

The MILLINI



A publication from
THE FIGHTING ILLINI ARMY ROTC



University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Department of Military Science

THE STORE

Fighting Illini Battalion Hoodie: \$37



Battalion Polo Unisex/Ladies Cut: \$35



Ranger Buddy Hoodie: \$35



The Fighting Illini Battalion store has been updated with some of the Cadet designs from the past year. However, the internet site we have used in the past is no longer operational. If you are interested in any of these items, please email what product you are interested in and your size to arotc@illinois.edu and we will place the order for you. You will still receive your order straight from the vendor. If you have questions about any of these items, please contact Eric Ashworth at eashwort@illinois.edu.

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The Fighting Illini Army ROTC Battalion
Forging Strong Leaders Since 1868
 Army ROTC: (217) 244-1407 arotc@illinois.edu Armory, Room 113



ARMY ROTC

Message from the Professor of Military Science

by LTC Daniel Johnson

Greetings Fighting Illini! The Fighting Illini Battalion just finished another incredible semester despite the impediments presented by COVID-19.

The one lesson learned from the fall semester is that the Fighting Illini Battalion Cadets are adaptable, innovative, and will stop at nothing to continue their growth as leaders.

Over the course of the past four months the Fighting Illini Battalion accomplished some amazing feats, which you will read about in the subsequent pages. The MSIVs worked extremely hard to plan, prepare, and execute this past semester's ROTC training events. The MSIIIs spent countless hours developing themselves as leaders while participating in the demanding ROTC training developed by the MSIVs. The MSIs and MSIIIs proved to be an extraordinary group of leaders in the making as they consistently brought enthusiasm and motivation to every ROTC training event. It is reassuring to know that many of these talented Cadets will join our Nation's military as leaders, in the near future.

We end this semester with a congratulations to 2LT Blake Link who commissioned into the Illinois Army National Guard as an Ordinance officer. Thank you for the hard work during your time as a Cadet in the Fighting Illini Battalion and we know you will excel as an officer in the Illinois Army National Guard.

The fall semester proved to be an exceptional one due to the Fighting Illini Battalion's Cadets. Every member of the Fighting Illini Battalion deserves this winter break in order to relax and spend time with their family and friends. I look forward to seeing the amazing Fighting Illini Battalion Cadets back on campus at start of the spring semester.



Have a great holiday season!



Message from the Senior Military Instructor

by *MSG Timothy Collier*

The Fall 2020 semester at the Fighting Illini Battalion (FIB) has not been conventional. As I look back on the semester, two thoughts in particular come to mind – 1) the significant challenges and difficulties that our Cadets and Cadre faced, and 2) their incredible resiliency and fortitude in the face of those challenges. COVID-19 continues to do its dirty little business across our country and the world, and the FIB has not been exempt from its effects. The amount of training that our Cadet Staff was able to plan and execute (despite severe limitations imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic), and the quality of that training, has been a clear demonstration of the quality of leaders present in this organization. I find comfort knowing that the United States Army in which I have served proudly for over 18 years is in great hands as these Cadets commission and become 2nd Lieutenants.



The semester began as scheduled back in August. The Cadre of this Battalion did incredible work to prepare the FIB to receive students in a safe manner and adhere to all COVID-19 protocols. Classrooms had to be adjusted to meet social distancing guidelines and maximum capacity requirements, curriculum had to be adjusted and plans developed to administer completely online instruction should the need arise, and physical readiness training (PRT) plans had to be adjusted and new locations identified with enough space to conduct PRT while still maintaining social distancing. Even simple things such as issuing new equipment to incoming Cadets during our annual Cadet Orientation Program had to be modified in significant ways. Despite the challenges and difficulties, the Fall semester started with very few significant issues, and the business of producing leaders of the highest caliber continued in earnest.

The Cadet Battalion Staff for the FIB has met or exceeded the lofty standards set by their predecessors from the last Academic Year. Cadet BC Gabriel Cross and Cadet CSM Baylie Mabbett set the tone from day one. They would not let COVID-19 detract from the quality of the training, nor detract from the business of team building which is so important to what we do. The entire Staff came together as a team and planned and executed a myriad of training events that were able to successfully reach the training audience, whether that was an experienced MS-III Cadet or a brand new MS-I Cadet. The efforts of Cadet S3 Steven Irace, in particular, were crucial to mission success. The FIB was able to execute several key events this semester to include a paintball lab, a Veteran's Day Ruck March, two Saturday tactical labs for the MS-III class, a weapons qualification range at Sparta Training Center, a 9/11 Stair Climb in Memorial Stadium, and a Day/Night Land Navigation lane for the MS-III class. This is a small sample of the many training events conducted during the semester, but I believe demonstrates the scope of training accomplished, and the fact that our Staff was not going to let COVID-19 detract from the training opportunities for our Cadets.

I will close by saying that I could not be more proud to be the Senior Military Science Instructor for the Fighting Illini Battalion. I swell with pride when I see our Staff coming together as a team and planning amazing training under extremely trying circumstances. I have enjoyed watching the MS-III class improve every week as they prepare for Cadet Summer Training. I have been so impressed by the motivation and dedication of the MS-I and MS-II Cadets during Leadership Labs and physical readiness training. I sincerely hope that the next Millini article I write is filled with passages alluding to the return to normalcy as we come out the other side of this pandemic. But if not, rest assured that the Cadets and Cadre of the FIB will still be developing the leaders of tomorrow and conducting outstanding training as our Cadets prepare to lead our Army one day. I hope this article finds you all safe and healthy and able to be with your loved ones. FIGHTING ILLINI!



ARMY ROTC



MS-I Class Updates

An Introduction to Army ROTC and College

By Cadet Ben Busby

I first wanted to join the Army my sophomore year of high school after going on a trip to our nation's capital, where I saw a group of World War II veterans being brought around the National Mall and after being a part of the marching band show, Lest We Forget, a salute to our veterans. In both experiences, I was able to witness many veterans being recognized for their service to this country. It made me appreciate everything that our veterans have done. I wanted to join them. I chose to do ROTC over enlisting because I wanted to receive a college education, be put in a leadership position and to learn valuable skills that will be useful in the Army and in civilian careers afterwards. I am certain that by being in the Fighting Illini Battalion, I will receive training that will make me the best Army Officer I can be.

