

College Life Defined by GCU's Army ROTC Ladies

Grand Canyon University is a campus filled with interactive clubs, leadership positions, sports, and internships that mold the foundation of a college student's experience, and identity. With all of this portrayed on social media, live broadcasts, and advertisements, GCU's Army Reserves Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) is exceptional because its stellar program shapes and redefines leadership not only as a college student but a future soldier for the U.S. Army.

The GCU's Army ROTC provides the tools, discipline, and scholarships to become an Army Officer without it interfering with college courses. According to goarmy.com, the Army ROTC program enrolls undergraduate and graduate students into military, and elective courses at colleges and universities, including the required courses for their degree. Once students have completed the program upon graduation, they will be commissioned officers that oversee enlisted soldiers.

So how is the Army ROTC influencing the collegiate lives of females who are part of the program? Sam Innanen class of '20, Isabel Rosales '22, and Mikaela Steinkamp '23 gave their individual expressions on how the program has impacted their college experience so far.



(from left to right: Steinkamp, Innanen, Rosales; Photo taken by GCU Army ROTC)

The three ladies quickly learned that the Army ROTC transformed their physical strength, sleeping habits, educational drive, and relationships with their peers for the better. They are continuously learning how to manage their time better so that they complete their tasks successfully. For instance, the ROTC students would need to get their homework done before landing into tough training assignments such as field training exercises (FTX). FTX usually last about two to four days into the weekend in which cadets apply their skills on field locations to operate tactical procedures as if they were in combat. The Army ROTC program emphasizes the key point to give your 100% because the cadets possess influence. Hence, the program helps motivate cadets to excel no matter the role that they carry.



(Rosales (on the left) reviewing an operation during FTX; Photo taken by GCU Army ROTC)

Task Force Commander (TFC) Sam Innanen majors in Christian Studies with an emphasis in biblical studies in pursuit of becoming a chaplain for the US Army. As a TFC, She is in charge of all cadets consisting of two platoons while mentoring, and teaching the cadets beneath her.

“When I came into this position, I thought to myself, ‘What would I have wanted my freshman year?’” After achieving the TFC role, she ensures her platoon on certain procedures that will take place during their training while addressing the improvements, and accomplishments that need to be made. Also, she has used her role to create additional physical training and mentorship programs to help guide the cadets in their Army ROTC journey. Throughout her experience, she’s enjoyed connecting with her cadets as they’re growing and helping one another to become better leaders.

For the majority of college students, they would spend their leisure time to go to parties, have three-day long weekends, or watch Netflix for an hour or two. For these ladies, their priorities differ due to their values while keeping the same level of influential standards on campus as well as off-campus. At the beginning of the semester, freshman Mikaela Steinkamp participated in many events, yet when she entered the Army ROTC program her priorities shifted to heavily focus on her schoolwork, physical training, and relationships with her platoon.

These ladies look forward to being challenged to excel physically, and mentally that help build the military mindset. Mikaela Steinkamp and Isabel Rosales are both majoring in nursing which tests their ability to manage their time wisely. As a student, Rosales believes that all nursing majors need to maintain a well-managed schedule due to the heavy study material that needs to be retained for upcoming exams, and to apply for GCU's Nursing Program. That said, the Army ROTC program helps build the discipline to attain a set-schedule.

As for Innanen, she overcame obstacles by learning from her mistakes. She notes that the best way to handle stressful procedures from the program is to retain, and rely on the information she's accomplished over the past few years that build competence.

One reason on why the program is taxing for the cadets is that they want to achieve the Order of Merit List (OML) by their senior year of college. The OML ranks senior cadets nationwide based from their accomplishments that will determine what career they'll receive.

All three can agree that exercise is a great outlet for them to alleviate stress, but importantly having a great support group is vital to maintain grit to progress in the program. "Your support system can be a great part on how you prioritize. Even in hard times they can help bring you back to the big picture, and help you reinforce on 'why' you are chasing after the right purpose. My family is my support group and they help reinforce that." says Rosales.

For women, it is natural to feel insecure, magnify flaws, and ponder if people will doubt them. The Army ROTC program has helped grow their confidence in exceeding ways to accept, and know who they are as individuals.

"As a woman, you have to rise above the insecurities. We can do as much as men. For instance, we had one cadet who did the bataan death march and she beat all of the other guys to achieve that. That made me realize that women can do the same just as men." says Steinkamp. The bataan memorial death march is a 26.3 mile ruck by hiking different types of terrain while carrying 65 pounds. The ROTC program helps women to take control of what they want to do with their lives as it helps them to rise above their expectations.

"If you're going to be a soldier you have to do what a soldier does, regardless of your gender. I think each person should strive to do their best in their job. One of the sentences of the warrior ethos is 'I will never leave a fallen comrade'. Everyone who joins the military should always have their battle buddy's back." says Innanen.



(TFC Innanen (lower right in the center) leading a 4-mile ruck earlier this semester around GCU's campus; Photo taken by GCU Army ROTC)

Overall, the Army ROTC helped improve the ladies' leadership skills by humbly serving the cadets in their platoon. They've gained these skills by abiding to the seven basic values of the Army: loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage (LDRSHIP). The level of presentation a leader has impacts the way cadets will plan to achieve their mission. That said, being confident in one's abilities will reap great cadets that rise above the level of complacency.

"For me I like seeing people grow. Like in the beginning of the year someone can be struggling to finish one lap on the track and a month later they can be running an eight minute mile. It is amazing to see how people can break their own boundaries." says Rosales.

These ladies continue to lead others with their outstanding character, competence, and diligence that embody their hearts to exceedingly serve the community.

To find out more about GCU's Army ROTC program, visit:

<https://www.gcu.edu/future-students/army-rotc-programs.php>

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