

Draft

Association of Military Colleges and Schools of the United States

Thank you for the invitation to speak with you this evening. A few old friends in the audience as well as few shared connections.

I suspect many of you have had a busy day of traveling so I will keep these remarks brief and focused on your theme of service matters. I know I am between you and the reception. I also know that I will be the best speaker of the conference at least for today!

The key point I want to state up front is that service to a higher cause and service to others provides the foundation that enables young men and women to become the leaders they wish they had.

It is a real honor to be here with you. I have had the pleasure of being associated with or visiting with several of the schools represented here during my active duty career.

I recruited at Norwich. This was before Naval ROTC and I was able to commission many fine officers who went on to great careers in the military and civilian life. One today is serving on active duty as a Major General.

I have a son who is a graduate of Virginia Tech and the Corps of Cadets who lives its motto- Ut Prosm - that I may serve everyday as a Major of Marines.

I have visited the Marine Military Academy, Admiral Farragut Academy, VMI and the Citadel.

These institutions and all the others represented here today have at the core of their purpose the mission of developing young men and women of character who will make a difference in the world and in the lives of others by their call to lead in the service of others.

And, I have also served with graduates of your institutions who every day served our Nation with honor, courage and commitment and selfless dedication to duty. Values that I know were learned, nurtured and lived equally well inside your institutions.

Accordingly, I have had the opportunity to see and experience first hand the wide impact that the colleges and schools represented here have had in making a difference in the lives of so many by graduating leaders who understand that the true cost of leadership is self interest. Men and women who understand that there is honor in serving a higher purpose and more importantly in serving others.

If service is to matter it must be linked to a purpose. In the case of military service that purpose is the defense of the ideals contained in our Constitution and the responsibility to selflessly serve those men and women entrusted in our care who have volunteered to serve.

In the case of civilian service it must be linked to the ideal that people do matter and that they should never be viewed as a commodity. People first must not be a bumper sticker but rather a belief that we, as leaders, have a responsibility to enable a better tomorrow for those entrusted to our care.

To understand the true meaning of service one must realize its relationship to leadership. The two ideas cannot be separated. Leaders serve and service is an integral part of leadership

Leadership is all about being willing to give of yourself to others.

Early on I was taught in the Marine Corps that the secret to Marine Corps Leadership is that Officers eat last. Think about this. It is a very simple idea. Having others eat first sends a powerful message. Your basic needs are more important than mine. No matter the rank..I never went hungry.

It is easy to say that the cost of leadership is self-interest and that service matters. But why does it matter?

It matters because creating servant leaders is what you are about and called to do as institutions. It is your why...the reason that you exist.

With this thought in mind let me give you some ideas on how to approach the challenge of developing young leaders.

When people ask me about how I would describe a great leader to them. I simply say: be the leader you wish you had.

You get to be the leader you wish you had by understanding the leadership evolution.

No one starts out being the leader they wish they had but as they learn from good leaders, their peers, some books and most importantly from their mistakes they can become the leader they desire to be.

Leadership is all about relationships and as you all know at the heart of every relationship is trust. This is true with friendships, marriage, and our professions.

Trust is what makes the magic happen.

Trust is the glue that holds things together in tough times and it is also what enables risk taking to build toward a better future.

Saying I trust you is one of the greatest complements you can give someone.

Leaders create trusted relationships by being:

- Honest
- Empathetic
- Competent
- Compassionate
- and Consistent.

Abraham Lincoln had it right when he said:

“If you would win a man to your cause, first convince him that you are his sincere friend.”

A key point here. Being someone’s friend does not mean that you do not hold others accountable. A true friend will. If you do not, then you are not serving the needs of others or of your friend.

One thing about leadership is that there are clues everyday into how you are doing but you have to be aware of them and also be looking for them. Here are some examples:

If someone comes to you and admits a mistake they trust you.

If someone comes and asks for your help they trust you.

If someone takes a risk for you they trust you.

If someone sacrifices for you they believe in you.

Remember building these trusted relationships also requires that you be willing to give of yourself to the greater good you serve, to the organization you serve and to the people you are privileged to lead and serve.

Now it is time for some leadership math:

Three formulas:

Character = Values+behavior

Trust=Values + behavior

Culture = values+behavior

Organizations with great values attract people who share those values and behaviors. You do not want this to ever be disconnected.

Leaders that have character build trust in the organization in which they serve. By building on trusted relationships they create organizations that people want to be a part of and organizations that people outside the organization want to support.

I cannot overemphasize the importance of a strong culture to the well-being and future of an organization

You can have all the vision in the world but if you do not have a strong culture in your organization you will get no where.

Peter Drucker had it right when he said Culture eats strategy for breakfast.

On your leadership journey it will be more like an evolution than a revolution.

There will be road markers along the way to let you know your progress.

Your first level will be that people follow you because they have to.

The second level is people follow you because they trust you. This means they will take risks for you

The third level is people follow you because they believe in you. In this case they will not just take risks for you... they will sacrifice for you.

So where do you think you are? Why do folks follow you? Why do you follow your leaders? If not at level 2 or 3 you need to reassess where you are and understand why.

The secret to moving from one level to the next is understanding your leadership defining moments. These are opportunities that occur throughout the day for you to demonstrate leadership values and behavior that are

consistent with your character, with building trust, and defining organizational culture.

The challenge is recognizing the opportunities and taking advantage of them.

Three things can happen with these opportunities.

- You can take advantage
- You can miss it
- You can have a negative

The real interesting part is that the leader does not get to define the moment. The recipient does. And they are often observed by others so the impact can be wider than expected.

Some examples:

How are you doing

A mistake

Counseling

My moments.

Increased awareness of these opportunities on your part coupled with great communication will help you become the leader you wish you had.

Your test: Think about the words of John Quincy Adams -
You are a leader if you inspire others to dream more, learn
more and become more.

Understand the why of what you do

Fear, courage, love