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Whenever one happens upon a difficult road in life, there are usually multiple choices he or she is faced with to try to find a smoother way forward. For some, it may be deciding to start a different job or move to a new city for the first time in their life. From my experience, change may not always be the most obvious choice. In one example that comes to mind, I decided to look towards a major life adjustment that I had never considered before.

At the beginning of my Senior year of high school, I decided to apply for an Army ROTC scholarship that would ultimately change my time in college drastically. Upon considering and researching different career paths, this option never crossed my mind. While my father has been in the military for most of his life, growing up with this and actually considering it as a full-time job require two completely different mindsets. Without a doubt, I was confident I wanted to study to become a nurse, but I also knew I needed more out of my college experience in order to push myself outside of my comfort zone while I had the chance.

Without going down the ROTC path, I am positive I would have been perfectly content throughout school. Overall, I definitely would have had more time to dedicate to the usual aspects of being a college student, a much-needed normal sleep schedule compared to what I have adapted to, and fewer weekends spent trekking through the woods with a thirty-five-pound rucksack on. Looking back on this time of my life, however, I am proud to say this decision has strengthened me for the better in more ways than one. My improved leadership abilities are some of the most significant assets gained from being an ROTC Cadet in the midst of a typical college campus. Currently, on top of my responsibilities of school, Sigma, and work, I am responsible for mentoring and keeping track of a group of approximately twenty other Cadets located at a number of schools in the area. Having the chance to lead and develop individuals younger than me has been another incredible, yet unexpected, opportunity offered. With preparing for an Army career also comes having the physical and mental ability to succeed in this type of lifestyle. In general, we never know what we are going to be faced with or which crossroads we may suddenly find ourselves at. Having the resilience to quickly adapt to any situation is a trait I am incredibly thankful for developing from only a few years in this program.

Reflecting on this choice, it was not one I made lightly by any means. Although I have gained these qualities, it has never been an easy process. As all of my commitments occur simultaneously with classes, there have been times over the past few years where life generally became very overwhelming. Whenever this happens and I begin to get discouraged, I remember why I made the choice to join this lifestyle in the first place. Every day, I become stronger in all of my abilities, eventually preparing for a life of caring for others and protecting my country. Less than one percent of the U.S. population is in the military; Whenever I hear this statistic, I am proud that in just over a year, I will be officially paving my own path when I commission as an Army Officer.