

# The MILLINI



A publication from  
**THE FIGHTING ILLINI ARMY ROTC**



University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
Department of Military Science





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**ARMY ROTC**

# Message from the Professor of Military Science

by LTC Daniel Johnson

Greetings Fighting Illini!

The Fighting Illini Battalion (FIB) placed another successful year in the history books. The 2022-23 academic year started with recognizing exceptional performances from summer of 2022. The FIB sent 28 Cadets to Cadet Summer Training. Four Cadets graduated from the Cadet Command's Basic Camp: Grant Cox, Dev Desai, Mikkel Flores, and Jia Wen Lin. The remaining 24 Cadets graduated from Cadet Command's Advanced Camp. Six of the Advanced Camp graduates earned the RECONDO Badge; Noah Chon, Jared Fligelman, Graham Kessler, Brian Keyes, Mary Pelzer, and Cole Thompson. Cadets Ilya Ahmad, Graham Kessler, Brian Keyes, and Mary Pelzer received an Outstanding Advanced Camp rating; reserved for Cadets in the top 10% of their platoons.



Once they returned to Champaign, the FIB conducted a Fall Field Training Exercise (FTX) at the Sparta Training Area in late September. Training consisted of a Land Navigation course (day and night), Squad/Platoon Tactics (with a paintball gun lane as well), a Ruck March, familiarization flights in a UH-60 helicopter, and negotiating the High Ropes Course. A special thanks goes to the Illinois Army National Guard for supporting the FIB's FTX – especially for providing two UH-60s and their crews (I think the FIB now has many more future Aviation officers).

Another special event this past semester was the 25th Anniversary of the Women Veterans' Memorial in Washington, DC. You will read an excellent article, by Cadet Nick Chheung, later in this edition of the MILLINI. However, I would like to extend the FIB's gratitude to COL(R) Deborah Read for being the driving force behind this incredible experience for several Cadets (and CPT Boyd). COL(R) Read developed the idea of the FIB's participation in the 25th Anniversary event several years ago. Over the last few years, COL(R) Read dedicated countless time and resources towards pushing her idea into a reality. Despite some resistance along the way, COL(R) Read's persistence and generosity paid off, which enabled nine University of Illinois Cadets and an Army officer to participate in the 25th Women Veterans' Memorial Anniversary. The last fall semester event I would like to mention is the MS-IV Cadets' Branch Night that informs them of the Army branch they will serve in as a commissioned officer. This event occurred in early December for our MS-IV cadets. There was a mix of various branches which you can read about in our commissioning section on pages 43-45.

The spring semester was busier than the fall as the FIB's cadet participated in numerous training events, which included the Northern Warfare Competition, Rifle Team Competition, Ranger Buddy, Bataan Memorial Death March, and the Combined Field Training Exercise on Fort Knox, KY. The MS-IVs did an excellent job planning and executing several tactical Super Leadership Labs, which better prepared 25 MS-IIIs to succeed at Cadet Summer Training 2023. The FIB wrapped up the spring semester with the Tri-Service Commissioning Ceremony. The FIB commissioned 20 new 2LTs into the US Army, Army National Guard, and US Army Reserves—future looks bright for these fine Leaders!

Finally, I would like to recognize CPT(P) Christine Boyd for her recent selection for promotion to Major and Resident ILE (Fort Leavenworth). CPT(P) Boyd's resume is impressive, so there was no doubt about her advancing to the field grade ranks. CPT(P) Boyd will stay with the FIB for one more year and then depart for ILE next summer. In addition to CPT(P) Boyd's milestone, the FIB also welcomed MSG Ben Eden, Mr. David Bisailon, Mr. Dan Dixon to the FIB. MSG Eden joins the FIB as the new Senior Military Instructor (SMI) and is coming from the 82nd ABD at Fort Liberty, NC—we are very excited for MSG Eden to join the Team and he has already made a significant impact in the short time he's been at UIUC. David is a Company Commander in the Illinois National Guard, and we are excited to have him join the FIB as the new HRA for the program. Unfortunately, the FIB said goodbye to Mr. Dorian Neang (former HRA) who transferred to Illinois State in to work closer to his family. Dorian has been with the Fighting Illini Battalion since 2019 and his contributions over the past few years have been nothing short of extraordinary. We will miss Mr. Neang but we wish him and his family the best of luck at Illinois State. Mr. Dan Dixon joins the FIB as the new Contract Instructor. Dan replaces Mr. Mike Stevens who accepted an USAR seat to attend the US Army War College—congrats to Mike.



ILLINI!

LTC Dan Johnson



# Advanced Camp 2022

*By Cadets Noah Chon, Neel Khattri, Nimotalai Lawal*

Advanced Camp is a requirement for all Cadets before they commission into the U.S. Army and it is typically completed between their junior and senior year of college. Listed below are some of the experiences of UIUC Cadets who attended the 2022 Advanced Camp:



*CDTs Michael Nelson, Eugene Jang, and Neel Khattri after the 2nd Regiment CST Graduation Ceremony*

**Cadet Noah Chon:** My advanced camp experience was a very tough challenge both physically and mentally. From the moment I arrived at the airport to the moment I got back home, I was nervous about my performance during Cadet Summer Training (CST). I was worried about what camp was going to be like and how it would affect my standing as a cadet. It is stressful being graded by cadre members you have never met and being good enough to contribute to the platoon. It wasn't until the entire platoon arrived in the barracks and after we had met our platoon cadre that I felt more at ease. My cadre members were fantastic. The first day we met them, they told us to get changed into our physical fitness (PT) uniforms and come back out. I thought they were doing uniform drills day one but it turned out they wanted to play spike ball to build platoon cohesion. From that moment, I truly understood what "cadre dependent" really meant. From then on, camp felt more doable. As the

training came and went, I realized the training was the easy part of camp. CST will make sure you pass the required events. The hard part of CST is trying to keep a good attitude and trying to stand out. With the brutal terrain and weather of Fort Knox, Kentucky, even being nice to yourself is difficult. It brings out the hate you stored for the last two decades of your life and you need to silence that side so you don't become a burden to the team. Standing out is also much harder than in previous years. From the stories I've heard from previous MS-IV Cadets, there are a handful of "high speeds" in each company. When I got to my platoon, every other cadet in the platoon was a "high speed." Even standing out in my squad was a nightmare. That being said, the best way to thrive at camp is to role play the most disgusting infantryman you can. Embrace the suck, bring a good attitude, and put in all your best efforts even if it is difficult to do. Finally, remember to try to have fun. There are plenty of times to have fun during camp. Some of my favorite moments were from events like repelling or during downtime just joking around with the platoon to pass time between events. Having fun is the best way to get through camp. Before you know it, it will be graduation, the second best day of your summer (The first being the day you get on the plane to go home).

**Cadet Neel Khattri:** The 35 days I spent at Fort Knox, KY were some of the highest ups and lowest downs I have experienced. Coming in, I felt confident tactically because of our field exercises, but I was nervous about how I would mix in with my platoon. Getting there, the first thing I remember was having to walk everywhere with my ruck, two duffel bags, and assault pack. That movement was actually one of the toughest on my shoulders because we walked over a mile with all the gear in my hands. When I got to meet my squad, I realized that everyone else was nervous just like me. However, a few of us tried to break the ice.



# Advanced Camp 2022

After a few days in garrison, our squad bonded closely, but what brought us closer was the field Situational Training Exercise (STX) lanes. That was when my platoon and I made some of the biggest memories that will last a lifetime. One of the best memories was when three cadets and I snuck out of a defense position to surprise attack the OPFOR at their command post, something that was typically not done. What happened after that was hilarious! We refused to leave until they gave us intelligence - so they gave us M&Ms. Then as we were returning back to our position, they sent two HMMWV (HUMVEES) with 50-cal machine gun on top looking just for us. It became the three of us versus the 10 of them. Eventually we managed to fall back into our defense and they ended up losing us.



*Cadets Noah Chon, Andrew Steffes, and Edward Thomas after the 5th Regiment CST Graduation Ceremony*

Stories like that are what made CST a memorable experience, but there are other memories of poison ivy, and oak that more that made it tough as well. Overall, Cadet Summer Training was a true test of leadership under stress, while also building memories (both good and bad) that would last a lifetime!

**Cadet Nimotalai Lawal:** The purpose of Advanced Camp, which is a required training experience for MS-III Cadets, is to evaluate a cadet's capacity to exhibit competence in officer leadership tasks. You go through a 35-day training program that is intended to help cadets improve their critical thinking and problem-solving abilities as well as to shape them into tough, adaptive leaders who can succeed in ambiguous and complex circumstances. Cadets are judged

on their capacity for leadership at the squad and platoon levels in tactical and garrison settings. During a 12-day consequence-driven outdoor training exercise that simulates a rotation at a combat training facility, cadets are put to the test both mentally and physically. How well they do is evaluated and then each cadet receives recommendations on how to improve for future leadership opportunities.

The most challenging part of Advanced Camp was adjusting to being in the field and running missions on very difficult terrain. On one of my platoon's missions, while doing a recon of the objective, there was a hornets' nest the Platoon Leader didn't see and eight of us were stung multiple times. Still, we had to finish the mission and climb up a huge hill; some of us fell on the way up. In the moment, the experience was terrible, but in retrospect, the experience was funny and we found out we could overcome adversity.



*Cadet Nimotalai Lawal*

My favorite part of camp would have to be the cadets in my platoon and our cadre. Our morale was almost always high. We had so many people who were willing to share ideas and tips to help in the field. Whenever someone was in a place of leadership, we all did our best every time to make sure everyone got a good grade. My cadre was also very understanding and graded us holistically as a leader. On the last day in the field one of our cadre members even handed us graham crackers, marshmallows, and Hershey's chocolate to make smores. Who says you don't have fun in the field.

# Basic Camp 2022

## *My Basic Camp Experience*

*By Cadet Grant Cox*

After enlisting in the Illinois Army National Guard this past summer as an O9R, I had the privilege of attending Basic Camp. My experience at Fort Knox was nothing short of unforgettable. At first, I struggled to adjust to the new lifestyle, but I put my head down and got through it. The cadre provided me with the opportunities and knowledge needed to become a successful leader in the Army. Starting out at camp, my platoon honed our knowledge of drill and ceremony, customs and courtesies, and Army history. Then, the drill sergeants arrived. I found their motivation and personalities very helpful throughout my time at camp. Even though it was their job to be drill sergeants and motivate us, I could see they truly cared about their soldiers. Morning PT every day was a great experience and showed me what it meant to

uphold certain standards in the Army. My first experience in the field was the land navigation course. My group worked very well together, and we ended up finding all day and night points. There were several points we struggled to find at first, so the lack of time forced us to run long distances. The heat at Fort Knox can be dreadful, but we all learned to embrace the suck together. Experiences like this brought me close to the cadets in my platoon. I hope to stay in touch with them for a long time. As camp went on, I was presented with many opportunities like the high ropes course, confidence course, weapons qualification, team building obstacle course, night infiltration, and tactics training. The weapons qualification and tactics training were by far the most interesting events for me. Finally, it came time for FTX, the last event before graduation. My regiment spent seven



*CDTs Mikkel Flores, Dev Desai, Grant Cox, and Emma Lin being recognized at the Town Hall for graduating Basic Camp*

days in the field learning how to survive in the field, tactics, and leadership skills. Finally, it was time to graduate. After 32 long days, I could say I had done something that many people could not.

Throughout this training I learned an incredible amount about myself. As I put more effort and thought into every day, I gained more and more confidence. I fell in love with the grind and challenges each new day presented. Besides my personal accomplishments, I met many people who felt like family. I plan to keep in touch with my battle buddy for a long time. Basic Camp taught me that everyone in the Army is family, and I really can do anything I put my mind to.





