

**CC PAM 145-37**  
**Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps Retention Guide**

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**Supplementation.** Do not supplement this pamphlet without prior approval from Commander, U. S. Army Cadet Command, ATTN: ATCC-T, Fort Monroe, VA 23651-5000.

**Suggested Improvements.** Send comments and suggested changes on [DA Form 2028](#) through channels to Commander, U. S. Army Cadet Command, ATTN: ATCC-T, Fort Monroe, VA 23651-5000. Suggested improvements may also be submitted using [DA Form 1045](#) (Army Ideas for Excellence Program (AIEP) Proposal).

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### Chapter 1, Introduction [TOC](#)

Cadets' voluntary participation in Army ROTC is vital to the future readiness of our Army. Experience and enrollment figures show that we bring in more than enough quality students to easily achieve our commission mission. Our principal challenge clearly is to retain the highly motivated and talented students we recruited into our ROTC program.

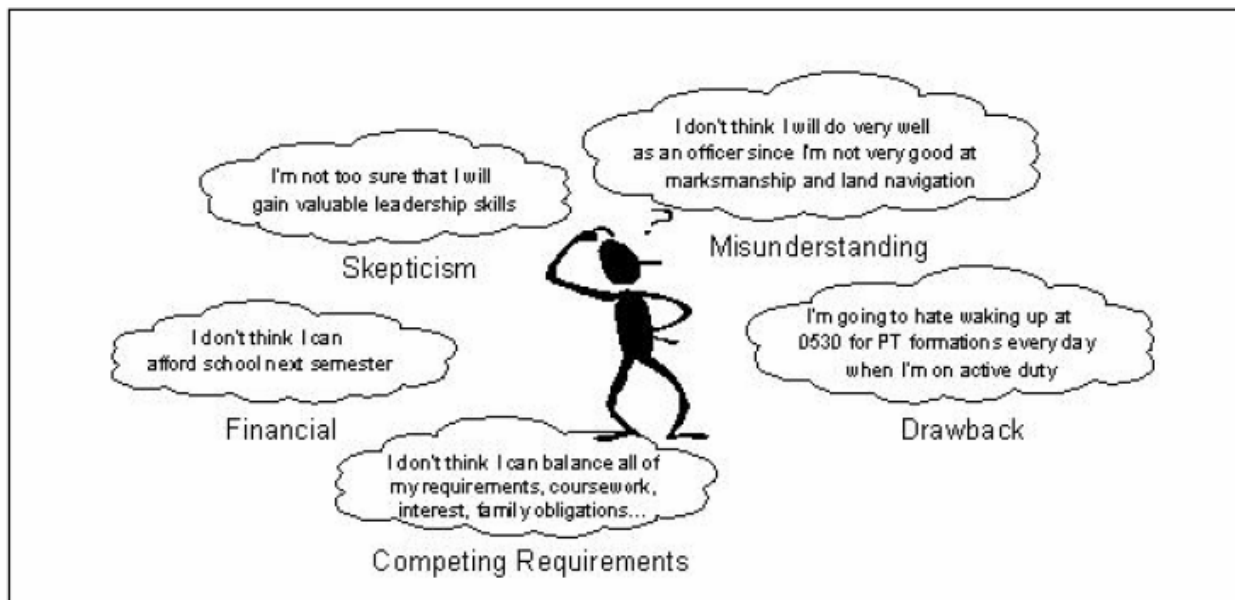
As in any organization, high rates of retention in an ROTC program are a direct reflection of a climate that is professional, understanding, compassionate, built on standards, and takes into account the needs, desires, and motivations of its members - in our case, our Cadets. It also results from the efforts of cadre mentor/leaders who work together to produce an environment that challenges the Scholar-Athlete-Leader to prepare to excel in the most demanding leadership environment in the world: the U.S. Army. Retention is a function of Cadet satisfaction and sense of belonging. Understanding your Cadets and the motivating factors in their lives is critical to crafting the command environment that makes Cadets feel as though they are an important part of an important team. This, in turn, reinforces their decision to remain and grow in the program to commissioning.

ROTC cadre must remember their function in the leader development process. You must remember that the students' primary focus at college is to get an education; ROTC should not be the primary focus. Excessive ROTC demands are reflected in poor grades, migrations, low morale, and Cadets leaving the program. Those students who are pursuing a highly technical degree have an additional unique set of burdens. You must understand these burdens and make appropriate adjustments.

You are not in an MTOE unit. You don't have the same leverage with Cadets as you do with Soldiers. Cadets are not subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice and can vote with their feet. The only adverse recourse a PMS has for a Cadet who fails to comply with the program is disenrollment. A disgruntled Cadet can walk away from ROTC at any time, the only penalties being the repayment of financial support or a possible involuntary call to active enlisted duty to fulfill contractual obligations. This presents you with a very difficult leadership challenge. You cannot make a student join ROTC, nor can you make them stay. But you can drive them away if you use the wrong leadership tools. Enthusiastic Cadets are our best recruiters. You can literally damage your ROTC program for years if you have a group of disgruntled Cadets speaking badly about your program.

This Retention Guide is intended to assist Cadre with retention problem identification and provide techniques to retain quality cadets. It does not contain all the answers and as any ROTC cadre member will tell you, there are no cookie cutter solutions to complicated issues. This guide is intended to inspire thought and aid anticipation in preparation for potential challenges.

Chapter 2, Focus on Retention [TOC](#)



Retention performance indicators come in a wide variety of formats, from the simple measure of whether or not the unit is achieving contract and commission mission to the number of Leaders Training Course (LTC) seats you require in order to support any given mission set. Other indicators of the health of your program can include everything from the most common reasons cited for disenrollment, to comments the Cadets make to you in formal or informal settings, to the number of times you speak with a Cadet's parents during the semester.

The hard copy disenrollment packets located at your unit provide valuable detailed information. In these folders you will find counseling statements and disenrollment letters that should include specific, definitive reasons why a Cadet was disenrolled. [TOC](#)

Some of the common indicators that a program may have a retention problem include:

- ✓ Quality non-contracted Cadets leaving or thinking about leaving the program.
- ✓ Desired percentage of retention for year groups not being met for the Enrollment and Mission Planner.
- ✓ Four-year and three-year advanced designee scholarship awardees not returning for the sophomore year.
- ✓ MS III Cadets not returning to the senior year.
- ✓ Cadet "no shows" in class, labs, training events, or for MS advisor counseling.
- ✓ Counseling forms and Planned Academic Program Worksheets ([CC Form 104R](#)) that are not updated. [TOC](#)
- ✓ Heavy reliance on LTC to meet MS III contract mission.
- ✓ Average retention rates declining over a period of time (Unit Visit Report).

- ✓ Large MS I–II classes with few enrolled student Cadets.
- ✓ High numbers of non-SAL enrollments and contracts.

