

My name is Gary Tran, I am enrolled into the University of Washington class of 2020, and was awarded a four-year Army ROTC scholarship. My intended major is mechanical engineering, and I'm currently considering a minor in a foreign language such as German or Korean. These are the barebone details of my aspirations. What I've come to realize after the fall quarter of my freshman year, is that my path to success is far from straightforward. It is a path that requires one to overcome setbacks, and to learn the ability of seeing the bigger picture.

My ROTC career began with cadet orientation week (COW), where I gained my first exposure to the life of cadets and cadre. This is also when I became a contracted cadet, and accepted the responsibility to uphold the values of the US Army. During COW, cadets are given a crash course to what opportunities ROTC offers, and what is expected of them. Two of the things that stood out in my mind were Ranger Challenge, and Color Guard.



Brigade Champs! Blue hoodie in the middle is me.

The UW ROTC ranger challenge team competes against the teams of other ROTC programs across the country in a variety of challenging events. The close-knit, and elite feel of the team appealed to me greatly, and I wanted to challenge myself physically and mentally. After a period of tryouts, I made the team, and began to prepare for the brigade level competition against 10 other ranger challenge programs. UW took first place in this year's brigade competition at Camp Rilea, in Oregon. Ranger challenge has been one of the most difficult, and rewarding experiences I have had in ROTC.

Color guard is a team of MS1 and 2 cadets who have the honor of presenting the colors (flags) at events at UW. For example, the team will plan for events such as UW football, and basketball games. I made the color guard team, and balanced its responsibilities alongside ranger challenge, and school.

ROTC has been of great personal benefit to myself as a person, student, and cadet. I never pictured myself as an early riser, self-starter, and leader at the level I have achieved now, thanks to

ROTC. Being a cadet has instilled into me the importance of discipline, and leadership at the uncertain, and shaky time of being an 18-year-old freshman in college.

After graduating from the University of Washington, hopefully with a degree in mechanical engineering, I plan to pursue active duty in either the Army corps of engineers, or infantry. Currently, I believe that staying in the Army is a viable option for the rest of my career. My main goal for the future is to use a degree in engineering to achieve the highest levels of success I am capable of for the Army.

If you would like to learn more about Army ROTC, please visit armyrotc.uw.edu