

# The MILLINI



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



# THE FIGHTING ILLINI ARMY ROTC



## FORGING STRONG LEADERS SINCE 1868



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Soldier Skills like Land Navigation are being stressed more in Army ROTC Labs.



Cadets plot their Land Navigation points at a Spring Military Science Labs.



**The Fighting Illini Army ROTC Battalion**  
**Forging Strong Leaders Since 1868**

**Army ROTC: (217) 244-1407 arotc@illinois.edu Armory, Room 113**



## Message from the Professor of Military Science

*by LTC Randall Smith*



We've concluded another successful academic year here at the Fighting Illini Army ROTC Battalion. Congratulations to the 20 newly commissioned lieutenants (we will add two more to that total this summer). They successfully completed all the academic and ROTC requirements while leading the battalion this year. I cannot thank them enough for their leadership and sacrifices they've made here. Best of luck to you all as professional officers in our Army.

The Cadets and cadre continued to meet the goals of being a learning organization and getting better every day. The Cadet leadership developed this semester that we added an additional opportunity for all our Advanced Camp attendees to fire and qualify with the M-16 rifle. They also planned and executed leadership labs that focused on squad and platoon tactics. Campus training ended with a "Super Lab" where the Cadets completed a long road march and two platoon missions.

Our semester training concluded with the Team field training exercise (FTX). Our Cadets, along with those from Eastern Illinois University spent four days at Camp Atterbury, Indiana. While there, they completed two days of platoon tactical missions, several road marches, qualified on the M-16, and successfully executed a Land Navigation Course. The four days tested the Cadets' resiliency, but they came out of it motivated and better prepared to succeed at Advanced Camp.

This year we conducted our Inaugural Joint Dining Out with the UIUC Air Force ROTC Cadets. This proved to be a highly successful event that highlighted the shared history of our services as well as individual traditions. Major General (Retired) Michael Symanski, a Fighting Illini ROTC alum, was our guest of honor and speaker. He provided inspiring words to our future leaders.

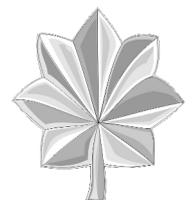
Somehow, during all these required events, 23 of our Cadets travelled to New Mexico to complete the 76<sup>th</sup> Bataan Memorial Death March. It was a great event. Thank you to all the cadre who donated five days to support making it happen. Congratulations to the cadre and spouses who completed the march as well. Lead from the front!

I want to congratulate the newest inductee to the Fighting Illini Army ROTC Hall of Fame. The Honorable Kenneth Kramer, commissioned in 1963, Juris Doctor, Harvard Law School 1966, active duty 1967-1970, was inducted into our Hall of Fame in April. He served as a Colorado State Representative 1973-78 and U.S. Representative 1979-1987, an Assistant Secretary of the Army from 1988-89, and with the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims 1989-present. An impressive and deserving addition to the Hall of Fame.

As always, our summer remains busy with Cadets and Cadre at Fort Knox, Kentucky attending Basic Camp and Advanced Camp. We look forward to the start of the Fall Semester and continuing to train and develop the next generations of Army Officers.



Thank you for all that you do to support our Cadets with your time, donations, and mentorship. Your active support ensures that they understand the tradition of this program, our Army, and our country.



## Message from the Senior Military Instructor

*by MSG Bruce Hutcherson*

I would like to thank all the graduates and the U.S. Army newest Lieutenants on a successful school year in leading the Illini battalion. As a learning organization, the spring semester increased on the skills that were introduced during the fall semester. U.S. Army Cadet Command is requiring the university ROTC programs to teach more Soldier skills and our Cadets have responded well to this level of training. Along with these important individual skills, each platoon conducted collective training during the leadership labs after focusing on squad-level skills during the fall semester. Unit cohesion is a vital part of a successful organization, and this return to more of the Soldier basic skills have already produced labs that replicate closer to what the Cadets will see at summer camps. Practice makes perfect and the Cadets this semester were able to practice.



Land navigation and Basic Rifle Marksmanship are crucial individual skills that our Cadets had the opportunity to sharpen during the semester. Cadets were able to train at Farndale Reservoir and the Police Training Institute which is located near campus. The benefits were clearly shown during our spring Field Training Exercise (FTX) as significantly more Cadets qualified, and the average number of rounds required to zero was reduced. In preparation for Advanced Camp, hard work and muscle memory pays off. I am confident that our Basic Camp and Advance Camp attendees have attained the skills to perform above expectations.

Being physically, mentally and emotionally fit are at the forefront of a successful military career. Our Cadets have embraced the new Physical Readiness Training standards, which ultimately increased our program's Army Physical Fitness Test scores. Excellent work, Cadets. Two dozen of our Cadets participated in the Bataan Memorial Death March in White Sands, New Mexico and another group of Cadets participated in the Ranger Buddy competition at Kansas University. Both of these events pushed Cadets to limits that most of them have never achieved before and all of them became more confident in their abilities by training hard, preparing sufficiently for the event, and digging deep to overcome difficult conditions during the competition.

In short, I personally would like to thank everyone that volunteered to support our efforts with the spring FTX at Camp Atterbury, the end of the year's Honors Day, the Hall of Fame, our first joint Dining Out, and the commissioning ceremonies. All of these events occurred the last month of the semester while students were preparing for their finals. Without dedicated leaders in this program, we would have not been as successful as we were. Keep your powder dry and two scoops of HOOAH!!!



**ARMY ROTC**

*On the Front Cover: A Cadet of the Fighting Illini Battalion poses for a picture after swearing into the U.S. Army during one of the Fighting Illini Football games (Top). In the bottom photo, members of the Color Guard prepare to post the Colors before Army ROTC Dining Out.*



## MS-I Class Updates

### *A New Cadet's Prospective of ROTC*

*By Cadet Gabriel Cross*

Cadet Gabriel Cross wanted to share his experiences as a new cadet in the Fighting Illini Army ROTC Battalion. Here are his thoughts:

“Since I was very young, I knew that I wanted to be in the military. My first real step towards joining the military was learning about the 4-Year Scholarship that is offered by Cadet Command. During my senior year of high school, I applied for a 4-Year Scholarship. Unfortunately, I was not selected for the scholarship. However, I was still certain that the Illinois Army ROTC program was something I was still going to at least try. Even after doing some research, I was not entirely sure what to expect from ROTC, but it only took me a few weeks to settle in and realize that the Fighting Illini Army ROTC program was the place for me. All of the Cadets that I met and trained with were very welcoming, friendly, and helpful. They offered abundant support to the freshman class and were a great resource to us while being integrated into the Fighting Illini Battalion.



The 2018 Hazelton Award winner, Gabriel Cross.

During my first year, I was taught numerous priceless lessons. Some of these will be specifically applied during my time in the Army while others are lessons that will be useful for me in any leadership position in life. My MS-I year also held many unforgettable experiences that I would not have been able to experience anywhere else.

