

For more information about Air Force ROTC, visit the
Web site: **AFROTC.COM** or call **866-4AF-ROTC**

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ROTC



Like most college juniors, Jessica Haney is at the point in her life where she needs to be thinking about what she is going to do after graduating from college. Her decisions are going to be a little easier, however, because she has already been offered a job with a major company when she graduates. At a young age, she'll have steady pay, travel opportunities, free medical/dental, free education, 30 days of annual vacation, and a leadership position – all starting on day one! All she has to do is finish college, and the job is hers. Sound too good to be true? Read on and find out how she did it.

Growing up in Athens, AL, Jessica graduated from East Limestone High School in 2002. "When 9/11 happened, I was still in high school. I started thinking about my future, my family's future, and my country's future," she says. "I realized how important it is for our country to have a core of dedicated people committed to defending our nation."

"My goals have been what many women want out of life – to be a wife, mother, and still have a career." Jessica wanted to find out how she could become a nurse and still be a part of that group of people defending her country. She decided to check into joining the Air Force.

She had no exposure to the military, other than listening to a local recruiter who had visited her high school. His focus had been on the students who wanted to enlist straight out of high school. She knew that didn't fit into her plans – she wanted to get her degree first.

"I went to the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) Web site (www.AFROTC.com) and checked it out," Jessica says. She found that the University of Alabama (Tuscaloosa, AL), her college of choice, had an Air Force ROTC program. She talked to the university's ROTC commander and was told about a scholarship program that would pay for her college.

"Before I made my decision, I talked with some other students to get their feel on ROTC. Their main concern was having to join the military after college," she says. "I already knew about the four-year commitment, and that wasn't a problem. The scholarship would really help, so I decided to go for it." She submitted her application for ROTC and applied for the scholarship. Not long thereafter, Jessica received the good news. She was awarded the scholarship at the University of Alabama and accepted into the program.

"I want to be a neonatal nurse in a pediatric trauma center," says Jessica. "I know the Air Force will support me in advancing my nursing skills, because some careers are critical to the military and nursing is one of them. They even have bonus pay for some jobs."

As an entering freshman, her instructors and friends in ROTC made her feel very much at home. "The other ROTC folks have always been there to help me with any problems I've had, from roommate changes to schedule requirements," she adds. "We are a close-knit group. We hold each other accountable, work hard together, and have lots of fun, both in and out of school. I've grown both personally and professionally from my experience in ROTC."

Jessica noticed that the Air Force ROTC program is based on what is done in the actual active duty Air Force. There are ranks, uniforms, and special ways of doing things. She explains, "I am now a Cadet First Lieutenant. Once I go into the Air Force, I'll be a second lieutenant, an advanced rank above those who enter without prior ROTC training." If she had gone directly into the military from high school, she would have been an enlisted member instead of an officer. Officers are higher ranking and make more pay.

Being in ROTC hasn't changed the college experience for Jessica. "I'm into music, writing, and having fun with my friends," says Jessica. "I couldn't have made a better decision when I joined ROTC! It has really added to the whole experience for me. I've learned to develop my leadership skills and I have more confidence in all aspects of my life."

"My schooling is paid for and I'm on the way to starting a double profession – as a registered nurse and an Air Force officer. I don't know if I'll make the military into a full-fledged career at this point. I want to wait and experience what life in the Air Force is like before I decide. What I can say, positively and with no reservations, is that ROTC is the way to go!"

– Janet Pendergast, Writer, AF Recruiting Service