When I walked up to the sign-in desk at 0845 on the first day of Cadet Orientation Program (COP), I was expecting a totally different experience than what I was about to receive. I expected something like what I had seen in movies: getting yelled at while standing at attention and receiving a haircut. To my surprise, the only yelling that took place was shouting words of encouragement during our APFT, a rock wall climb, and team-building exercises. I eventually had to get a haircut, but at least it wasn't a buzz-cut. I was looking forward to COP after spending several days on campus with not much to do. It was challenging to make friends and meet people when social interactions are discouraged because of COVID-19, so I really looked forward to being around other people (and being safe). After many of my plans this year were cancelled, I was finally able to do something I have been eager to do.

The first day of COP was very enjoyable. We spent the morning getting clothing issued, taking tours of the Armory and even climbed a rock wall! In the afternoon, we spent several hours learning about Army ranks, when and how to salute, the Army song, unit structures and Army customs and courtesies. We then went on a scavenger hunt around campus. This was very helpful to me, as I had gotten lost on campus earlier in the week. We finished the first day with a close out brief and then were sent home to rest up for the APFT at 0600 the next morning.



Cadet Ben Busby poses for his battalion photo.



Cadet Ben Busby's squad poses for a picture with their MS-III squad leaders Cadet Neel Khattri and Cadet Jacob Jung.

MS-I Class Updates

An Introduction to Army ROTC and College (Continued)

The second day of COP felt less like an introductory day, and more of a hands-on day. I had to wake up at 0500 and make sure my PT uniform was up to the Army's standards. My fellow new-Cadets and I then took the APFT. While I do enjoy sleeping in, it was a great feeling to wake up and get to experience what a normal week would be like in Army ROTC. I then had some free time to shower and eat breakfast. After that, it was back to work with over two hours of drill and ceremony. It was challenging and a lot of new information was presented. I spent a lot of time practicing, and eventually was able to respond to basic commands without the help of the upperclassmen. We spent the afternoon in Lot 31, one of the battalion's outdoor training areas, being introduced to events we would be participating in throughout our ROTC experience. These included: the ACFT sprint, drag, and carry; grenade toss; rope-bridge crossing; and teamwork exercises. These events were my favorite part of COP. COP ended with an awards ceremony that gave recognition to the highest APFT scores, the best marchers, the most spirited new-Cadets, and the scholarship recipients.

Overall, COP was a great experience. I made many new friends, learned new skills, and got a taste of what my next four years will be like. It was filled with a perfect balance of basic leadership skills, military customs and practices, physical training, and fun. I felt included, safe, and welcomed into the Fighting Illini Battalion. Once it was complete, I truly felt initiated into a group that was greater than myself, something I have wanted for a long time. I look forward to the next four years I get to spend as a member of the Fighting Illini Battalion, and the many friends and memories I will make.



Cadet Ben Busby leads his blindfolded squad through a team building exercise.



Cadet Ben Busby executes one of the Army's challenging new ACFT events, the Sprint-Drag-Carry.

MS-II Class Updates

A Hands-On Training Opportunity

By Cadet Ali Burianek

On October 9th, the MS-I and MS-II Cadets participated in a unique training opportunity- a large scale paintball exercise meant to sharpen our skills in Individual Movement Techniques (IMTs). As an MS-II who's trained on IMTs, this was a great opportunity in a realistic environment to put to practice one of the many skills we learn in ROTC. For my MS-I peers with less experience, the Paintball Lab was perfect for exposing them to an exciting lesson in battle drills and squad movements.

After arriving at the Salt Fork Paintball Center, we were separated by company and sent to different fields. At these fields, we competed at securing different objectives. For our first objective, six of us were assigned to defend a tower against the rest of the company, giving our opponents roughly a 3:1 advantage over us. While we held our ground as well as could be expected, the rest of the company was able to rush us with their overwhelming numbers. In the next iteration, the company was split evenly and I was on the attacking side. We were able to advance to the tower before the time constraints and ended the mission early.

Later, the two companies switched fields to pursue a new objective - defending the perimeter of the field from a larger invading element. For this iteration, our strategy was to pin the opposing team down in the one narrow avenue of approach as they tried to enter the playing field. Other Cadets and I would take turns covering each other while we buddy-rushed towards the enemy, eliminated the enemy, then bounded back. We wanted to close the gap between their superiority in numbers by using an aggressive offense as our defense. Through this plan we were able to defend the territory for the entirety of the exercise.

Through the uniqueness of the exercise as well as the practical value it offered, the Paintball Lab was a massive success, and I know many Cadets would agree it was an experience worth repeating!



MS-I/II Cadets take cover while defending the objective from the enemy at the Salt Fork Paintball Center.



Cadets pose for a group photo after a successful day of paintball at Salt Fork Paintball Center.

MS-III Class Updates

A Day of Firsts at the Range

By Cadet Julio Zacarias

At 0600 hours on Sunday, November 8th, the Fighting Illini Battalion loaded up on motor coaches and began the 3-hour trip to the World Shooting and Recreational Complex in Sparta, Illinois. The purpose of this training excursion was for MS-IIIs to conduct group and zero and ALT-C qualifications in preparation for Cadet Summer Training, and allow MS-I/IIIs to improve their marksmanship abilities. For some Cadets, such as myself, this trip would prove to be very exciting as the culmination of many firsts: first time shooting a firearm, first time grouping and zeroing a firearm, the first time shooting down a range, and the first time eating a delicious MRE.



MS-III Cadets take notes as they receive a safety brief.

Before we even arrived, the Cadets from the Fighting Illini Battalion's B Company 1st Platoon were ready to rumble. The second the bus stopped our Cadet Platoon Leader Flores wasted no time in maneuvering us. Once outside, Cadet Platoon Sergeant Seo called us to formation and marched us towards the range bench. Once the entire Battalion was seated, we received a gun range safety brief reviewing safe firearm handling procedures and general range rules. Thirty minutes later is when the fun began.

