



FEATURED STUDENT AUTHOR

BUILDING LEADERSHIP SKILLS THROUGH THE MARINE CORPS JUNIOR RESERVE OFFICERS' TRAINING CORPS

**Cadet Major Alexis Molina
Class of 2016
Tolleson Union High School**

The JROTC program at Tolleson Union High School consists of over 200 cadets learning, practicing, and developing their leadership skills. As a Marine Corps Junior ROTC program, we learn the art of leadership as it is taught in the Marine Corps. To perfect what is taught in this program, there are two parts of the leadership learning process that allows the cadets to fully develop classroom material. First, there is the classroom itself where the cadets are given the knowledge. Here, the cadets are taught the 11 leadership principles, the 14 leadership traits, the objectives of leadership, and the styles of leadership. Along with those, they are taught aspects of the Marine Corps, such as the roles of a Non-Commissioned Officer, roles of an Officer, Enlisted/Officer ranks, the 11 General Orders, and more. They are taught these aspects of the Marine Corps because the military is a great example of how the world works outside of high school; as a result, we have a Marine Corps style structure in our program.

Which leads to the second part of the process, and that is outside of the classroom. Here the cadets practice what they are taught in the classroom. This includes days such as physical training days. On these days, the first year cadets are able to lead others in exercises and events, such as land navigation. If the cadet has been in the program for more than one year, then they practice these leadership skills more often as they gain responsibility of other cadets. Cadets could acquire various leadership positions as small as a squad leader or as large as a battalion commander. However, these positions are earned based on their leadership at the discretion of the instructors. No position is simply given. In this part of the process, they also take care of their uniform, which is modeled after the Marine Corps Utility Uniform. The uniform is a great responsibility for these cadets because the upper classmen and the instructors hold the first year cadets to a high standard for uniform appearance. The uniform needs to be prepped every week and diligently cared for, which is a large responsibility that these cadets have.

Outside of school, we have several groups and events that the cadets can take part in. These groups include color guard, marksmanship team, and battalion staff. Events include drill competitions, orienteering competitions, and volunteer service events. In this JROTC program, cadets have the outstanding opportunity to gain leadership skills that are similar to the Marine Corps. There is no other organization in Tolleson that offers leadership opportunity as much as this program does.



FEATURED STUDENT AUTHOR

LEARNING AND GROWING AS A LEADER IN THE MARINE CORPS JUNIOR RESERVE OFFICERS' TRAINING CORPS

**Cadet Captain Puaolealgi Dole
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Leaders are not born, they are made. During my time in this program, I have definitely learned many life lessons that shape who I am as a leader today. I must admit, I started a bit rough. I came into this program with high hopes of being the best leader known to the MCJROTC program; however, I did not take the initiative to go beyond to accomplish that goal, and it took me a while to realize that. It is no surprise that during my time here, I struggled with many obstacles and trials as well as many successes and joyful memories in this outstanding program. I definitely struggled with change and constructive criticism, especially since I started with two of my close male figures as my Senior Marine Instructor and Marine Instructor, and ended up with two unique male role models. Aside from the change that I encountered during the last two years of being in this program, my perspective on being a leader in this program has completely transformed since the beginning to now.

In the beginning of my crazy experience, I was on top of everything involving the program. I did outstanding on my inspections, stayed motivated and helped motivate others during physical training sessions, received rewards and promotions during my first year, attended every single MCJROTC volunteer event, helped fundraise for every event necessary and, of course, I was given a leadership position as a squad leader. Overall, my first year in the program was quite remarkable due to the fact that I was recognized as a great first year cadet; however, I came to realize that I did not gain much knowledge that was required to be a great leader both in the program and in the real world. I looked back over my first year and realized it was more about fun and games rather than setting goals and actually accomplishing them. During my first year, I was not focused on going into depth with developing the knowledge of being a good leader; I thought I could solely learn how to be a good leader by watching others lead. I failed to learn that being a good leader also meant having knowledge and direction to guide others while accomplishing the mission, whether it be saving lives or simply teaching my squad how to roll the sleeves of their uniform.

My years in the program definitely taught me lessons I never thought I had to face. One of the most meaningful events in my first two years in the program was when I was selected to attend Summer Leadership Camp (SLC). This 5-day, 4-night event was a life changing experience for me, and I remember every single detail about the camp. It was most meaningful

to me because it was that summer that I finally realized the true meaning of being a leader. I had a moment of reflection after the camp; reality had hit me that the past two years in the program was two years wasted as a leader. I realized that I did not challenge myself as hard as I should have, and I started to notice all of the little things about my leadership was, for the most part, not as great as I wanted it to be. It was actually frustrating. I was more frustrated at the fact that it took me two years and going to a Summer Leadership Camp to realize what was really going on. I was leading compared to actually growing as a leader.

Being a leader has never been easy; however, it is not impossible either. My first two years in the program were obviously more of a time for enjoyment and making memorable moments; whereas, my last two years was a time for reality checks and plenty of growth sessions. It was then that I started to learn and grow as a leader. I was in a time of denial and disappointment when I was first introduced to the new instructors and their way of leading the program. Looking back, I remember I was in denial of the fact that I was left behind after realizing I was not anywhere close to being the leader I wanted to be. Although I felt lost with my experience and whether or not I was fit for the program, my current Senior Marine Instructor put an end to my dramatic moment and pushed me to get myself together and learn how to do what I came to the program to do. He was strait forward and hard core, but in a calm way, and looking back, I remember he guided me and always told me the truth about what I was doing right and wrong. I knew it was going to be tough especially since I was fresh out of leadership camp and was fresh into Gunner Jordan's MCJROTC camp. They may not have noticed the things they have done for the program and me, but Gunner Jordan and Master Sergeant Carver really inspired me to be better than the person I was the day before. They literally broke me down (without knowing it) and made me a stronger person and leader, which I find very meaningful. Having these two instructors in general is meaningful to me because it made me want to be better for others and myself. Their constant jokes, comments, constructive criticism, humble lectures, serious talks, and motivating PT sessions made me have a better understanding of what I will face in the future once I am on my own and without teachers and parents. They not only came into the program with a purpose of changing and improving things for the better, but they also came into my life with the same objective; therefore, I am a completely new and improved student, leader, and person from when I started as a freshman, to where I am now.