

The MILLINI



A publication from
THE FIGHTING ILLINI ARMY ROTC



University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Department of Military Science

THE FIGHTING ILLINI ARMY ROTC



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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Inside this issue:

Message from the Professor of Military Science	4
Message from the Senior Military instructor	5
MS-I Class Update	6-7
MS-II Class Update	8-9
MS-III Class Update	10-11
Ranger Club Spotlight	12-14
MS-IV Class Update	15
Commissioning Class of 2021	16-17
Cadet Training Events	18-30
Keeping in Touch with the Fighting Illini Battalion	31-33
What is New in the Armory & Hall of Fame Nomination Application	34-35
Contacting the Fighting Illini Battalion	36



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!

First, I am very proud of the Fighting Illini Battalion's (FIB) cadets for all of their accomplishments during this past semester. COVID-19 presented several challenges to ROTC, but the cadets adapted to the newfound environment and continued to ensure the Fighting Illini program thrived in the spring. The semester was bookended by the cadet orientation program and the spring commissioning ceremony. However, the FIB had an extraordinary amount of activities in between the aforementioned events.

The FIB sent a 5-person team to the Northern Warfare Challenge (NWC) competition in La Crosse, Wisconsin in February. The Fighting Illini Team competed among 28 other ROTC teams during a 22+ mile foot march that covered over 3500 feet of elevation through low temperatures (8 degrees at start) and high winds. The challenge was comprised of numerous mental and physical challenges, in addition to survival skills testing. The Fighting Illini did well; this year was the first time the program sent a team to compete in the NWC in the last two decades. The Fighting Illini Team brought valuable lessons back to the program and our cadets are eager to field a team and compete in the NWC 2022.

This year the Task Force Ranger Challenge competition was moved from the fall to the spring semester. The competition took place on Camp Atterbury, IN. The FIB 9-person and 5-person teams dedication countless hours towards developing their physical fitness, becoming competent in basic Soldier skills, and honing their military acumen. In the end, the Fighting Illini Battalion 9-person team did incredible well and won the Task Force Marseilles' Ranger Challenge competition! The first place achievement was the first time since 2005 that the Fighting Illini program won the Task Force Ranger Challenge competition. This victory earned the program a spot in 3rd Brigade's Ranger Challenge competition on Fort Leonard Wood, MO. The Fighting Illini Ranger Challenge Team did a great job competing against other teams from the Brigade and took home the streamer for the highest score in the competition's functional fitness event. The Fighting Illini Battalion also sent several teams to the Ranger Buddy competition at Kansas University. The two-person teams trained very hard for several months and all competed hard and did an fantastic job representing the FIB.

In addition to the spring competitions, the FIB conducted numerous training events that developed the cadets' leadership abilities. The cadets participated in several tactical leadership labs that included practical exercises on battle drills, field craft, combat water survival, tactical combat casualty care, etc. The culminating training event for the semester was the Combined Field Training Exercise (CFTX) on Fort Knox, KY. During the CFTX, the MS-III cadets integrated into platoons with cadets from the universities of Eastern Illinois, Illinois State, and Western Illinois. The CFTX consisted of Land Navigation, Individual Weapons Qualification, and Situational Tactical Exercise (STX) lanes.

The semester ended with 17 cadets earning their commission as 2nd Lieutenants in the U.S. Army or Illinois Army National Guard. After being about a year removed from last year's virtual commissioning ceremony, it was extremely important to have this year's ceremony in person. The ceremony was more memorable with family and friends attending who were supporting and celebrating their cadet's achievement. A special thanks goes out to retired Colonel Deborah Read (Fighting Illini Alum and Hall of Fame Inductee) for serving as the Guest Leadership Speaker for the commissioning ceremony.

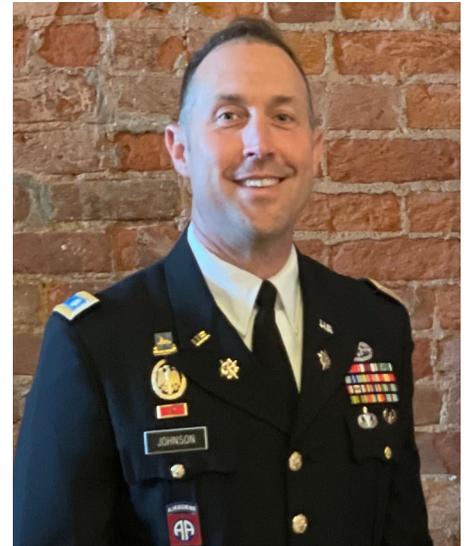
Finally, the FIB said goodbye to two of the program's cadre members and welcome another two teammates. SFC Ramiro Silva, who served as the Senior Military Instructor for the program for the last two years, retired from the U.S. Army after 20 years of service. SFC Silva had an outstanding career with multiple combat tours and is a Purple Heart recipient. Additionally, Mrs. Emily Brown, who served in many capacities as a University employee, retired in June after over 27 years serving the ROTC program. There is no doubt that Mrs. Brown impacted thousands of cadets as she dedicated countless hours and energy to serving the Fighting Illini Program. Mrs. Brown will truly be missed, but not forgotten. Along with the farewells, the FIB also welcomes Ms. Sharon Jackson and CPT Jess Carr to the team. Ms. Jackson