# CTLT 2022

## ***My CTLT Experience***

***By Cadet Jay Hatkar***

Fresh from Advanced Camp, I arrived at JBLM ready for CTLT. I met the lieutenant I was going to shadow, 1LT Sean Rogers. 1LT Rogers was a new PL in the Lancer Brigade at JBLM. I was shadowing him and his Infantry platoon. We first got a brief from the Brigade Commander where we all got to introduce ourselves and learn a bit about JBLM. From there on out, I was shadowing my lieutenant for the most part.

During CTLT, I would get up at 0500 everyday, get changed, shave, and meet 1LT Rogers outside the door by 0530 to get to the office for the morning meeting by 0600. After the morning meeting, we would go to PRT with the platoon, where we mostly would be lifting in the gym attached to the office building, blasting music, and getting a good workout in. After PT, we would typically change, grab a PX breakfast, and start the work day.

Typically, we would head to the motorpool to check up on the Strykers, making sure maintenance was getting done and vehicles were PMCSd. There were also many inventory transfers going on during my time with the platoon because 1LT Rogers was new to the platoon and because of their October deployment to Korea. Then the rest of the day was either spent going through paperwork in the office and learning about the officer side of the Army.

However, we did have plenty of fun training events throughout CTLT. I was able to go to an M17 range and help run it, and by the end with the extra ammo, qualify on the M17. Additionally, I went through a SQD STX day, doing room clearings as the lead man with UTM rounds, which hurt by the way, and even got to ride the Strykers at CTLT. These experiences going through the lives of the Infantry platoon were exciting as a whole.

Beyond just shadowing 1LT Rogers, I was given the opportunity to check out other branches. I got the opportunity to ride a Blackhawk day and night for 4 hours, got to see a lot of EOD equipment and learn about the branch, and even got to see what the Sapper platoons do. This experience was especially important because it gave me ideas of the other branches and what else the Army does beyond just the Infantry. These experiences were incredibly vital to my cadet career because it gave me a holistic view of the Army before competing to go Active Duty. After this experience, it only boosted my eagerness to start the job.

For everyone considering competing for Active Duty, I would say CTLT is a must take opportunity. Although with Advanced Camp it will take 2 months out of your summer, it is an almost necessary experience, especially for those who don't fully understand the Active Duty component of the Army and aren't sure if they want to be an Active Duty Officer or in the Guard/Reserves. CTLT was a fantastic experience in hindsight and I would recommend everyone to volunteer to get a slot for it.



*CDT Jay Hatkar at the range in Joint Base Lewis-McChord*



# Air Assault School

## *My Air Assault Training Experience*

*By Cadet Benjamin Beebe*

This summer, I was fortunate enough to get the opportunity to attend the Sabalauski Air Assault school at West Point, New York. The moment I heard this news at around 0630 on a PRT morning, I was ecstatic! Right away, I started getting my gear all squared away and developed a training plan that would get me through. I was very ready to get it started. Then, after five short months, it was time to begin.

When I arrived at West Point, we started in-processing. This was a three-day period where we had our gear inspected, practiced on the obstacle course (for those who had never done it before), and were briefed on what would happen over the next 10 ½ days. During this time, I was able to explore the beautiful campus, experience the mess hall food, and make new friends. I even got the opportunity to see an old friend from back home (which was a crazy coincidence). However, after our three in-processing days, the ten toughest days of the Army would officially begin. Day 0 began at 0330. We woke up, grabbed all our items on that day's packing list, and formed up outside the barracks. After accountability was taken, we marched over to the buses that would take us to Camp Buckner, where our two-mile run, 'smoke' session, and obstacle course would be done. Once we arrived, we quickly got off the bus and moved to a large, open field by the lake. There, we met our Air Assault Sergeants. They gave us a quick "warm up" and then we went on the two-mile run. After that, we had a three-hour workout before the obstacle course. Once that was completed and we were all sweaty and tired, we started conquering the obstacles. I was excited as I was able to complete all the obstacles and did not need to use my one 'drop.' Once this was completed, we ate our MRE lunch and got loaded on the buses to go back to West Point. Once we arrived, we grabbed the rest of our packing list, had another two-to-three-hour workout, and had our packing list inspected. We officially completed Day 0 at approximately 1700, just in time for dinner.

Phase 1 (Days 1-3) taught us all about Army aviation. We had to learn about the history of air assault operations, the different helicopters the Army utilizes (distinguishing characteristics, flight times, top speeds, cargo weight capacities, and much more), medevac procedures, hand and arm signals, and pickup zone/landing zone (PZ/LZ) operations. This period of time focused heavily on academics, but also challenged us physically with events like AEROMED PT and random workouts throughout the day. On Day 3, we woke up at 0400 to get ready for our written exam. Nervous (as I didn't know what to expect), I went out to formation, moved to the classroom, and took my exam. I was relieved when they called my roster number, meaning I passed the exam. I had a couple hours to relax and prepare for Phase 2.



*CDT Benjamin Beebe at Air Assault School*



# Air Assault School

Phase 2 (Days 3-6) focused on sling load operations and contained our six-mile ruck march. Much of this time was spent learning about the different equipment and rigging procedures in the classroom, as well as hands-on inspections of sling loads at the South Dock. We had many opportunities to practice on clean loads (ones without deficiencies) and dirty loads (ones with deficiencies) to prepare us for our exam. After many hours spent studying and completing workouts the Air Assault Sergeants made us do, it was time for the exams. For this phase, there was a written and hands-on exam. We were quizzed on our knowledge of rigging cargo loads and graded on how well we could spot deficiencies on different cargo loads. To move on, we would have to pass the written exam and identify three out of four deficiencies per cargo. I was able to pass this phase and move on to the final and, in my opinion, the most fun phase.



*Trainees prepare to board a UH-60*

Phase 3 (Days 7-10) began with a four mile formation run. We were required to complete this in 36 minutes or we would be dropped from the course. After completing it, we began to learn about rappelling. We were taught how to tie a Swiss seat, hook in, and use the proper rappelling technique. We completed jumps off of the small tower, the tall tower with the wall (both with and without combat gear), and the open wall rappel tower. While doing these jumps, we still needed to prepare for our test; tying a Swiss seat in under 90 seconds and hooking in in under 15 seconds. On Day 9, we took the test. Once we passed, we were able to do one last open wall jump and then had the opportunity to rappel out of a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter. This was by far the most fun I have ever had. After this, we had the rest of the day to prepare for our last event; the twelve-mile ruck.

Day 10 began bright and early for me at 0130. I spent this time preparing myself and my ruck for our 0330 step off time. I was worried about this event as I was very sore and tired, but continued to push through. I wasn't leaving without those wings. Once we heard the words "Go," it was on. Everyone was moving with a purpose, encouraging each other as we went. Then, after 2 hours and 43 minutes, I crossed the finish line. We had our final gear layout and then we were free. Our class had zero Day 10 drops. We spent the rest of the time cleaning our barracks and getting ready for graduation.

Getting my wings pinned on me during our graduation ceremony is something I will never forget. The sense of accomplishment I had was unmatched; I was beyond proud of myself. Having my family there to celebrate that moment with me was great, but the best part of this day was the long nap on the flight home. I was very thankful for the opportunity to complete this course over the summer.

AIR ASSAULT!



# MS-I Class Update

## *The Transition from JROTC to ROTC*

*By Cadet Devyn Blake*

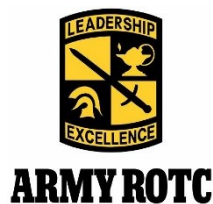
I never saw myself in the military whatsoever. Apparently others didn't either, because whenever I told someone that I was in JROTC and looking to do ROTC in college, I always got a strange look. Up until the last week of summer 2018, I was enrolled in P.E. and had no intention of joining JROTC. However, when I heard that the JROTC students got to do archery, I wanted to give it a try. Four years later, I am so grateful that I gave it a chance, as it has given me so many opportunities and has led me to do ROTC in college.

Walking into my first day of ICW2, the introduction into college ROTC, I was very intimidated but feeling good about the upcoming years. ROTC shouldn't be much different than JROTC, I thought as I made my way to the check-in area. Now, almost four months later, I can officially say that ROTC is very different from JROTC. So far, I have felt so welcomed by everyone and have met so many amazing people, some of which have become my best friends. I have become more active, joining Ranger Challenge and Northern Warfare to help increase my physical fitness abilities. I have learned more about the Army as a whole, along with its many customs and traditions. Most importantly, however, I have felt like I am a part of something big, and I know what it means to work hard and push myself. Something that has really stood out to me since coming to ROTC was my first assessment with Ranger Challenge. Rucking for three miles at 3:30am with weight on your back, working out for two hours, and then rucking back was one of the hardest things I have ever had to do. In the moment, I wanted nothing more than to quit. However, looking back now, I realize it was all just a mind game. Your body is capable of doing so much more than you think, and that experience has definitely impacted my view on what I can do: if you want something and do not give up, you will receive what you deserve.

This has been a common theme throughout my time in ROTC. I now have more discipline, a better mindset, and I am able to push myself in all aspects of my life, including school, ROTC, and other extracurricular activities. Seeing everyone who is in ROTC has inspired me, as they are all super dedicated and welcoming cadets who are always willing to help you out. Overall, my time here in ROTC so far has been an incredible experience, and I am looking forward to continuing to get involved and work on my leadership skills!



*LTC Daniel Johnson and the incoming MS-I class during Day 1 of ICW2*





# MS-II Class Update

## ***Adrenaline Rush***

***By Cadet Conner Hughes***

My favorite memory from the past semester was by far the Field Training Exercise or FTX. The reason I liked it so much was because of the comradery that was built. Nothing beats a good long weekend out in the field with your battle buddies learning tactics, doing land navigation, playing paintball, and even getting the opportunity to fly in a Black Hawk Helicopter.

The Black Hawk Helicopter was specifically my favorite thing I have done in the ROTC program here and my favorite thing of my military career. The rush of adrenaline that you get running up to the helicopter hearing the propellers swoosh over your head is indescribable. The moment we took off, I remember looking down to the ground and just being so happy. The helicopter ride was so surreal. I look forward to making more amazing memories with this Battalion and group of young leaders.

The Battalion hopes to continue having awesome events like this for our Cadets to experience. Being able to fly in a UH-60 is an unforgettable experience and it was a big talking point for all the Cadets in our Battalion once we arrived back on campus. Being able to fly over and see our state from above was something I will never forget. After riding in a UH-60 I understand why so many people want to branch aviation. By far the coolest event of the Fall Field Training Exercise (FTX).



*CDT Conner Hughes (furthest right) with the rest of the Battalion listening to LTC Daniel Johnson's speech at the end of Fall FTX*



*UH-60 Black Hawk lands near the B-huts in Sparta Training Area*



*MS-II class at the semester Dining-In*



# ARMY ROTC

# MS-III Class Update

## ***Peer to Peer Leadership***

***By Cadet Aditya Madduluri***

The bonds built since our freshmen year within the Fighting Illini Battalion have cemented the foundations of a great team going into our MS-III year. Our progression through the years has also increased the level of responsibility proportionally. As MS-IIIs, this year we play a major role in the execution portion of mission command. With our increased roles and responsibilities within the battalion, we have had the opportunity to exercise initiative and practice the art of leadership. This semester, I was assigned the role of B Company Commander. In this role, I was responsible for everything that my company accomplishes or fails to accomplish. This role was especially a learning curve for me due to the emphasis on peer-to-peer leadership. My previous experience in the military followed a strict chain of command which was often reflected by the rank/position of an individual. As a result, the influence leadership had within an organization often reflected their position.