Programs with good retention will likely reveal the following indicators:

- ✓ High quality prospects successfully recruited.
- ✓ Cadets who are recruiting other students to join the program.
- ✓ Positive command climate surveys, especially from MS I Cadets.
- ✓ High degrees of satisfaction with the branching process.
- ✓ Strong training performance during NALC.
- ✓ Strong national Order of Merit List (OML) standing.
- ✓ Positive relationships and communication with Cadets' parent.
- ✓ Low cadre turnover or underlap in assignments.

Use all of the tools at your disposal to assess the health of your program, and then find the underlying challenges that need to be addressed. Cadets who are satisfied with the program and the cadre, who see the benefits and feel their expectations are being met may, nonetheless, migrate for academic reasons. At the same time, Scholars who are managing tough majors may feel that the pay-off from ROTC does not outweigh the energy it takes to keep up with the additional course work. Assessment of the indicators won't improve retention unless you get to the root cause and develop a method to overcome those challenges. The best, most accurate assessment is worthless without an effective plan to turn things around.

### Chapter 3, Understanding the Causes of Migration and Disenrollment [TOC](#)

The topic list is not all-inclusive but serves as a basis to promote awareness among our cadre. Through awareness and early intervention, we can influence and reaffirm our Cadets' commitment to the program. The techniques and ideas offered below bear marked resemblance to the techniques offered to recruiters to help convince prospects to commit and buy into what the recruiter is selling. In a very real sense, the process of retaining Cadets thru commission entails "re-recruiting" and "re-selling" Cadets as they grow, mature, and face the many changes that occur during a college experience.

The college experience is the most defining stage of life for young adults. The experience is subject to a variety of stresses and strains. Actual or perceived conflicts in a Cadet's life will preclude their continued participation in the ROTC Program. Examples are family problems, career decisions, and personal developmental issues. Understanding and sensitivity are required to address these challenges. Cadet issues can often be resolved by using your influential skills with common sense, counseling, and logical arguments to show students why they need to stay with the program. Many retention issues fall into the same categories as recruiting issues -- ROTC must meet a valid student need and must be accurately perceived as meeting that need. Additionally, the benefits of Army ROTC must not conflict with other individual needs such as the need to pay for the college education, make good grades, etc. Overcoming misperceptions, drawbacks and skepticism is vital for Cadet retention. [TOC](#)

Ultimately, there are three ways for movement out of an ROTC class or mission set – a Cadet will:

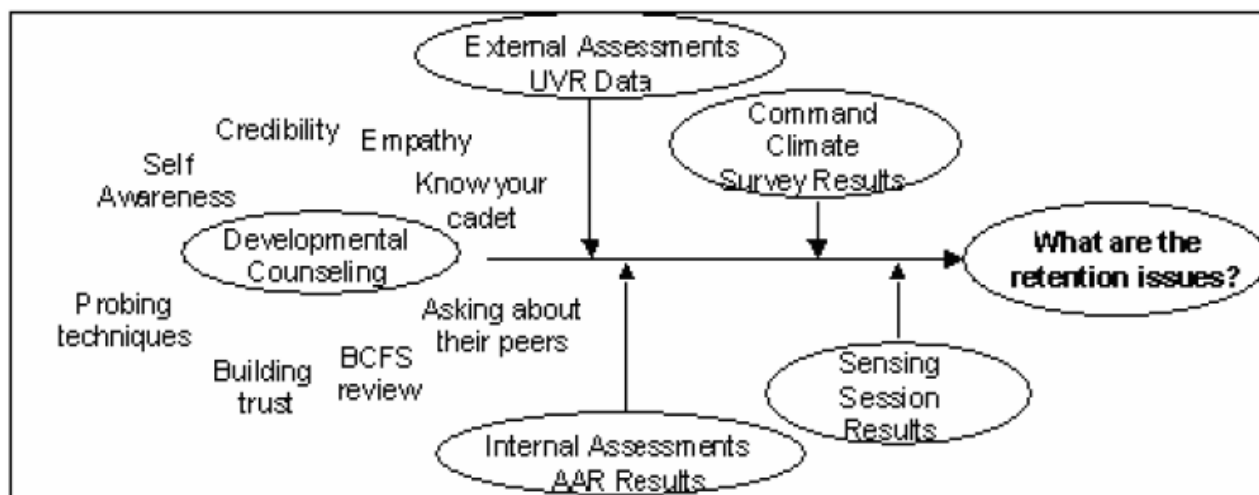
- ✓ Achieve success (graduate and commission),

- ✓ Depart the program (disenroll on request or fail to meet the ROTC or school standards for retention), or
- ✓ Defer their success by migrating to another mission set.

Cadets migrate based on what cadre may perceive as purely academic reasons – course failure or scheduling difficulty. A closer look may reveal that the reason for a scheduling difficulty is related to a personal situation such as dropping courses to accommodate a family situation or to spend more time being employed. Cadets may also disenroll from the program due to physical fitness issues when what actually may be overwhelming to them is the requirement to balance a heavy academic load with the requirement to remain physically fit. Failure of the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) is a common cause of migration.

Disenrollments and migrations may, therefore, be related to the Cadet's financial situation and time management capabilities as well, or they may be related to factors such as cadre expectations or the image of the ROTC program and the Army.

There are a number of issues that a PMS can influence that are often viewed negatively within the ROTC program. The bottom line is that for us to claim the motto of 'the best leadership training program' we must deliver a first-rate organization in which Cadets will be proud to participate, with high standards they will want to uphold. [TOC](#)



### 3-A. Financial [TOC](#)

Tight finances can lead a Cadet to believe they cannot afford to continue with ROTC, or even school, in their current situation. As noted earlier, financial issues can lead to either disenrollment or migration. Financial issues can be overcome by assisting the Cadet in finding solutions to their situation. A first step can be to assess the Cadet's current financial situation to determine the specific issues.

Cadets may have enough funds to cover their college and living expenses. The real issue may be the Cadet is having difficulty telling the difference between needs, wants, and desires. Based on your experience you may want to counsel the Cadet on prioritization and budgeting or refer them to a budgeting class. You may also need to remind them of the access they have to free or reduced-price entertainment, meals, etc.

Cadets may in fact not have enough funds to get them through college. To assist them in this situation you must develop a "kit bag" of things that will assist the Cadet in developing courses of action to

address their financial problems. The "kit bag" needs to include information on where and how to get money, including Reserve Component options such as SMP or even Guard or Reserve enlistment. Examples of techniques that have been effective include: how to qualify for in-state tuition (including state Guard benefits), information on inexpensive transportation and lodging, the benefits of no longer being claimed as dependents on their parents' income tax records, information on available work study programs, and sources of scholarships, financial grants and loans. The school's financial aid office and Reserve Component On-Campus Recruiters are critical resources in this effort. The Office of Student Affairs and Office of Student Services are helpful organizations also.