Each MS-III drew a M4 carbine, 20 round magazine, ear pro, and eye pro. We proceeded towards the gun range and once every Cadet was in place, the tower operator readied us into a prone supported firing position. They then gave the command to shoot 5 rounds into the 25 meters zeroing target. When shooting ceased and the range was clear, the tower gave the command to move up to the zeroing target and then come back to the firing line to make necessary adjustments to the front sight or rear sight windage of the M4. MS-IIIs would continue to fire in rounds of three until everyone grouped and zeroed properly. Once zeroed, MS-IIIs received 3 additional magazines for the ALT-C qualification. Although I fell short and only made 17/40 shots this time around, I received a plethora of valuable advice from the PMS, Cadre, and senior Cadets. With the advice and the newfound experience I gained, I am confident in my ability to succeed in the marksmanship qualification at Cadet Summer Training.

This trip served a higher significance beyond its intended purpose. COVID-19 has indiscriminately changed the world as we know it. Lockdowns, mandatory 14-day isolations, spit tests, mask-wearing, and six-feet of social-distancing have become ingrained into our daily ritual as we finish up the 9th month of the pandemic. For Cadets, university quickly turned from rushing between in-person classes to attending Zoom after Zoom lecture with ROTC as our only break from the online cycle. In an uncertain world, the Sparta Gun Range trip provided not only the opportunity for Cadets to put into practice essential marksmanship skills, but the comforting reaffirmation that even in a pandemic the Army will continue to Improve, Adapt, and Overcome the challenges thrown our way.



MS-III Cadets line up on the firing line in the kneeling position to practice qualifying on the M4 Carbine.

MS-III Class Updates

Testing Our Skills: Land Navigation

By Cadet Kyle Villamayor

On a picturesque autumn Saturday, the MS-III Cadets of the Fighting Illini Battalion conducted a land navigation exercise at the Farmdale Reservoir near Peoria, Illinois - an expanse of land developed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers that stretches 837 acres of streams, hills, forest and woodland. The reservoir hosts miles of winding trails that run up sloping hills that are frequented by cyclists, hikers, and equestrians. It also holds an active ecosystem teeming with wildlife native to the central Illinois ecology.

We conducted the exercise in lieu of the semesterly fall field training exercise (FTX) that was unfortunately cancelled due to the limitations that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought upon the Fighting Illini Battalion. Land navigation is a mandatory requirement set by the United States Army Cadet Command (USACC) which is usually met at the FTX. The FIB set to meet that requirement despite the challenge presented.

The day began at noon on September 26th, 2020 with good weather and clear skies throughout most of the afternoon. This prompted my MS-III class to meet at the Armory a few hours before accountability in order to get our minds right and equipment ready. Upon checking everyone's COVID test status in adherence to the University's COVID-19 protocols, we then set out for the two-hour drive from Champaign to Farmdale. The drive had helped all of us assess and review the navigation techniques we learned in class, hoping to work out last minute kinks and questions before the daytime portion of the exercise. The daytime portion which required 4 points to be found under 4 hours began as soon as the initial briefing, protractors, compasses, and maps were issued to us. Now, with the classroom work mastered and paper exams passed the time to put words to action had begun.



MS-III Cadets head off into the woods to find their 4 land navigation points.

MS-III Class Update

Testing Our Skills: Land Navigation (Continued)

The experience was that of excitement mixed with stress as we navigated our way through the hills and wetlands of the reservoir; compass in one hand and plotted navigation routes on the other. Careful to plot the points and routes, we used the terrain association along with dead reckoning methods to utilize the most of what the environment had to offer to find the signposts. These were small, rectangular pieces of metal billeted on 4x4 wood posts scattered strategically around the area. At the end of the four hours, our exhausted legs quickly fought through the challenging terrain to meet the hit time and record the points. Afterwards, we got to plop down and finally enjoy the hour long period of rest and eat our MREs. We remained ready and vigilant, though, as the exercise had not concluded - the nighttime portion was yet to commence.

As the sun set, we rose to meet the challenge of finding two points in the dark headstrong. Armed with only a red-light lens flashlight, compass, and maps, we were ready to fight through the dark that pervaded every space of the looming woodland. At 7pm, we set off to find our points of which we only had 3 hours to find in the pitch dark. Movement with light was restricted, so plotting your points and “measuring twice and cutting once” was of the utmost importance, lest one found themselves lost. The terrain was suddenly an alien and foreign landscape but elicited the necessity to stick to the fundamentals of land navigation. At the end of the day, though, my class and I showed why we deserved to be future leaders of America’s Army. We persevered to complete the night iteration with little to no trouble. Ultimately, we learned how to utilize the knowledge accumulated over long hours of instruction and reap the benefits of applying them to practical situations. We gained more knowledge for future assessments at the Cadet summer training (CST) while also learning about our limits, confidence, and physical capabilities. The biggest lesson we learned was that the van ride home tastes just a little bit sweeter with victory.



A land navigation point from the Farmdale Reservoir course.



MS-III Cadets plot their points as the sun is setting for the night portion of the exercise.

MS-III Class Update

Cadet Orientation Program

By Cadet Christopher Flores

The purpose of the Cadet Orientation Program (COP) is to welcome new Cadets to the Fighting Illini Battalion Army ROTC program. For COP, we conduct classes, tours, competitions, and other events to help the incoming Cadets see some of the things we do and learn here at the Fighting Illini Battalion. In addition, new Cadets are introduced to our cadre team to show them who will teach them in their military science classes. Finally, the incoming Cadets conduct an Army physical fitness test to gage their physical abilities. Due to COVID-19, the Fighting Illini Battalion had to adjust/accommodate various restrictions.

During day one of COP, Cadets showed up outside the Armory for a COVID-19 screening and received some Army ROTC gear. The goal was to make sure we prevent the spread of COVID-19 and protect all our Cadets from possible exposure. Following the COVID-19 screening, the incoming Cadets filed into the auditorium to receive a brief about what will happen at COP, meet all their cadre, and get a big, warm welcome to the Fighting Illini Battalion family. Following this brief, Cadets visited different stations consisting of Army classes, a tour of the armory, learning about all the resources we have such as the weight room that only Army Cadets have access to, and other fun events like a scavenger hunt around campus. At the end of the day, the Cadets were rewarded with dunking their squad leaders with ice water. All in all, the new Cadets did a great job on their first day and all the cadre/supporting Cadets were successful in enforcing COVID-19 precautions.