The ROTC program helped to push myself out of my comfort zone and by doing so, I not only far exceeded what I thought I could accomplish as a Cadet, but as a college student as well. For example, I was a member of the Ranger Challenge Club which permitted me to push myself physically, and refine soldier skills that I will use in my Army career. This additional training led to other successes for me later in the year when I earned the Hazelton Award, an annual competition of the top MS-I Cadets. It is very humbling to be the most recent recipient of an award that has a long history at the University of Illinois and I pray that I am able to continue to uphold its legacy. My first year as a member of the Fighting Illini Battalion has been an awesome experience and it has been truly amazing to see the work and effort put in by all the cadets in the Battalion; especially by the MS-I class. I thank God for such a great first year of ROTC and look forward to continuing my time in the Army ROTC program at UIUC next year.”



Cadet Gabriel Cross learns some of the techniques of throwing a hand grenade.



Cadet Gabriel Cross being evaluate by MS-IV Cadet Andrew Jacobs.

## MS-II Class Updates

### Balancing ROTC and Division 1 Athletics

*By Cadet Molly Hein*

Though academics and Army ROTC tests students and Cadets daily, there are some who are up for a greater challenge. While not in the classroom or learning Army tactics, Cadet Molly Hein is training and competing in the sport she loves. Cadet Hein decided to share her experience of balancing school, ROTC, and athletics with us:

“My name is Molly Hein and I am a Sophomore Fighting Illini Cadet, and student-athlete on the Women’s Swimming and Diving team at the University of Illinois. Being a Cadet and Division One athlete is a challenge that many of my peers choose not to attempt, but makes me incredibly happy for being part of both. The support my ROTC family constantly provides makes the challenge much easier and more rewarding. Balancing athletics, school and ROTC is probably the most time consuming way I could have chosen to spend my college years, but it will be worth it the day I commission as a Second Lieutenant and become a Platoon Leader in the U.S. Army.



Cadet Molly Hein pulls security for her squad.

Division One collegiate swimming has one of the longest seasons of any college sport, lasting from late August until the middle of March. During this time, over 20 hours a week are solely dedicated to team training. After training, I manage the many team meetings, treatments, rehab and swim meets; all the while maintaining a challenging course load as a Material Science and Engineering major at this university and, of course, my ROTC requirements. To most of the other Cadets, I am seen as the swimmer who comes to lab each week and an occasional after-school event. What they do not see is what I am doing when I am not around them. They do not see the time I sacrifice from being social to catch up on school I missed, the grueling practices, lifting sessions and finally they do not understand the expectations that come with being a Division One student-athlete at the University of Illinois. However, my fellow Cadets accept me even though they may not understand what my requirements are, and still give me all the support I need to be just as successful as them.

The hardest part of balancing ROTC and athletics is the constant lack of time to devote to each discipline while trying to be successful in the classroom. Having good time management is incredibly important to my success in the program, classroom, and pool. Throughout my swimming career, I have learned to prioritize extremely well, and get things done efficiently so that I have sufficient time to focus on other priorities. This has translated very well as a Cadet in the program. Planning, writing things down, and communicating with people to hold me accountable is how I am able to fit so much into my schedule. There is plenty of time throughout the day if you plan right and are willing to make sacrifices. I have encountered many people who think I am crazy for



Cadet and student athlete Molly Hein prepares before a race.

taking on such a demanding plate of activities, but their doubt only motivates me to be even more successful. More importantly, I want to be a role model for the younger generations and show them that hard work and dedication can take you anywhere.

Finally, I want to show the athletic community that there are ways to follow your passions and careers while still continuing your sport. I have learned so much about myself, leadership, and how to be a teammate through both ROTC and swimming and I am incredibly thankful for the opportunities both organizations have provided for me.”

# MS-III Class Updates

## MS-III Prepare for Advanced Camp

*By Captain Nathan Elkins, MS-III Instructor*

In reflection of the MS-III year of ROTC, its focus is on what a leader does; more specifically, as defined by ADP 6-22 “Leadership competencies are groups of related actions that the Army expects leaders to do.” Cadet Hopp had this to say about what he did as a leader this year, “Above all else, I practiced the core leadership competencies: Lead, Develop, and Achieve. Whether it was a simple gear layout, a mission brief for a Platoon Ambush, or performing a Color Guard for over 10,000 Fighting Illini fans, by adhering to these competencies, I was able to achieve results in a professional fashion while developing this in my chain of command.”

Cadets in their MS-III year are provided opportunities to develop their leadership skills through leading small groups as Squad Leaders, Platoon Sergeants, and Platoon Leaders. For most MS-III Cadets, the experience of leading other Cadets can be very intimidating as stated by Cadet Daniel Lee, “Now that I was in the spotlight, I was afraid of making mistakes and constantly doubted myself. It initially felt uncomfortable and awkward since I was used to following other cadet’s orders.” Cadet Jonathan Becker agreed and additionally explained, “In an environment of strong-willed individuals that are all trying to be leaders, it is easy to get lost and overwhelmed when everyone is adamant their idea is the best idea. At some point, your plan can be manipulated by the thoughts of others that it is no longer your plan. After experiencing this, I realized the importance of making a plan and sticking to it. I got comfortable standing my ground, and rather than caving in when questions got asked, I learned to get comfortable disagreeing with those around me and convincing them as to why my plan is better, whilst implementing the best of their ideas. This led to me becoming not only more confident as a leader, but more competent.”

In addition to executing as a leader, the MS-III Cadets are academically challenged as they begin taking 300 and 400-level courses in their degree programs. Cadet Michael Hill stressed how time management techniques have helped him with this increased responsibility, “Above all, I have gained the skill to operate under the pressure of school, grades, classes, deadlines, labs, and having new stuff being piled onto my plate every hour. Sometimes I failed, but I got back up.”

As they struggled with the increased course load and the leadership challenges, many of the Cadets learned what being a team and counting on peers really means. Cadet Barsbald Darmabal recalled, “I look back on the greatest asset that have proven to be the most beneficial to me, my peers. I owe them any success that I have attained. From morning calls at 0530 making sure I make it to morning Physical Training; some of them coming into my room to physically drag me out of bed; to helping me prepare for labs and assisting me to shine bright under the spotlight in leadership positions, it is with their help and the teamwork that was forged over this year that I think we all started to realize that the necessity that teamwork plays in all of our lives.” Cadet Thomas Jackson concurred, “After two years I cannot imagine my success without my fellow MS-IIIs. Being an effective military officer is dependent on one’s ability to recognize talents and flaws but find ways to best utilize those skills to benefit the team. In our program our Juniors are in constant communication and coordination, utilizing each other’s skill sets to accomplish tasks we could never imagine accomplishing on our own.”



Members of the MS-II Class carry out a mission during lab.

## MS-III Class Updates

This Spring semester has really been about preparing the MS-III's for success at Advanced Camp. The focus has been on troop leading procedures, operations orders, terrain models, and learning how to utilize all three of these tools to accomplish a mission. Cadet Vinay Prabhakar showed his appreciation by stating, "This formal education on OPOD briefs resonated with me, and everything finally clicked. I now understand how to brief an Operations Order to a platoon, and my ability to lead improved as a result."

