Clarke: Welcome to *Pritzker Military Presents* with a discussion about the history of ROTC and JROTC with guests Colonel Andy Morgado, Dr. Arthur Coumbe, and Colonel Daniel Baggio. I’m your host Ken Clarke, and this program is coming to you from the Pritzker Military Museum and Library in downtown Chicago, and it’s presented in partnership with the US Army Public Affairs Midwest. This program and hundreds more are available on demand at PritzkerMilitary.org. The Army Reserve Officers’ Training Corps, or ROTC, and the Junior Reserve Officers’ Training Corps, or JROTC, began one hundred years ago with President Wilson signing the National Defense Act of 1916, a year before the United States entered into WWI. Although military training had been taking place in civilian colleges and universities as early as 1819, the signing of the National Defense Act brought this training under a single federally controlled entity, the Reserve Officers Training Corps. Army ROTC is the largest officer-producing organization in the American military, having commissioned more than half a million second lieutenants since its inception. ROTC is offered at approximately one thousand colleges and universities and provides cadets with scholarships in addition to their officer training. Junior ROTC begins in high school and teaches students character education, student achievement, wellness, leadership, and diversity. Colonel Andy Morgado is Brigade Commander 3rd Brigade, US Army Cadet Command, commander of senior and junior reserve officer training corps units across a ten-state region in the upper Midwest. He was commissioned a second lieutenant of armor in 1994 from the ROTC program at Lee High University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. He graduated with a bachelor’s of arts degree in government and earned his master's in diplomacy from Norwich University. In twenty years on active duty he served on three deployments to Iraq, two operational deployments to Korea, and served in a variety of command and staff positions in the continental United States. Dr. Arthur Coumbe is a colonel of the United States Army and an associate professor of history and researcher historian in the Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis. Dr. Coumbe earned a bachelor’s of science in national security and public affairs from the US Military Academy in 1973 and a Ph.D. in history from Duke University in 1985. Previously Dr. Coumbe was a historian for the US Army Cadet Command, the organization responsible for the management of the army’s ROTC program. A military historian by training, Dr. Coumbe's primary research interests are officer education and management, officer accessions, and the religious history of the US Military Academy. Coumbe is the author of several books about the history of cadet command. Colonel Daniel Baggio is the director of military instruction for Chicago Public Schools. He is chief administrator and instructional leader, responsible for resourcing and leading forty-five JROTC programs in high schools across Chicago with the cumulative enrollment of approximately 10,000 cadets. He earned a bachelor's of science in physical education from the University of Wisconsin Whitewater and a master's of arts in human speech communication from the University of Northern Colorado as well as a master's of strategic studies from the United States Army War College. Colonel Baggio’s thirty years on active duty include eleven years overseas in command and staff positions in Korea, Japan, Belgium, and Turkey and serving as the US Army Forces Command chief of public affairs. Please join me in welcoming to the Pritzker Military Museum and Library Colonel Andy Morgado, Dr. Arthur Coumbe, and Colonel Daniel Baggio. Welcome gentleman. Thank you for being here today.
Clarke: So let's get into the nuts and bolts of what ROTC is and what it does and what JROTC is. And I would like each of you to spend a moment telling me from your perspectives what the programs are and what they do and what they mean to you.

Morgado: Great. Thanks, Ken. I really appreciate that. I have the distinct privilege of being 3rd Brigade Army ROTC Commander responsible for the upper Midwest and responsible for both senior and junior ROTC. Though both programs fall underneath the umbrella of my command, I would say they're two very distinct programs. Senior ROTC is essentially charters given to produce quality leaders for our army. It's a matter of national security, to provide our soldiers, our army quality leadership. So that's our primary mission on the senior side. So we're looking for leaders of character. We develop them as scholars, athletes, and leaders, and we want them to be professional army soldiers and join our profession when they're complete with their college education. I'll let the sergeant expert on junior kinda field that portion of it.

Clarke: Okay.

Baggio: Yeah, the junior ROTC program, we are a citizenship program. We're a leadership program. We focus on--our core curriculum is actually aligned with the common core in fact since 2012, so we focus on critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration. In fact one of our academic competitions we have right here at the Pritzker Museum and Military Library is our JROTC Leadership and Academic Bowl. So we focus on those sorts of things. Another key element that we do is we do a lot of service learning. Some of our projects include doing fundraising for cancer research, feeding the homeless, taking care of veterans. All of the forty-five programs have to do service learning projects. So it's about learning to give back to your community, whether it be your high school involvement--and puts the kids in a great leadership position, with a military model, but by no means does anybody that go into JROTC--we are not recruiters. That is not our mission.

Clarke: Arthur?

Coumbe: I think they've outlined the purpose and the differences between the two programs fairly well. I would only add that both programs since 1916 have been focused on reaching out to the American public, helping the public understand the defense mission, helping the public understand what is unique about the military and some of the problems and needs the military has. And both programs I think have been tasked to do that really for the last century.