### 3-B. Skepticism [TOC](#)

Skepticism is evident when a Cadet expresses doubt about your comments regarding life as a commissioned officer. A Cadet who is skeptical needs reassurance that you've accurately reflected what life as an Army officer will be like. To provide that reassurance, you need to acknowledge the concern, offer relevant proof, and check for acceptance.

Acknowledge the concern; let the Cadet know that you understand and respect their views. When you acknowledge a Cadet's concern, be careful not to agree with them or give their concern more credibility than it deserves, but also be careful not to argue with them. In their mind, they have a valid point.

Offer relevant proof. Provide evidence that ROTC and a commission includes the features and benefits you have described. For example, you might show a Cadet that a commissioned officer is more marketable. You could say, "Here is an article from The Wall Street Journal. The table on page XX shows where Fortune 500 companies hire officers. As you can see, former military personnel are the number one source for management positions." In offering proof, make sure the proof you offer is relevant and addresses the specific feature or benefit of continuing in the ROTC program.

After offering proof, you should ensure the Cadet accepts it. If the Cadet rejects your proof, probe to find out why. You then can offer a different source of proof. Another technique would be to ask the Cadet what kind of evidence he/she would like to see. It may be that you have not established your own credibility and the Cadet doubts your sincerity. Attempt to use "unbiased" media sources as well as other influencers on campus or in the community to provide additional proof. "Don't believe it just because I said it – look here's another source who says the same things."

### 3-C. Misunderstanding [TOC](#)

When a Cadet has a concern because he/she thinks ROTC or the Army requires or demands something that is not factual, you must develop a plan to correct this misunderstanding. Influencers (family, friends, peers, significant other, and educators) can be the source of or reinforcement of the misunderstandings. It is beneficial to stay in contact with influencers, especially parents. We have found that one common indicator of good retention is frequent, positive communication with Cadet's parents. Misunderstandings may also be cleared up if you confirm the need behind the concern and then support the need with additional information.

In addressing a misunderstanding, you need to get to the heart of the Cadet's desire, rather than asking what is wrong. For example, a Cadet might say, "I really don't like to be in the field all of the time and I'm not very good at doing basic infantry training." To clarify the concern you might say, "So you're looking for a type of job where your not always in the field doing infantry-type training, is that right?"

Once you have confirmed the need behind the misunderstanding and gained a clear understanding of the need, you can propose a solution. Remember to probe for "the need behind the need" – does this student lack confidence in his/her physical abilities or is he/she concerned that infantry-type skills will not have a long-term benefit?

### 3-D. Drawback [TOC](#)

Often Cadets will become dissatisfied with an aspect of the ROTC program or with what life will be like as an officer. To overcome such drawbacks you should:

- ✓ Let the Cadet know that you understand and appreciate their concerns.
- ✓ Help the Cadet put the drawback in perspective and consider it within the broader context of other needs. You might say: "Would you mind if we took a few minutes to review some of the other factors that will play a role in your decision?" In addressing a drawback, avoid using the word "but," since it may cause the Cadet to feel that you are minimizing the importance of their concern.
- ✓ Once you have refocused them on the bigger picture, you can sometimes overcome a Cadet's reservations by reviewing the benefits the Cadet has already accepted. This can help the Cadet weigh the important needs that will be satisfied by ROTC. For example you might say, "We've discussed how ROTC and receiving a commission will meet your near-term goals, as well as enable you to continue on with your family tradition of serving your country." When selecting benefits to review, ask yourself which ones would be most likely to outweigh the drawback and focus your efforts there.
- ✓ Again, it is critical to check for acceptance to ensure you have satisfied the Cadet's concerns. Remember, too, that students are influenced a great deal by peer pressure. The solution or advice you offer the Cadet should serve as a foundation he or she can use to overcome questions/concerns raised by their peers about their decision to enroll or remain enrolled in the ROTC program.

### 3-E. Competing Requirements [TOC](#)

Many Cadets leave the ROTC program because they feel they are unable to pursue other interests or activities and still do well in both school and ROTC. Inflexibility in scheduling ROTC classes, events and requirements will have a negative effect on Cadets. This is particularly true for Cadets in difficult fields of study, for those involved in varsity athletics, for members of fraternities or sororities, and those elected to the student government. These are exactly the types of Cadets we most desire and at the same time they are the most likely to be driven away by demands we place on them. We cannot afford to lose these talented young leaders. Every effort should be made to ensure that we do not create the perception that ROTC is unfriendly or inflexible. A flexible program successfully balances ROTC, academic, athletic, social, and employment opportunities. Fostering a campus environment that is more student-friendly and flexible can lead to increased retention of Cadets. While ROTC should certainly be challenging, it should also be a program that enhances the total campus experience.

#### a) Cadet Interests

Cadre must listen to their Cadets and hear their likes, dislikes, hobbies, and outside activities, and learn to recognize that these activities that are important to the Cadets. Cadre should use this knowledge to balance Cadets' participation in ROTC with their other college interests. ROTC should not be the critical focus of the Cadet's college experience.

#### b) Taking On Additional Personal Responsibilities

Cadre must also hear the Cadets clearly when they begin describing heavy workloads that stem from volunteer work, personal interests or personal relationships. Illness in the family, opportunities for new challenges or other situations may require or prompt a Cadet to take on responsibilities that further



compete with the demands of the college and ROTC programs. Involvement in the Reserve Component adds additional responsibilities Cadre need to be aware of. [TOC](#)

c) High Tech or Nursing Degrees [TOC](#)

Retention of quality Cadets majoring in difficult degrees requires extra effort. The climate within the battalion should be supportive of Cadets as they work through the conflicting demands of ROTC and their academic majors. Both the cadre and the Cadet chains of command need to understand the additional time constraints placed on students. At times, these demands may conflict with their participation in ROTC activities. Cadre should know and understand the critical times for academic performance in technical degree programs, and assist the Cadet by working around their academic schedule. In the nursing curriculum, for example, the junior year is the most challenging and time-consuming. A PMS might consider allowing the nurse Cadet to slip the LDAC requirement to the summer following graduation and allow the Cadet to commission at the end of camp. Maintaining a positive, understanding climate is essential to a successful partnership between the student and ROTC.

Additional requirements for Nursing:

Cadre must work closely with the School of Nursing faculty and advisors to accommodate class and clinical schedules. They must develop alternatives to maximize participation without adversely affecting the program as a whole. The nursing faculty must be made aware of ROTC schedules, especially field training exercises (FTX) and major training dates. Such coordination should prevent Cadets from having to choose one academic discipline over another. Brigade nurse counselors and the Cadet Command Chief Nurse are available to assist in providing answers or talking to Cadets.