*CDT Aditya Madduluri briefing his plan to his fellow MS-IIIs*

The challenge with leadership at our level was that everyone has the same level of experience and similar domain expertise. I learned very quickly that leadership doesn't have to reflect a hierarchy and can instead be more about the influence you have on an overall organizational success. I was lucky to have other cadets within my company who also recognized this very early in the semester. Our first test trial of this was an early Fall Field Training Exercise (FTX). Each member of our class was willing to go out of their way to help underclassmen prepare the week leading up to the training exercise. This set the precedent for how the overall experience would be for the battalion as a whole. The meticulous efforts put forth by the squad leader and team leader roles which were filled by MS-IIIs ensured the underclassmen felt prepared and gained the most training value. By the end of Fall FTX, the battalion became a lot more unified. Taking this momentum into various platoon/company competitions, cadets within Bravo company took pride in a winning culture. Peer to peer leadership is something that can be extremely difficult when not everyone in the organization is on the same page. Going into Advanced Camp, MS-IIIs will have to navigate this very style of leadership.

This semester has been a great learning experience for each of us to navigate this leadership style. Learning from things that worked and things that did not work, we hope to build upon our strengths and weaknesses for the spring semester and represent the FIB at Advanced Camp.



*MS-III class at the semester Dining-In*





# MS-IV Class Update

## *Making Progress*

*By Cadet Mary Pelzer*

I joined ROTC on a whim. On class registration day, I went to each ROTC branch's table and asked why they were better than the other branches. No one gave me a satisfactory answer, but I didn't care much about boats or planes, so I chose the Army. I wanted a challenge, and I told myself that even if I hated it, I would stick it out for the entire first semester. I was particularly intimidated by morning PRT because I had virtually no experience in fitness.

In those early days, I had two goals: not to be last in any event, and never to quit any training. Those goals worked well for the first semester, so I set my goals higher. As a sophomore, I competed at Ranger Challenge and earned a challenge coin for being "Most Improved." As a junior, I earned my wings from Air Assault School and a RECONDO badge at Cadet Summer Training (CST). As a senior, I was named a Distinguished Military Graduate and Cadet Battalion Commander. My freshman self would never have believed myself capable of these achievements. I made it because of all the help from the people around me. I've become a better leader, student, athlete, and future officer by observing and listening to other cadets and cadre.

Mr. Richards challenged my preconceived notions of what it meant to be a leader. CPT Drabowicz showed me how to lead with confidence and empathy. MSG Collier inspired me to stand out in my class and develop my tactical skills. LTC Johnson demonstrated how to balance the demands of the mission with the needs of the team and gave me the opportunity to excel.

As for other cadets, the classes before me taught me what I needed to know to become a successful cadet in the classroom, gym, and field. My peers helped me develop my interpersonal tact, physical fitness, and tactical skills. Younger cadets set the example for incredible motivation, caring for others, and putting the needs of the team first.

ROTC was never the sole focal point of my college experience, but as I have advanced, I have given more time and effort to the program. I realized how much I want to improve other cadets' experiences. As MS-IV cadets, we finally have the opportunity to make improvements to ensure that every other cadet learns more thoroughly, enjoys their experience, and becomes a valued member of the FIB team. I have made many mistakes in every position I have held – just ask any cadet who has been in a unit I led. I have also learned and grown so much through those mistakes. I will never be a flawless leader, but if I continue to be surrounded by such exceptional leaders, I will always continue to improve.

The ROTC program is not perfect, because the cadre and cadets are not perfect. That is the whole point; as I told the battalion at the beginning of the semester, the goal of our participation in this program is to become better leaders. Throughout my nearly four years here, I have worked hard to improve myself and help others along the way. Serving in our exceptional country's military is an honor. Our soldiers deserve excellent leaders, and I hope to prove myself worthy to lead them. I am truly excited to commission as an officer in the United States Army, and I am confident that this Fighting Illini Battalion has provided me with the skills necessary to excel in my future career.



*CDTs Virginia Larsen and Mary Pelzer hold up the Fighting Illini flag on the high ropes course during FTX*



*Push Up Crew on the field during a recent Illinois Football game*

# Ranger Club Spotlight

## Ranger Challenge

*By Cadets Benjamin Busby and Brandon Carter*

CDT Busby: CDT Carter and I were fortunate enough to bring both a 9-person and a 5-person team to compete in the competition in Joliet this year. Upon arriving, we immediately began rehearsing tasks we would have to complete in the next several hours. From the moment we left campus, our two teams were undoubtedly some of the most energetic there, especially when the 9-person team won the first event, the written exam. After the written exam, our teams went to sleep and got the luxury of being one of the later groups to start the next day.

The main competition day started with rehearsals, breakfast, and a lot of dynamic stretching. If we were going to lose the competition, it would not be because of a lack of preparation. Both teams started out tackling the physical fitness lane, which consisted of many ACFT events. We were then tested on our grenade-employing abilities, which both teams earned first place in. The toughest lane was the dynamic problem solving, which consisted of carrying combined gym and military equipment totaling over 800 lbs to a checkpoint 500 meters away and back. The 5-person team took first place in that event. The teams then moved over 3100 meters to the Call for Fire lane, where cadets could take a short break while only 2 members of the team executed the lane. After our short rest, the teams moved to the medical lane. Luckily, each team had a combat medic who used their knowledge to benefit the team. The next lane, one-rope bridge, required the most team coordination of any events during the competition.

Teams had to cross a river using only a singular rope and a tied swiss seat without dropping any equipment. To raise the intensity, we conducted the one-rope over a river where both myself and CDT Carter got soaked. The final lane was the stress shoot. Teams split into half, with one group performing weapon assembly/disassembly and one group shooting the M-4. Both teams struggled with weapon jams during the live-fire, but were extremely fast with assembly/disassembly.

In the end, the 9-person team placed third and the 5-person team placed fourth. While Carter and I were sad to see the season end, we were very honored to lead a great group of cadets.



*Ranger Challenge team takes a group photo at the Ranger Challenge competition*





# Ranger Club Spotlight



CDT Carter: I had the immense pleasure of being the co-captain with CDT Busby for the Ranger Challenge club this past semester. We both competed with the Ranger Challenge teams during our first two years as cadets, but we were excited, and admittedly, nervous to now be in charge. Everything, from the daily workouts and lessons to the logistics and execution of the competition, would have to be planned and led by us. When it finally came time to start the training for Ranger Challenge in August, we were impressed by the immediate dedication that our cadets exhibited. Plenty of MS-1s—still in their first week of college—had no reservations about joining the hardest team in ROTC. We knew our time before the competition was limited, so we made every minute count. Our workouts were intense, and we hammered through practice on skills like calling in artillery fire and constructing a rope bridge. To prepare for shooting, we coordinated trips to a local civilian range and practiced weapon disassembly on rifles, handguns, and machine guns.



*Zully Gomez and Francisco Cornejo drag a 90-lb sled during the Ranger Challenge Assessment*

I have never been so inspired than from seeing how hard our cadets were willing to work and how much they were willing to give for the team. We truly lucked out by having such an extraordinary group of people to lead. Many of them would ask how they could further prepare themselves for the competition beyond what we were asking them to do. They were critical thinkers and took an active role by throwing out ideas to help the team succeed. I thought to myself, "All these people are counting on me, I can't let them down." So, Busby and I would plan, strategize, and rehearse for hours every week. It was a lot of work, but we saw that the quality of our training was determined by the



*Shamus Herbert preparing for the range.*

amount of planning that we put into it, and our team deserved the best. The most important thing, though, was our team cohesion. I looked forward to every morning we got to spend with our team members, who are amazing friends to have. As we neared the competition, our training intensified. At first, I really wanted our team to win so we could go to Sandhurst and paddle the Zodiac boats. By the end of our training, I just wanted to win just so we could keep training as a team.



# Push Up Crew Spotlight

By Cadet Lauren Leonard



*Push Up Crew team gets ready to do pushups after the Fighting Illini score*

Who wouldn't love a free front-row seat at EVERY home Illini football game? Cadets who choose to participate in Push Up Crew receive just this! Push Up Crew provides cadets with the perfect opportunity to display their school spirit. This past Illini football season, cadets had the opportunity to participate in Push Up Crew for seven home games. Participants arrived at the FIB Gym an hour before kick-off the day of every home football game.

Upon arrival, cadets received a Push Up Crew t-shirt to change into. Once dressed and ready for the game, the twelve participants marched in an orderly fashion to Memorial Stadium. When walking through the main entrance of Memorial Stadium, cadets were able to experience the pregame "hype" exuded by both the players and fans alike. After entering, cadets made their way down to the playing field, staging their gear in the tunnel located by the south endzone.

Once their gear was staged, cadets made their first appearance on the field. At this time, cadets rehearsed how the push ups would be performed when Illinois had put a number on the scoreboard. After running through a couple of rehearsals, cadets patiently waited for the Marching Illini to make their way through the south tunnel onto the field. Once the Marching Illini set foot on the field, cadets were serenaded by an influx of spirited band tunes. When it came time for the band to play the National Anthem, cadets formed into a line and held a salute. Once the Anthem had finished, cadets made their way over to form a tunnel near the north endzone; the tunnel served as a passageway for the players to run onto the field through. Then after the players had made their way out onto the field, cadets marched back to the south endzone and awaited a touchdown.

When the Illini scored, cadets would form into a linear formation and complete pushups for every point on the scoreboard. The Navy ROTC detachment would ring a bell to set a cadence for the pushups. From this point forward, Push Up crew would continue to wait for another score to be scored...cheering the Illini onto victory along the way!



*Push Up Crew poses with Iowa's Herky the Hawk at the Illinois vs Iowa football game*





# Concessions Spotlight

By Cadet Jiwoo Kim

Football season is when cadets get the opportunity to raise money for the Fighting Illini Battalion by running a concession stand within the stadium. Working in concessions on game day is not easy. However, when working with cadets from all MS classes, time definitely flies by. On game days, volunteering cadets meet 3-4 hours prior to the start of the game in order to prepare our stand. The preparation consisted of getting a start count of all items we will be selling, boxing the popcorn, refilling the fridges, grilling the hotdogs and bratwursts, and preparing the nacho ingredients.

When the gates opened for fans to enter the stadium, the stand was always prepared and ready to go. Customers slowly approached the stand in the first half of the game, but as half time came it got busier. This required a lot of patience and perseverance as the ticket orders piled up. Many customers would get upset due to the backed up orders, and food slowly running out. Fortunately, the concession staff were in the back of the stadium ready to help by warming up extra hotdogs and bratwursts along with restocking low items in the stand. When the game began to wrap up, that was our sign to close the stand and begin cleaning. Cadets helped out with cleaning the entire stand and got an end count of all the items, to see what was left over.

Once the stand looked spotless, cadets were released after 8 hours of working the concession stand. Throughout the game, cadets encountered a variety of people, whether they would be excited or upset about the progression of the game. However, that did not stop the cadets from having a positive attitude! Participating in concessions gave various opportunities for cadets to get to know one another despite being in a different MS class, along with challenging them in different ways throughout the experience. Also, our efforts allow the our Cadets to earn money for T-shirts other swag and other items that the ROTC department can not purchase for us.



*CDTs Grace O'Brien and Francisco Cornejo running the concession stand at an Illini football game*



*CDTs Jiwoo Kim and Grace O'Brien at the Illinois vs Purdue football game*



# Service and Fortitude

By Cadet Francisco Cornejo

Service and Fortitude had an amazing semester this Fall. Our mission was to build trust and a positive presence within the Urbana-Champaign community through volunteer work. Amid personal obligations, schoolwork, and exams; cadets of the battalion took their downtime to service the local community, not only accomplishing our mission, but also creating an awareness of Army ROTC.