With all courses there are also intangible skills that are learned and developed. Cadet Madison Jolley learned, "It is important to always show up prepared. Several times I showed up to class in the fall semester unprepared, either having not read the text or not checking the syllabus for the day, which ultimately limited my success for that given class day. These days motivated me to prepare for class more effectively and encourage my peers to as well." Cadet Edgar Gamino echoed this by remarking, "The MS-III's learned what it was like to be docked class participation points for not meeting important deadlines. These penalties showed the MS-III class what one should expect when commissioning as a Second Lieutenant; do not expect to get away with being unprepared at your unit."

As all of the MS-III Cadets head out to Advanced Camp this summer to be evaluated on their leadership potential, we wish them luck and pray they have a productive, safe, and enjoyable experience. Eight of the Cadets will be going on to participate with Army units across the World through the Cadet Leadership Training program, two Cadets will be participating in Army summer internships, and three Cadets will be working with foreign militaries through the Cultural Understanding and Language Proficiency program. We look forward to hearing from all these Cadets about their experiences this summer when they return in the Fall.



The MS-III class poses for a picture after Dining Out.



Cadet Vinay Prabhakar instructs his squad members during a lab.



Cadet Hercules Analitis pushes himself to finish the 12-mile ruck.

## MS-IV Class Updates

### MS-IV Class Begins New Journey

*By Second Lieutenant Dylan Shearer*

Entering my final year in the Army ROTC program, there were many mixed feelings. Being relieved to finish Advanced Camp over the previous summer, I was excited to begin my next step but at the same time, nervous to see my time here in the program coming to an end. With the excitement of component and branch selection right around the corner, it was difficult to look forward to beginning my career in the Army but at the same time, the MS-IV Cadets knew we had a responsibility to our program first. Being the first class to complete the new Advanced Camp requirements, we now had the experience to prepare our MS-III Cadets and have them ready by the end of this year for camp and hopefully ensure they achieve more as a class than we had. We knew coming into the year there were high expectations on us but we were ready for the challenge. With great leaders and an even better drive to succeed, our MS-IV class was very confident that we would leave our program in a better place than it has been before.



The MS-IV Class poses for their last Dining-Out together.

Communication and teamwork were the cornerstone of our MS-IV class. Even more than wanting to be successful ourselves, we wanted to do everything in our power to help others succeed. Our class was selfless, not only when it came to helping the younger cadets, but when helping each other as well. From planning training to covering down for one another, our MS-IV class knew we could count on each other and this made our last year in the program the best. Around the time components, branches, and duty stations were published, there was nothing but support and happiness for one another. I can honestly say the entire class was just as excited for others receiving their top choice as they were for themselves. This was mainly due from building a relationship with one another outside of our program. Our class took the time to know each other away from OPORDs and labs, and met after classes and on weekends. Because of the inclusion we gave each other, we were a cohesive team that worked very well together. We held each other to the same standard, pushing and motivating one another during every training event. I am a firm believer that we had such success not only as a class, but as a program, because we were able to lean on others and perform well in areas others felt weak.



The MS-IV Class at the Joint Commissioning Ceremony. 20 Army ROTC Cadets earned commissions during the 2018 academic year.

Even in my last year of the program, I learned many skills and now hold myself to an even higher standard. I believe we have successfully prepared the MS-III class for Advanced Camp and to take over as Cadet Battalion leadership, upon their return to campus. I am confident they will make our program even better. As for our newly commissioned Lieutenants, they will all have successful careers in the Army and I wish nothing but the best for each of them. I am thankful to have been a part of a great class and thank them for making me a better leader. Wherever the Army takes them, I know the soldiers under them will be in great hands and I hope they enjoy their time in the Army because they have deserved it.

# THE STORE

The Fighting Illini Army ROTC Store is still operational but starting this summer, all purchases will have a new look to them. Across the university, the Column “I” design is leaving. The university wants to maintain the Block “I” so we need to change to keep up with the times. Therefore, starting with the fall semester, the new Block I Shield (our new ROTC Patch when the Chief departed) will replace the Column “I” found on the current polo shirts. The new design is shown on the right:



“The Store” will continue to provide an opportunity to fulfill requests of alumni, assist in marketing our program through our supporters, and providing the Cadets a small fundraising resource. A portion of the price (\$3-5) of each item will be allocated to supporting Cadet training, development, and related activities. All funding will be used for cadet activities.



If interested in purchasing any of these items, fill out an order form by going to the following website: [teshurt.com/uiucrotc](http://teshurt.com/uiucrotc) You will pay and receive your order straight from the vendor. If you have questions, please contact Eric Ashworth at [eashwort@illinois.edu](mailto:eashwort@illinois.edu).

Also, we often have alumni that see in the Millini one of the shirts the Cadets are wearing for training and ask to purchase one of these shirts. Some of these are available for a “donation” to the program. Contact Eric Ashworth as well for these requests.

# Cadet Spotlights

## A Story of Ruck Club's Journey to the Bataan Memorial Death March

*By Cadet Michael Hill*

Over the latter half of Spring break, I embarked on a journey with a few close friends, a 40-pound ruck, and a few bags of sunflower seeds, with the intent to do something I had never done before, a marathon. Not just any marathon, this was the 26.2-mile Bataan Death March in White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico.

We left campus in government vehicles on a trip that would take us somewhere around 24 hours to complete. Along the way, we made a stop in Amarillo, Texas, where we were driven by limo to a steakhouse known as "The Big Texan." The limo driver promoted a 72-ounce steak that was free if you could eat it. He had mentioned the record holder was a 120-pound woman who ate three of these steaks in 28 minutes. She was somewhat of a celebrity in the area. Good ole Amarillo. Eating the steak would have been a great feat, but we were preparing for our own a couple of days from then.

One the second day of driving, we arrived at White Sands Missile Range, the same site as the Trinity test site, which is the location of the first nuclear weapons employed by the United States; I am fairly confident there is no lingering radiation on my boots. We registered for the event and received our bib numbers and looked around the area which was full of old aircraft and ordinance previously utilized by the United States military. The surrounding mountains and white sand dunes were quite the sight and made for some great photos.

The next morning at 0400 hours, we awoke in our motel rooms and headed out in the government vehicles for the starting line. The atmosphere in the waiting area was full of energy - veterans, active duty soldiers, and civilians alike; all preparing to embark on a marathon for different reasons, whether it be physical fitness or in memory of a deceased and loved soldier. The starter signaled for our group to go, and we moved out.

Right from the start, my feet were in pain with my standard issue boots. I started to run to numb the pain. This pain lasted throughout the race. The energy I was receiving from all of those around me, and the banana and orange slices that were always present at the numerous checkpoints kept me motivated.

Finishing the race, I came in with a few of my great friends from the ROTC program. Weighing my ruck showed that I had been rucking with 50 pounds, rather than the required 35. Mistake? Yes. Additional pride? Also yes. The first thing I did when I was finished the ruck was devour the free meal the hosts gave us while contemplating the importance of preparation for future challenges.