Morgado: I'm sorry, Dr. Coumbe, that's a great point and a super question, because one of the biggest hurdles or obstacles that we face in ROTC is exactly that, drawing the distinction about what our programs do and what we do on campus. And so many times we are the only military face, the only army face that many of our fellow citizens see on a daily basis. So that's probably one of the biggest parts of our job.

Clarke: Let's talk about that a little more, 'cause it's a great topic. People on college campuses, they see ROTC cadets. They're either gathering in formation or they're doing physical training, or they're doing whatever the cadets do on a campus--studying, things like that. And if somebody lives near a high school in Chicago or in other metropolitan areas, they're gonna see the cadets in uniform doing things. And I don't think that people truly know what's happening there on these kind of things. And I think maybe there are some misconceptions that we'll get into. And I don't also think that people value of the programs and the institutions that they're in in addition to the students. So Andy, will you tell me a little bit about some of those values?

Morgado: Sure. I'm probably gonna take great risk here in replying to this question because Dr. Coumbe is an alumnus of the United States Military Academy, but I have to draw a comparison, and I think it will help bring out the distinction. At the military
academy, the military instruction—your development to become a professional army officer, is completely integrated into the entire program of study. It is inherently all part of the same cloth. In ROTC we have a slightly different challenge. We have to stitch in the military instruction, the professional development, how we built leaders of character into 275 different programs of study across campuses across the entire nation. Some fit relatively easily, particularly if you go to a senior military college like the Citadel or VMI or Norwich for instance. But many of our civilian institutions, those programs of study vary widely. So how do we put our curriculum to match theirs and go through our program of study to develop leaders fit in? So that's the first challenge that we face of how do we go about doing that? I would argue that an ROTC cadet has a really distinct challenge in that they have to get their degree because you can't become a commissioned army officer without having a bachelor's degree. So they have to accomplish their degree, and frequently we ask them to take STEM degrees. At least twenty-five percent of our cohort are our STEM degrees. And then how do we fit in all the additional military instruction and leadership instruction that we expect to fit into it? So we spend a lot of time on weekends and summers in order to get that done. So I would say that's our primary challenge or one of the first challenges that we face in ROTC.

Baggio: Yeah, I think in the junior ROTC program--and we talk about citizenship. I think what really defines--well, first, what does citizenship even mean? I mean, citizenship means a lot of things, but even within the high school community itself, we find the kids that tend to be in there are the kids that when there's report card pickup, as an example, they're the kids that come in, and they assist the principal in their uniforms. They learn about pride and taking care of themselves. They learn what it's like to be in charge of teams, to accomplish tasks and be put in positions that others don't. We reward involvement in the school, so a lot of our JROTC cadets, the number one goal is to make them college ready or whatever their career is post-high school. That's the number one goal. So involvement, we reward that. If you're on a sports team, you get a ribbon for being a soccer player or a football player. We encourage them to be in programs like band, national honors society. Matter of fact, each school has a local school council. The school that I was at prior to taking this director position for the last three years, the student representative on the local school council was a JROTC member. So learning what it's like to be involved in community to include that service-learning piece. And they actually get directly involved within the communities around those schools. So I think the citizenship piece, the leadership piece, the preparation for life after high school is what our primary focus is.

Clarke: So if you were to--cause Arthur you basically already said this, but that this is in addition to it being training for officers and citizenship programs for students in high school, it's also a way that the armed services are reaching out into the civilian world with all sorts of different tools and things and vehicles for that outreach. But if you're--if somebody's driving by or somebody's walking by, a professor maybe, who has no idea what the ROTC is, or a mom dropping their kid off to high school--that kid's not in JROTC--what would you want them to essentially know?

Morgado: Well, first, it's a professional program. We are building a professional army officer. And so our program of instruction begins at the basic level. We call it the basic course for freshman and sophomore year. And in junior and senior year it is the advanced course. Your first two years are really focused on character development. It's about how do we build your skills as a person. We're certainly testing to make sure you're right for the army and that the army is right for you, and that's a big part of it. A key feature of our basic course is that any student can take it, on any college campus if it offers ROTC, you don't have to be interested or have the desire to go into the military at
all. But if you’re interested you can take it as a freshman and sophomore. Before moving out to the advanced course, though, you’re gonna have to make a commitment to the army and say, "Yes, I do in fact want to be an army officer." Then once we do get you into the advanced course we start looking at what are those professional skills you need as an army officer, and we start to put things more in a military context. So we value critical thinking, we value creative thinking, we value leadership above all else, and we value problem solving. And so we want to put all those things together in a military context. Can you lead America’s young men and women that come to us into our army to help defined our nation? And we want to make sure you have the right skills to do that. So you have to take at least one class every semester, it's called military science, that we do a lot more than just science-type obviously topics. You have to do physical training, frequently three or more days a week. We'll have to take a weekend here or there to do some field exercise or training, and then we'll ask you to go on various summer programs to augment your on-campus training, 'cause there are many things we just can't do on a campus. Like land navigation--hard to do in the city of Chicago. So we'll have to take you to maybe there's some woods and contour lines in order to do that. So those are very practical technical skills that we can't get at. But it's much more than that. It’s really all about leadership and critical thinking and imbuing you with the right traits and qualities to lead young men and women in very difficult circumstances, and that's what senior ROTC being an army officer's all about.