Often, nurse Cadets who contemplate leaving ROTC believe they will find better professional opportunities in a civilian environment. They should be reminded of the professional autonomy that military nurses possess. Unlike civilian communities, where nurses may take a back seat to physicians, both professions hold equal rank and prestige in the Army as officers. As Army nurses advance in rank, they also progress rapidly in career positions. During the time that they progress to a head-nurse position--usually within five years--their civilian peers may still be in staff nursing positions with little hope of advancement unless someone retires or moves away.

In addition, unlike civilian nursing positions, the Army offers guaranteed specialized training within the first two years of service and an opportunity to attend graduate school as a captain. Also available is a vast array of other military medical-related training that is free-of-charge. This training covers areas from hospital specialty courses to battlefield nursing.

**3-F. Campus Perception Challenges** [TOC](#)

Perceptions of the ROTC program amongst the student body on campus directly impact retention. Cadre must do all they can to ensure a positive perception exists on campus through involvement in campus life and university administration. Equally important is the need to rapidly intervene to correct negative perceptions by monitoring campus media, actively seeking out influencers to ensure they understand the program, and generally seeking every opportunity to promote an accurate picture of Army ROTC.

Cadre can generate publicity for, and enhance the perception of, the program by inviting university public affairs personnel, students, and local media to ROTC events. Publicly identifying a student as an ROTC Cadet can instill a sense of belonging and pride. Most universities have a public affairs office, sometimes called the University Relations Office, which will assist with publicizing ROTC. Very likely, at least one member of the staff is assigned to cover every program. Making that individual a member of Military Science Advisory Committee and keeping them informed of upcoming training events, scholarship awards, and military school graduations can reinforce positive perceptions of ROTC. Other



offices on campus, such as the University Advancement office or even Alumni Affairs can also help promote your ROTC program.

Your unit public affairs officer can provide information through the school or local newspaper that can help retain Cadets as well as inspire other students to enroll or contract. Provide articles and photos of individual or team accomplishments and photos and bios of graduating and commissioning Cadets to campus media. Also, provide hometown news releases for branch announcements, accomplishments, or significant events such as commissioning and graduation, NALC and LTC graduates, awards, honors, Cadet Troop Leader Training (CTLT), and airborne/air assault training. Many influencers, family, and friends back home appreciate seeing a familiar name in the local paper. Hometown news releases can improve the perception of ROTC throughout the country by identifying successful Scholar - Athlete - Leaders with the program.

### **3-G. Cadre Impressions** TOC

ROTC battalions are small organizations. The potential impact that a single cadre member can have on a ROTC program, for either good or ill, is truly profound. A negative impression can damage a program for years, not only with students but with faculty and administration as well. The potential damage caused by immoral or unethical behavior is obvious. Less obvious, but almost equally damaging, is the failure to show genuine concern for the welfare of cadre and Cadets. The PMS must establish a positive command climate for cadre, staff, and, most importantly, Cadets, if retention is to be effective.

All cadre and staff--supply technicians, administrative technicians, secretaries, contractors, active component and reserve component soldiers and officers--significantly affect a Cadet's decision to remain with ROTC. How cadre and staff greet candidates, answer phones, and respond to requests for assistance are strong indicators of the relative strength of a program and likely reflect how Cadets will perceive ROTC and the U.S. Army. To preclude or resolve retention problems, issues with cadre and staff must be corrected immediately and appropriately. Command climate must be constantly monitored.

Together with instructor interaction and associated mentoring, classroom instruction is also a major factor in determining whether a student accepts or rejects ROTC. Instructors have a direct influence not only on the Cadets' environment but also on their interest in ROTC and their individual development. Instructors must look sharp, be well prepared, and demonstrate character and professionalism.

### **3-H. Cadre Expectations** TOC

Many times a Cadet is discouraged by his or her inability to achieve standards that may be inflated. Some units attempt to measure success by how far their Cadets exceed the Army standards. Unrealistic expectations may be perceived as an insurmountable barrier to success. An example is requiring all contracted Cadets to achieve 250 on the APFT or to participate in Ranger Challenge before sending them to camp. Cadets must understand the importance of physical conditioning and set personal goals. Success in this business is not based merely on the number of Cadets who were in the top third at camp. Success is based on whether Cadets meet the Army standard and achieve their personal desires and goals. Cadre should also be sensitive to the actions of senior Cadet leaders. Ensure they do not establish unrealistic informal standards for younger Cadets to meet. Not all Cadets want to be in Ranger Challenge, and that is okay.

### **3-I. Support** TOC

Support to our Cadets should be first-rate; this does not imply that you should award a scholarship to every eligible Cadet but that Cadet concerns and requests should receive prompt action and organizational support. Pay attention to Cadets' personnel requests and pay; ensure that they receive proper closure. Uniforms should be issued that fit properly and are serviceable. Accommodate those with long or short sizes, instead of just issuing small, medium, and large. Properly fitted uniforms

enhance self-confidence while in uniform and ease the transition from wearing civilian attire. Evaluate Cadet classrooms and work areas. Do they have proper furniture and equipment to facilitate training and work? Move away from working with 'minimum military equipment'; our competitors are not. Our furniture and equipment should be consistent with the rest of the academic facility. Ensure that the Cadet lounge is professionally inviting. We can still be prudent with our taxpayers' money and establish an environment that better suits our objective to recruit and retain quality Cadets.

### 3-J. Specific Migration Issues [TOC](#)

Ideally we would like to have all Scholar-Athlete-Leader Cadets in the program, but not everyone will fit this model. The PMS and all Cadre need to help those Cadets who demonstrate the right attitude, motivation, desire, and potential, even though they may be struggling in a particular area. The challenge is to maintain a program that facilitates success while managing scarce resources and the limited available time. Too many Cadets who do not bring any scholar, athlete or leader traits will create a drain on resources and retention of the quality Cadets will suffer. Maintaining both academic and fitness standards are requirements for continued participation in Army ROTC. Consider these issues carefully and use existing tools such as the [BCFS](#) and CC Form [104R](#) to minimize preventable migrations.

#### 1) Academic

Academic counseling must be more than a "check-the-block" event. Cadre should ensure Cadets are registered for required classes and that they make adjustments to reflect deviations from their academic work-plans. Early intervention may help Cadets avoid academic difficulties that cause them to migrate mission sets or fail classes that must be repeated. If counseling occurs only once, at mid-term or upon receipt of final grades, there is only one opportunity to intervene and assist in correcting the problem. Cadre should identify those Cadets who are at academic risk, as the first step. Routine and accurate use of the CC Form [104R](#) will ensure early identification of potential academic dropouts and migrations. As a minimum, the CC Form [104R](#) should be reviewed and updated every semester. Cadre can then act to make Cadets aware of the available referral agencies and resources on campus that to assist them academically. The following are suggestions for dealing with academic failures:

- ✓ Provide information on assistance, such as tutoring available on campus.
- ✓ Recommend that Cadets seek out or form a study group.
- ✓ Refine your battalion mentoring program to address specific cadet needs.
- ✓ Review time management techniques with Cadets to schedule time for studying.
- ✓ Place Cadets on academic probation and counsel them on the consequences.