By far, the highlight for Service and Fortitude Fall 2022 was our participation in Champaign's First Methodist and First Presbyterian Trunk or Treat event. This was the first time the community would hold a Trunk or Treat in two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The anticipation for it was extremely high. Making the event a success required finding vehicles, volunteers, decorations, candy, and costumes, not to mention the careful work and planning of all Service and Fortitude leadership. When the day of the event came around, it was a windy and wet morning. My biggest fear was that all our preparation and hard work would come down to the event being canceled, but the rain and winds calmed and sure enough, the show went on. Cadets came to the event with the most creatively decorated vehicles and attire. We had superheroes, cartoon characters, and doctors eager to distribute treats. We were able to organize 7 vehicles, over 15 cadets, and a whole lot of candy for over 200 children. Throughout the event, children of all ages visited us excitedly and eagerly in their adorable costumes, smiling faces, and by the end left with buckets full of tasty treats. Our Army-themed trunks received the most attention, with many of the children asking for pictures with Cadets in their uniform excited to take a photo with a future warrior leader. The entire event was a WIN-WIN-WIN the children enjoyed the event, the First Methodist and First Presbyterian embraced our presence by "adding younger faces to the event," according to the pastor, and Cadets like CDT Jordan Abenes, "had a great experience and really enjoyed serving the Urbana-Champaign community."

Service and Fortitude's last event was a hastily organized battalion food drive turned Company Competition to add a little fun. In the end, Alpha Company gave the most with over 150 food items! In total, we raised over 250 items, all donated to the Eastern Illinois Food Bank. The lessons learned from this event will go towards arranging a larger food drive and the challenge of a foot march with our items on our backs to the food bank.

Stepping into my MS-II year to lead Service and Fortitude was the most daunting task I thought I would have to endure of all of my responsibilities as a student and cadet this semester. Unlike many of the other clubs within the Battalion, Service and Fortitude did not have any prior reputation, schedule, plan, or connections that I could use as a blueprint. In a college environment where syllabi are written and expectations are always provided and defined, we were in for a challenge. At the start, I thought my most difficult task would be finding events and activities. To my surprise, the biggest challenge was choosing which organizations and events we wanted to help out of the many that were more than happy to receive our assistance. From this semester, Service and Fortitude now knows the kinds of events to be part of. For next semester, we hope to have an event every month and maybe even host an event of our own. Stay tuned and follow @serviceandfortitude on Instagram for updates!

Service and Fortitude was built from the ground up and is still undergoing improvements paving its way to establishing an organizational structure that future leaders of the club can use to continue the involvement of the Fighting Illini Battalion to aid the local community. The success and development of Service and Fortitude cannot be attributed to any singular individual but to the amazing group of incredibly hardworking, intelligent, and devoted staff whose individual contribution deserves a page of their own. Cadets Megan Distelhorst, Jiwoo Kim, Suzy Lee, Estephanie Rendon, and Laine Torrance each contributed their thoughts and ideas and put the great effort forward and perspective that ultimately made Service and Fortitude a success this year.



*Cadets Toby Werner, Sofia Pina, and Devyn Blake hand out candy at truck or treat.*



# Military Women's Memorial

## *A Trip of A Lifetime*

By CDT Nick Chheung

It was an honor and a privilege to be one of the cadets invited to the 25th anniversary of the Military Women's Memorial in Washington DC. I have participated in color guard since starting ROTC my freshmen year, but I would have never imagined this is where it would take me. When we arrived Friday, October 14th 2022, I had no idea what to expect. That night, we were invited to an All Services reunion at the Marriott Marquis in the heart of DC. I had never seen so many service women in one room together. We were in the presence of women who had served during World War II to women who are currently breaking glass ceilings in the military today, including the first Native American woman to become an intelligence officer in the Space Force. It felt so great to talk to so many different women and hear how they were able to face adversity, as well as the advice they gave to the female cadets who attended.

On Saturday morning, we were all invited to attend the 25th anniversary ceremony at the Military Women's Memorial, which is right next to Arlington National Cemetery. We heard remarks from former and current military women representing each of the branches, senior Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs, and many more. The highlight of the ceremony was to meet the guest of honor and the woman who made the memorial happen, BG (Ret.) Wilma Vaught, who is also an alumni from the University of Illinois. During this trip, we were also able to meet a number of influential people: Secretary of Defense, the honorable Lloyd Austin; lead of Department of Veterans Affairs, the honorable Denis McDonough; and the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, ADM Grady. Later that night, myself and two AFROTC cadets were a part of the color guard that led the Candlelight Honor Walk from the Lincoln Memorial to the Military Women's Memorial for the Remembrance Ceremony. I had been the commander for color guards in front of huge crowds at Illinois football games and basketball games, but presenting the colors and calling commands for the color guard at the Remembrance



*CDTs Mary Pelzer, Nick Chheung, Laine Torrance, Ariana Elizondo, and Kira Seeley in front of the Lincoln Memorial*



*CDT Nick Chheung and CPT Christine Boyd at the Military Women's Memorial*

Ceremony was a completely different experience. At that moment, presenting the colors was to honor all those women who served, past and present.

With all the events of service women disappearing and passing away in recent years, attending the events for the 25th anniversary of the Military Women's Memorial reminded me why I chose to serve and why I chose to go the officer route. Women like BG Vaught were able to get to where they are facing a lot more issues than we do. They are the reason there are a lot more women who serve today.

This trip would not have been possible without the help of Fighting Illini alumni, COL (Ret.) Debbie Read. She had donated the money for nine cadets from both Air Force and Army ROTC, as well as an Army cadre member, to take a flight from Chicago to DC. COL Read, her husband Rick, and fellow alumni from the university, LTC (Ret.) Tina McGuffey, gave us the utmost warmth and hospitality by sharing their stories and giving us a tour of Washington DC. Attending the Military Women's Memorial was a once in a lifetime experience I will never forget, and will continue to carry with me throughout the rest of my military career.



# Cadet Training Events



Fighting Illini Battalion



## Town Hall

25 August 2022

To start the semester, the Fighting Illini Battalion conducted a Town Hall lab at Huff Hall in order to introduce the cadre and MS-IV staff along with the clubs available to Cadets this semester. During the lab, Cadets were recognized for their achievements over the summer. Such achievements include graduating CST, achieving Recondo, and graduating from Air Assault School. Newly contracted Cadets were also recognized.



*Cadets listen to the presentations given at the Town Hall lab*



*Mr. Eric Ashworth presents the ISTW and scholarship opportunities*



Fighting Illini Battalion



## FLRC/CST Lessons

8 September 2022

The Fighting Illini Battalion conducted a Field Leadership Reaction Course (FLRC) lab for the MS-Is and MS-IIIs and a CST panel for the MS-IIIIs. The purpose of the FLRC lab was to build esprit de corps within the underclassmen and build confidence in their communication skills. The MS-Is and MS-IIIs did a variety of activities such as one rope bridge and a minefield game to build teamwork and communications skills. The MS-IIIIs had panels of MS-IVs who shared their experiences at CST and answered questions to help the MS-IIIIs prepare for CST next summer.



*CDTs Andrew Rodrigues and Creighton Recavarren help CDT Francisco Cornejo over an Obstacle*



*CDT Elizabeth McLane prepare to cross the One-Rope Bridge*



# Cadet Training Events



**Fighting Illini Battalion**



## TA-50 Familiarization and TLPs

15 September 2022

The MS-Is and MS-IIIs conducted a TA-50 Familiarization lab while the MS-IIIIs conducted a Troop Leadership Procedures lab. These labs were done early in the semester because they cover foundational knowledge that would be used for the rest of the semester. For the MS-Is and MS-IIIs, the priority was to introduce them to the gear they were in many cases recently issued and ensure they know the names and how to use them. For the MS-IIIIs, the goal was to ensure that they had a solid grasp of TLPs since TLPs are the foundation of all leadership evaluation at CST.



*CDT Cole Thompson instructs the MS-IIIIs on TLPs*



*CDT Ali Burianek introduces issued equipment to the MS-Is and MS-IIIs*



**Fighting Illini Battalion**



## Fall Field Training Exercise Day 1

23 September 2022

The first day of Fall FTX in Sparta, IL consisted of mainly of a land navigation practical exercise. The MS-IIIIs conducted land navigation alone and started right after the safety brief. The MS-Is and MS-IIIs were given a refresher before going out in groups of three to find points on the land nav course. Cadets also had another opportunity to go out on the course at night. During the night land nav course, the MS-IIIIs were again on their own while the MS-I and MS-II groups had an MS-IV attached for safety.



*CDT Aditya Madduluri finds a point on the land navigation course*



*CDT Ameer Samy walking back to the trail on the Sparta Land Nav Course*

# Cadet Training Events



**Fighting Illini Battalion**



## Fall Field Training Exercise Day 2

24 September 2022

The second day of Fall FTX consisted of Battle Drill training, a Grenade Obstacle Course, and UH-60 helicopter rides by the Illinois Army National Guard. The Battle Drill refresher consisted of an IMT refresher followed by instruction and a practical exercise on Battle Drills 1 and 3. The Grenade Obstacle Course involved instruction on all the steps of successfully throwing a grenade. There were two UH-60s providing rides to Cadets.



*CDTs Graham Kessler and Brian Keyes hold UIUC flag in front of ILARNG UH-60*



*CDT Ewan Ro throws a dummy grenade on the Grenade Obstacle Course*



**Fighting Illini Battalion**



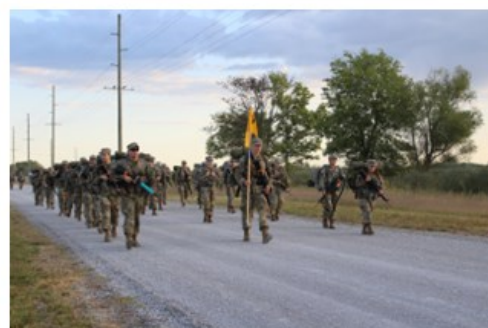
## Fall Field Training Exercise Day 3

25 September 2022

The third day of Fall FTX consisted of a 3-mile ruck march from the bee-huts the Cadets had been staying in to the high ropes course. The high ropes course consisted of a series of obstacles Cadets had to overcome to get to the end platform. At the end platform, there a zipline which took Cadets back down to the ground. After all Cadets completed the high ropes course, there was an awards ceremony to recognize the most motivated Cadets at FTX.



*CDTs Virginia Larsen and Mary Pelzer display an Illini banner on the high ropes course*



*Cadets march in formation during the 3-mile ruck to the high ropes course*



# Cadet Training Events



Fighting Illini Battalion



## TCCC and 9-Line

29 September 2022

The Tactical Combat Casualty Care and 9-Line lab consisted of instruction on medical combat casualty care and on the procedure for calling a 9-line MEDEVAC. The instruction was split up between MS-Is/MS-IIs and MS-IIIs. The MS-I/ MS-II instruction gave more of a broad overview of TCCC while the MS-III instruction was more focused on what was specifically tested on at CST. The MS-III had the chance to run practical exercises where they were graded to CST standards.



*Cadets practice loading a casualty onto a litter*



*CDT Brian Keyes instructs MS-IIIs on how TCCC is evaluated at CST*



Fighting Illini Battalion



## Tactics and Communications

6 October 2022

The Fighting Illini Battalion conducted a Tactics and Commo lab in order to introduce MS-Is and MS-IIs to special teams and radio operations and to further MS-IIIs' knowledge of radios and special teams to prepare them for CST. The roles of RTO and Medic were introduced along with instruction and practical hands-on time with radios.



*CDT Russell Orm gives instructions on how to clear an EPW*



*CDT Nina Shearill practices setting up a radio*

# Cadet Training Events



Fighting Illini Battalion



## CBRN

13 October 2022

The Chemical, Biological, Radiological & Nuclear lab was conducted to familiarize Cadets with protective measures against CBRN attacks. The Fighting Illini Battalion received the help of Chemical Soldiers in the Illinois National Guard to instruct the Cadets. The lab consisted of four stations: react to chemical or biological attacks, protect yourself from CBRN injury/contamination, decontaminate yourself and individual equipment, and a Q&A session.



