1978, is one of the nation's largest partnership schools and typically commissions more officers than other ROTC programs in the nation.

As freshmen, students do a lot more physical work. Every year, the cadets are able to go up in the ranks and be assigned leadership positions. As juniors, they are direct supervisors of freshmen and sophomore cadets, and as seniors, they are in charge of planning and leadership.

Through this program, ROTC's mission is to instill values of citizenship, service, personal responsibility, and a sense of accomplishment in participating students.

"You learn a lot about yourself from all the challenges ROTC puts you through," said Alex Polk, a senior cadet.

In addition to mandatory classes about military history and tactics, cadets have mandatory physical training sessions every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 5:45 a.m. As freshmen, the time commitment is limited to physical training and class time. But as cadets pick up more leadership positions through the years, they may spend up to eight hours per week in the ROTC office.

"It's taught me time management and to push myself to see how far I can go," said Polk. "What was hard for me freshman year is now extremely easy."

As a senior, Polk is in charge of planning ROTC's Thursday Lab. The lab takes place every Thursday and cadets take part in activities that allow them to practice tactics and participate in mock missions. Previous labs included bow training, mock village interactions, and taking boats out on the New River.

Polk states his favorite activity has been the Ranger Challenge. During the Ranger Challenge, cadets march 20 miles before having to go through an obstacle course.

Ashley Williams, a junior in the ROTC program, said her favorite lab was Key Leadership Engagement (KLE). During KLE, platoon leaders spoke with village leaders to negotiate. If platoon leaders could help villages with anything they needed, they could receive information in return.

“Building rapport and respect is critical,” said Williams about the activity. “It’s also important to be able to have mutually beneficial relationships with other countries.”

“You don’t necessarily have to end up having a career in the military,” said Polk. “Activities like these are a great way to learn about leadership and even yourself.”

When asked about the benefits of being in ROTC, Williams stated, “It’s helped me become a more confident leader and to think critically. We’re constantly given situations that require resolutions that are not only immediate, but well planned.”

The biggest perk of being in ROTC? Army Officers are ensured employment in the military after graduation. Upon graduation, cadets are members of the U.S. Army, Army National Guard, or Army Reserves and owe four years of active service.

Students interested in ROTC can visit the office on dark side located at 512 Davis Street, Apt. J.