**ESSAY 1:  Motivation and Decision to Serve**

Discuss your motivation and decision to serve, in the military or otherwise. Explain how your unique life experience has influenced your life and your ambitions. What is the most important lesson you have learned?

**RESPONSE | ESSAY 1**

The motivation and decision to serve my country was one I made from the very early age of 10 years old. Service to God and country was an honor instilled in me through my father, uncles, and cousins. In particular, my Uncle Richard’s career naval service inspired me to join the United States Navy after high school. Like my father, he was a man of service, learning, and leadership who sought to make the world a better place to live.

Uncle Richard’s character, as well as the character and honor my father brought to our family as he stepped up to serve our country as a soldier during Vietnam, impressed on me a life-long love of learning, service to our nation, servant leadership, and uniting others to advance the common good of our neighbors and communities.

As a teenager, I discussed my career options with my parents, and, in 1991, I joined the United States Army Reserves, attending basic training at Fort Sill the summer before my senior year. While in basic, I learned my father had undergone a liver transplant to replace a cirrhotic liver caused by his exposure to Agent Orange in Vietnam.

My father’s desire to serve people was epitomized when he volunteered to use trial medications that are now used to allow organ transplant recipients to live normal lives after their surgeries.

It is through examples such as this, I have developed a passion to serve others with a special focus on success through education. My passion for learning and assisting others, particularly through intellectual growth, has continued to grow, even into middle age.

I am a fervent believer that “*scientia potentia est*”, and although my service-connected disabilities limit my physical service opportunities, I continue to empower my community through educational agendas such as reading programs in local schools, tutoring through my church, and volunteering in the local youth soccer league. This passion to serve continues because passion without action – after all – is futile.

In life I have learned, while we each may be strong as individuals, through selfless service, life-long scholarship, and servant leadership, we are much stronger together – allowing us to have the greatest impact as we advance ideas that change the world for the greater good.

Quite simply, in the words of the honorable Pat Tillman, “To err on the side of passion is human and right and the only way I’ll live.”

**ESSAY 2:  Academic and Career Goals**

Share your academic and career goals. How will you incorporate your experiences into these goals? How will you make a positive impact?

**RESPONSE | ESSAY 2**

In his letter to the Roman Senate, the Roman general and statesman, Julius Caesar, declared a swift, conclusive victory at the Battle of Zela in 47 BCE proudly proclaiming: “Vini. Vidi. Vici.” (I came; I saw; I conquered.)

One of my greatest passions in life is learning, followed closely by service to others. It is the yearning for knowledge and desire to help others beyond self, as well as my personal experience in pursuing my disability benefits through the Veterans Administration (VA) that has encouraged me return to law school, so I may serve my fellow brothers and sisters in navigating the tortuous waters of federal regulations helping them obtain the benefits they so honorably deserve and allowing them to proclaim in the end “Vini. Vidi. Vici.”.

As a nuclear engineer, I learned and acquired skills that reinforced the importance of teamwork and servant leadership through example. Using these strategic professional skills, I seek to serve our veterans, not only in their pursuit of their veteran benefits, but also in the pursuit of their disability with the Social Security Administration (SSA), which is equally froth with peril in navigating.

I attempted to obtain my social security benefits, while concurrently pursuing my service-connected disability. And, while the VA was challenging, I learned the SSA is a much more arduous and difficult course.

The bureaucracy that engulfs our warriors often takes years to muddle through the collective process, often unsuccessfully due to inexperience or misunderstanding of how to effectively present their case to the government. My goal is to simplify this process based on my personal experience and my combined education.

With a firm understanding of laws and an application of the principles I learn through the veteran clinics in law school, I am confident I will be able to serve our veteran community and their families through scholarship and example as I earnestly seek to lead the community to positively impact the lives our veterans who have sacrificed and given so much to our country and communities.

Helping my brothers-in-arm face the regulatory monstrosity that is infamously the federal government, which promised so much to those who gave selflessly in service to us, is my life’s purpose. In the end, I want to stand side by side, with my fellow veterans as they emerge from the bureaucracy proudly proclaiming for themselves and their families “Vini. Vidi. Vici.”.

**OPTIONAL ESSAY:  COVID-19 Pandemic Effect**

In what unique ways has the COVID 19 pandemic affected you and your candidacy to become a Tillman Scholar? (250-word limit)

**RESPONSE | OPTIONAL ESSAY**

“The difference between stumbling blocks and stepping stones is how you use them.” – Unknown

Community disruptions and natural disasters such as the COVID-19 pandemic often have deep and long-lasting impacts. It is how we confront and deal with these challenges that determines our success or failure, individually as well as a society. While I have not personally experienced COVID-19 symptoms, the pandemic has profoundly impacted me personally, academically, and professionally.

During the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, while many activities shut down, I challenged myself to learn innovative, new ways to connect and communicate with my drafting students. While it’s not always been easy, I persevered and continued to develop my skills and using my innate passion for education to learn programs that not only helped me communicate effectively but also streamlined and improved my processes across academia and business.

Additionally, I have used my intellectual growth and newly acquired skills to lead and continue my service in the community, efficiently and effectively presenting classes in a remote, safe environment. My ability to adapt and overcome to these obstacles has provided a great opportunity for me to help others and lead my family, friends, classmates, and coworkers to success as we continue to navigate this new, challenging era introduced with COVID-19.

In an uncertain world, where things are always changing, it is this service, growth, and servant leadership that allow me to unite with others to impact and change the world for the betterment of the human race.