Clarke: Well, it's fascinating. Any college student can take courses without any commitment.

Morgado: Yes, and that's part of the agreement between the department of defense and college campuses is that. And frequently what they find is our curriculum is put together by people a heck of a lot smarter than me that are college-level courses. And so we want anyone that comes in contact with army ROTC to learn about their nation's army and certainly then to take some skills with them. We want leaders of character throughout our entire society, not just within our army, and we hope that in those two years of ROTC they get a sense of that, they come to understand what our army is. They understand that is in fact America’s army, and they are part owners of that. And then they go back out, and whatever their civilian career is, are able to share that with others. So that is a big part of what we do.

Clarke: Well, Arthur, what are the things that you have encountered in your research that really point to this being a key part of the program?

Coumbe: Since 1973 as we're all aware, the number of people with direct military experience has been shrinking. Fewer and fewer people have any connection personally with the military establishment. Through JROTC and through senior ROTC, not only the cadets, and there are about you know almost 600,000 of them now if you include all the armed forces, but their parents, their friends, their associates, it's putting a personal face on the military establishment. Not necessarily instilling views in people or in cadets or in their parents, but kinda giving them a personal feeling of who is in the military, what these people are doing, what these people need. So that's what I see, this personal connection is absolutely essential in an era where fewer and fewer people are connecting with the military.

Clarke: Dan, what do you think?

Baggio: Well, I think the biggest challenge--maybe misperception's a better word—I think there is confusion a lot. And even sometimes amongst the faculty within the Chicago Public Schools is, there is the impression that they think we're recruiters. So there’s a lot of the similar educational things, the STEM focus that Colonel Morgado talked about, which we kind of echo with in the classrooms within the JROTC program as well. But the difference is, unlike the senior program, which is a commissioning source, we are not. I
don't--I'm not a recruiter. I don't get paid anything extra to recruit people into the military. It's very important that people understand that. As I mentioned earlier we want kids to be college ready. We want them to pursue careers--now if a cadet wants to have a career in the military, we're certainly gonna help him to achieve that. We worked things out with the senior program. In fact when Colonel Morgado was talking about, basically in layman's terms, trying out the program without a commitment, there are scholarships, tuition waivers that you can get and go into ROTC programs sponsored right here in Chicago. And we give kids opportunities to try out for those. But once again we're not a recruiter. I think the value that the kids have, it's just undeniable. I think there tends to be--and I don't have statistics, but there tends to be a higher grade point average of the kids in ROTC of JROTC. There tends to be a higher graduation level for the kids who are in JROTC. So we see the real true results that happen from being a part of this program and being a part of an organization that's bigger than yourself. Yeah, they're proud of the uniform, and they do understand that they represent something that is tied to the military but not tied to the military. It's almost kind of a contradiction in terms. But they feel very much a part of it, but really they're not in terms of any sort of obligation or anything like that. And we certainly don't push them that way.

Morgado: Ken, Dan brings up a great point about the recruiting aspect of it. Certainly in senior ROTC we do not look at JROTC as a means to recruit. Our bottom line is we are not a hard sell organization. Not to denigrate our recruiting command brothers and sisters who have to go out and find and recruit soldiers for our army. In ROTC it has to be a calling or a vocation. You really gotta want to be an army officer and understand that the pain--not to understate suffering and commitment and sacrifice that you’re gonna have to make to be an army officer. And we're not gonna hard-sell that. We’re not gonna twist your arm to come and join. We hope to offer and show you what we have to offer. And you should be compelled to do that 'cause there's a seed of leadership or national service or selfless service inside of you that wants to make you commit. And certainly we don't go to junior ROTC looking for recruits. Those two programs are very distinct in that way.

Clarke: Well, Arthur, let's talk a little bit about the history of the criticism of the program. And then Dan and Andy, I'll want to have you talk about some of your experiences in dealing with some of the critics, 'cause I know you all have personal experience. But let's talk about some of the history of where the criticism comes from historically and kinda where it's gone.

Coumbe: Well, I might comment at this point that even before JROTC was established, even in some of its predecessor organizations--the church-related Boy's Brigade for example or the Grand Army of the Republic's American Guard Units. There were charges that these organizations, these military high school organizations, were nothing but fronts for military recruiting. And of course when JROTC was created in 1916 there were especially among pacifist organizations heavy criticism that this entire JROTC was nothing but a front for recruiting. And so that charge has been around a long time, and it was predicated on some mistaken beliefs. The people really didn't delve into what the government was doing. If they would have read for example some of the official records at the time of the chief of staff, General Leonard Wood, very famous general in the first two decades of the 20th century, for him it--JROTC and the senior ROTC exemplified the citizen soldier concept. To Wood it was a guard against militarism. It was the guard against the creation of a military cap. So when he tried to promote JROTC and senior ROTC it was definitely with a view towards warding off any militaristic tendencies in the US Army and the military establishment. So--

Clarke: It's a bit of an irony, don't you think? But it makes total sense when you look at who we fought during the Second World War. We fought highly militarized societies in
Germany and Japan, where the ethos of the military was everywhere and obligatory to everybody.