*Illinois National Guard Soldier instructs Cadets on defense against CBRN attacks*



*SGT Brown instructs the Cadets on Mission Oriented Protective Posture (MOPP) gear*



Fighting Illini Battalion



## IMTs/OPORDs and TMKs

20 October 2022

The Initial Military Training/OPORDs and Terrain Model Kits lab consisted of instruction on OPORDs and TMKs for MS-IIIs and a refresher on IMTs for MS-Is and MS-IIIs. The OPORD and TMK instruction consisted of lessons on OPORDs and TMKs, a live demonstration of briefing an OPORD off of a TMK, and an opportunity for MS-IIIs to practice what they learned. The IMT lab consisted of a refresher on IMTs and buddy rush along with a platoon competition so the Cadets can demonstrate what they learned.



*CDT Andrew Rodrigues prepares to bound up during a buddy rush exercise*



*CDT Mary Pelzer adds stress to an IMT exercise conducted by CDT Christian Lee*



# Cadet Training Events



Fighting Illini Battalion



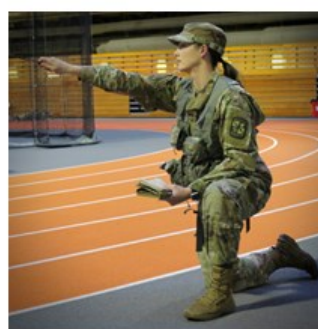
## Squad/Platoon Attack

27 October 2022

The Fighting Illini Battalion conducted the Squad/Platoon Attack to introduce Cadets to the attack mission and to set MS-III Cadets up for success at the coming Super Lab. The MS-Is and MS-IIIs were split off from the MS-IIIs and were taught the basics of a squad and platoon attack on the Armory Track Floor. The MS-IIIs were split into three groups and instructed on an attack. Afterwards, the MS classes recombined and conducted an MS-III lead practical exercise where the MS-IIIs were graded.



*CDT Nolan Hull explains his plan to CDTs Conner Hughes, Carter Evans, Hannah Hoffman*



*CDT Lauren Leonard directs her platoon during their mission*



Fighting Illini Battalion



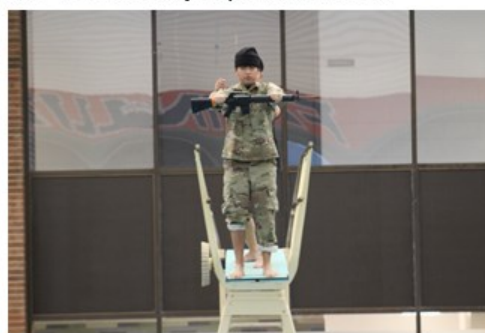
## Combat Water Survival Training

3 November 2022

The Combat Water Survival Training (CWST) lab consisted of three stations of the Army CWST test and a station for non-swimmers. The non-swimmers were given instructions on the basics of swimming. The three CWST stations were the 3-meter Drop, 15-meter Swim with Equipment, and Equipment Removal. CWST is meant to give Soldiers training on how to survive in water while wearing full equipment. Each station consisted of an instruction portion where the survival skills were taught, and the standard was demonstrated. This was followed by a practical test.



*CDTs Creighton Recavarren, Richard Yeom, and Noah King at the 15-meter Swim station*



*CDT Leonardo Jimenez-Tovar about to perform the 3-meter Drop*

# Cadet Training Events



Fighting Illini Battalion



## Super Lab 1: Attack and Movement to Contact

17 November 2022

The first Super Lab of this semester focused on the Attack and Movement to Contact missions. This Super Lab was only attended by MS-III's and the purpose was to give the MS-III's their first practice running full tactical lanes and being evaluated on their performance. The Super Lab consisted of two total iterations.



MS-III Cadets get set up for the first iteration



CDT Estefanie Rendon pulls security in the Objective Rally Point



Fighting Illini Battalion



## Dining-In

17 November 2022

The Fall 2022 semester included the first Dining-In the Fighting Illini Battalion has conducted since the Spring 2019 semester. Dining In gave the FIB the chance to revive many battalion traditions such as the grog and Dining In skits. Dining In was held at the Illini Union Ballroom. The event included the grog which was made up of 11 items. When a Cadet or Cadre broke a rule, they had to drink from the grog. There were also skits made by the Cadets and a live ROTC band who performed.



CDT Brady Moran adds vinegar to the grog



CDTs Benjamin Busby, Nick Chheung, Fernanda Carmona, and Francisco Cornejo were the Color Guard



**Hall of Fame:** The next Induction Ceremony into the Fighting Illini Cadet Battalion Hall of Fame will not occur until the spring semester of 2024. However, it is never too early to submit your nominations. For applicants that were previously nominated but were not selected, they will also be reviewed so additional information can be sent to make an even stronger file before the Hall of Fame Board. Nominations for the next board must be received by October 2023 to ensure inductees selected will be notified in time for the ceremony. Listed below is the application form that must accompany each nomination.

## Fighting Illini Battalion Army ROTC Hall of Fame

### Nomination Form

1. Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Your Email: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Your Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Best time to call: \_\_\_\_\_

#### NOMINEE INFORMATION:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Graduated UIUC (if alumnus): \_\_\_\_\_

Degree(s) Achieved at UIUC (or other University): \_\_\_\_\_



Will this award be Posthumously? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

If no, do you have contact info for Nominee (Address, City, Zip and/or email/phone):

If yes, do you have contact info for Nominee's Family: \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

If yes, please provide any info you may have (Family member's name, address to include city and zip/email/phone number):

On a separate sheet of paper, please TYPE a brief military biography listing the awards the nominee received during service along with a summary on why the nominee should be considered for the Hall of Fame (e.g., the categories that all applications are reviewed for are military contributions, public service contributions, academic achievements, and business achievements.) Rarely do candidates have all categories covered but having multiple categories does provide for a stronger nomination.

If the nominee is selected, you may be contacted to provide a picture (recent or historical) of the nominee or for direction to where a picture may be found of the nominee.

Return this form with a nomination biography to [arotc@illinois.edu](mailto:arotc@illinois.edu) by 31 October 2023 for consideration for the Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony. Thank you.

# Alumni Update

## Alumni Financial Support to Our Cadets

*By Mr. Eric Ashworth, Alumni Coordinator*

The Fighting Illini Cadet Battalion (FIB) is thankful to have alumni and friends that continue to generously donate funding that supports their military training activities and college education. A few have even donated sufficient funding to create and maintain a scholarship or endowment that aids a qualified Army ROTC cadet or the Cadet Battalion as a whole. We would like to take this time to thank these donors by listing the scholarships and awards that support our Cadets each year:

1. **The Colonel Charles E. Curran Jr. Memorial Scholarship (#11771735):** Colonel Curran graduated from UIUC in 1942 and served in the Army for 30 years. From 1968-1972 he served as the Professor of Military Science at UIUC. His \$1,000 scholarship is awarded by the current Professor of Military Science for a non-scholarship cadet that best upholds the values of the Army and the university.
2. **The Demetri B. Shimkin Outstanding Army ROTC Cadet Award:** Colonel Shimkin graduated and commissioned from the Army ROTC program at the University of California at Berkley in 1939. He taught at the U.S. Army War College, Harvard University and finally the University of Illinois. He retired from the Department of Anthropology in 1985. After his death, his wife, and now his descendants fund an annual prize of \$500 to a deserving contracted Army ROTC Cadet that is majoring in one of the social science majors and have maintained at least a 3.0 GPA while studying at UIUC.
3. **The Army ROTC Class of 1970 Scholarship Fund (#1176233):** Mr. Steve Schrenzel coordinated the funding efforts that led to a \$1,000 scholarship that is awarded to an undergraduate non-scholarship cadet. The cadet awarded this needs-based scholarship is determined by the current Professor of Military Science and/or his designated board of faculty members.
4. **The Army ROTC Cadet Endowment Fund (11774561):** Colonel Deborah Olson Read established this endowment with the goal to support cadet training expenses and needs not covered by the U.S. Army or the University. The cadets have significantly enjoyed numerous training opportunities that they would have been required to pay themselves, due to the efforts of COL Read and other donors that contribute to this endowment. This growing fund continues to accept donations and annually provides the cadets a percentage of the current balance within the fund.
5. **The Army ROTC Alumni Fund (11330418):** This fund receives the majority of donations received each year and directly supports the training events of the cadets. This fund is dependent on annual donations to provide resources that the cadets request. The Professor of Military Science and the current faculty hold a board that determines the validity of each request so that all cadets have the opportunity to receive the benefit of these donations.
6. **The Colonel Eric & Teal Ashworth Outstanding Leadership Award** is a new award that provides a cash award to the Advanced Camp graduate that is voted by their peers as the cadet that best represents the leadership qualities, traits and character needed to be a successful junior officer in today's Army.

As you can see, the Fighting Illini Battalion is blessed financially by our supporters. All of this tax-deductible financial aid are gifts through the University of Illinois Foundation. Your generosity has enabled us to install a touch-screen monitor to hold the biographies of our Hall of Fame members, fund the lodging and travel costs needed for our cadets to ruck the 26 miles of the

Bataan Memorial Death March, cover the bus expenses for our MS-IV cadet Staff Ride and participate in the Ranger Buddy Competition. We also receive general support from others who share their time as mentors, guest speakers and role models for our cadets.

I'll leave you with a couple new items for consideration as we prepare for a new academic year in the FIB. We plan on holding our Hall of Fame board during the fall semester. We will then hold the Induction Ceremony along with our Dining-Out in the 2024 Spring Semester. If you would like to attend any of these events, please contact at [artoc@illinois.edu](mailto:artoc@illinois.edu) or by phone at 217-244-1407 to receive all the necessary details. We look forward to catching up with all of you that are able to make it.



*A group of our distinguished alumni that were able to attend our latest Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony.*



# Fun Facts of the Armory Building

## Wanted, Your Professional Books for our Cadet Library!

*By Mr. Eric Ashworth, Alumni Coordinator*



*Part off the McLain library of the Armory*

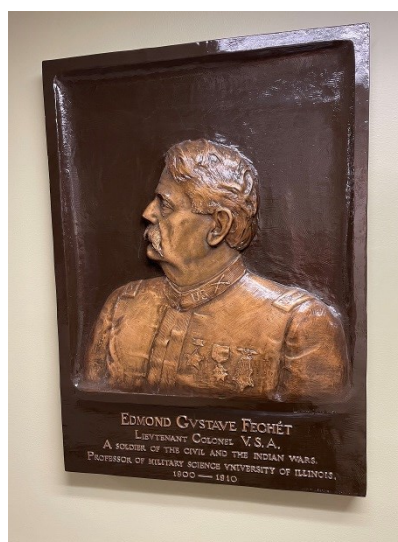
The University of Illinois prides itself for have a library system on campus with more that 14 million items that visitors may use to conduct research. But did you know that the Fighting Illini Cadet Battalion has its own library? In 1977, the Cadets created and dedicated a library in honor of Master Sergeant James L. McLain, an instructor in the Military Science Department at the time. This library was originally located in Room 114 of the Armory Building but has expanded over the past five years to the Conference Room and to the Cadet Lounge. Thanks to several alumni that donated their personal books to our library, our collection has grown to over 1600 books and journals. As new books arrive, we update our catalog and place them in categories on our shelves. These publications have



*Bookshelves in Mr. Eric Ashworth's office*

assisted our cadets with their research projects, book reports and individual reading enjoyment. Topics generally fall into the category of military history, countries of the world, leadership development and biographies. If you are considering to “downsize” your personal and professional libraries, please consider donating your books to our library. We do ask that you find the means to get these publications to us but this is a great way to ensure the books and articles that assisted you in your career are available to our future generations. Thanks.