On the final day of COP, the incoming Cadets got up bright and early to take an Army physical fitness test at 0600. The new Cadets did a great job on their first PT test; every Cadet pushed themselves past difficult mental barriers and finished the PT test with nothing left in the tank. Later on in the day, the Cadets returned to the Armory where members of the Illinois National Guard were waiting to teach the new Cadets drill and ceremony. Cadets learned facing movements and the discipline it takes to remain still while executing these movements. Once this was completed, the new Cadets put their skills to the test with a drill and ceremony knock out competition. Next, the Cadets participated in various tasks such as grenade toss, FLRC, sprint drag carry, and one rope bridge crossing. Finally, the Cadets gathered to conclude the last day COP. Awards for best squad, most motivated Cadet, and other awards were given and Cadets received Illini swag. Before leaving, the Cadets who received scholarships got their big checks. It was great to recognize the Cadets who worked so hard for their scholarship.

COVID-19 really made things difficult this year. We weren't able to do some of the things we usually do at COP but our cadre and Cadets pushed past obstacles and made a positive and memorable impact on the new Cadets while abiding by all the COVID restrictions. I know Cadets at the FIB will be successful this year regardless of COVID.



MS-I Cadets participate in a team building exercise during COP to build comradery.

MS-III Class Update

First Mission as an MS-III

By Cadet Raven Jo

On Saturday, October 10th, the MS-III class conducted our first Superlab lane day of the year. The Superlab was divided into three parts with the first being a refresher course on how to conduct a leader's recon and the last two parts being the two iterations of a leader's recon. The arboretum was relatively warm and sunny out, in stark contrast to the Superlabs I attended as an MS-II.

For the first part of the lab, we walked through the steps of a leader's recon along with a step drill. Although this may seem as though we were handed the leader's recon mission on a silver platter, it was much different when we went on the leader's recon during each iteration.

The first iteration had a relatively easier objective to recon. Which also happened to be the iteration where I was pulling security at the ORP. While the leader's recon was out scouting the objective, I made sure to take orders from the platoon sergeant and relay them to my team, as my squad leader was out on the recon. Besides that, once all the tasks were complete and we had some down time, we started rehearsing for the next iteration while the leader's recon from the first iteration was returning to the ORP.

On the second iteration, I was able to go out on the leader's recon as a squad leader. Although we had the refresher and the rehearsals prior, I did not know the route nor the terrain, so the mission was still a challenging mission for me.



Cadet Raven Jo listens intently to a refresher brief by Cadet Steven race on Leaders Recon.



Cadet Raven Jo poses for a picture after the first mission.

However, the preparation I had done prior such as going to tactics club and watching informational videos gave me confidence to push through.

Overall, not only was the leader's recon lab beneficial for me, but for the entire MS-III class as well. Although some of us did not get a leadership role for this Superlab, it was still good to be able to see what was happening on the leader's recon. Not only that, kicking it off as our first lane day of the year, the leader's recon was definitely a good choice for the first mission. It eased us into tactics that the US Army employs and it will serve as a foundation in which we can build future missions off of.

MS-IV Class Update

A Reflection on Operation Agile Leader

By Cadet Gabriel Frausto

Throughout the summer of 2020, Class of 2021 MS-III Cadets participated in Operation Agile Leader (OAL) at Camp Atterbury, Indiana. Cadets from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Fighting Illini Battalion underwent OAL from August 2nd through August 10th. Along with UIUC, there were MS-III classes of Cadets from Illinois State University, Northern Illinois University, Eastern Illinois University, Western Illinois University, Southern Illinois University - Carbondale, University of Illinois at Chicago, University of Chicago, and Wheaton College.

OAL was a unique experience not only for the Cadets that attended, but also for the entire ROTC program on a national level. Years prior, ROTC hosted a summer training program called, "Advanced Camp." This is a graduation requirement for all Army ROTC Cadets, and the ultimate assessment of leadership training for ROTC. This program typically encompasses 45 days of training at Army ROTC headquarters in Fort Knox, Kentucky, and involves MS-III Cadets from every school in the country including US territories. Just as the rest of the country, ROTC has taken careful consideration into COVID-19 precautions and made the decision to downsize Advanced Camp from the entire nation, to specific regions which limited the numbers from a few thousand people to only a few hundred.

When I arrived at Camp Atterbury, we instantly drew our gear from our bus to a wide field near the barracks and conducted in-processing. This involved a search for restricted items on the base, and a COVID screening. They took our temperature with a non-touch thermometer and we filled out a questionnaire. This process happened three times a day for every day we were there. The first few days were spent familiarizing ourselves with the camp and undergoing social training such as prevention against sexual harassment. After that first introduction day, we hit the ground running, with a land navigation assessment that occurred the next day. For this event we used a compass, map, and protractor to navigate our way through the woods of Indiana in order to find small markers throughout the area. We were told to find four different markers in roughly three hours, but three markers found would pass the assessment. That entire morning was spent cycling Cadets through this land navigation assessment, and I was able to find three of the four markers with roughly a half an hour remaining. Once the assessment was complete we marched back to the barracks, just shy of a two-mile walk, to eat and prepare ourselves for night land nav. The same assessment, but in the dark. Later that evening, we were bussed back the land navigation course at around 10:00pm and given glow sticks. Instead of four points, there were two and we needed to find one in about two hours. I was able to accomplish this; although I must admit, night land navigation is my weakest skill, so I was more than pleased to complete and pass this portion of the land navigation assessment on my first attempt.

The next two days consisted of shooting range assessments. We began our day bright and early at 6:00am and marched over to the shooting range. The assessment for shooting is more straightforward than land navigation. You set up your sight picture on your rifle, and shoot targets. Why it takes so long, is because there are hundreds of Cadets that needed to do this. So the first stage

MS-IV Class Update

A Reflection on Operation Agile Leader (Continued)

is “zeroing”, which is essentially a practice target shooting to ensure our weapon shoots accurately. Then we head over to a range that has targets that pop-up. There's 40 targets, and we need to hit at least 23 of them. There were two days to accomplish this because this happens to be one of the more complicated tasks for Cadets.