Coumbe: You're exactly right. You're exactly right, and that's exactly what we tried to avoid with the creation of senior ROTC. There was something thought to be unique about blending military training with high school and college studies. It's not like you're studying a concern at a military base. You get a more liberal; you get a more broad-based education doing it the ROTC way. Even though Leonard Wood admitted that possibly we might be sacrificing a little efficiency, he thought that the political goals—and I put that in parentheses—was more important than military efficiency, making sure we had an army that was dedicated to republican and democratic principles.

Morgado: Just a note, Doctor, of how that's been translated into modern time is that about—let's say about sixty percent of our graduates go on to active duty, and that is out of 6,000 lieutenants that we commission every year. Forty percent go into the reserve component, and we are the only federal source of commissions within the US Army Reserve and the National Guard. So a large chunk of the lieutenants that we produce go into the reserve component. And so it's that connection back to that non-militarization and that idea.

Clarke: Well, I think that the idea of not being militarized but having an active citizen soldier-based group of armed services is really important and something that's uniquely American. And how would you talk to the critics of JROTC and ROTC in those lines?

Coumbe: My response would be that you're aiming at the wrong organizations. If you want to attack militarism, the last place you should be looking is senior ROTC and junior ROTC. The other commissioning sources certainly aren't militaristic organizations, but they certainly fit the bill better than junior ROTC and senior ROTC do.

Clarke: Andy, what are some experiences you've had—and Dan I'll ask you the same question—in dealing with these same problems?

Morgado: Well, probably not as specific or pointed perhaps as junior ROTC, but in senior ROTC many of our campus leaders question, particularly in our religious colleges and universities, if military service is compatible to what they're trying to accomplish on their campuses. But the way around that argument, or the way I address that argument, is if we're gonna have an army in our nation and if we're going to produce officers from this institution, wouldn't you prefer to have that graduate, that army officer, imbued with your institution's high standards and character, which I argue are things that the army is doing as well. Wouldn't you want that officer to then lead the army, someone that you've put your stamp on in your unique way from your institution? So that's really the greatest bulk of criticism that we get, but it's fairly minor, and I think people understand the logic of that argument.

Clarke: Dan, you've got a slightly different story?

Baggio: Well, we in Chicago, and we've got—if you take—I guess the best illustration, if you took a map of Chicago, and you took a handful of paint, and you splattered it on there, our forty-five schools really kinda represent the neighborhoods of Chicago. They're distributed pretty relative to the population. So the population of our program represents the demographics of the city of Chicago pretty well. So you get kids from all walks of life. But you know, we do have a lot of our schools, because it's by the very definition of Chicago, it's an urban environment. So we have a lot of minority kids and typically African American and Hispanic kids, a good majority. But then it's a mix—once again, kind of matches a cross section. So there have been organizations that have kind of accused us of perhaps pandering to some of the minorities that are disadvantaged in order to recruit them into the military. And we've had to address those claims. We've basically, you know, rest our laurels on the fact once again that we're not recruiters. It's a citizenship program. There have been accusations that we teach kids to be mindless
robots, that--but the truth of it is that's not that way at all. We have debate, we have
critical thinking. Our curriculum is aligned with the common core that looks at all the
different aspects that--and we embody everything. Just like the senior program, physical
fitness is important, too, because you get a physical education credit for being JROTC.
So it's actively being involved in service learning. We work on trying to be physically fit,
mentally sharp; it's the whole picture. But there's absolutely no tie with, you know, having
to go into the military. So our critics out there have basically accused us of trying to
brainwash, to use the word, these kids into becoming mindless military machines, and
it's really not that case at all.
Clarke: To answer them, do parents get involved with these discussions?
Baggio: Well, the ironic thing is a lot of the kids that come in the program--and it's kinda
funny because we're supposed to be--it's an all-volunteer program, but a lot of the kids
are in there 'cause their parents volunteer them to be in the program. 'Cause the parents
are some of our biggest supporters. We'll get calls--there will be calls from school
counselors, the principals will get calls, because the schedule won't put them in--"I want
my son, I want my daughter in JROTC." We get that all the time. So, and frankly
because it's a volunteer program, if a parent has a concern that thinks we're a recruiter,
ell, then they don't have to be in JROTC. I mean, so there's no conflict that way when it
comes to the parents. Once again, big supporters. It's really people who may have had
military experience in the past, you know, whether it be serving in active duty. Maybe
JROTC itself. And that's one thing I got to tell you, I am a product of JROTC. I grew up in
Rockford, Illinois, about an hour northwest of here. And I was a freshman in 1973, the
very same year that women were allowed into JROTC as well. So I saw how that's
changed, in a way, kind of a microcosm in a sense of the rest of society. But in those
days the tie, perhaps, to the military was a little bit more direct. So maybe some of the
experience, especially some of our people who grew up in the Vietnam War era were
used to that more direct tie. But it's not that way anymore, and we intentionally separate
that tie, if that makes sense.
Clarke: It does make sense. Let's go into the classroom a little bit. Let's talk about who's
doing the teaching in the ROTC environment and the university campuses.
Morgado: Well, at the university it's really a team of teams. The primary corps will be an
active duty lieutenant colonel will be what's called a professor of military science at each
one of these campuses. And generally speaking they'll have three to four active duty
members of the army on board depending upon the size of program. There'll be a senior
noncommissioned officer. There will be probably two or three additional officers that are
on staff. Then we get a considerable amount of support from local National Guard units,
so state national guards who have a vested interest since we're producing a good part of
their population. So they'll provide officers to teach in our classrooms. All of them have at
least a bachelor's degree. Our professor of military science must have a master's degree
as part of their education. Then we have a corps of army civilians, so these are our civil
servants that operate different functions at these programs. We do contract a small
portion of it. These are if we have swings in our active duty strength--every now and then
we have to fill in with a contract position, but normally these are civilians who contract
and have military experience. So that forms the core of who's teaching on our
campuses. And all of them by the way have to be certified by the university, and we also
have our own internal cadet command cadre certification program that ensures we're
putting the highest-quality instructors and educators in our classrooms.
Clarke: So it's all organized out of the military. These are people on deployment
basically. This is your assignment, this is what you do and you're told to go and when to
go.
Morgado: Absolutely. And two to three-year assignments, which in the world of academia is just but a blink of an eye. And I frequently have college presidents complaining of, "Well, why are you taking my PMS away from me?" Well, 'cause the PMS has to go back into the active army and continue serving. So that's where our civilian corps--actually department of army civilians are professionals as well, so they help provide a lot of that continuity. But yeah, they're serving an active duty assignment, and they'll go back into the active army usually and continue to serve somewhere else.

