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## A Century of Selfless Service

Eric F. Spina  
*University of Dayton*, [efspina@udayton.edu](mailto:efspina@udayton.edu)

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Saturday April 8, 2017

By Eric F. Spina

Guess who's turning 100?

In case you don't know it, the University of Dayton is home to one of the oldest Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) programs in the country.

For a century, we have prepared students to serve our nation, while learning the type of leadership, management and communication skills prized by all employers.

That's a significant milestone. Today, ROTC leadership, current cadets, alumni and community partners will gather to commemorate this achievement at a centennial dinner at the Marriott at the University of Dayton.

As a university, we've certainly come a long way from our early days when ROTC was mandatory for male students.

When the University of Dayton partnered with the Army to start the program in 1917, in the shadow of World War I, all first-year and sophomore men were required to enroll. Military training remained mandatory for men until 1969.

Today, our program — one of 275 on college campuses around the nation — annually enrolls 80 cadets from a broad spectrum of majors, from pre-med to engineering. Women typically make up about 20 percent of each class. All take ROTC classes in leadership training.

It's not unusual to spot cadets rappelling from the roof of O'Reilly Hall or running at the crack of dawn on Saturday mornings. They post the colors at Dayton Flyer basketball games and, in memory of our alumni and friends who lost their lives in the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, they place flags on the Central Mall on the anniversary.

Some participate in ROTC's Cultural Understanding Language Proficiency program, where they spend three weeks immersed in international cultures, learn how others around the world view our country and, most importantly, learn important lessons about themselves. At graduation, they receive their degrees in their chosen fields of study and are commissioned as active duty or reserve officers.

These are some of our most dedicated, disciplined students on campus. They receive a valuable holistic Marianist education that provides critical thinking skills and an ethical compass while preparing them to safeguard the peace and security of our nation.

In the spring issue of the *University of Dayton Magazine*, Lt. Col. Jeffrey Rosenberg, chair of the military science department, talked about the value of ROTC in cultivating leadership skills. “The bedrock of ROTC — servant-leadership and serving something bigger than yourself — has been there since day one,” he said. “Honorable service has been our hallmark since the beginning, and has not changed in the century since.”

That 100-year-old philosophy is worth celebrating.