

LEADERSHIP AND MY EXPERIENCES

[What it means to be an Army Officer, along with advice for the next generation of lieutenants]

Good morning esteemed faculty, staff, family, friend, Madam President Doctor Stacey Robertson, GEN John Tilelli, and most importantly, the cadets before me that are about to be commissioned. I am deeply honored to stand here today, grateful to the military administration for this opportunity. You, the future leaders of our nation, **fill me with immense pride and hope**.

I hope you recall the wonderful words of wisdom presented by Dr. Stacey Robertson last week at her commencement address. The salient points were that **age brings perspective**, and there are some fundamentals that provide the foundation for personal and professional success. They are (1) **be curious**, (2) **elbow grease**; that is hard work, (3) **mindfulness**; that is being attentive, and lastly (4) **humility**. I thank you Dr. Robertson for providing a prologue to my talk today on leadership.

Leadership is not just a title; it is the profound responsibility to **guide** and **inspire others toward a shared vision**. It begins with leading yourself - knowing who you are and what you stand for. This self-awareness is the bedrock of effective leadership. Remember, leadership is one of the most **vital attributes** you will carry into your careers.

As I reflect on my journey, which began at Pennsylvania Military College in 1958, I realize that the experiences I gained as an Army Officer were invaluable. I learned that true leaders are genuine. Authenticity fosters trust, and trust is the foundation of any successful team. **Be curious** - dare to venture into the unknown. Analyze complex challenges and seek innovative solutions. **Adaptability is essential**; as innovative technologies emerge, especially in our ever-evolving world, your ability to pivot will set you apart. **Embrace creativity**; bring fresh ideas to the table and redefine what is possible.

One of the most important lessons I learned is to be comfortable with ambiguity. Life will throw you curveballs - embrace them. Cultivate resilience; when you stray off course, regroup, and seek input - **never hesitate to ask for help**. Remember, the success of your organization is intertwined with your own success.

Empathy is the ability to connect on an emotional level. It is a hallmark of great leadership. Strive to understand what matters to your team. **Foster relationships** which are built on trust and open communication. When you step into the shoes of your team members, you will gain invaluable insights and appreciation for their perspectives.

Throughout my military career, I applied these **essential leadership qualities**. From my time in the Bacteriology Section of a 1,000-bed Army Hospital in Southeast Asia, where teamwork became our lifeblood, to my later roles as an HIV educator and Chief of the Inspector General's Inspections Division at the 97th U.S. Army Command, each chapter taught me the importance of **hard work**,

accountability, and personal integrity.

As you embark on your own journeys, strive to **earn** your credibility. Work diligently and take responsibility for your actions. Remember, **respect is not granted; it is earned** through consistent effort and integrity.

Take the **initiative**! When you see a need, rise to the occasion, especially in leadership roles. **Be a mentor** - share your knowledge, guide others, and **embrace the role of a coach**. Ask thoughtful questions, show genuine interest, and **take notes**. Your willingness to learn from others will set you apart as a leader. **Networking is crucial** - capitalize on your connections. Identify resources that can help you solve problems and **always keep an open mind**. Set clear goals; they give purpose to your actions. Maintain professionalism in your appearance and communication - **first impressions matter**.

Emotional intelligence is essential. It is not enough to believe in your abilities; how others perceive you is equally important. **Master the art of two-way communication** and prioritize face-to-face interactions over texting on your phone when resolving conflicts. **Seek mentors**; they are all around you, ready to guide you if you are willing to learn.

And remember, not every manager will be exemplary. Sometimes, you will encounter those who lack knowledge or leadership. In those moments, **take the lead yourself**.

Embrace failure as a steppingstone to success. It is not the fall that defines you, **but how quickly you rise again**. Never leave room for assumptions - communication is key.

As you step into your roles as young officers, remember to **lead with values**. Establish clear expectations and hold yourself accountable. If you encounter obstacles, do not be deterred - find a way around them. **Persistence is crucial**.

I hope you carry these essential qualities of leadership with you throughout your military careers. I am **proud** of your achievements and **eager** for what lies ahead. I salute each of you (RENDER SALUTE TO INDIVIDUALS ABOUT TO BE COMMISSIONED). May God bless you all, Widener University, and Cadets from the other seven universities within the Dauntless Battalion, and may God bless the United States of America.

SHOUT: WIDENER UNIVERSITY PRIDE; WIDENER UNIVERSITY ROAR.
HOOAH! Thank you all!

Then and Now!
Bob Hawley, PMC Class of 1962