#### 2) Personal Fitness

Physical fitness is a core competency of Army service. ROTC should not only nurture the fitness ethos in Cadets, but should teach the importance of maintaining good physical condition, deeply etching it into their lifestyle. APFT scores are a good indicator of progress, but not the only measure. Assist Cadets in setting goals and developing plans of action to accomplish them. Monitor progress and provide assistance tailored to achieve the individual goals, with the Army standard as THE standard. One of the fundamental facets of the ROTC fitness program is to imbue each Cadet with an appreciation for the importance of physical fitness and firmly embed a personal commitment to a well-rounded conditioning program. [TOC](#)

The U.S. Army Physical Fitness School (USAPFS) official website, <http://www.bct.army.mil/pfs.apx>, provides helpful information concerning physical fitness. Conditioning drills, flexibility, running, nutrition, special/remedial programs, injury prevention, and even how to choose the right running shoes are some

of helpful information found on this website. Additional topics include physical fitness doctrine, policy, and research.

## Chapter 4, Identification Techniques: Catch the Indicators Early [TOC](#)

### 4. Identification Techniques: Catch the Indicators Early

Early knowledge that a Cadet is contemplating leaving the program is key to the cadre's ability to positively influence the situation. A Cadet's decision to voluntarily leave the program (disenroll) should not be a surprise. Early identification happens when you are "in tune" with your Cadets as a result of scheduled and tracked formal counseling, including initial counseling and academic counseling using the CC Form [104R](#). You can also gain invaluable insight through routine interviews you conduct with your Cadets as the opportunities arise. Through the formal counseling, you should be aware of the common indicators of potential migration-- failing or very poor grades in course work, for example. Other informal techniques may provide earlier insight and the opportunity to get Cadets on track before you lose them.

#### 4-A. Cadet Interviews [TOC](#)

The techniques outlined here are not new to you --the majority of them come from the Army standards for counseling. You should adapt and adjust them to establish positive, open communication between your cadre and your Cadets.

##### 1) Probing:

This is the process by which you gather information to achieve an understanding of the Cadet's needs. The ability to ask questions that logically and efficiently uncover important information about a Cadet's needs is important. Do this in a way that does not make the Cadet feel uncomfortable.

##### a) Open Probe Techniques:

Encourage Cadets to respond freely. For example; you might ask, "What do you find most interesting about ROTC?", "What was interesting and now is no longer interesting?", "What would make ROTC more interesting again?", "What are your goals?" or, "Tell me, how did you come to that conclusion?" Open probes are the leading questions that help a Cadet open up to discussion.

##### b) Closed probes: [TOC](#)

Questions that can be answered with a simple "yes" or "no" should be used to bring focus or closure to a discussion. They are particularly useful when a Cadet rambles or does not provide useful information. Closed probes, if relied upon too heavily, tend to make the Cadets feel as if they are being interrogated or make them unwilling to share information, but can provide clarification and help to prioritize or uncover the real issues.

##### c) Get to the bottom line answer:

You must be willing to spend time and effort to develop the skills and rapport to get to the real issues of why the Cadet is contemplating leaving the program. A Cadet may say, "I lost interest." This is a valid reason, but a poor explanation. When a Cadet gives you a reason for leaving the program, probe a little further and ask him/her if they would stay if you were able to fix or eliminate that reason or if the benefits of staying could be enhanced so that the reasons for leaving were overcome. Keep probing until a specific, definitive reason is identified.

## 2) Developmental Counseling

Developmental counseling is the best way to identify what is causing the Cadet to contemplate leaving and can also support positive retention and a solid command climate. Effective counseling happens when you demonstrate certain qualities common to effective counselors.

### a) Respect for Cadets: **TOC**

As ROTC cadre, you show respect for Cadets when you allow them to take responsibility for their own ideas and actions. Respect improves the chances of changing (or maintaining) behavior and achieving goals. Your many roles--mentor, educator, parental figure, and member of the profession you want them to join-- all carry with them the responsibility to bolster each Cadet's own standing as a student and a young adult.

### b) Self-awareness and cultural awareness:

Cadre must be fully aware of their own values, needs, and biases prior to counseling Cadets. Self-aware cadre are less likely to project their biases onto Cadets. Cultural awareness is part of this mental attribute. ROTC cadre need to be aware of the similarities and differences between individuals of different cultural backgrounds and how these factors may influence values, perspectives, and actions. Cultural awareness enhances your ability to display empathy, and is crucial to earning the respect and trust of the Cadet.

### c) Empathy:

Empathy is being understanding of and sensitive to the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of another person. By honestly trying to understand the Cadet's perspective, you can better help a Cadet develop a plan of action that fits the Cadet's personality and needs. You may not be able to fully understand a situation from your Cadet's point of view, but if you don't make an honest effort, you will have less credibility in their eyes and have a far more difficult time influencing their decisions. **TOC**

### d) Credibility:

Cadre achieve credibility by being honest and consistent in their statements and actions. You can earn credibility by repeatedly demonstrating your willingness to assist a Cadet and being consistent in what you say and do. If you lack credibility with your Cadets, you'll find it difficult to influence them. Your credibility is enhanced when you consistently apply high standards while remaining approachable.

### e) Knowing your Cadets:

Having detailed information about a Cadet also improves credibility, as well as providing common ground that may aid in communication. Create a student profile; include information on their motivation for joining ROTC, their influencers, their values, current financial situation, and other pertinent information dealing with their lives. All cadre should provide input to the Cadet profile folder from day one and update it regularly. A Cadet profile folder that contains specific Cadet information is a necessary tool for cadre to review prior to counseling. Demonstrating to the Cadet that you have taken the time to know them will show not only that you care, but also will enable any counseling to go beyond superficial conversation.

## 4-B. Other Methods of Investigation **TOC**

Information from sensing sessions, command climate surveys, and internal assessments can also identify trends and the root cause(s) of your retention problems.

### 1) Sensing Sessions

This could be a good source of information on specific program issues that may be driving Cadets away. Participants can be groups such as all MS IIIs, randomly selected Cadets from across the Battalion, or even cadre. HQCC IG can assist you in structuring a sensing session to provide the most valuable feedback.

## 2) Command Climate Surveys

This is another valuable tool to identify why Cadets elect to leave the program. Consider [DA Pam 600-69, Unit Climate Profile Commander's Handbook](#), for some ideas on questions to ask. It is helpful to conduct a survey at the beginning of each semester to assess the "health" of the organization and identify areas of concern early. Awareness of Cadets' perceptions provides an advantage in addressing unit retention challenges. Such awareness can be developed using routine command climate surveys.