Cadets pose in White Sands, New Mexico



Cadets celebrate their competition in the Bataan Death March

## Cadet Spotlights

### ***Surviving the Sands; Honoring the Soldiers of the Bataan Death March***

***By Cadet Vinay Prabhakar***

White sands, a scenic mountainside, and an entire shelf's worth of Gold bond powder. This spring break, most college students were resting and relaxing. However, one group of motivated cadets decided to turn a week-long break into an unforgettable training experience. 23 cadets and 6 cadre members took a 40-hour drive down to White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico in order to participate in the Bataan Memorial Death March. The 26.2-mile ruck march is an annual commemoration of the Bataan Death March, that over 60,000 American and Filipino soldiers were forced to endure during World War II. This year, on March 25, 2018, there were over 8,000 attendees and participants, including seven survivors of the 1942 Bataan Death March. This is the second year in a row that the Fighting Illini Battalion has gone to New Mexico to participate, and the number of cadets that marched this year is double the amount that participated in 2017. The event offered Fighting Illini cadets an opportunity to test their rucking abilities as well as partake in a historic event that honors the American soldiers of the past.

The training and preparation for the event were led by Ruck Club captain Cadet Patrick Reynolds. "I am extremely happy with how our team performed at Bataan this year. Thanks to the dedication, hard work, and spirit of all 23 cadets, Ruck Club was able to plan, train, and execute the marathon without a hitch. It was definitely one of the greatest moments of my life." The march is the same length as a marathon and requires a minimum of 35 pounds to be carried in the ruck sack.

A daunting task that exceeds the length of any ROTC training event, the march had physical effects that were felt by everyone. Cadet Alex Kim is no stranger to the event, having participated in in last year as well. "The first time I participated in the Bataan Death March, it was the hardest thing I ever did. The second time I participated in the Bataan Death March, it felt like the hardest thing I ever did. But I would gladly do it again because both times I learned two valuable things about myself. That I really want to quit when things get hard, and that I won't quit when things get hard. There are few things in life that build your confidence as much as knowing you've reached your edge and realizing that you can go further."

23 cadets entered the Bataan Memorial Death March with varying levels of preparation, and all 23 finished. Four of our cadre also completed the ruck march. This year, Cadet Cullen O'Connor finished ahead of everyone else in the battalion, with a blistering finish time of 7 hours and 39 minutes. "The event certainly tested my limits, as each mile that passed felt longer than the last. I never thought I would be able to complete a weighted marathon, but I was able to prove to myself that I can be capable of doing anything I put my mind to. I would not have been able to complete this ruck without those who trained with me and those who pushed me through from start to finish." The Bataan Memorial Death March is open to participants of all ages, and cadets from every MS class participated this year. Cadet Ryan Kim is one of the three MS-I cadets that participated in the march during his first year as an Illini. "Nothing I have ever done during my MS-I year or prior could have prepared me for the trial that was this marathon ruck march. There were times where my body felt as if it could not go any further and I literally could not stand. Perhaps even more challenging was the fierce mental battle which I faced every step of the way. In the end, The Bataan Memorial Death March was an outstanding experience which pushed me to my limits and brought together thousands of people to undergo a little bit of hurt and learn a lot in order to honor those who suffered a lot more than we had to."

The march was truly a humbling experience for everyone. The physical and mental challenges faced during the event pale in comparison to the atrocities American and Filipino POWs had to endure during the real Bataan Death March. Every single cadet that participated this year is better off because of it. Not just because they have proven their physical and mental capabilities, but because they now have become a part of something greater than them. The sacrifices of the "Battling Bastards of Bataan" will be forever immortalized and revered by the country they proudly served.

# Cadet Spotlights

## A Look Back at Color Guard and Winter Commissioning

*By: Second Lieutenant Alex Tkaczyk*

It has been an honor to serve with the Fighting Illini Army ROTC Color Guard. The Army ROTC Color Guard pays respect to the tradition of bearing, protecting, and presenting the national, state, service, and battalion colors. Through hours of strict drill and ceremony practice under the supervision of MSG Hutcherson, a Division-level Color Guard veteran, our cadets represent some of the most professional and disciplined the program has to offer. This year, Cadet Dylan Hopp led the Army ROTC Color Guard at twenty-six events, including multiple athletic events, the Construction Engineering Research Laboratory ribbon cutting ceremony, two Veterans Day ceremonies, The Homecoming Parade, and the University's Commencement ceremony. Their performance in these events reflects great credit upon the Fighting Illini Battalion and the University of Illinois.



Cadets Alex Tkaczyk and Dylan Hopp prepare for one of many Color Guard events on campus



The Color Guard is often supported by all of the ROTC Departments found on the U of I campus.

Another special honor was witnessing the December 2017 graduating cadets earn their Commissions into the U.S. Army in that month. During that month, the Fighting Illini Battalion commissioned three new Lieutenants, Second Lieutenants, Chris Kerasotes, Lanise Branch, and Corey Maisch. These three lieutenants had the opportunity to work with and develop cadets in the Army ROTC program for one more semester while finishing their degree programs and graduating from the University of Illinois. All current MS-IV cadets remember the contributions these Lieutenants gave to our program. Currently, these three are at BOLC during the summer before beginning their careers in the Active Duty Army and Army Reserve. We wish nothing but the best for these three and thank them for taking the time to further improve our program.



2LT Chris Kerasotes and his Dad at the December Commissioning Ceremony



2LT Lanise Branch and sister, Somonica, at the December Commissioning



2LT Corey Maisch and his parents at the December Commissioning Ceremony

# Cadet Spotlights

## Ranger Buddy Experience

*By Cadet Johnathan Becker*

The Ranger Buddy component of Ranger Club has always had a special place for me in Illini Battalion Army ROTC. When I joined the team as an MS-1 Cadet a few years ago, I was immediately inspired by the leadership of the club. 2LT Maisch and 2LT Kerasotes were always motivating and inspired the Cadets on their team to always push themselves as far as they could go. The camaraderie and positive environment left me with many lasting friendships, and the lessons I learned were some of the most impactful development moments of my time in ROTC. The culminating Ranger Buddy competition at Kansas University was the most difficult competition I had ever done, and pushed me to my limits both mentally and physically. With my partner pushing me, I learned how to put mind over matter and keep going when I thought I physically couldn't, especially on the 15Km-ruck over grueling terrain. The personal development and confidence I gained from the competition made me passionate about Ranger Club and the training we do to prepare for the annual competition. I was excited and honored to be a co-captain my MS-II year, and then to be chosen as the Ranger Buddy Captain my MS-III year. I had several goals as captain, but the one that was most important to me was to replicate and improve upon the experience I had when I joined Ranger Club. I wanted to provide a positive and motivating environment in which Cadets could improve themselves in physical, mental, and knowledge capabilities, using the Ranger Buddy Competition as a test and standard to meet. We used the Ranger School 60-Day Preparation plan from Fort Benning in order to provide a rigorous and organized physical training regimen that improved ruck times and APFT scores, as well as provided exposure to the Ranger Physical Fitness Test, the standard for Ranger School that many Cadets in Ranger Club aspire to attend. We also trained rigorously in soldier skills and knowledge that there is often not time to train extensively in the organic battalion. Every Ranger Buddy Cadet became proficient in Tactical Combat Causality medical skills and knowledge, American and foreign weapons knowledge, Claymore mine setup, as well as the use of radios and hand grenades.