Every day from there on out, about 5 days remaining, was the real meat of OAL. This phase was field training, and we spent 4 nights and 5 days in the woods. This area was about 15 miles away from the barracks and was covered in very thick terrain. What I mean by this is large areas completely covered by vines and thorns, endless seas of questionably poisonous plants, and not a single area of flat plain ground. It was awesome. Our days here were mock-missions intended to assess our leadership abilities, and conditions under stress. There were a combination of volunteer Cadets and enlisted personnel that played the role of opposing forces (OPFOR) and we were given blank-rounds for our rifles to add to the intensity of our missions. The mission I was tasked with was a raid, a theoretically simple mission that involves attacking an objective and leaving shortly after. My role for this mission was the platoon leader, therefore I was in charge of the entire platoon for this mission. Naturally, I was very nervous especially because it is a graded event. I planned the raid, briefed the mission to other Cadets, and then initiated the movement towards our objective which was 200 meters away from our current location. I was given two hours to accomplish this, and I was able to meet this time hack. Once things got into motion, I had a blast. The mission was stressful, but there was certainly a level of excitement that played a role in commanding those in my platoon. Especially because they were all very cognizant of how the mission was to be conducted and all other variables involved. My mission was a success, and I was thrilled.

I was not completely thrilled about Advanced Camp being cancelled, because of the fact that it was an experience all other Cadets before my class have experienced. The training value of Advanced Camp is also great to prepare us for the next level of training once we graduate. In all, I am pleased the Cadet Command was able to find a way to give me a summer training experience, and it was something I will always remember.



The MS-IV FIB Cadets pose for a picture after successfully completing Operation Agile Leader.

MS-IV Class Update

Branch Night Results: Class of 2021

December 2nd was an exciting night for the class of 2021! The Cadets received their branches for their upcoming commissioning as Second Lieutenants in May 2021.

Congratulations to all!

Active Duty



Cadet Baylie Mabbett:
Field Artillery



Cadet Wyatt Martens:
Infantry



Cadet Ezequiel Barraza:
Ordnance



Cadet David Pabianczyk:
Field Artillery



Cadet Ryan Kim:
Engineers



Cadet Tim Easton:
Infantry



Cadet Tim Wallace:
Aviation



Cadet Steve Irace:
Infantry



Cadet Timothy Song:
Transportation

MS-IV Class Update

Branch Night Results: Class of 2021 (Continued)

National Guard



Cadet Ben Kofman:
Cyber



Cadet Keegan O'Donnell:
Engineers



Cadet Gabriel Frausto:
Ordnance



Cadet Coco House:
Engineers



Cadet Donald Argueta:
Field Artillery



Cadet JonBenet Gonzaga:
Engineers



Cadet Quinn Beckman:
Engineers



Cadet Nathan Ruxlow:
Engineers



Cadet Tucker Petersen:
Transportation



Cadet Blake Link:
Ordnance



Cadet Allison Duncan:
Education Delay for
Law school

Adapt and Overcome: COVID –19

This semester has proven to be one of the most unique semesters that the Fighting Illini Battalion has faced, as the COVID-19 pandemic has completely changed the traditional college experience. Through trials and tribulations, the FIB was able to execute valuable training while adhering to COVID-19 guidelines to keep the Cadets, cadre, and community safe. MS IV Cadet **Baylie Mabbett**, MS-III Cadet **Heidi Kirchen**, and MS-II Cadet **Mary Pelzner** share their experiences from the Fall 2020 semester.

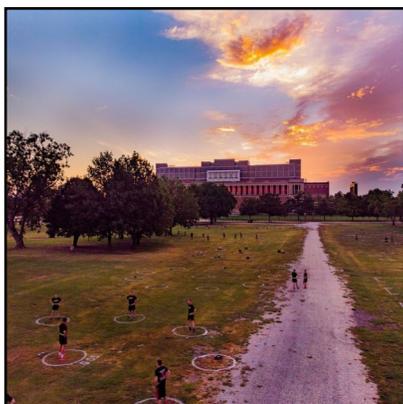
Edited by 2LT Ginny Fulk.

Physical Readiness Training

“PRT was the most impacted by COVID-19 guidelines. We were not allowed to workout inside due to the number of people in our battalion, so we had to find a new spot. Luckily, cadre found a big field across from the football stadium that was not too far from everyone’s apartments. The U of I Faculty and Maintenance had a team spray paint socially distant circles for each squad and running lanes for sprinting. So, PRT this year was conducted at the squad level, which consisted of about six people. The squad leader would stand in the middle of their squad’s circle, and everyone else would follow the six-foot apart rule and stay in their own circles. The circles’ spacing helped to minimize exposure if someone in the battalion did test positive for COVID. Lucky for us, it did not get too cold before Fall Break.” -**Cadet Baylie Mabbett**



Socially distanced circles and running lanes painted by the U of I Faculty and Maintenance at Lot 31.



Cadets conduct PRT in their socially distanced circles.

“PRT this semester has been a very different experience than in the past. PRT was done at Lot 31 in circles spray painted on the grass, which made social distancing simple. Maintaining proper distancing during runs and ruck marches was more difficult, but standard distances were established to keep Cadets safe. PRT is typically done as a platoon or even a company, but this year it was done in squads. One benefit of this change was the opportunity that squad leaders had more opportunities to lead, providing them with a beneficial learning experience. It also allowed squads to grow closer than before. Despite the unique situation, PRT was planned so that we got a effective workout in every day while staying safe.”

-**Cadet Pelzner**

“A significant adjustment this semester has been the transition from the APFT to the ACFT, the new Army fitness test . We were not able to use our usual facilities for PRT, so Cadets were introduced to the new ACFT events during PRT by utilizing Lot 31 to prepare for the new test. A lot of the events were completely new to Cadets, so being able to practice events such as the sprint drag carry (SDC), standing power throw (SPT), and the maximum deadlift (MDL), just 3 of the 6 events, allowed for Cadets to be introduced to the standards and expectations before being thrown into the test. This was all possible by making sure everyone sanitized the equipment before handing it off to another Cadet as well as staying socially distanced with masks.” -**Cadet Hiedi Kirchen**

Adapt and Overcome: COVID-19

Leadership Laboratories

“Hands-on practical exercises involving physical contact such as tourniquet application were not possible, but alternative methods of learning took their place. Cadets were still able to absorb all the information through watching demonstrations, taking notes, and when possible, doing practical exercises while maintaining social distancing.” -**Cadet Mary Pelzer**

“As an MS-III, being able to practice tactical training during super labs as well as go to the Sparta Range to practice Preliminary Marksmanship Instruction (PMI) was something that I didn’t think would be possible this semester, but we were still able to accomplish these labs while being safe to prepare for Cadet Summer Training (CST). I think that the MS-III class accomplished a lot more than we expected this fall, and despite not having a FTX, I believe that we all grew as leaders from our MS-II year, even under the unusual circumstances.” -**Cadet Hiedi Kirchen**



Cadet Hiedi Kirchen wearing a mask while leading a mission during Leadership Lab.