**Who is the Man on the Bronze Plaque of the Army ROTC Main Hallway?** Why, that is none other than Edmond Gustave Fechet who was the Commandant of Cadets at UIUC from 1900 through 1910. He served the majority of his adult life serving his country in the U.S. Army. At age 18, while the nation was in the first few months



*Sign on armory wall of Gustave Fechet*

of the Civil War, Edmond enlisted for three years as a Sergeant in Company A, 7th Michigan Infantry on 19 June 1861 at Fort Wayne. Just prior to the start of the Battle of Antietam in 1862, he was appointed 2nd Lieutenant, Company H. During this battle, he was wounded in action. He was promoted to First Lieutenant, Company K on 1 May 1863. He was medically discharged at Morrisville, VA on 31 July 1863 but returned to military service by reenlisting as Quartermaster Sergeant in the 10th Michigan Cavalry on 13 October 1863 in Detroit. Once again he was promoted to the officer ranks as he was made a 2nd Lieutenant, Company M on 30 December 1863 and First Lieutenant on 21 December 1864. He was discharged after the war on 21 November 1865. After the Civil War, Edmond was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant, 8th US Cavalry on 28 July 1866. He was promoted to First Lieutenant on 31 July 1867 and Captain on 23 May 1870. He served on the western frontier during the Indian Wars and was appointed Major, 6th US Cavalry on 20 April 1891. He retired from the Army on 9 July 1898 and lived in Grand Rapids for two years. In 1900, he moved to Champaign, Illinois where he was the Commandant of Cadets at the University of Illinois, with a rank of Lieutenant Colonel, US Army. He served in this position for the last 10 years of his life. Although unconfirmed, it is rumored that he was found dead at his desk while serving as the Commandant.

# Words About our Program



## *The Achievements of The MS-I Class*

By Cadet Minjin Khuchitbaatar



*LTC Johnson presents Minjin Khuchitbaatar with a coin during the Fall FTX at the National Guard base in Sparta, Illinois.*

For the MS-I class, this year can be characterized as a year of growth, teamwork, and development as leaders. Our military science class has been taught by Mr. Stevens and CPT Patrick Richardson in which both have heavily emphasized the importance of wellness, leadership skills, and our role as MS-Is. The majority of our classes consisted of building the foundation of our military knowledge in preparation for weekly labs. Mr. Micheal Stevens taught us about battle drills and the role of fire teams, followed by the occasional competitive Kahoot to maximize learning and effort from our class. To build our understanding of a leader's responsibilities, Mr. Stevens emphasized the value of clear and effective communication skills. To demonstrate how communication can become often overlooked, our class played a game of telephone resulting in the majority of the messages being delivered incorrectly. On the other hand, CPT Richardson thoroughly explained the performance triad of diet, sleep, and exercise. His lectures not only taught us the importance of a healthy lifestyle as individuals but how to be a leader that performs above the standard of a balanced lifestyle. In addition to his extensive lectures, CPT Richardson hosted an Easter egg hunt at the end of the semester challenging us on military history, labs, and the Fighting Illini Battalion trivia!

As MSI's annual Hazelton award competition was hosted by CDT Grace O'Brien and CDT Tom Franklin, since our class is heavily involved in all clubs, there was a competitive spirit in the air. Both days of Hazelton were enjoyable but challenging as much of the material derived from labs and the basics of army life. The MS-III class graded us on our cadences, Physical Readiness Training stretches, drill and ceremony, 9-line, and Tactical Combat Casualty Care. Ultimately, CDT Carter Lee earned the Hazelton Award, a well-deserved title after his involvement in Northern Warfare, Ranger Buddy, and the Bataan Memorial Ruck March. CDT Lee was among a large portion of the MS-I class who dedicated almost every morning to learning knowledge lanes with Ranger Buddy or working out with Northern Warfare Challenged. This year, the MS-I involvement was impressive with three MS-Is competing at the 'toughest race in ROTC', and three freshmen earning a spot to compete at the Ranger Buddy competition. The freshman dedication didn't stop at clubs, seven MS1s completed the Bataan Death March at the White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico over spring break. There were many firsts for the MS-I class and all ROTC departments at UIUC, with the newly formed ROTC band. CDT Elizabeth Mclane and CDT Justin Macatangay performed with the band at the tri-service award ceremony and the end-of-semester Dining Out.

The second semester without a doubt has been the most enjoyable, MS-I's had fun at labs with room clearing, weapons, and team building leaving us with memorable experiences. The room-clearing lab was well organized by the MS-IV cadets with the FIB gym utilized to simulate unique situations on every floor. With the instructions to create a fire team of four and to rotate roles every simulation, all cadets were able to learn the purpose and responsibilities of each member of a fire team. Our early morning PRTs weren't miserable when the battalion played capture the flag several times throughout the semester, the variety in workouts from volleyball to rare "Zonk" started our days on the right foot. Overall, this semester has been full of challenges to our abilities and opportunities to develop as individuals who will begin their journey into leaders.



# UIUC Wrestling Military Appreciation Match



*Cadet Conner Hughes Competes against the Naval ROTC Cadets*



*View from the ROTC section at the State Farm Center*

## ***Attending The UIUC Military Appreciation Match***

**By Cadet Andrew Steffes**

The Fighting Illini Battalion was invited to attend one of the varsity wrestling meets at the State Farm Center in Champaign. It was a great experience to watch the athletes compete. All veterans in attendance of the meet were recognized and invited to stand. Every Branch of ROTC was in attendance including the Army, Navy, Airforce, and Marines. During half time the Marines and the Army competed in a pull up competition. Sadly the Army lost by a small margin but it was still really fun to watch us compete against the Marines.

Thankfully, the Illini won the dual meet against Maryland 29-11. The Army ROTC program even had a wrestler on the team, Joey Braunagel who is also a soldier in the Illinois National Guard. He won his match via Forfeit and helped the Illini get the win over Maryland. The State Farm Center is a great atmosphere for athletics. I was lucky enough to have competed there as an athlete myself in high school as an All State Wrestler. I had been wrestling since I was four years old and actually knew many of the wrestlers on U of I's wrestling team. It was really fun getting to watch them compete in a sport we all love so much. I hope the team continues to invite the military ever year for their dual meets as many Cadets in our program have wrestling backgrounds and enjoy the sport. It's also a great way for the program and the Army to get exposure.



*Cadets Connor Hughes, Jay Hatkar, Mary Pelzer, and Andrew Steffes before the pull up competition.*



*Lucas Byrd of Illinois takes down Maryland opponent in the 133lb match up.*

# Northern Warfare Challenge



*NWC Team preparing litter for the competition.*

**By Cadet Nolan Hull**



*Cadets: Brady Moran, Elizabeth McLane, Noah King, Nolan Hull, and Carter Lee*

“The Toughest Race in ROTC” is no joke! NWC has taught me a lot about what it takes not only to push through any challenges I face but what it takes to lead a team. From my previous experience with the competition last year, I utilized the skills learned as a competitor so that I would be equipped to teach others and lead a team to victory when I was selected as captain this year. I was not alone, however, with the help of another captain, CDT Grace O’Brien, who despite injury, gave incredible assistance in leading the club to success. The change from one captain last year to two this year proved successful too, as can be seen in our placing of 15th and being the fastest competitors to finish the race in UIUC history!

For those that do not know what NWC is, it is broken down into two days of competition. The first day is all knowledge base. There are 5 events total: knot tying, rifle marksmanship, casualty evacuation, fire-making with limited materials, and a written test. The following day is the main event, which is a 17-mile race through the Bluffs of La Crosse, Wisconsin, with a 45-pound ruck. You’re constantly going up and down massive hills, and at mile 12, you must drag a 135-pound sled for roughly 4 miles. 42 Schools from across the country came to compete this year.

Overall, the experience was great! There were two things that kept me going despite the physical cramps and mental challenges. One, I didn’t want to let my team down, and two, I remembered the amazing feeling from last year of finishing the race and looking over La Crosse, Wisconsin, with the bluffs surrounding the town and the Black River running through it. Cadets Jordan Abenes, Brendon Carter, Noah King, Elizabeth McLane, Brady Moran, Grace O’Brien, and myself gave it our all, and it showed. I couldn’t have done it without the help of CDT O’Brien and especially without the incredible team that was put together. Cadet King was selected as captain of NWC in 2024, and I can’t wait to see the team he leads to victory!



*NWC Competitors at the starting point of the competition.*





# IHSA Boys Basketball State Finals



*Samuel Phillips gives out ROTC information*



*Cadet Michael Nelson and LTC Daniel Johnson hold the pull up bar for a participant.*

## ***Supporting The State High School Basketball Championships***

**By Cadet Michael Nelson**

Between March 9-11, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign hosted the 2023 IHSA Boys' Basketball State Championship. The games were played at the UIUC State Farm Center which gave the high school teams the opportunity to experience playing basketball in a major NCAA Division 1 stadium. The Class 1A and 2A semifinals took place on Thursday while the Class 3A and 4A semifinals took place on Friday. All the championship games were on Saturday, which was naturally the busiest day. The final results were Gibault Catholic High School from Waterloo, LTC Dan Johnson's hometown, won the 1A division, DePaul College Prep from Chicago won the 2A division, Metamora Township High School from Metamora won the 3A division, and Moline High School from Moline won the 4A division. For Army ROTC the IHSA Basketball State Championship represented an opportunity to reach out to high school students and answer any questions they may have about ROTC.

Since the state championships took place during the first weekend of spring break for UIUC students, finding Cadets who could volunteer to help run the stand at the event was difficult. Despite this, we were able to find enough Cadets to run the stand for the duration of the event. Cadets who volunteered to help with the event included CDT Ali Burianek, CDT Sebastian De la Cruz, CDT Divine Nnadi, CDT Minjin Khuchitbaatar, CDT Samuel Philips, and CDT Liam Meyering. For Cadre support, we had Mr. Eric Ashworth and LTC Dan Johnson.

The stand itself consisted of pamphlets giving information on the variety of scholarships and education funding opportunities offered by the Army for high school students looking to go to college. There was also information on how to enroll in ROTC and what commitments were involved. In addition, there was a variety of ROTC brand items like pens and water bottles which were popular. For activities, we had a pullup bar where the person who could do the most pullups would be awarded a \$100 gift card. The winning score was an impressive 22 pull-ups. The pullup bar was a major hit with both students and spectators. The stand was managed by one Cadet and one Cadre member who would answer any questions a prospective student had. The idea was to have a Cadet who can share recent experiences about being in ROTC and relate to new students more easily along with a Cadre member who would know more about scholarship opportunities and the Army in general. We also had a fair number of veterans who stopped by and wanted to chat.



*Scene from the IHSA Boys Basketball State Finals in the State Farm Center.*

# Shooting Competition / Rifle Club



Cadets: Elizabeth McLane, Miles Ralph, Ameer Samy



Cadet Elizabeth McLane during rifle competition

## The Rifle Club At UIUC

By Cadet Elizabeth McLane

Last year I participated in many clubs that the battalion offered one of said clubs was rifle club. Although I was a little hesitant to join the club at first because I knew almost nothing about real rifles and absolutely nothing about air rifles, I ended up thoroughly enjoying this club. Last year we met twice a week on Monday and Wednesday, the time differed because you could select the time you wanted to go and how long you wanted to go.. thirty minutes or an hour and this could include time spent with the air rifles and time spent in the smokeless range. This allowed me to work the club easily into my busy evening schedule. As mentioned above I had very little experience with shooting which did mean when I started, I was not very good but the upperclassmen that led it were all very supportive and helpful so this just encouraged me to attend more meetings so I could get better. I went from barely being able to hit the targets in prone to being able to hit them in prone, standing, and kneeling positions. Not only were the upperclassmen supportive but it was also just a better opportunity to talk to them about ROTC. It was also a good place to get closer to some of my classmates because as the year progressed the same group of us consistently attended.