Clarke: So that constant rotation is also a teaching tool for the college to say, hey, this is just how the army is.

Morgado: Yes.

Clarke: This is just what goes on. We all go through this.

Morgado: Yup, absolutely.

Clarke: That's very interesting. So who's teaching in a JROTC?

Baggio: Well, that's interesting because the optics are very similar, so you see a guy like me, and of course I'll shave my temples close to kind of hide the gray hair and things like that, but we're retired officers, noncommissioned officer that have done a minimum of twenty years in the military. Our NCOs have to have a requirement of having an associate's degree. Most of them are encouraged, and while they're here they'll get their bachelor's and many times master's, and we have several who have even--are even working on their doctorate's. The officers have to have a minimum of bachelor's degree.

And, but we are retired military. We're hired because we are military professionals, but we're also educators, so once again we're--where he has the challenge of people complaining, maybe the complaints here is that maybe these guys should go away after a while, 'cause they could be here for quite a while. So basically this is a retirement opportunity for us. And so we're actually hired by, in the case of Chicago, the Chicago Board of Education. So we're actually city of Chicago employee, but we wear the uniform. We represent our service, and so we need to maintain the professional standards, but a little bit different in terms of how we're manned.

Clarke: And just for our audience, retirement doesn't necessarily mean somebody who's sixty. It means somebody who's forty or forty-five or--