After a baseline of knowledge was established, stress tests were then introduced to expose Cadets to the necessity to perform under stress and physical demands. Training for Ranger Buddy Competition has allowed me to improve and develop my skills and leadership style to levels of confidence and ability I would not have thought possible prior to joining the team. This has held true in my MS-I, MS-II and MS-III years. However, the greatest reward I got out of Ranger Buddy was not my own improvement. But having the opportunity to help develop and train the younger Cadets under me, and witness their improvement from start to finish. When we started the training plan, only a handful of Cadets in Ranger Club could pass the Ranger Physical Fitness Assessment (RPFA) during the diagnostic test. By the final RPFA, we had just under half of the club getting passing scores. Cadet Kim and Cadet O'Connor stepped up on multiple occasions to take charge when Cadet Hill and I were busy.

I watched them develop their own personal leadership styles as they assisted the club as co-captains. Their leadership development not only had a positive effect on themselves, but on the club the past semester, and I look forward to watch the club continue to improve under their leadership during the 2018-2019 school year.

Some of the greatest development came out of the MS-I Cadets. Cadet Barraza was one of the most motivated Cadets in the club, always coming in with a great attitude and ready to push himself. His ruck times improved to the point where he was able to stay at the front during a release ruck. Ranger Buddy skills transferred well into the Hazelton competition for best MS-I Cadet in our program. Every Ranger Buddy Cadet was confident and felt prepared, and Cadet Cross was announced as the winner of the competition. During the last battalion Golden Canteen competition, my Ranger Club squad ended up winning with another Ranger Club squad close behind in 2nd. I am proud of all my Ranger Buddy teammates and the significant improvement and development that occurred during the last semester. Their success would not have been possible without their motivation and hard work in, showing up five to six days a week to train. Their dedication shows, and I could not be more humbled by the opportunity to lead such outstanding individuals.



Cadets Roy Kim and Johnathan Becker at the 2018 Ranger Buddy Competition



### Fighting Illini Battalion



## Cadet Orientation Program

From January 20-27, 2018, the Fighting Illini Battalion welcomed new cadets into the program through their participation in the Cadet Orientation Program. On the first day, the new cadets drew gear from the supply room that they would need throughout the semester. The next day, cadets conducted Physical Readiness Training (PRT) learning the various drills done during a standard day. The final day, the new cadets were briefed on what to expect in military science labs, the basic of drill and ceremony, and had the opportunity to meet the cadre and their chain of command.



CDT Edgar Gamino (right) helps fit CDT Youngmin Lee (left) for his Army Combat Uniform (ACU) top.



CDT Kurt Kuzur carefully inspects the gear to be issued out to the new cadets.



CDT Andrew Lee (right) instructs the new cadets on the basics of drill and ceremony.



### Fighting Illini Battalion



## Fighting Illini Blood Drive

On January 30, 2018, the Fighting Illini Battalion hosted their community blood drive to help the Community Blood Services of Illinois gather donations in order to save lives. Cadets promoted the event through social media to draw the attention of students and local organizations across campus. Throughout the day, cadets and other university students came to the armory to donate blood, easily reaching the goal of over 50 donations. Army ROTC works to host this blood drive every semester in order to give the cadets and other university students the opportunity help their community.



CDT Wyatt Martens enjoys a quick bite to eat after donating blood.



CDT David Pabianczyk follows instructions as he watches the needle being placed in his arm.



CDT Dylan Shearer is in high spirits as he helps the community through his donation.



### Fighting Illini Battalion



## Patrol Base Rehearsal Lab

On January 18, 2018, the Fighting Illini Battalion conducted the Patrol Base Operations Refresher Lab in order to ensure all the cadets understood the importance and proper procedures for a patrol base. The platoons received a grid coordinate and were tasked to establish a patrol base to standard at that location. Once in the patrol base, cadets reviewed and practiced the priorities or work, information they learned in previous labs and were now being accessed on.



CDT Roy Kim pulls security as he waits for his platoon to move out.



CDT Michael Hill uses his Terrain Model Kit (TMK) to outline his plan of action as his platoon members intently look on.



CDT Barsbold Darmabal (left) checks on his squad member, CDT Justin Xu (right).



### Fighting Illini Battalion



## Battle Drill Rehearsal Lab

On January 25, 2018, the Fighting Illini Battalion focused on a battle drill refresher lab from the Fall semester. Each squad was given a mission designed to place them in a situation where a pre-selected battle drill was necessary. In order to prepare the MS-III cadets for Advanced Camp, they were not told which battle drill they would be using so that their mental agility and decision making could be assessed under pressure. The skills that were being accessed during this lab are critical to being successful at Advanced Camp and as an Army leader.



CDT Michael Vilker tries to locate the enemy as his squad takes contact.



Cadets low crawl under fire in order to flank the enemy.



CDT Mason Potts prepares to ambush a squad as OPFOR.



### Fighting Illini Battalion

## Squad Recon Lab



On February 8, 2018, the Military Science lab consisted of a practical exercise of a squad recon. The MS-III cadets were given a mission designed to evaluate their ability to properly lead their squads successfully through a recon which consisted of being undetected by the enemy as well as gaining information on them. Several MS-I cadets received an additional mission by serving as OPFOR for the recon lanes. This lab followed the first portion of conducting a squad recon in which cadets were taught and walked through the basics of conducting a squad sized recon.



CDT Iraklis Analitis (left) receives his mission from his lane's Observer Trainer Mentor, CDT Fidel Toto (right).



CDT Molly Hein provides overwatch as her squad conducts their recon mission.



CDT Patrick Reynolds (top) assigns sectors of fire for his squad.



### Fighting Illini Battalion

## MS-IV Staff Ride



On February 9th, 2018, the MS-IVs of the Fighting Illini Battalion and Eastern Illinois Panther Battalion conducted their annual staff ride. The ride was regarding the Battle of Tippecanoe with the purpose of developing analytical skills in military history through the use of Battle Analysis. Cadets were required to conduct research on the events leading up to the battle, as well as a key leader during the battle to have a better understanding of the situation. Mr. Ashworth led the staff ride to ensure cadets understood the consequences and outcomes of the Battle of Tippecanoe.



The Blockhouse located a miles from the Battle of Tippecanoe's battlefield



The museum dedicated to and located at the Battle of Tippecanoe battle field



MS-4 cadets from The Fighting Illini and Panther Battalions pose in front of a memorial



### Fighting Illini Battalion



## Squad Ambush Lab

Following the walkthrough phase of a squad ambush the previous week, the Fighting Illini Battalion conducted part two of their squad ambush labs. On February 22, 2018, each squad received a mission to conduct a squad sized ambush at a designated location. The mission tested the MS-III cadet squad leaders' ability to properly plan, brief, and lead their squad on an ambush and to accomplish their mission. The MS-I and MS-II Cadets also received the opportunity to conduct special teams such as Enemy Prisoners of War search and Demolition, allowing them to receive additional responsibilities.



