In seventh grade, I was asked to write a letter to my high school graduating self, congratulating myself for my accomplishments. In the letter I predicted where I would be, and I was shocked to find out how much I had changed in those six short years. I wrote to myself, “I don’t know what I want to do with my life, but I know one thing is for sure: I will never be a teacher, and I will never join the military.” Ever since graduation, those are the two things that I have never wanted more. Within the second week of my first year at James Madison University I declared my major of Interdisciplinary Liberal Studies (Education), and I decided to join the ROTC program my sophomore year.

Something I discovered from pursuing my degree and participating in ROTC was that many of the same concepts I am learning apply equally to being both an effective teacher and soldier. Their main focuses are leadership and commitment to the job. As a teacher, my duty will be to educate, mentor, and lead students to success beyond my classroom. As a soldier, I will be educated, mentored and led, which will prepare me to do the same with my fellow soldiers. There is also a great sense of purpose that can enrich my life. Most teachers and soldiers select their careers for the positive impact they can have and for the satisfaction of doing something honorable for their community and their country. I know that every event in my life will be another step in self-development.

For those who are education majors, consider looking into serving in the military. Challenge yourself to step out of your comfort zone and see what the services have to offer. Not only are the two lifestyles identical in ethics and morals, but there are also a plethora of benefits that come with the military life, some of which include scholarships. I was recently offered a ‘Line’ Scholarship from the US Army that commits me to four years of active duty and four years of reserve post graduation. I am so honored to have received this scholarship, and I have many people to thank for this accomplishment. Most importantly, I am proud of myself for proving how truly devoted and determined I can be in regards to my future.

Although active duty is the route I have chosen, there are other paths that the military has to offer, including the National Guard and US Army Reserves. Both of these are honorable and respectable routes to take as well. I truly encourage anyone who is studying to be or already is a teacher to learn about the benefits the military has to offer. Not only will you become a great soldier, but you will also become a proud and honorable human being.