Military Science Class

“Classroom lectures looked a little different this year. Class is always inside the Armory, which was heavily regulated. There was only one access point through the east doors, and we had to show proof of a negative COVID test before entering the building. The University created an app called "Safer Illinois" which tracks our recent COVID tests and allows us building access. Students are required to get tested twice a week to maintain their building access. Once we got into the building, the classrooms had their own rules as well. The tables and chairs were all spread out, only allowing one person per table, there were wipes in every classroom, and there was a capacity dependent on each room's size. Everyone in the classroom was required to sanitize their hands upon entering, wipe their seat and table down before and after leaving, and wear a mask the whole time they were in the armory.” -**Cadet Baylie Mabbett**

Taking Precautions to Remain In-Person

“During this pandemic, a lot of people have struggled with feelings of isolation. For many Cadets, ROTC was their only in-person class. It provided a sense of community and comradery in a time of separation. Even though the emergence of COVID presented a unique challenge for the Fighting Illini Battalion, our innovative responses enabled us to continue learning and developing as leaders.” -**Cadet Mary Pelzer**

“The majority of college classes this semester were online, so ROTC was the only in-person learning Cadets had. In-person learning was beneficial in a lot of ways, the main reason being to restore some normalcy.” -**Cadet Baylie Mabbett**

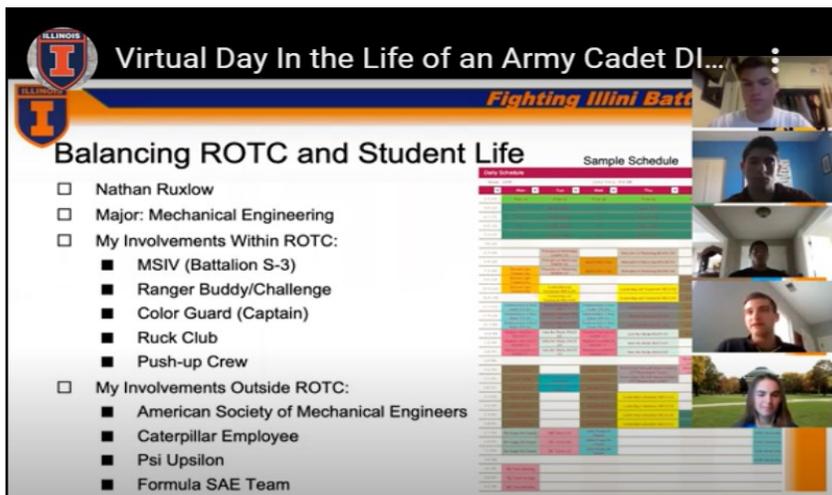
Recruitment Spotlight

Overcoming Recruiting Challenges: Day in the Life of a Cadet

By Cadet Quinn Beckman

The Day in the Life of a Cadet event is hosted by the Fighting Illini Battalion once per semester. The event allows prospective Cadets, primarily high school students, the opportunity to shadow a current Cadet within the program during a typical school day. The event is especially beneficial to students that are exploring their options because it gives them the ability to tour the University of Illinois campus, tour the Fighting Illini Battalion’s facilities, learn more about the program, and interact with current Cadet’s. This event essentially allows these students to make an informed decision about both the University and the program itself. However, due to the risk of exposure to COVID-19 the FIB has had to cancel in-person visits. Although this obstacle has made recruiting for the Battalion somewhat difficult, the Fighting Illini Battalion continues to adapt and overcome.

On October 22nd, 2020, Cadets from the Fighting Illini Battalion conducted the program’s second Virtual Day in the Life of a Cadet event. The event itself was hosted by eight Cadets, but behind the scenes Cadets from across the Battalion contributed to its success. Cadets spread awareness about the event by posting fliers across campus and through word of mouth, and others volunteered to be virtual Cadet mentors. These mentors provided the students with answers and advice about the program, the university, and student life via email and text message.



In this snapshot of the Virtual Day in the Life of a Cadet event, Cadet Nathan Ruxlow explains how to balance ROTC and student life.



Fighting Illini Battalion Cadets put their skills together to create a Virtual Day in the Life of an Army ROTC Cadet virtual tour video.

Recruitment Spotlight

Overcoming Recruiting Challenges: Day in the Life of a Cadet (Continued)

On the day of the event, over 30 prospective students were in attendance. I organized and moderated the event, with the assistance of the event's scribe Cadet Ali Burianek. The content of our presentation came primarily from our Cadet speakers who each created their own portions and provided the audience with information about the Fighting Illini Battalion, Cadet life, and their personal experiences in ROTC. Our volunteer speakers featured Cadets Graham Kessler, Raven Joe, Annika Koester, Valarie Villalpando, Brian Keyes, and Allison Duncan. Due to the fact that these students missed out on seeing the campus and its facilities in person, our S5 shop created a brand-new Fighting Illini Battalion tour video. The video featured several Cadet tour guides and provided the students with a virtual look at all the locations they would normally see when shadowing a Cadet mentor in-person. After the presentation concluded, the event continued with its Q&A portion which allowed students to ask both the presenters and cadre members any questions they still had about the program.



In this snapshot of the Day in the Life of a Cadet tour video, Cadet Nimotalai Lawal introduces prospective Cadets to Ikenberry Dining Hall, one of the most popular dining halls among FIB Cadets.

Cadet Donovan Spann explains how to transition into both student life and Cadet life.

A video of the Day in the Life of a Cadet event and the virtual tour can be found on our website at <https://publish.illinois.edu/army-rotc/>

Social Media Spotlight

Expanding our Reach Through Social Media *By Cadet Henry Feldhaus*

In an age of social media, "influencers," social media is more a part of individual worldviews than ever before. Multi-million-dollar corporations start Twitter wars with business rivals to incite awareness and excitement about their products. Companies hire college students to advertise on their personal pages. Organizations everywhere can sculpt a first impression before any in-person interaction occurs. At the FIB, we realize this as a recruiting advantage and an opportunity to build a legacy presence online.