CDT Barsbold Darmabal (center with map) briefs his team with his TMK.



CDT Zigmas Zamora (right) and a squad member clear an enemy combatant on the objective.



CDT Vinay Prabhakar waits patiently for the ambush to start.



### Fighting Illini Battalion



## Squad Attack Lab

On March 8, 2018, the Fighting Illini Battalion conducted a tactical exercise of a squad attack mission. Each squad leader received a mission to carry out an attack on a stationary OPFOR element, consisting of MS-I and MS-IV cadets. The mission was designed to test the squad leader's ability to plan a mission but react to a changing situation and successfully perform a squad attack with their squads, a subject the cadets reviewed and rehearsed in the previous week's lab.



CDT Timothy Wallace awaits behind cover for orders to engage his target.



CDT Gabriel Cross holds his security position while his squad prepares for their squad attack mission.



CDT Mason Potts gives orders to his fire team.



### Fighting Illini Battalion



## MS-III Land Navigation Day

On March 10th, 2018, the MS-III cadets of the Fighting Illini Battalion traveled to the Farmdale Recreation Area to participate in a land navigation course. This event further prepared them for Advanced Camp this upcoming summer. Cadets were given a map and a compass in order to navigate the terrain and find various points scattered around the area. This training gave the MS-III cadets firsthand experience of what will be expected from them at Advanced Camp.



Cadets Daniel Lee (left) and Vinay Prabhakar (right) check their maps.



Cadets plot their points before heading out to locate them.



Cadet Megan Zurliene locates her first point of the day.



### Fighting Illini Battalion



## Platoon Operations Lab

The Fighting Illini Battalion completed their second Platoon Operations lab on March 29, 2018; their first being on March 15, 2018 covering platoon recon and attack. The mission of this lab was for the cadets to conduct an ambush with a platoon sized element. The MS-III cadets led their respective platoons against a squad sized OPFOR element composed of MS-I and MS-IV cadets. This lab gave different MS-III cadets the opportunity to lead a platoon as well as train different tactics than they previously trained the week before.



CDT Alieah Moore remains vigilant during a security halt.



CDT Daniel Lee briefs the mission to the leadership of his platoon.



Cadets serving as OPFOR take contact and react.



### Fighting Illini Battalion



## MS-III Range Day

On March 30, 2018, the MS-III class had the opportunity to practice their marksmanship at the Police Academy range off campus. Each cadet utilized an M16 rifle to mechanical zero and then qualify with their weapons on Alt-C targets. They were assisted by Cadre and MS-IV cadets who acted as safeties and advisors. This training was conducted in order to further prepare the MS-III cadets for qualifying this upcoming summer at Advanced Camp. The RECONDO Badge may be earned if they shoot expert with their rifle at Advanced Camp.



Cadets prepare to fire in the prone position.



CDT Vinay Prabhakar (left) takes his ammo from CDT Craig Muncaster (right).



CDT Michael Hill expertly shoots from the kneeling position.



### Fighting Illini Battalion



## Honors Day

On April 7th, 2018, the Fighting Illini Battalion participated in the Tri-Service Honors Day Ceremony. The event commemorates the various accomplishments of cadets and midshipmen at the University. Awards were earned in the areas of physical fitness, scholastic achievements, and extracurricular activities. Various organizations from the community came to the university that day to award the cadets for all the hard work and effort they have put into the program the past year. Our very own Colonel (R) Ashworth was the guest speaker for the event.



CDT Patrick Reynolds receives an award from the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War.



CDT Barsbold Darmabab receives the American Veterans ROTC Recognition Award



CDT Fidel Toto receives an award for excellence in leadership.



### Fighting Illini Battalion



## Open House

On April 12, 2018 the Fighting Illini Battalion conducted their semi-annual Open House in order to access student interest around campus in Army ROTC. Open House is an event in which the cadets within the Fighting Illini Battalion offer students the chance to participate in some of the military training activities to gain exposure to opportunities offered within the Army ROTC program. Each participant had the opportunity to compete in: a grenade assault course, tire flips, photos in a Humvee, and climb a giant rock wall. This event occurred on the Main Quad and almost 200 students participated.



Cadets demonstrate tactical combat casualty care on the quad for students to see.



CDT Tyler Igunbor pulls himself across the one rope bridge.



CDT Maritza Palafox (left) mans the information table with CDT David Pabianczyk (center) and CDT Jacob Beckman (right).



### Fighting Illini Battalion



## Hazelton Competition

On April 12th, 2018, the Fighting Illini Battalion conducted their annual Hazelton Competition. MS-I cadets were tested on their proficiency in military knowledge, bearing, and soldier skills at the MS-I level. Cadets were evaluated on various events in the following categories: an APFT, Drill & Ceremony, Tactical Combat Casualty Care, grenade throws, and a written quiz on the MS-I class curriculum. In a very close competition, Cadet Gabriel Gross successfully completed the rigorous evaluation process to become the 2018 Hazelton Award Recipient.



CDT Sushruth Pattekar (right) salutes CDT Elizabeth Storr (left).



CDT Alex Tkaczyk (right) evaluates a group of MSI cadets in their Drill and Ceremony.



CDT Andrew Jacobs (left) evaluates CDT Gabriel Cross (right) as he conducts tactical combat casualty care.



## Fighting Illini Battalion



### Super Lab

On April 14, 2018, the Fighting Illini Battalion completed the Super lab training event. The MS-III Class conducted a 10-mile ruck march on a Saturday morning to prepare for their 12-mile ruck march requirement at Advanced Camp. The cadets executed tactical missions within the the battalion. Training centered around platoon-sized elements with cadets alternating leadership positions throughout the day. The missions ranged from offensive-type like recons and ambushes to establishing and securing patrol bases.



CDT Jarrett Kapusta uses his ruck to conceal his position.



Cadets push themselves and each other to complete their 12-mile ruck course in under 3 hours.



CDT Zigmas Zamora (left) gives instructions to one of his squad members, CDT Maritza Palafox (right).



## Fighting Illini Battalion



### Field Training Exercise: Day 1

On April 19th, 2018, the Fighting Illini Battalion departed campus towards Camp Atterbury, IN to partake in their semi-annual FTX with the Eastern Illinois Panther Battalion. Cadets partake in the Spring FTX in order to ensure the MS-III class is better prepared for Advanced Camp while the younger cadets further their learning on Army tactics. Upon arrival to Camp Atterbury, cadets organized into their new platoons in order to create unit cohesion before conducting platoon sized operations later in the day.



Cadets practice advancing under fire before beginning their mission.



Cadets rehearse how to aid a fallen comrade with an MS-IV cadet giving guidance..



The MS-IV class takes one last group photo to celebrate their last FTX as a group.