## 3) Internal Assessments and After Action Reviews (AARs)

Use the AAR process to gain information on the usefulness of each ROTC event and its impact on retention. At times, we find ourselves doing an event, such as parking cars to raise funds for the Cadet Fund, because we have always done it even though it has proven to have a negative impact on retention. Remember, Cadets are busy students; don't add fundraising events to their burdens if you can avoid it. Be sensitive to perceptions of other students, too; asking Cadets to park cars or provide security during campus events can and has backfired and cost programs dearly in good will as well as recruiting and retention.

## 4) Cadet Chain of Command [TOC](#)

Asking Cadets about their Cadet peers will often reveal much, since Cadets often know key details concerning other Cadets. Through them you may learn who is not happy, who is struggling in school, and other valuable information. Use the Cadet chain of command to gain insight on potential "at risk" Cadets. This can also be a useful vehicle for introducing senior Cadets to the developmental counseling process. Remember that to be most effective Cadet counselors will require training.

## 5) Cadre Staff Calls

Weekly cadre review of selected Cadet profile folders can be a good management tool to focus on and discuss each Cadet's performance in class, as well as their standing in physical training, laboratories, height and weight, cumulative GPA, motivation, attitude, and other relevant areas. Often a single cadre member can overlook an indicator that is seen by other cadre. Share information.

## 6) Battalion Commissioning Forecast System ([BCFS](#)) [TOC](#)

[BCFS](#) is a useful tool in early identification and tracking the status of each Cadet. [BCFS](#) is reviewed and updated monthly by the PMS to identify Cadet issues. Reviewing the [BCFS](#) with the cadre and the individual Cadet will enable you to identify problems early, and should provide a solid assessment of the potential to commission a Cadet within the contracted mission set. Each PMS is required to update the [BCFS](#) before submitting a monthly mission forecasting report through the Mission Set Management Report (formerly called the Battalion Mission Set Report) to Cadet Command. Additionally, the PMS presents the [BCFS](#) to the brigade commander at least twice per school year, which provides a formal mechanism to validate unit's mission forecasts. [BCFS](#) promotes awareness and provides validation rather than serving as just another system to track Cadets. It is a systematic approach to developing a realistic appraisal of each Cadet's development to commissioning.

## 7) Other Ways to Identify "At Risk" Cadets

Cadre need to know their Cadets and be alert for and sensitive to performance changes. A change in a Cadet's behavior, motivation, or attitude must be quickly identified for the cadre to positively influence the situation in the narrow window of opportunity that may be available. Like all college students, Cadets will have "bad days," but a pattern of poor performance or attitude can often be prevented if an influencer such as a cadre member notes the change and asks the right question. Cadre must share their insights on changes in behavior and attitude in order to uncover the indicators, patterns, and risk.

## Chapter 5, Intervention Techniques: Prevent Migration and Disenrollment and Positively Affect Retention Throughout the Cadet Life cycle [TOC](#)

Knowing where each Cadet stands within his or her degree program and ROTC lifecycle will help a unit synchronize its retention efforts. Students new to college are away from home for the first time. Reception and integration counseling will set the stage for everything that follows. You must have an effective counseling program for new Cadets when they join your team. Reception and integration counseling activities serve two purposes. First, it identifies and allows the unit to rectify any problems or concerns that new members may have, especially regarding any issues resulting from enrolling in ROTC, a new and different kind of college course. Second, it lets them know the organizational standards and how they fit into the team. It serves to clarify job titles and sends the message that you and your cadre truly care about them.

Reception and integration counseling should begin as soon as possible after Cadets arrive on campus if the students are new. For students recruited on campus, it serves to introduce them to you and your cadre, so new team members can quickly become integrated into the organization. Consider assigning Cadet sponsors to help transition.

Every additional opportunity you take to get to know your Cadets allows you to catch the early indicators of pending migration or disenrollment. Beyond that, however, it allows you to affect retention (and continued recruiting) in a positive manner.

### 5-A. Reception [TOC](#)

Just as at any unit, reception of new members sets the stage for their perception of the professionalism within an organization. To get the process off to a good start, cadre must treat new Cadets as welcome additions. ROTC must make a good first impression because it is competing with every other department on campus. Members must dress appropriately and professionally, smile often, and greet new Cadets with energy and enthusiasm. Cadre must convey by their actions and their tone that they are proud of and comfortable in the ROTC environment. Answering phone calls should be done with retention in mind. A good first impression goes a long way in overcoming misconceptions formed by television or movies, and encourages Cadets to learn more about what the Army does. Remember that cadets are enrolled students in a college elective course, not contracted enlisted soldiers.

### 5-B. Integration [TOC](#)

Integration is the process of incorporating Cadets into the ROTC program in a manner in which they can feel accepted by the team. Cadre should develop a sponsorship program for incoming freshman and transfer Cadets. The following are examples of events or activities that may be conducted to help integrate students into the program:

- ✓ Social event, e.g., pizza and soft drink gatherings, hosted by cadre. Focus on making introductions, providing information on the curriculum, demonstrating proper wear of the uniform, and providing information about Cadet groups or clubs such as Ranger Challenge, drill team, color guard, Pershing Rifles, etc.
- ✓ Scavenger hunt. This event may help new Cadets find their way around campus, ensuring the Military Science Department is one of the stops with recruiting publicity item handouts.



- ✓ Staff rides. Target local museums, historical sites, Army installations, etc.
- ✓ Special reception ceremonies/receptions for three-year advanced designee and four-year scholarship winners and parents.
- ✓ Recognition of other scholarship awardees and achievements, especially contracting of MS III Cadets.

**TIP from the Field:** "Last year we started a sponsorship program for all Cadets new to Army ROTC. In this program, we provide every new Cadet a sponsor who has been in the program at least one year. We try to match them up based on some shared interest or background: academic major, Simultaneous Membership Program (SMP) involvement, hometown, sports interest, etc. The sponsor helps the new Cadet get off to a good start in ROTC by teaching them basics such as: wear of the uniform, customs and courtesies, equipment assembly, general ROTC expectations, and ROTC extracurricular opportunities. This program has helped us increase our retention because it speeds up the psychological bonding process of the individual with the group. This program complements and supports the Cadet chain of command and smoothes out some of the leadership turmoil caused by the MS IIIs rotating into and out of the leadership positions."