The accumulation of attending this club consistently and for most of the year led me to the chance to compete in the CMP State Championship which was an air rifle shooting competition held in Bloomington. The shooting at this competition was unique because a lot of things were digital, we had a little iPad next to us and for every shot we took it would pop up on this virtual target on the screen. This is technology that our battalion does not have so it was a very cool experience. This was also the first time I ever got to compete using the skills that I had acquired, and it gave me a chance to see the people who did this type of thing full time. Some of the people at this competition were nationally ranked and they easily would score 8-10s on every shot. Seeing how good these people were was very cool and very humbling. Because we were doing so poorly the instructors at the range came in and helped us and gave us advice. Although we did not walk away as winners this competition ended up being very informative and an overall cool experience.



Cadets: Miles Ralph and Ameer Samy



# Bataan Memorial March



*Cadets Ameer Samy, Francisco Cornejo, Daniel Yu, and Noah King*



*Aditya Madduluri, Ben Busby, Lauren Leonard, and 1LT. John Kuhn*



*Cadets and Cadre eating in Alamogoroo after the Ruck march.*

**By Cadet: Daniel Yu**

When I was first asked to lead a team to complete the Bataan Death March last year, to be completely honest, I was very nervous, for both the team's sake and my own. The Bataan Death March is a 26-mile-long ruck (A ruck is a big backpack weighing a minimum of 35lbs), down at White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico held in honor of the soldiers who were forced to walk to prison camps in the Philippines during WWII. At this point in time, even as someone who had been in the Army before college, I had only ever rucked for 12 miles and this would be more than doubling the distance. I got to work on creating both a training plan as well as figuring out the logistics of bringing our teams out for such an event. In the end, we had 19 brave souls who volunteered to go in order to challenge themselves both physically and mentally and compete in an event that no one within the program had completed since before COVID.

I was greatly honored to be able to be the Cadet organizer of the event and I learned so much about the leadership required behind the scenes to organize something of this magnitude, from the finances to the training, recruiting to cover a last-second injury and personnel management. It was a truly fulfilling experience that allowed me to learn a lot about my personal managerial strengths and weaknesses in a tangible event and I am grateful for everyone that mentored, helped, and ultimately participated in the event with me. I'm proud that these individuals were willing to push themselves and have the self-discipline required to train for such an event, but also that they crossed the finish line and completed something that not a lot of soldiers even in the operational army have completed. I also want to thank our drivers, Mr. Mike Stevens, Mr. Todd Gannon, 1LT John Kuhn and Mr. Eric Ashworth, who drove over 2,800 miles to allow all of our Cadets to participate in this event.



*Cadets and Cadre taking a break during the March*



*Cadets at the starting point of the March*

# MS-IV Staff Ride

## Cadets Participate in a Military Staff Ride to For Donelson

*By Mr. Eric Ashworth, MILS-120 Instructor*

The MS-IV Cadets conducted a military-style Staff Ride to study the Battle of Fort Donelson on 30-31 March 2023. This semester-long project started with the research of a topic to ensure all the cadets had a good understanding of the background that led to the battle. Once these presentations were completed, each cadet was assigned a military leader that affected the 1862 battle. Then during the visit to Fort Donelson, each cadet summarized the decisions and actions of their leader to the rest of the cadets. Because the battle was fought at the beginning of the American Civil War and the majority of leaders involved were new to their commands, this was a great opportunity for the cadets to learn how their understanding of the terrain, the intelligence reports received and even how weather affected the decision-making process back in 1862.



*MS-IV Cadets and Cadre at the Water*

This event was possible due to LTC Johnson's desire to create a staff ride event for the MS-IV cadets before their officer's commission in May. Due to the restrictions of COVID, the Fighting Illini Battalion had not conducted a staff ride since 2019 and that was only to Battle Ground, Indiana to study the small Battle of Tippecanoe. LTC Johnson's vision was to study a larger battle involving more leaders so after some initial research, the Battle of Donelson on the Cumberland River in northwest Tennessee was decided as the sight for the UIUC cadets. Mr. Eric Ashworth conducted a series of reconnaissance visits to Fort Donelson to determine the amount of time and the appropriate battlefield stops would be possible. A special thanks goes to LTC (Retired) Jim Vaughn who provided his time and knowledge of the battle to recommend a course of action that would work for our group. We would also like to thank Park Ranger Bill Fields, who allowed us access to the key locations on the National Park. With their help, Mr. Ashworth was able to create a 10-stop staff ride that covered the four-day battle in two half-days. Because of the distance to northwest Tennessee, this meant we would need two days and lodging overnight. A special thanks also goes out to Mr. Fred Ranck, a very generous alumnus, who accompanied us to provide his leadership experiences during the Vietnam War and provided the funding required for the 24 cadets and two cadre members to make this plan a reality.

On March 30th, the group departed before light and arrived at the battlefield around 1030 hours. Over the next six hours Mr. Ashworth led the discussion of the first two days of the battle. The group then traveled to Paris Landing State Park Lodge for dinner and to stay overnight. We picked up the battle the next morning with discussions on the Confederate breakout attempt and the following counterattack by the Union Army. After a visit to the Fort Donelson Battlefield's cemetery to remind the cadets the consequences of battlefield decisions, the group traveled back to Champaign. The cadets gained a greater understanding on the value of coordination with joint operations, the role overconfidence plays in the outcomes of battles, the importance of mission command, and the effects of good and bad decisions on the battlefield. Although the weapon systems change, these lessons are timeless and continue to affect actions on today's battles.



*MS-IV Cadets, Mr. Fred Ranck and Mr. Eric Ashworth at the 2023 Dining-Out*

Winston Churchill said, "Those that fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it." The military staff ride is a great exercise to learn the lessons from the past in the hope our future leaders keep from making similar mistakes when they are in command. I believe our nation is in good hands and our cadets did learn valuable lessons that will serve them well in similar situations in their future. To conclude, I wanted to let them know that it meant a lot to Fred Ranck and myself when the cadets thanked us in mass during this spring's Dining-Out. We both wish them the best during their military careers.



# Ranger Buddy Competition



*Cadets Aditya Madduluri and Jay Hatkar after the Ranger Buddy Competition.*

## The Fighting Illini Battalion Tackles the Ranger Buddy Competition

By Cadet Megan Distelhorst

After a sixteen-week training program led by Cadets Aditya Madduluri and Lauren Leonard, the Fighting Illini Battalion had one of the most successful Ranger Buddy competitions yet. Out of around 200 total teams, one of our male team placed top 10, and we placed 5th as a school. As described in the name, the Ranger Buddy competition is completed in two-person teams. It is a daylong competition that starts off bright and early with a 15-kilometer ruck, then immediately moves into physical and tactical skills lanes. The competition ends with a 5-kilometer buddy run.

We started the season off strong with a challenging initial assessment that got new members acquainted to the rigor of the competition. Once the initial assessment was complete, we went straight into training. We trained 6 days a week, with intense workouts, and extensive knowledge days, all geared to prepare for the competition. In years past, we had always struggled to get past the knowledge portion of the event, and would go home with little to report, but with the leadership of our captains Aditya Madduluri and Lauren Leonard, we were able to change our fortunes this year and really succeed at the competition, all due to our team's disciplined study habits during training, and on our own time. Overall, the training and effort we put together this year resulted in an exceptional team, and I hope to continue to build on these efforts this coming year.



# ISTW Combine — Camp Lincoln in Springfield



*High school ISTW Scholarship winners!*



*High school students compete at Camp Lincoln in Springfield during the Illinois State Tuition Wavier Combine.*

## Supporting The Central Illinois State Tuition Wavier Combine

By Cadet Ali Burianek

With the start of the 2022–2023 school year, the Fighting Illini Battalion created a new staff section—Recruiting and Retention. The goal of Recruiting and Retention is to offer a section of MS-IVs dedicated to inspiring students around campus and local high schools to join Army ROTC by educating them on the numerous opportunities and unique experiences no other organization can offer. In addition to focusing on Recruiting efforts, assigned MS-IVs also focused on Battalion Retention by developing a mentorship program to ensure current underclassmen Cadets were developed into future professional leaders within the Army. Led by a Cadet Recruiting Officer and assisted by a Cadet Retention NCO, Recruiting and Retention was successful in quarterbacking a variety of operations through the year.

The first event Recruiting and Retention section planned, prepared, and executed was the Central (ISTW) Combine, located at the Illinois Army National Guard Camp Lincoln in Springfield, IL. At the ISTW Combine, a record 15 high schoolers and National Guardsmen competed for the opportunity to have full tuition and fees covered for their first year of college while participating as an Army ROTC Cadet. The Combine consisted of a physical fitness assessment followed by an interview portion; all prospective candidates aced both sections and were ultimately awarded the ISTW.

The culminating event ran by Recruiting and Retention section was Day in The Life of An Army ROTC Cadet (DILARC) and our semester Open House, both of which showcased opportunities in Army ROTC in various ways. DILARC gave prospective Cadets the opportunity to shadow an active Cadet for the day as they attended a PRT session, shadowed college classes, and enjoyed lunch at Newman Hall with the Professor of Military Science. At Open House, Army ROTC facilities such as the rock wall, Fighting Illini Battalion Gym, and Electronic Shooting Range were made open to the public.

Army ROTC is always in search of the next generation of talented individuals to serve as leaders within the organization and the nation as a whole. With the creation of a dedicated Recruiting and Retention section, achieving this mission will be even more attainable for the Fighting Illini Battalion.





# Combined Field Training Exercise (CFTX)-Fort Knox

## By Cadet Zully Gomez

During our MS-III year, we had the opportunity to participate in a combined FTX with neighboring schools to allow us to put our own tactical knowledge and leadership abilities into play. Being integrated into platoons with cadets from different schools initially allows us to work together to develop SOPs, trust each other and build confidence in ourselves to lead others.

During my time at CFTX, I was able to really sharpen my tactical and land navigation skills. Having it be located at Fort Knox does put us at an advantage to get familiar with the terrain for our oncoming Cadet Summer Training as MS-IIIs. This FTX was eye-opening for many of us, and myself personally. Getting evaluated and hearing feedback from an outside perspective allowed me to go back to campus and refine those little things that would set me up for success. Although it was a very nerve-wracking FTX, I was also able to meet new cadets from other schools and create friendships. I came out more confident, and I can not wait for the upcoming MS-III class to get this amazing experience to develop themselves as leaders!

## By Cadet Ben Beebe

This past April, I, along with my fellow the MS-III cadets, participated in the Combined Field Training Exercise. During this five-day training, we had the opportunity to complete the Table VI Qualification, navigate Fort Knox's land navigation course, and practice our leadership during our Situational Training Exercise (STX) lanes. Once everything for this training was squared away, we loaded up the buses and went down to Kentucky. Our training started at the range. After we were given our M4s, we went to the range for group and zero. Once our rifles were ready to go, we went straight into the qualification. I was grateful for this opportunity to practice as I have only done the Army's qualification once before. After our qualification, we went on a short, three-day field training exercise to practice our leadership and tactics. I was able to get an iteration as a Platoon Leader for an ambush mission and one as a Squad Leader for a defense mission.

During this FTX, I was able to learn a lot about myself in leadership positions and receive helpful tactics advice from our cadre. I was able to apply what I learned at Cadet Summer Training (CST) which led to success in the field. Once the FTX was complete, we turned in our weapons and prepared for land navigation. We woke up very early the next morning so we could start the course before 0500. This



*Cadet Zully Gomez and her Platoon at CFTX.*



*Cadets Nolan Hull, Zully Gomez, Ladarius Jackson, Ameer Samy at CFTX.*

would give us time to practice both night and day land navigation in the same iteration. After everyone's compasses were checked and pace counts were verified, we began the course. I was able to locate all five of my points and get good practice in my orienteering skills. Overall, my experience at CFTX was great! I was able to practice most of the evaluated events for CST, get valuable leadership experience, and meet cadets from other schools who I would see at CST. I was very grateful for the opportunity to practice what I have been learning all year and learn new things from other cadets and cadre in our state.