### Fighting Illini Battalion



## Field Training Exercise: Day 2

On April 20th, 2018, the Fighting Illini Battalion and Panther Battalion partook in the second day of their FTX. Cadets continued their field operations over the course of the day throughout Camp Atterbury, Indiana. Field operations consisted of several missions such as: react to contact, hasty defense, and platoon raids. MS-III leadership rotated with the start of each new mission in order to prepare the MS-III Cadets for Advanced Camp. Cadets were also evaluated by cadre and MS-IV Observer Trainer Mentors (OTMs) to help develop MS-III leadership.



CDT Iraklis Analitis uses his binoculars to watch for the enemy while his squad waits to conduct an ambush.



Cadets conduct a rehearsal of actions to take when clearing an objective.



Cadets react to fire taken during their movement.



### Fighting Illini Battalion



## Field Training Exercise: Day 3

On April 21st, 2018, the Fighting Illini Battalion and Panther Battalion continued their field training exercise. Cadets rucked toward Range 12 to conduct range operations and zero their weapons to gain confidence and weapon familiarity. Cadets were given a Preliminary Marksmanship Instruction class, a First Aid class, and a class on how to operate the ASIP radio to prepare them for range and mission operations. Afterwards, cadets returned to land navigation course to begin their land navigation exercise. Land navigation was their final training event for weekend before the Cadets departed Camp Atterbury the following day.



CDT Edgar Gamino (left) receives his points to conduct Land Navigation.



Cadets tactically march on the road to their next location while a Blackhawk flies overhead.



Cadets at the range zeroing their M16 rifles.



## Fighting Illini Battalion



### Dining Out

On April 27th, 2018, the Fighting Illini Battalion conducted the inaugural joint Army and Air Force Dining Out ceremony. This event took place to reflect on training throughout the school year and to increase esprit de corps throughout the battalion and air detachment. Several alumni, special guests, and family attended the special event to help celebrate the many cadets' accomplishments over the past year. The evening's events included a message from the guest of honor, MG (Ret) Michael Symanski, a 1973 alumni of the Fighting Illini Battalion.



The MS-II class poses for a group photo after the event.



Cadets participate in the toasting ceremony.



CDT Thomas Jackson poses for a picture with his date, Hope Daly



## Fighting Illini Battalion



### CHAARG

On February 28, 2018, cadets from The Fighting Illini Battalion organized a workout with the campus' Changing Health, Attitudes, and Actions to Recreate Girls (CHAARG) program. One of the CHAARG program's goals is to motivate and engage women in fitness and health. The Fighting Illini Battalion partnered with members of the CHAARG program to introduce them to the battalion and the physical readiness training that is conducted within Army ROTC. After their joint workout, cadets and CHAARG members answered questions that members had of others' programs.



Cadets and CHAARG members link arms in preparation for the exercise.



CDT Cullen O'Connor (right) motivates a member of CHAARG as they do pushups.



Cadets and CHAARG members pose for a group photo after the session of Physical Readiness Training.



### Fighting Illini Battalion

## Tri-Service PT Competition



On April 9th, 2018, the Army ROTC participated with the Air Force and Navy ROTC programs on campus. The friendly physical fitness competition included events that emphasized teamwork and coordination, and others focused on individual performance. These events consisted of: push-ups, pull-ups, planks, tug of war, and various relays and races. The Army ROTC came in second place just a few points behind Navy ROTC's first place finish. This competition builds esprit de corps and an appreciation of the other ROTC programs on campus.



CDT James Calloway (left) mentally prepares himself for the pull-up competition.



CDT Ben O'Donnell does his best to be the last man standing in the plank competition.



Cadets pull their way to victory in a tug of war match with an Air Force ROTC team.



### Fighting Illini Battalion

## Fighting Illini Gymnastics Military Appreciation Night



On March 9, 2018, the University of Illinois Gymnastics team competed against the Air Fore Academy on Military Appreciation Night. The Fighting Illini Battalion's very own Cadet Silbermann competed in the pommel horse for Illinois' team. After the competition, Cadet Silbermann was recognized for his preparation to serve our country. Fellow cadets and cadre also attended the event in support of the gymnastics team and Cadet Silbermann. The Fighting Illini won the match and later won the Big Ten Championship for the 2018 season.



CDT Andreas Silbermann receives recognition for his service to the country.



Cadets pose with Ms. Emily Brown and CDT Andreas Silbermann after the competition.



CDT Andreas Silbermann performs on the pommel horse during the competition.

## Hall of Fame Update

### Fighting Illini Battalion Cadets Welcomes Newest Member to Hall of Fame

*By Eric L. Ashworth, Cadre Sponsor for Alumni Outreach*

On April 27, 2018, the Army ROTC Battalion inducted the Honorable Kenneth B. Kramer as the 28th member of the Fighting Illini Army ROTC Hall of Fame. The ceremony was attended by cadets and cadre as well as several University of Illinois faculty and staff. Mr. Kramer provided advice and lessons he learned from his career to the audience. His wife, Louise, was able to attend this special event and the two of them were our honored guests later that evening at the Joint Army and Air Force ROTC Dining Out.

Mr. Kramer has lived a very distinguished life. He was commissioned as a distinguished military graduate in 1963 after graduating from the University of Illinois. He also graduated Juris Doctor from Harvard Law School in 1966. He then served on active duty in the U.S. Army from 1967-1970. After leaving military service, he served as a Colorado State Representative from 1973-1978. In 1978, he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from Colorado where he served four terms. In Congress, as a member of the Armed Services Committee, he was instrumental in the creation of the Pinon Canyon Maneuver Site, which tripled the Fort Carson training area, and in the creation of the Unified and Air Force Space Commands. He was an early proponent of missile defense and founded the Space Foundation, a leading nonprofit space industry advocate and educator. In 1988, President Reagan appointed him as Assistant Secretary for Financial Management and Comptroller, U.S. Army. In 1989, President Bush appointed him to the newly created U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims. From 2000 until 2004 he served as Chief Judge, and since then as a senior judge of the Court. Mr. Kramer is a strong supporter of wounded warriors, co-chairing an annual fund-raising golf tournament for many years.



Honorable Kenneth B. Kramer



COL (R) Deborah Olson-Read presents the Fighting Illini Army ROTC Hall of Fame Medal to Mr. Ken Kramer. Also pictured is LTC Randall Smith, and Professor Thomas Teper, Chairman of the Military Education Council.

The Hall of Fame continues to recognize former University of Illinois Army ROTC alumni who have led successful careers in the fields of the military, public service, academic and/or business communities. Nominations may be submitted by anyone, and applications are accepted at any time. Every two years, a Hall of Fame panel is formed to review each nomination for selection. Once an individual is nominated, if the review board does not recommend induction at that time, the application is automatically transferred to be reviewed by the next board. Nominators may continue to add achievements to the original application but this is not required. Every two years, typically during the spring semester, the Cadet Battalion develops plans for the next Hall of Fame Ceremony. The next induction ceremony is expected to occur in the spring of 2020. If you are interested in submitting a nomination, please contact any of the current cadre.