Baggio: In fact, it's really interesting, 'cause this is one of the pep talks I give when we talk to--when I talk to my own instructors, 'cause we have our own professional development, so we want to maintain currency. We're required--we keep what we call our portfolio, our professional portfolio about how we're advancing our careers and doing better with that. But there's a slide that I always like to quote. It was part of our initial training, but it says, "You're retired from active duty, but you're actively retired." And it says--it's a quote from the training that his guys send us. It says, "Expect sixty-hour work weeks and some weekends." So our best instructors are out there working with the kids, staying after school, coming early, helping kids with their homework. I mean there's a lot of the things that we do that we're expected to do. And because we have that mindset of having been military professionals, it's not a nine-to-five job. It's you do the job until you get it done and the most impact you can have on those kids. And I will tell you this: the most rewarding thing that I've experienced prior to coming to this position, in order to get blued, so to speak, I spent three-plus years down at one of the schools. It's so rewarding when you see those young girls and boys, and you see how they grow from their freshman year to their senior year. And it grows people, and you really have an impact. And especially in some of the tougher neighborhoods, both our male and female instructors become role models to those kids that sometimes is lacking in their home environment. So it's very rewarding, and the vast majority of our instructors has such a great passion to do that. So that's the thing that I take away, and that's the thing that really keeps me going and wants me to stay here and do this.
Clarke: Well, Dan, let me follow up with that. What is a student going to experience in the classroom? What kind of teaching?
Baggio: Well, we actually have an approved curriculum. And we can modify that, but we do look at the government. It's almost like when you take government and econ. We look at the branches of government. We do have classes, especially for the basic cadets, you do learn your basic discipline. How to wear a uniform, how to march, and all that sort of thing, 'cause those are things you have to have as a cornerstone if you're gonna be in an organization that's structured on the military. But we have health classes in there. We learn first aid. We learn, well, I mentioned the branches of government. We learn about what does leadership mean. We have a program called Winning Colors, which is a leadership--talks about are you a leader, a builder? Are you a relator, which is, you know, a person who's more into the, kind of, sensitive side? Are you a planner? Are you an adventurer? We look at the qualities of an individual and how that affects leadership and how you act in a group dynamic. It's in a lot of ways there's a lot of social studies that's in there, it's a lot of physical education that's in there, it's a lot of health that's in there. It's a curriculum that really fits well with the rest of the school. And I've had teachers that are supporters come to see us, and they really envy a lot of ways the curriculum and the depth that we get into in a lot of our subjects. So it's very broad and in some areas very deep depending on what the topic is.
Morgado: I think Dan nailed that. I'll only add, I certainly have not sat through or administered as many classes as Dan has with junior ROTC, but I would term it civics-plus-plus. I mean, it--and the beauty of it is there's a huge practicum period, so cadets are physically hands on, doing things as opposed to just sitting passively in a classroom. But the curriculum is top-notch. Yeah, civics-plus-plus, I would say.
Coumbe: I would like to add that this commitment to active learning is something that's been with the program since its very early days. I've looked at some reports from the inspectors that went around and inspected senior and junior ROTC detachments in the 1920s, and the inspection list included references to John Dewey's active learning. Were the cadets involved in the instruction? Were they actually doing things in the classroom or was it a dead lecture? And of course those units that did the active learning got high marks and those units that did the old lecture got low marks. So that's something that I think the ROTC has been at least emphasizing since its inception.
Baggio: I want to piggyback on that, and I'm glad you said that, because what we do is the instructors facilitate, but we teach the cadets to lead. And that's kind of when I talk about the beauty piece of seeing a kid that comes in as a freshman that leaves as a senior, you see those kids become leaders in their own right, whether it's leading a drill team or--so you teach the freshman how to do the basic things, and then they become the teachers later on as upper classmen. And it's the amount of confidence they have. Part of our accreditation program, we do command briefings. You have cadets briefing school administrators, briefing people from Colonel Morgado's headquarters or higher, people--outsiders come in. You have young cadets talking about the virtues of their program and the service learning that they do and the great things that they do. The confidence those kids have--I will tell you, they do some presentations. I was at one the other day, in fact--well, I'll give credit where credit's due. I was at Farragut High School, Patton Academy. The level of presentation that those kids put together was better than anything I've seen in college, and frankly some of our professional corporations would have really been envious of the kind of work those kids put into it.
Clarke: Before we get into the ROTC classroom setting, I want to ask you a question in particular. Any good learning institution from a college or a high school is going to basically say, okay, here are all the sources on a topic. You're gonna find opposing ideas, you're going to find, you know, enemy sides in a conflict. You're going to find
various political views. You’re gonna find books by leaders that have been demonized. You’re going to find books by leaders who have been lofted up as some kind of hero that they maybe weren’t. You’re going to get that very interesting cross section of education and academic engagement. And so this active teaching that you’re talking about, how is that happening on the college level and on the JROTC level to actually challenge these kids to think for themselves? Because that's, I think personally, a core of any academic institution. How are you doing it?

Morgado: Well, we place a large premium on critical thinking and to challenge everything that's being presented in the classroom. So cadets are required to write frequently. They’re required to, on a different level and scale to get up before their peers and superiors and state a position and state an argument. And so that's all part of the curriculum. We use Bloom's taxonomy as terms of our rubric for how we develop our cadets' level of understanding and education that we want to get them to. But that dialectic is very much a part of our instructional method. And then in senior ROTC we have the practicum. So do we approach and do we introduce military tactics? We do, but we're not there to make tacticians. We are providing that military context to access their leadership ability. And the greatest learner and the greatest teacher--and the cadets in the studio audience will appreciate it--is failure. Right, so we want to put cadets in a situation where they’re going to fail miserably, and not to shame them, not to denigrate them, but then we pick them up, we brush them off, and then--alright, cadet, let's talk about what happened? And so what went wrong, and how are we gonna do this better the next time? And then we put them back on the pony and let them ride again. And I bet you on that second iteration they're gonna do a lot better 'cause they've learned from real and practical experience. So that has been I think the ROTC model for quite some time, and we continue to improve upon it and really focus on the intellectual capacity and the abilities of our leaders. So that's been our approach.

Coumbe: I would just like to piggyback as far back as just what he just said. Back in the 50s and 40s you actually had debates being conducted in senior ROTC and junior ROTC. The instructor would pick a controversial issue, break the cadets into sides, and have them debate each other, having them completely understand both sides of the issue at hand and try to get one to out-debate the other. So I think this has been endemic in ROTC for some time.