#### 5-C. Teambuilding /Bonding [TOC](#)

Military organizations and group activities such as **Phi Kappa Omega Alpha Chapter**, [Scabbard and Blade](#), and [Pershing Rifles](#) encourage teambuilding and friendships among Cadets. When time and resources permit, cadre should plan and publicize morale and team-building activities or socials. Events such as white-water rafting, ski trips, Leaders Reaction Course, field training exercises, dining in/out, military balls, organizational sports day, and paintball provide great opportunities for Cadets to bond with one another. Some universities can provide designated dorm or residential living areas specifically for ROTC Cadets to assist in the bonding efforts. Designated living areas will enable Cadets to establish friendships early. Another great way to encourage teambuilding is to sponsor Cadet intramural teams with senior Cadets as coaches and registration fees funded. Remain sensitive to time demands on students and don't turn what should be an enjoyable event into a problem.

**Key Point:** *While building cohesion within the ROTC Cadet battalion, you might also guard against Cadets becoming isolated from the general population. Cadets on campus are there to get an education. These interests will be best served by exposing Cadets to the broad offerings of campus life. "Cadets majoring in ROTC are not necessarily what we want."*

#### 5-D. Maintaining Communication [TOC](#)

Cadre must communicate regularly with Cadets: if you lose contact, you lose Cadets. Remaining in contact with Cadets, especially when they are away from campus, shows a concern for and commitment to their well-being. To maintain communication:

- ✓ Encourage Cadets to keep you informed.
- ✓ Call a Cadet who is absent from class or misses a training event.
- ✓ Know where Cadets will spend their semester breaks and what they will be doing.
- ✓ Use multiple forms of communication, e.g., phone, e-mail, text, postcards, letters.



## 5-E. Mentoring Cadets [TOC](#)

Mentoring is coaching, motivating, teaching, providing experience and direction, and guiding Cadets through the college experience and the ROTC leadership development process. All cadre members and Cadets can act as mentors. An experienced Cadet with similar interests or background—academic major, sports, hometown, and SMP involvement—can assist new Cadets in being accepted as part of the team. Experienced Cadets can show the new Cadets how to wear a uniform, explain military jargon, and other common tasks. Mentoring also seeks to strengthen and sustain Cadets in their educational and career goals and to assist in making college an exciting, fulfilling, and successful experience. Mentoring can be challenging and time-consuming. If using Cadet mentors, remain sensitive to time demands. Some of your most effective Cadet mentors will be those with the most demanding academic and extracurricular loads to bear. Don't burn them out or, worse, lose them through disenrollment or migration due to competing requirements.

**TIP from the Field:** *"We have created a 'mentoring team' made up of a cadre member, upper-class Cadet 'buddy,' Cadet's parents, an academic advisor, and a coach (where applicable) to help guide the Cadet in his/her new environment."*

The goals of an Army ROTC mentoring program are to:

- ✓ Promote academic excellence.
- ✓ Support development of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for successful completion of academic and commissioning goals.
- ✓ Encourage development of supportive relationships with other Cadets, faculty, cadre, and staff.
- ✓ Promote self-confidence.
- ✓ Develop leadership skills that will enable Cadets to become campus leaders and future Army officers.

An ideal mentor should: [TOC](#)

- ✓ Guide but not direct.
- ✓ Listen attentively.
- ✓ Give positive feedback and coach constructively.
- ✓ Display a positive attitude.
- ✓ Be a good role model.
- ✓ Enjoy his or her job.
- ✓ Empathize with others.
- ✓ Know Cadet position responsibilities and roles within the big picture.
- ✓ Want to encourage and assist others.
- ✓ Demonstrate strong leadership commitment and technical skills. [TOC](#)

**TIP from the Staff:** *In addition to your mentorship program, battalions can also take advantage of the Special Recruiting Assistance Program (SRAP) or the Officer Returning Alumni Program (ORAP). Recruiting Assistance Programs exist to support unit's efforts to retain our Cadets. Specific information can be found on the Right Site in MOI, Special Recruiting Assistance Program (SRAP), dated 22 Feb 08 and MOI, Officer Returning Alumni Program (ORAP), dated 22 Feb 08.*

## 5-F. Academic Alignment [TOC](#)

Helping to keep Cadets on the academic path to graduate as scheduled is a demanding task--you must be involved from the time a Cadet enters your program until the Cadet leaves, hopefully as a new 2lt. Cadre awareness and active counseling are the key factors in managing migration. [CC Form 104R](#) is the form advisors use to plan out academic progress. [CC Form 104R](#)s should be reviewed every semester to ensure the Cadet has an achievable plan that he or she understands and follows, and to review how the previous semester went. Cadre must avoid relying too heavily on departmental academic advisors who may check only to see if the Cadet has the right course titles and may be less concerned with the course load. Cadre must learn how to be academic counselors themselves; the PMS should arrange for cadre training through coordination with the office of the registrar or academic affairs. Cadets must receive timely and accurate assistance to fully understand their college academic majors and general education credit requirements (classes required to graduate).

To avoid migrations the [CC Form 104R](#) should be reviewed frequently. A review should begin early in the process and each Cadet's progress monitored. Occasionally you will have unavoidable migrations; however, effective and diligent [CC Form 104R](#) management can limit them, as well as facilitate early identification of a Cadet who may not commission in the mission set as originally projected. A [CC Form 104R](#) that reflects a maximum load with no room for dropping or making up a class should be seen as a bright red flag signaling a Cadet who may migrate. Failure of any classes during a semester, a weak cumulative GPA, or specific class requirements that are offered only in a given term may affect a Cadet's progress and could also indicate a potential for migration. [TOC](#)

**TIP from the Field:** *"Experience shows that academic advisers are sometimes reluctant to sign a Cadet's [104R](#) because they aren't sure what it is they are signing. While most colleges have a system to plan and track academic progress, this system may not look at all like [CC Form 104R](#). Our [CC Form 104R](#) sample letter gives the Cadet's adviser a heads up that their advisee (Cadet) will soon approach them seeking approval and signature on the [CC Form 104R](#), and explain the rationale regarding the need for the form. The intent is to help alleviate any concern the adviser may have in signing something when he or she is not sure of the purpose. The letter was intentionally written in the informal interdepartmental format and placed on the school's letterhead (rather than battalion letterhead) to further reduce any reluctance the adviser may have placing his or her signature on a "government" document. Sending this letter ahead of time, accompanied by a blank/sample [CC Form 104R](#), may make it easier for the Cadet to obtain the adviser's signature. It also gives the adviser a specific point of contact (the PMS) if they have any questions or concerns they want to clear up before they meet with the student. Finally, the letter makes the adviser aware of the consequences of the Cadet's failure to progress, which may cause the adviser to pay closer attention to the academic plan and progress of the Cadet."*

**Key Point:** Cadre need to be somewhat flexible and be prepared to help translate university academic planning tools to the [CC Form 104R](#) to facilitate a tracking of academic progress.