# Alumni Update

## Where Are They Now

*By Second Lieutenant Dylan Shearer*

Periodically, we like to look back and recognize alumni of the Fighting Illini Battalion. Lieutenant Colonel Kristopher Howell is an alumnus from the class of 1999. LTC Howell is currently the Battalion Commander of the 1st Battalion, 37th Armor in 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division; also known as the 1-37 AR Bandits. The pictures shown here are a courtesy of LTC Howell during his time at the National Training Center in August of 2017, and while his Task Force Bandits supported multi-national Operation FRIENDSHIP.

LTC Howell explained the best part of his job by remarking, “I have spent as much time in my tank as a Battalion Commander as I did when I was a tank platoon leader 18 years ago, I love it.”

The Bandits, led by LTC Howell are currently nearing the end of their deployment in Saudi Arabia in the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) Area of Responsibility and will be returning to Fort Bliss, Texas shortly. We thank LTC Howell and the 1-37 AR Bandits for their continued service and dedication to the U.S. Army and the defense of our country. It is always great to hear from our alumni. Thanks LTC Howell for keeping in touch with the Fighting Illini Battalion and setting a great example to our current Cadets. LTC Howell wanted to say he is very proud of his time as a Fighting Illini Cadet and we are proud of the leadership he has exhibited throughout his career. Go Bandits!



# Alumni Update

## Fighting Illini Alumni Mentorship Program

*By Eric Ashworth, Alumni Coordinator*

At the start of the Fall semester, the Army ROTC Cadre implemented a mentorship program with the MS-IV Cadets as another means to develop them towards becoming a 2nd Lieutenant. One of the additional goals of this initiative was to provide examples of how a mentor/mentee relationship develops so that each MS-IV Cadet would in turn feel more comfortable mentoring a MS-III Cadet in preparation for Advance Camp.

This effort has been well received, and when asked how we could improve on this, the Cadets recommended that this mentorship program be opened to the alumni of the Fighting Illini Battalion. During the spring semester, the Cadet Battalion Commander, **Cadet Alex Kim**, wrote a letter to the alumni asking them if there would be interest in helping this year's senior Cadets by being a mentor. Nine alumni volunteered and from discussions with the Cadets, it was unanimous that this mentorship opportunity was beneficial and should continue. On behalf of LTC Randall Smith, I would like to thank all the alumni who supported us this past semester:

- COL Bob Baer
- COL Mark Alessia
- LTC/Dr. Thomas Edwards
- LTC (R) Nick Macris
- MAJ Melissa Sayers
- MAJ Derek Elder
- CPT Michael Lee
- CPT Sam Bowman
- 1LT Kaush Kancharla



Alumni that have passed through this program have experience that can benefit our current Cadets in some way. This one-on-one contact with a current MS-IV Cadet will not only allow you as an alumnus to pass on your knowledge and have a more direct impact on the Fighting Illini Battalion, but also give our Cadets an opportunity to gain knowledge about being an Army Officer and what tools they need to succeed.

If this is something you would be interested in supporting, please contact me at [eashwort@illinois.edu](mailto:eashwort@illinois.edu) with the following information:

- Year of Graduation
- Rank
- Branch
- Occupation (If having left the Army)
- Best means to contact you (email, phone, carrier pigeon)
- Any mentee preferences (such as desired branch, MS Class, gender, race, etc.)

Once we receive this information, we will match you with one of the Cadets in the program. Again, thank you for everything you have done for the program, and we always grateful to your continued support.

# Armory Renovations Update

## The Armory Renovation Project Nears Completion

*By Mr. Eric Ashworth*

Last summer I wrote about the new Armory Renovation project. After 100-plus years, it was decided that the Armory Building needed modernizing and I am happy to inform you that the project is near completion. The offices of the Army ROTC Department were moved in May 2017 to the third floor and since then, the south-side of the Armory has heard the sound of construction workers modernizing the facilities. Walls have been adjusted, centralized heating and cooling have been installed, double-paned windows have replaced older windows, walls have been painted and new carpet has been installed. It looks very promising that all offices as well as our supply room will reopen during the summer and be operational for the start of the fall semester.



New flooring, new doors and freshly painted walls are found at both entrances on the south-side.

The renovation of the building started in the summer of 2014. At first, most of the work was focused on the north-side of the building to modernize the main floor offices of the Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning (CITL). Many of the classrooms within the building have since been modernized. With the completion of the south-side of the building and both south-facing entrances, only the third floor offices remain to upgrade. As construction has occurred over the past year, we have taken photos to mark the progress being made. Here are a few examples of what has occurred over the past year:



A view of the Admin Office in May 2017.



The same view of the Admin Office in September 2017.



What the Admin Office looks like today, roughly a month before reoccupying.

This historic building, built in 1913 and then expanded in 1926, is now better suited to accommodate modern office standards while maintaining the historic look. The Armory Building has been home to the Army ROTC Program here at UIUC from the creation of the Reserve Officers Training Corps and these improvements should allow us to continue to develop our future leaders of our Army. If you are ever back on campus, we hope you will come visit us. We would love to show you what has been done to the place.



The Cadet Lounge shortly after the renovation started in June 2017.



Central heat and cooling were installed in the Cadet Lounge last fall.



What the Cadet Lounge looks like in June 2018. Bring back the pool table!



# Staying in Touch with The Fighting Illini Battalion

University of Illinois  
Foundation

Recruiting, Donations  
Visits, Expertise

**Upcoming Calendar:** 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:

- Guest Speaker for the Cadet Orientation Program. During the week of 20-25 August, we will welcome the newest members in the Fighting Illini Battalion as new Cadets attend the first of three days of ROTC classes to provide them a better understanding of what occurs in their Army ROTC classes and labs. MS-IV Cadets will also conduct their staff school and the MS-III Cadets will complete their leadership academy during the same time. Each year, a guest speaker provides initial remarks to the Cadets.
- Veterans Day Football Game. Each year the Army ROTC Battalion conducts a “Loyalty Oath” Ceremony during the Salute to Veterans Football Game at U of I. This is a great retention event for the Cadets. This year we are looking to expand this celebration to include a pre-game tailgate party. If this is something you would be interested in and perhaps assist in the coordination of this event, please contact us. This year’s game occurs on 3 November against The University of Minnesota. This would be a great opportunities to meet and socialize with our current Cadets.
- 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 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.
- Donations to the Army ROTC Operations or Endowment Fund. Donations to the **Army ROTC Cadet Endowment Fund** (11774561) or the **Army ROTC Alumni Fund** (11330418) helps current Cadets with the costs associated in participating in events not covered by the U.S. Army funding. These funds continue to support the Ranger Buddy Team, the Bataan Memorial Ruck March, the Scabbard and Blade Honor Society, and the Norwegian Ruck March.

## Contacting the “Fighting Illini” Cadre

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# THE FIGHTING ILLINI ARMY ROTC



**FORGING STRONG LEADERS  
SINCE 1868 ... AND INTO  
THE 21ST CENTURY**