As social media's breadth and depth continue to expand, so too does the Public Affairs (S5) shop at the Fighting Illini Battalion (FIB). Before 2019, the S5 shop's primary responsibilities were documenting training events, posting highlights to Facebook and Instagram, and publishing the newsletter you're reading now. Composed of one or two Cadets, S5 shops just three years ago served more as historians, collecting pictures to hang in our hallways and to post for Cadet's parents. Important, but a far cry from the influencing capabilities the shop handles today.

Now a team of three Cadets, the S5 shop posts on Instagram, Facebook, and Youtube as often as possible. This semester, we implemented a #FeatureFriday posting schedule. We reached out to alumni, specifically those with notable careers, and composed a short biography detailing their Army career. Every Friday, we posted the biography with some highlighting pictures. The posts were well-received, and usually our most interacted-with content. As a recruitment tool, the #FeatureFriday posts allowed us to show potential Cadets what was possible as an Army officer, whether it be working with the National Security Administration (see our post about retired LTC Wolfframm) or mitigating current events like COVID-19 (see our post about 2LT Tkaczyk). Recognizing alumni has the added benefit of keeping our past Cadets engaged and involved in the Battalion. One of our focuses this year was to build a strong alumni network, and #FeatureFriday posts were a step in the right direction.

This year, we focused on posting during high-traffic hours, hoping to capture our followers' attention when they are mindlessly browsing. It worked: this semester alone, we grew our Instagram audience to just over 775 followers, a 200 person increase from last year. Our demographics are perfectly in-tune with our audience: 50% are 18-24 years old, college-age. Some of our posts are seen by thousands of people, and our



Snapshot of a #FeatureFriday post featuring retired LTC Wolfframm.

Social Media Spotlight

Expanding our Reach Through Social Media (Continued.)

legacy continues to grow. Army ROTC and the 3rd ROTC Brigade are also online, and some of our best posts are highlighted on their pages; thus, we can reach their audiences of tens of thousands. It is remarkable to see comments on our content from other Battalions, potential Cadets from across the country, and even our very own FIB Cadets expressing their excitement.

This year, our capstone project was creating a Virtual Day in the Life of an Army ROTC Cadet video, to be shown at the largest recruitment event of the semester. We interviewed a dozen current Cadets about their day-to-day activities, both as a Cadet and student here at UIUC. COVID-19 restricted many new students from visiting campus, so we compiled a short virtual tour of campus and ROTC buildings to highlight what Cadets said in their interviews. The resulting video garnered hundreds of views on YouTube, all from high school students interested in the Battalion. Now posted on Instagram, it continues to grow in exposure as young students everywhere investigate ROTC at UIUC.

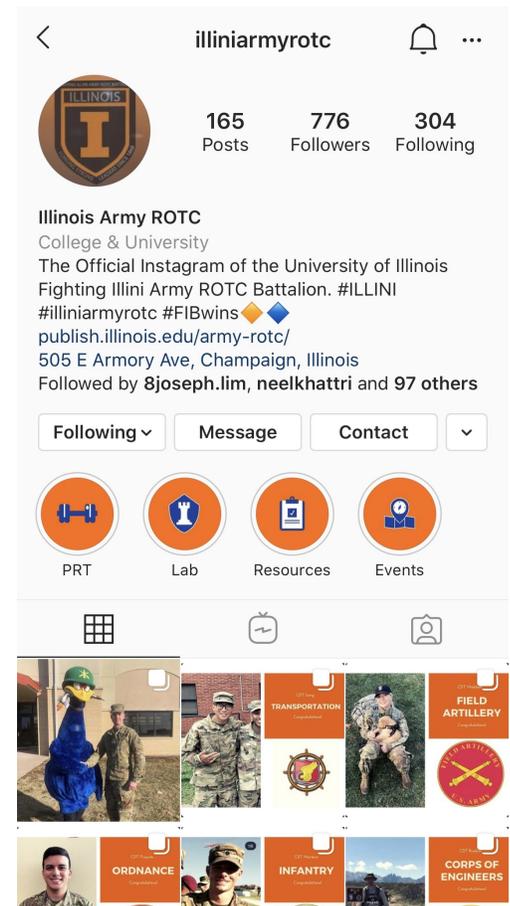
As we head into winter break, we must maintain an active presence on all platforms until we resume training in the spring. My assistants and I are already planning new content to keep our followers engaged. We have learned so much already this semester and continued to build a strong foundation for the future of FIB social media.

I look forward to seeing this shop continue to grow and innovate, leveraging new opportunities at every turn! If you are not currently following us, check out our pages! We are always looking for suggestions, new content, even a comment or like. Alumni especially, please reach out; we would love to honor you with a #FeatureFriday post.

Facebook: @FightingIlliniArmyRotc

Instagram: @illiniarmyrotc

Youtube: @Fighting Illini Battalion



Snapshot of the Fighting Illini Battalion's Instagram page.

Cadet Training Events

FLRC/OPORD Lab

September 3rd, 2020

Cadets from the Fighting Illini Battalion conducted Field Leadership Reaction Course (FLRC) lanes for the MS-I-MS-II and OPORD briefing classes for the MS-IIIs in order to build camaraderie among the underclassmen and lay a tactical foundation for the MS-IIIs. Four challenging FLRC lanes were completed. The MS-IIIs were exposed to their first Operations Order (OPORD) flip brief and given feedback from the MS-IV class.



New Cadets work with MS-II Cadet Zhara Trott to complete an FLRC lane.



Cadets Christopher Flores, Connor Forrest, and Joseph Lim listen attentively to an OPORD flipping instructional brief.

Land Navigation Lab

September 10th, 2020

MS-III Cadets from the Fighting Illini Battalion conducted their first land navigation practical at the Arboretum in order to set a benchmark for their navigation skills. Each Cadet was given five points to locate within a 90-minute time hack. MS-I and MS-II Cadets received instruction on basic terrain features, map reading skills, and route planning.



Cadet Alexander Bouddabbous checks his azimuth before heading to his next point.



Cadet David Seo navigates his way through to the course at the Arboretum.