## 5-G. MS V, VI, and Completion Cadets [TOC](#)

Although tracking MS V, VI, and Completion Cadets can be difficult, it is necessary to guide them to commissioning. These Cadets must be counseled at least twice per semester on requirements--PT, height/weight, grades, etc.--and encouraged, as senior Cadets, to participate in activities. Regular contact, at least once a month, is required to ensure they do not "slip through the cracks." Cadets with

weak academic records, weight-related problems, financial problems, etc., should be considered "at-risk" and should be contacted more frequently to ensure they remain focused on graduation.

## 5-H. Special Events [TOC](#)

### 1) Contracting

Cadre should counsel students before contracting, emphasizing what it means to become a commissioned officer in the U.S. Army. They should explain the responsibilities and honors associated with being a commissioned officer and the extent of the Army's investment in the students. Students must clearly understand that they are entering and signing a contract; they must appreciate its benefits as well as the obligations they assume by virtue of signing the contract.

Then, make a big deal out of it! Contracting is a key milestone. Hold a ceremony and, if feasible, invite family, friends, peers, and influencers. During the ceremony, cadre should highlight the commitment of the student. Explain the significance of being qualified for and accepted into a program leading to an Army commission. Armed with this knowledge and perspective, influencers have proven to be powerful allies in helping keep the Cadet focused on his or her commitment. Ceremonies may be conducted at agreed-upon times and can be done during class, lab, PT or during award ceremonies.

**TIP from the Field:** *"We redesigned our annual activities to tailor a special experience for each MS class. For MS I's, we designed a "Survivor" FTX that was heavy on group dynamics and 'discovery' leadership, where they had to successfully negotiate STXs to get the ingredients for their dinner. MS II's went on a "Military Orientation" FTX to Fort Leonard Wood for branch briefings, museum visit, national cemetery visit, PX and movie, and confidence course -- to sell the Army culture and experience prior to their contracting decision. MS III's had a special contracting ceremony in front the entire battalion to celebrate their decision -- intent is to take the anxiety out of contracting. MS III's also went to Fort Leonard Wood for land navigation, basic rifle marksmanship, and confidence course to work on advanced camp skills. MS IVs executed all other MS level FTXs and go on a staff ride in the spring. This approach takes lower classmen out of the training aide scenario, and gives Cadets something new to look forward to each year."*

### 2) Leaders Training Course [TOC](#)

LTC is the first exposure to the military for many lateral entry Cadets. Special consideration must be taken before, during and after LTC to ensure you have a viable retention program to get your Cadets to LTC and through LTC, and ensure they return to campus in the fall.

- ✓ If possible and at limited cost, enroll students in the MS II course on campus to start the reception, integration, and teambuilding process with their peers.
- ✓ Teach them the basics: uniform standards, how to break-in and maintain boots, marching skills, customs and courtesies, etc., to instill confidence.
- ✓ Provide information on the Leaders Training Course and answer all questions and concerns to reduce anxiety caused by the unknown.
- ✓ Provide all required uniforms and equipment as well as a sundry package with moleskin, sunscreen, insect repellent, talcum powder, and other useful items.
- ✓ Have a pre-LTC social, inviting previous camp graduates to share their experiences.
- ✓ Visit the Cadets at LTC if possible; provide them phone cards or post cards and encourage them to write about their experiences.

- ✓ Send a letter home to parents/spouses telling them about the LTC experience their Cadet is going through and a bit about what lies ahead in the ROTC program.
- ✓ Contact the Cadet after camp and congratulate them on accomplishments. Conduct a personal AAR with them to review their experiences and tie them to the benefits of Army ROTC and service as an Army officer.

### 3) Summer Training [TOC](#)

By the time Cadets are ready for NALC, they will have been with the ROTC program for some time and cadre may forget that NALC training events are stressful and may be somewhat frightening to most Cadets. The cadre must work extra hard to allay fears and maintain contact with and provide support to all Cadets in the weeks leading up to NALC. In addition to using some of the ideas already cited, the ideas below may help you ensure your Cadets arrive at the NALC, CTLT, Cadet Professional Development Training, airborne or air assault training, National Guard or Army Reserve Annual Training (AT), or any other schools, courses, or camps prepared for success: [TOC](#)

- ✓ Provide transportation to and from the airport or training site.
- ✓ Remain in contact with Cadets at the end of the term and before departing to summer training.
- ✓ Track the progress of your Cadets.
- ✓ Write to the Cadet more than once; send a care package.
- ✓ Write to parents about their son/daughter's progress and accomplishments; send photos if possible.
- ✓ Visit or contact Cadets at camp if possible.
- ✓ Meet with or contact the student upon return from summer training.
- ✓ Submit an article to the campus newspaper describing the training.
- ✓ Submit a Hometown News Release upon graduation or completion of training.
- ✓ Recognize and reward graduates and their accomplishments.

**Key Point:** *Tracking and remaining in contact with Cadets during summer training will enable you to influence a situation before it is too late. Situations of concern may include: attitude problems, lack of motivation, homesickness, contemplating quitting, poor performance, and so on.*

## Chapter 6, Incentives for Cadet Retention [TOC](#)

### Program Incentives [TOC](#)

Incentives are intended to assist committed Cadets to reach graduation and commissioning. They can also be influential tools to retain quality Cadets. Incentives include more than scholarships and pay. Specialty schools such as Airborne School, Air Assault School, Combat Survival Training, Mountain Warfare Training, Northern Warfare Training, and as well as Cadet Field Training and Cadet Troop Leaders Training are great retention tools. Reserve Component associations, such as SMP, can also

be effective retention tools that provide the Cadet with financial assistance, training, and enhance their commitment to the ROTC program. There are also many other ways to provide additional financial incentives to your cadets. Encourage university administrators to see if they would be willing to support room and board scholarships for those cadets who bring in full tuition scholarships to the school. Seek other avenues to support cadets both financially and through other incentive programs.

**TIP from the Field:** *"At our school, Cadets have access to limited-credit MS I/MS II courses. Enlistment in the reserve components and attendance at Basic Combat Training ( BCT ) and Advanced Individual Training ( AIT ) is a maturing experience for Cadets, which improves academic performance, increases retention and accelerates the development of Cadets as leaders. In turn, the Virginia Army National Guard (VaARNG ) and U.S. Army Reserve units get high-speed Soldiers for two to four years, and potentially a high-speed Lieutenant. Army ROTC participation continues their development on campus. Drilling reservists, serving as cadre as part of the alternative staffing program, are positive examples for students and promote interest in serving simultaneously in the reserve components. Enlisting in the VaARNG and the USAR provides an underclassmen with an alternative means to help pay for their college education, and the contribution of individual and unit training provides a continued incentive to participate as upperclassmen in the Simultaneous Membership Program." [TOC](#)*

**OFFICIAL:**

**//SIGNED//**  
**WILLIAM T. WISEMAN**  
Colonel, GS , U.S. Army  
Chief of Staff