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**Sample essays 2017**

**United States Military Academy**

# What Makes an Officer Anonymous

## What are the most important qualities in becoming a successful USMA cadet and a successful Army officer?

The path to becoming a successful USMA cadet and Army officer must start before being admitted to the Academy. A potential cadet has to prepare by taking rigorous courses in high school and being successful in them. My class load, which includes many AP and honors classes, is rigorous. The academic challenge has prepared me for the difficulty and workload of a high caliber institution like the USMA. My success in these classes also proves that I can thrive in an competitive environment.

However, becoming a successful USMA cadet requires more than dedication to one's studies. A cadet must have an outstanding leadership base to build on while at the Academy. Leaders take the initiative to coordinate and empower others to accomplish any task, whether it is by example, authority, or both. During high school, potential cadets can develop their leadership skills in class, sports, clubs, and community service. For me, the golf team has been a great way for me to grow as a leader. My first opportunity to lead occurred in my sophomore year when a shy freshman joined the golf team to make friends. At first, my teammates thought it was odd that I was trying to befriend the freshman, but over time when I brought my new friend in with the team, everyone realized how fun he was. In a single season I helped him go from being an outcast to one of the most friendly and outgoing guys on the team. I wanted to demonstrate that a united team is more powerful than a group of individuals. As a senior, I still make an effort to get to know the new freshmen on the team, but my role now includes setting a good example and keeping the whole team focused on our goals. As a leader, I know that the team will be more successful when we work as one cohesive group. An Army officer needs to realize the importance of teamwork and act in the best interest of the team by organizing, disciplining, rewarding, and pushing every member of the group to do his or her best.

The first step to being a successful cadet is preparation; the second is devotion. The U.S. Army deserves the best officers in the world, and the ambition to succeed is necessary for USMA cadets to become worthy officers of the Army. Work ethic and discipline are critical for a cadet. Even when a cadet triumphs, he or she must know that the work is not over and push to become even better, whether it is in the classroom, in leadership positions, or in physical training. Cadets must also be aware that their priority is to serve their country, not to merely earn a salary. As an Army officer, serving my country is a reward a normal paying job can never give me. The Academy life is challenging but I am prepared to work hard for success, and I have the dedication to become an elite Army officer.

# Last Two Summers Joseph Austin Martinez

## What I did over the last two summers.

During the summer of 2011, I switched to a new club swim team with my best friend and we were motivated to push each other to faster times. That was also my second summer working at my dad’s office, so I was happy to have been given more responsibility. I charted the effects of medicines he was administering which helped his office run more effectively. Soon my days pleasantly fell into routine. I would head to practice at six in the morning, then eat breakfast with teammates, drive to work, and then go back to practice again until four in the afternoon. This routine enabled me to keep more focused. By the end of the summer, my best friend and I had achieved our goal of making the Olympic Trials cut. I had never been happier, and to make the cut with my best friend only made it sweeter.

The summer of 2012 started in the water. All my focus was directed towards training for the Olympic Trials in Omaha. I continued my routine from the previous summer. When the meet finally came in early July, I could not have been more prepared and was excited with my results. After the trials, I spent a long, relaxing weekend with a friend in upstate New York at the Finger Lakes. I was also able to see the musical Mary Poppins on Broadway. It was incredible to see such fantastic acting, which rekindled my childhood passion for the stage. If I did not swim, I think I would be an actor.

After New York, I got back in the pool to train for the Junior National meet at the end of the summer and continued my work on college applications. During any free time, my friends and I would collaborate online over a digital “sandbox-building” game called Minecraft, and constructed scale models of everything from a Roman city to a more modernized version of the Natatorium we swim in everyday. On Saturday afternoons, this same group of friends would get together for a competitive game of Ultimate Frisbee.

# Andrew Joseph Austin Martinez

## Describe an important person in your life

I find it incredibly difficult to go through life alone. As humans, we look to others for guidance because sometimes we do not know what is best. Four years ago I joined a new swim team and met my best friend, Andrew. Even though he is two years older, he always treats me as his equal. He is completely selfless and always tries to bring out the best in other people.

There always seem to be friendships that parents would rather discourage (especially those with older high school kids), but this was not one of them. When I first met Andrew, my parents’ approval was readily apparent. While I don't need their approval for everything, but I do feel it added to my comfort level with Andrew. We shared a lot of personality traits, such as our sense of humor and work ethic, but what I admired most about him was how inclusive he was towards the younger swimmers on the team. He was an encouraging leader. Every Friday, Andrew would gather the guys around in the locker room and we would have a 5-minute “clap it up” meeting. We would all sit in a circle and then he would start by complimenting a teammate and pointing out something that we did well that week in practice. This activity did wonders for team camaraderie and attitude. Two years later, I now find myself leading the “clap it up” meetings. I am now the oldest on the team and I am doing everything I can to be the same selfless leader Andrew was. He taught me that the best way to improve ourselves was to improve with the people around us. Andrew’s support played a huge part in my successes not only in, but out of the pool.

I have watched many friends leave for college and our relationship has dwindled because of it. This is not the case with Andrew; it does not matter if I have not seen him in a year, we will always pick right back up where we left off. Andrew often contacts me to ask how the team and I are doing. Whenever I am in a difficult situation and need some outside advice, I can go to Andrew. Just recently, with the worries of applications and swimming, I called Andrew and he happily shared his experiences and advice. I am able to create a better path for myself and attain the best opportunities possible because he helps me not to focus too myopically.

Andrew and I have formed an unbreakable bond of trust with each other; because of this I am more myself when I am around him. Andrew has played a constructive and substantial role in my life. Now when I am cheering on the younger kids, “clapping it up”, or giving someone advice, I think of him. I want nothing more then to treat others how he treated me.