Cadet Training Events

Terrain Model Kit (TMK)/Basic Fieldcraft Lab ***September 18th, 2020***

Cadets from the Fighting Illini Battalion conducted a split lab: MS-Is and MS-IIs received hands-on instruction on basic fieldcraft skills, while MS-IIIs learned about Terrain Model Kit (TMK) development in order to improve their OPORD briefing skills. Each MS-III Cadet built a simple TMK and used it to brief a Movement To Contact mission. Following the brief, an MS-IV Cadet gave feedback to the MS-III in order to further improve their briefing skills.



Cadet Neel Khatri practices tying a hooch in the MS-I&II lab.



Cadet Donovan Spann practices giving an OPORD brief with a TMK.

Preliminary Marksmanship Instruction Lab ***September 24th, 2020***

Cadets from the Fighting Illini Battalion conduct PMI, preliminary marksmanship instruction, on the M4/M16 style weapon system. MS-III leadership taught classes on basic weapons safety, M4/M16 series functions, and the fundamentals of marksmanship. Valuable hands on experience was given to Cadets that in turn will give them confidence and understanding in future range operations.



Cadet Joseph Lee adjusts his sight picture in his fundamentals of marksmanship class.



Cadet Alexander Boudabbous teaches a class on the M4/M16 series functions while Cadet Joseph Lim assists.

Cadet Training Events

Tactical Combat Casualty Care Lab October 1st, 2020

Cadets from the fighting Illini Battalion conduct a TC3/9-Line lab to learn how to conduct combat casualty care and how to call in a 9-Line MEDEVAC. MS-III Cadets were assessed through practical application scenarios to prepare for Cadet Summer Training. Scenarios including treating hemorrhaging, shock, broken bones, burns, and calling up a 9-Line Medical Evacuation.



Cadet Wyatt Martens teaching the underclassmen how to apply an Nasopharyngeal airway.



Cadets Tim Easton and Nathan Ruxlow teach a class on the roles of a medic

MS-IV 12-Mile Ruck September 10th, 2020

MS-IV Cadets from the Fighting Illini Battalion conducted a 12-mile road march to fulfill their commissioning requirement. Cadets completed the road march while carrying a 35-pound ruck, FLC and a rubber rifle. The road march was to be completed at their own individual pace, which allowed some Cadets to finish as fast as two and a half hours.



Cadet Alexander Bouddabbous checks his azimuth before heading to his next point.



Cadet Ben Kofman and Ezekiel Barraza relax after their 12 mile ruck march.

Cadet Training Events

Movement Techniques and Competition Lab

October 10th, 2020

The Fighting Illini Battalion conducted a movement techniques and competition lab which were taught by the MS-IV Cadets. The MS-I and MS-II's were taught on how to conduct individual, team, and squad movement techniques and formations. At the end, a competition was held to see which company could conduct these movements the best.



Cadet Joseph Lee low crawling under simulated barbed wire.



Cadet Connor Forrest rushing to fight the enemy.

Military Communications Lab

October 15th, 2020

The Fighting Illini Battalion conducted a military communications lab in order to teach Cadets how to utilize US Army communication technology according to doctrine. Subjects such as the phonetic alphabet and numbers, common radio terminology, and radio etiquette were taught.



Cadet Allison Duncan teaching MS-Is and MS-II's on proper radio etiquette.



Cadet Brendon Carter asking his MS-IV instructors on how to properly use radio terminology.

Cadet Training Events

Tactical Competition

October 29th, 2020

The Fighting Illini Battalion conducted a tactical competition lab in order to continue to refine MS-I and MS-II's movement techniques and tactical abilities in a competition setting. Cadets also had the opportunity to gain leadership experience and built Esprit de Corps throughout the program.



FIB Cadets looking to see if Cadet Lauren Leonard's grenade landed near the target.



Cadet Graham Kessler pulls a heavy 90 lbs. sled back dropped by the iconic Grange Grove.

M4 Individual Weapons Qualification at ILARNG Sparta Range

November 8th, 2020

The Fighting Illini Battalion went to the Illinois Army National Guard (ILARNG)'s Sparta Range. For many of our junior Cadets, this was their first time ever firing a weapon. Our MS-IV Cadets also showed the caliber of leaders they have become as they led this event with zero issues at any point!



Cadets on the firing line work to zero their M4s.



Between firing iterations, Cadets got to learn about tactical comms such as the SINCGARS Radio.



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:

- Guest Speaker for the Cadet Orientation Program. During the week of 25-29 January 2021, we will welcome the newest members in the Fighting Illini Battalion as new Cadets attend the Cadet Orientation Program. This three day orientation provides our new Cadets with a better understanding of what occurs in their Army ROTC classes and labs. During this same time, MS-IV Cadets will learn how to operate as a battalion staff and the MS-III Cadets will receive instruction on leadership at the platoon and squad levels of command. Each year, guest speakers assist by providing personal experiences to the Cadets.
- Alumni Mentor. All of our MS-IV Cadets have received their component and branch choices by now and there is now the opportunity to connect with and mentor a current Fighting Illini Cadet 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 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.

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

Contacting the “Fighting Illini” Cadre

Professor of Military Science: LTC Daniel Johnson

(217) 300-3056

Email: dwj34@illinois.edu

Senior Military Instructor: MSG Timothy Collier

(217) 300-3269

Email: tsc6@illinois.edu

Training/Supply Sergeant: SFC Ramiro Silva

(630) 465-3758

Email: ramiro3@illinois.edu

Recruiting Operations Officer: Mr. Eric Ashworth

(217) 265-6857

Email: eashwort@illinois.edu

Enrollment Eligibility Officer: Ms. Emily Brown

(217) 244-1407

Email: ebrown@illinois.edu

Asst. Prof. of Military Science: MAJ Jennifer Soderlind

(217) 300-9455

Email: js40@illinois.edu

Asst. Prof. of Military Science: CPT Michael Drabowicz

(217) 244-6984

Email: md34@illinois.edu

Asst. Prof of Military Science: Mr. Mark Larson

(217) 300-6753

Email: mlarson@luc.edu

Human Resources Assistant: Mr. Dorian Neang

(217) 300-0196

Email: dneang@illinois.edu

Supply Technician Mr. Todd Gannon

(217) 300-9955

Email: tgannon@illinois.edu

GO FIGHTING ILLINI !!!!

THE FIGHTING ILLINI ARMY ROTC



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