Baggio: I was exactly gonna say that. We’ll pick a controversial topic, current events, and we’ll let the kids debate it out. Sometimes we'll do it as a kind of, you know, an event in class where we'll break them into opposing groups and give them some time to presentations to give opposing views, sort of like a mini-debate. We do that. They also--talk about open-minded critical thinking. We'll have different times--we also have writing requirements. We have essays. And each school will do things different. But every year there’s a JROTC essay contest, and there will be a theme that's picked from higher headquarters. And we'll have everybody do that to see what the best topic is. But also monthly topics. If it's African American history month or if it's Hispanic history month, we'll give writing topics, and we'll let cadets pick people that they want to write about. It might be a controversial person. And we'll let them present that, and we'll let the kids ask questions. So we're always about critical thinking. We're always about hearing different opinions. So we do that within our classroom.

Morgado: Right, and I would say one of the things that we teach is particularly in senior ROTC is, the army as we all know is a very hierarchical organization, right. There's colonels and there's privates. But the key message to our leaders is that if you rely on the rank that's on your collar in order to get the job done, you will not succeed as a leader. So how are you going to be influential and lead peers and get folks to do a very difficult job? And so that is a people business and requires a lot of nuance and a light
touch at times. So that, we are constantly emphasizing that and having cadets practice that skill, to lead propel, provide purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish tough missions. And you’re not gonna do that in strictly a lecture sense. They have to go out there, feel it, experience it, and try things out.

Clarke: I think it's important to point out that the JROTC student is a minor that is under the command of their parents so to speak. And you get into ROTC and these are adults who have made decisions on their own. So the parents are a big part of the JROTC experience. Arthur, let's talk a little bit about, more about the history. We've kind of touched on it a little bit. But there is a long history before the Defense Act of 1916, and if you would explain that to the audience, that would be great.

Coumbe: Well, it literally goes back until colonial days, the idea of school age children taking military training. But in the modern version perhaps we can go back just to the Civil War. Places like Bangor, Maine and the Boston school system started to create age-graded military units during the Civil War. Now this had a very practical use. They wanted their kids to get some training before if they ever got called out to go fight in the Civil War, they'd have it. Basic drill, maybe a little marksmanship. However, soon after that, the biggest citizenship-oriented training that occurred, occurred with something called the Boy's Brigades. And actually it started in Scotland as a program of the Presbyterian Church. And they wanted to teach character development to the kids that went to their Sunday schools. So they made up this Boy's Brigade organization. And it was quite popular in Scotland. In the early 80s it was transferred to San Francisco, where the churches there in San Francisco got hold of it and tried to adapt it to their needs in San Francisco. It caught on like wildfire. It jumped out to Chicago, and from Chicago to cities all across the east. And basically it was a program devoted to, I guess you could call it, citizenship or probably more accurately character development, instilling self-discipline in young people, instilling the idea that there was an authority to society, loyalty to your organization. Those certain character traits that people thought were important for someone to succeed in the adult world. And so they got very big. It was an organization that amounted to probably 100,000, and that didn't count certain offshoots. The Catholic Church wasn't a part of the Boy's Brigades, but they developed their own units. The Methodist Church developed their own units. So it was quite a going enterprise. In the 1890s that was eclipsed by another widespread movement called the American Guard military units, and they were high school based age-graded type of units that were especially powerful in the large cities of the United States. And the American Guard was closely associated with the Grand Army of the Republic, the veterans' organizations. And again it was an organization really focused on character development and patriotism. The 90s, the early 90s especially were a period of intense nationalism, and the American Guard picked that up. They taught flag etiquette. They taught loyalty to the country. They taught certain work-related skills like self-discipline, punctuality, that sort of thing that would help these kids when they got a job in industry quite frankly. So the American Guard units ran very strongly until the Spanish American War, and after that they kind of declined. They didn't go away, but they certainly declined from where they were. So those two things were huge. And one American Guard unit parade in New York City in the 1890s, there were 40,000 American Guard cadets that actually took place in this thing. So there was a very strong military unit tradition in high school, even before the JROTC was created in 1916.

Clarke: So as JROTC and ROTC have progressed from 1916 to now, will you kind of give us a walk-through of how that's changed? For example, there were more direct ties built into the system back in the day that we've abandoned probably around the Vietnam War.
Coumbe: Yes, that's true. Originally of course you could get a commission through senior ROTC. All of the units from 1916 until really the early 50s were branch specific. In other words you didn't go to get a commission, you went to senior ROTC to get a commission in the infantry or the engineers. Very, very specific, and the instruction on campus was focused on very specific technical skills. So that was one difference. In JROTC it's always been a very wide-ranging program. Now certainly in the early days there was a military component to it. There were a number of people that got commissions through JROTC. It wasn't large. It was something like three or four hundred from 1916 to 1941 were commissioned through JROTC. And then they actually had to graduate from high school then wait a couple years until they got their baccalaureate degree before finally getting commissioned, but they were commissioned through JROTC. So that was one aspect of it, but that again disappeared right after WWII. After WWII you couldn't get it.