# Semester Super Labs



*1 LT John Kuhn teaching MS-III class during Super-Lab.*



*Cadet Ameer Samy conducting Recon during a mission.*

**By LTC Daniel Johnson**

The Fighting Illini Battalion executed three Super Leadership Labs during the spring semester. The first Super Leadership Lab was in the frigid month of February and the last one in early March. The primary training audience for the Super Leadership Labs were the MS-IIIs with the focus on tactical leadership to prepare them for Cadet Summer Training 2023. Additionally, several MS-Is/MS-IIIs volunteered to participate in the training, and they gained valuable tactical leadership experience that will serve them well as they continue to progress up the cadet ranks. The Super Leadership Labs consisted of 4-6 hours of practical exercises (on Saturdays) that included OPORDs, rehearsals, and executing tactical missions such as a Raid, Attack, Movement to Contact, Leader's Recon, Ambush, Patrol Base Operations, and establishing a Defense. The MS-IVs did an outstanding job planning and resourcing the Super Leadership Labs and the MS-IIIs are better prepared to thrive at CST 2023 because of the MS-IVs' efforts.



*Cadets: Nick Chheung, Nolan Hull, Miles Ralph during Super lab at the South Arboretum Woods. (SAW).*





# Hazelton Competition



*Cadet: Carter Lee competes in Hazelton competition*



*Cadet: Toby Werner competes in Hazelton competition*



*Dev Desai and Brendon Carter during the Hazelton competition*

## ***Competing In The Hazelton Competition***

**By Cadet Carter Lee**

The Hazelton Competition in April was the culminating event for my freshman year with the Fighting Illini Battalion, and it was a very rewarding test of all the things I had learned throughout the year. All the previous winners were cadets that I looked up to, so I thought it would be very cool to have my name up on the wall with them. Going into it, I felt well prepared because of all the things I had done and practiced throughout the year. We learned a lot in class and lab, and I had the opportunity to practice those skills and that knowledge in my extracurriculars activities. Throughout the year I participated in Ranger Challenge, Northern Warfare, Ranger Buddy, The Bataan Memorial Ruck March, and Tactics Club. Participating to these clubs every morning and evening, I felt I had a good grasp on the skills I would need for the competition. I expected to do well on the written portion: I had studied my notes and memorized the Cadet Creed. It was the practical that I was nervous about. I didn't usually do well under pressure, and I wasn't sure exactly what I was going to be tested on. It turns out that they were tasks that I had practiced a million times before, and I think it went very well. I definitely made some mistakes, but all the repetitions really made a difference.

My advice for the incoming freshmen would be to try everything, inside ROTC and out! College is going to bring a lot of new experiences, and you won't know what you like until you try it. I did every club the battalion offered, and now I definitely know which ones I'd like to do again this upcoming year, and which ones I'm okay missing out on. I think that if I hadn't taken the first step of just showing up to things, I never would have left my comfort zone or tried anything new. But it turns out that doing all these activities has led me to do things I never thought I'd do, and meet people I never would have known otherwise. At the start of the year, I never would have been the type of person to drive 25 hours to New Mexico to ruck a marathon in the desert, but it turned out to be one of the best experiences of my life so far. So to the freshmen: try new things, enjoy your first year, and make the most of it. You only get one first year!

# Dining-Out



*CPT (Ret.) Fred Ranck talks with 2LT Ilya Ahmad and 2LT Ryan Sanchez.*

**By LTC Daniel Johnson**



*Army ROTC Music Staff featuring Cadets: Ali Burianek, Kevin Ziech, Sebastien De La Cruz. Co staff members, Dominik Rzeszutek, Matthew Mak*

The Fighting Illini Battalion (FIB) conducted a Dining Out on 6 May at the I-Hotel on the University of Illinois Campus. The Dining Out was a great way to end the academic year. Numerous FIB cadets received awards and accolades for their phenomenal accomplishments throughout the year. FIB cadets receive recognition for participation in Ranger Challenge, Northern Warfare, Ranger Buddy, and the Bataan Memorial Death March. Additionally, the FIB recognized cadets who served on the Battalion's Rifle Team, Color Guard, and Concessions Club.

FIB cadets also received awards for high GPAs, Volunteer Hours, and for Cadet Recruiting. The FIB also awarded certificates to cadets with the highest ACFT scores. Congrats to Cadets Jake Slaughter (MS-I/Male - 551), Elizabeth McLane (MS-I/Female - 510), Andrew Rodrigues (MS-II/Male - 552), Ariana Elizondo (MS-II/Female - 565), Brendon Carter (MS-III/Male - 593), Grace O'Brien (MS-III/Female - 595), (2LT) Brady Moran (MS-IV/Male - 597), and (2LT) Mary Pelzer (MS-IV/Female - 523) for achieving the highest ACFT score in their respective class. The FIB cadre recognized the top cadet in each class who best exemplify the Army Values. Congrats to Cadets Tobias Werner (MS-I), Francisco Cornejo (MS-II), Aditya Madduluri (MS-III), and (2LT) Graham Kessler (MS-IV) for earning the Top Cadet awards. Finally, Cadet Carter Lee was presented with the Hazelton Award, which is presented to the MS-I/ Freshman Cadet who earns the highest score during the Hazelton Competition.

A special thanks goes out to "The Staff Band" and the Tri-Service Band and their bandmates for performing during the Dining Out – both bands did an awesome job. Finally, the FIB extends a special thanks to a few Fighting Illini Battalion alum for attending the 2023 Dining Out – thank you to (CPT) Fred Ranck, (COL) Debbie Read, and (MG) Mike Symanski for attending the Dining Out and the FIB is very appreciative of your continued involvement and support to the Fighting Illini Battalion.



*Army ROTC Color Guard posting colors during the Spring Dining out. Cadets: Francisco Cornejo, Aditya Madduluri, Kira Seeley, Zack Sumner, and Daniel Yu.*



# 2023 Commissioned Cadets



**2LT Ilya Ahmad**

Component: Active Duty  
Branch: Infantry  
Degree: Kinesiology  
Duty Station: TBD



**2LT Noah Chon**

Component: Illinois National Guard  
Branch: Field Artillery  
Degree: Mechanical Engineering  
Duty Station: Urbana, IL



**2LT Sebastien De La Cruz**

Component: Illinois National Guard  
Branch: Corps of Engineers  
Degree: Biology  
Duty Station: Joliet, IL



**2LT Won Emmanuel**

Component: US Army Reserves  
Branch: Adjutant General  
Degree: Statistics  
Duty Station: Shoreham, NY



**2LT Jared Fligelman**

Component: US Army Reserves  
Branch: Signal  
Degree: Material Science Engineering  
Duty Station: Lake Forest, IL



**2LT Jay Hatkar**

Component: Active Duty  
Branch: Infantry  
Degree: Finance  
Duty Station: TBD



**2LT Eugene Jang**

Component: Illinois National Guard  
Branch: Infantry  
Degree: Community Health  
Duty Station: Kankakee, IL



**2LT Graham Kessler**

Component: Active Duty  
Branch: Education Delay Medical School  
Degree: Biochemistry  
Duty Station: TBD  
Medical School: Wright State University – Boonshoft School of Medicine

# 2023 Commissioned Cadets



**2LT Brian Keyes**  
Component: Illinois National Guard  
Branch: Infantry  
Degree: Kinesiology  
Duty Station: MT Vernon, IL



**2LT Virginia Larsen**  
Component: Washington National Guard  
Branch: Medical Corps  
Degree: Psychology  
Duty Station: Seattle, WA



**2LT Nimotalahi Lawal**  
Component: Illinois National Guard  
Branch: Medical Corps  
Degree: Interdisciplinary Health Sciences  
Duty Station: Chicago, IL



**2LT Joesph Lee**  
Component: Illinois National Guard  
Branch: Infantry  
Degree: Marketing  
Duty Station: MT Vernon, IL



**2LT Brady Moran**  
Component : Active Duty  
Branch : Chemical Corps  
Degree: Political Science  
Duty Station: Fort Cavazos TX.



**2LT Michael Nelson**  
Component: US Army Reserves  
Branch: Corps of Engineers  
Degree: Civil Engineering  
Duty Station: Arlington Heights, IL



**2LT Mary Pelzer**  
Component: Active Duty  
Branch: Signal  
Degree: Mechanical Engineering  
Duty Station: Schofield Barracks, HI



**2LT Ryan Sanchez**  
Component: Illinois National Guard  
Branch: Infantry  
Degree: Molecular and Cellular Biology  
Duty Station: Bartonville, IL  
Advanced Schooling: Dental School



# Commissioning



**2LT Andrew Steffes**

Component: Active Duty  
 Branch: Quartermaster  
 Degree: History and Criminology  
 Duty Station: Fort Johnson, LA



**2LT Edward Thomas**

Component: Active Duty  
 Branch: Ordnance  
 Degree: Political Science  
 Duty Station: TBD



**2LT Cole Thompson**

Component: Active Duty  
 Branch: Military Intelligence Branch  
 Detail: Field Artillery  
 Degree: Finance  
 Duty Station: Fort Bliss, TX



**2LT Kevin Ziech**

Component: Illinois National Guard  
 Branch: Ordnance  
 Degree: Economics  
 Duty Station: Springfield, IL

This 2022-2023 School year the University of Illinois Fighting Illini Battalion commissioned 20 new 2nd Lieutenants into various components into the Army. Each of these 2nd Lieutenants received their various degrees from the University of Illinois and completed all requirements in ROTC to commission as Army Officers. They each left their own legacies in the Fighting Illini Battalion and we wish them all well on their future endeavors in the Army and life.

Be all you can Be!

-ILL -INI!

-Go Forth and Serve!



*Sergeant Aditya Madduluri and 2LT Andrew Steffes perform the traditional first salute at the 2023 commissioning ceremony.*



*The Commissioning Class of 2023 taking their Oath of Officer during the commissioning ceremony.*



# Staying in Touch with The Fighting Illini Battalion

University of Illinois  
Foundation  
Recruiting, Donations  
Visits, Expertise

Alumni continue to ask for ways to support the current Cadet Battalion. The best way is through your willingness to share your experience with them. Please consider supporting one of these upcoming events:

- Alumni Mentor. All of our MS-IV Cadets have received their component and branch choices by December and there is an opportunity to connect with and mentor a current Fighting Illini cadet every spring semester as they prepare for their transition into the Army. Alumni are an incredible resource as your experience can assist them understand what to expect.
- Guest Speaker for any Military Science class. Each year, alumni speak to specific military science classes on their experience. If you would like to speak to current cadets, please let us know at [arotc@illinois.edu](mailto:arotc@illinois.edu) the topic and the time you are available so that we can coordinate for you to be a guest speaker in one or more of our classes.
- Career Highlights. Alumni sharing their career highlights has a powerful impact on our cadets as they see the phenomenal opportunities and experiences a career in our Army may lead to. We are always in search of guest speakers at our Dining-In, Dining-Out, Honors Day and Commissioning Ceremonies. Please contact us at [arotc@illinois.edu](mailto:arotc@illinois.edu) if interested.

For more information on any of these support opportunities, please contact Mr. Eric Ashworth (contact info below).

There are endowments that support the Army ROTC cadets. All of this tax-deductible support goes through the University of Illinois Foundation. A list of awards and scholarships are listed on page 29. There are two endowments that focus on supporting operations, the **Army ROTC Cadet Endowment Fund** (11774561) which provides funding each year to supplements annual cadet training and the **Army ROTC Alumni Fund** (11330418) that supports specific requests by our cadets throughout the year. All of these funds directly help cadets and we wish to thank all of you that have donated to any of these funds in the past.

## Contacting the "Fighting Illini" Cadre

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**GO FIGHTING ILLINI !!!!**