Clarke: One question that I have for you guys is that to be an ROTC cadet or to be a JROTC cadet sometimes means to put yourself in the cross hairs of being made fun of. You're in the crux of something that can be political because there are opposing sides on whether this is good or bad for or our society and for our kids and things like that. So given the fact that it's something that can be challenging for the students to engage in something like this, why do they choose to do it? 'Cause there's gotta be a personal choice there. A little maybe less so when the parents are volun-"toting" them, but they still have to go through with it.

Baggio: You know there's a lot of those kids-- I'll go first. A lot of the kids that really love it and thrive for it. I mean, there are those challenges. I experienced it personally in 1973 coming in there, 'cause, you know, Doctor was talking about in the Midwest for the most part it was probably much more accepted to be in it than it would be in other areas of the country. But a lot of times it depended on the demographics where you lived. So I actually lived in a little town, suburb, called Cherry Valley, and we were considered hicks. And we got bused to kind of a rich school, which was Gilford High School where I went. And a lot of the kids were kinda-- looked down on us 'cause we were wearing the uniform. But it was interesting 'cause in some of the more urban areas, some of the more poor areas it wasn't that sense at all. So it really depends on where you're at. My experience in Chicago with as far as the neighborhoods are, some of the schools maybe especially that are gang-infested or something like that, kids would be taunted or teased 'cause they think it's not cool. But the converse of that, which is the value of it, especially in those areas where those gangs are, this is an alternative to the gangs. This is an opportunity for those kids to get away from that environment. So instead of being up to no good on a weekend, we'll take a bus of forty, fifty kids out to a forest preserve and do some land navigation, some orienteering. You know, instead of being up to no good, we'll take some kids for an archery meet. So we do a lot of productive-- kids to keep out of those environments. So there is some negative peer pressure. But I think the desire and the kids that get a taste of what JROTC is about, the vast majority of them love it, and some of the reasons that some do drop out is maybe academic conflicts with some of their higher-level classes. And by the way, to take some credit, I think a lot of times I've heard instructors complain to me that some of your smartest kids that kind of get trained up and become great leaders through JROTC are the same ones that have conflicts when they're seniors 'cause they have to take these additional AP classes because of the good that the program does. So I find more complaints about kids that are challenged to stay in the program than those that want to leave.

Morgado: On the senior side we offer 3,000 new full-tuition scholarships ever year as an incentive to bring young men and women into ROTC. Spend 300 million dollars a year on scholarship funds alone. But if you're only in it for the money, you're not gonna stay,
or if you came for the money, you’re not gonna stay. It takes something more. Certainly not to be dramatic or oversentimental, but there's a love of country there. And that's why cadets come and join our ranks. They love their country. They want to serve. They have - they want to be selfless. They want to be part of something bigger than themselves. In terms of wearing the uniform, I always state it very simply to the cadets. This uniform that I wear is not mine. This is the nation’s cloth. So your country has asked you to do this uniform and to serve and to protect it. And that by far is what keeps cadets in, and we commission 6,000 brand new lieutenants every year that are a testament to people who love their country and want to serve their country.

Clarke: Alright. I have one last question for you. We are a museum and library, so I’m kind of wondering -- we’ll start with Dan and work down the table -- do you have a book that you can suggest that we read that has helped you in your career?

Baggio: Sure. In fact it's funny because I'm actually rereading it. I've got an interest in the Korean War, 'cause my father's a Korean War vet, two uncles that were, and I see a lot of cadets are out here, too. When I just got my commission I was really told by my commander to actually read This Kind of War by Fehrenbach because it really talks about a country that went from WWII, very prepared, of a highly mobilized force, and how we went from 1945 to 1950 as being totally unprepared, not learning from our lessons. So that's a book I highly recommend. I highly recommend it to these senior ROTC cadets who are getting ready to graduate and become officers. But This Kind of War by Fehrenbach.

Clarke: Great.

Arthur?

Coumbe: I have two I'd like to mention. One is a book by Donald Downs, who's out of the University of Wisconsin. And it's Arms in the University, is the title. arms in the University. And it deals with, among other things, the recent decision to bring ROTC back to Columbia. The next one, I'd like to plug my own book that's coming out. Steve Condly and Bill Skrimmyhorn, my colleagues in OEMA, and we're coming out with a book called Still Scholars and Soldiers. It talks about West Point ROTC and OCS and their various screening methods from 1900 to the present day.

Morgado: Great, and I would recommend in addition to Dr. Coumbe's two books on cadet command, which are very good, I would recommend Forging the Sword. And it was edited by Dr. Converse. So it's a collection of officer education essays, and it looks at not only the army but joint services but also international officer training programs. Super book.

Clarke: Well, gentlemen, I want to thank you for an excellent discussion.

(Applause)

Clarke: Thank you to Colonel Andy Morgado, Dr. Arthur Coumbe, and Colonel Daniel Baggio for this outstanding discussion and to the US Army Public Affairs Midwest for supporting this program. To learn more about the Museum and Library, visit in person or online at PritzkerMilitary.org. Thank you, and please join us next time on Pritzker Military Presents.

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