has been working at the University of Illinois for a few years and will join us as the program's Office Support Associate. CPT Carr joined us shortly after completing company command at Fort Hood. CPT Carr is originally from Chicago and will serve as an Assistant Professor of Military Science for the program. We are excited to have Ms. Jackson and CPT Carr join the Fighting Illini Battalion.



Be safe and enjoy your summer.

ILLINI!



Message from the Senior Military Instructor

by *MSG Timothy Collier*



Winston Churchill is quoted as saying “The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.” This quote has always resonated with me and I would submit that the cadets of the Fighting Illini Battalion (FIB) were the quintessential optimists during the 2020-2021 Academic Year here at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

I mentioned in my last correspondence the difficulties related to the COVID-19 pandemic that our cadets and Cadre faced last semester. I also mentioned that outstanding training and mentorship that took place despite those difficulties. I am pleased to report that the Spring 2021 semester saw a continuation of those efforts and, thankfully, some of the COVID-19 protocols being eased as the vaccines have rolled out. It culminated in the commissioning of 17 new 2nd Lieutenants in the Active Duty, Army National Guard, and Army Reserve components (see pages 16-17).

As mentioned above, our cadets were the eternal optimists this semester. They found every opportunity to conduct outstanding training. They aggressively reengaged with the myriad of clubs offered in the FIB. They conducted Combat Water Survival Training (CWST). The MSIII cadets were able to attend a Combined FTX with fellow cadets from three other universities. They did all this while still getting their COVID tests twice a week and following all University and CDC protocols. BLUF: the cadets of the FIB continued to train and develop the leaders of tomorrow and show the resilience and determination inherent to all great leaders.

I would like to highlight some of the cadets as well as some of their accomplishments from this last semester. I am immensely proud of our Ranger Challenge Team this year. They won the Task Force Ranger Challenge for the first time in recent memory and finished 4th out of 41 teams in the Brigade. The team was captained by Cadet Donovan Spann with significant contributions from his Co-Captain Cadet Joseph Lim. Cadet Grace O’Brien was awarded the “Cadet of the Year” and it was no surprise to anyone that is even loosely affiliated with the FIB. She exceeded every standard and was an integral part of the aforementioned Ranger Challenge Team. Lastly, I would like to recognize two cadets who will serve as the Cadet Battalion Commander (BC) and Command Sergeant Major (CSM) during the Fall semester next Academic Year. The PMS has implemented a new selection process by which interested candidate’s interview for these two key positions. Congratulations to our next BC, Cadet Donovan Spann, and our next CSM, Cadet Jacob Jung. The FIB is in good hands with these two fine leaders at the helm.

I would like to close by giving a big, gigantic, huge, enormous THANK YOU to the longest ever serving member of the FIB, Mrs. Emily Brown. She will be leaving us after this year. Her expertise and contributions to this Battalion will be sorely missed, but I am confident that she will approach retirement with the same passion and fervor that she served the cadets and Cadre of this Battalion with. Thank you Emily. I hope this message finds you all well and in good spirits and good health. FIGHTING ILLINI!



Cadets from the Fighting Illini Battalion take a break from a 2021 Spring Lab to pose for a photo.



ARMY ROTC



MS-I Class Update

Spring Semester Cadet Orientation Program

By Cadet Ladarius Jackson

I knew from a very early age that I wanted to get into public service, whether that be as a Police Officer, Firefighter/EMT, law, or the military. In my junior year of high school, I started seriously considering joining the United States Army. It had always been a thought in the back of my head, but with graduation approaching, I



Cadet Ladarius Jackson draws a weapon at Super Lab.

knew I wanted to do something that would be of value to me and would make a difference in other people's lives and in the community. On February 26th, 2020, I enlisted in the United States Army Reserve as a 31 Bravo, more commonly known as a Military Police Soldier. I left for my five month training endeavor on August 11th, 2020, and graduated as the Distinguished Honor Graduate of my class on January 14th, 2021. I took the time to essentially plan out the next two years of my life back when I was a Junior, and my plan was to enlist in the

Army Reserve, complete One Station Unit Training (OSUT), and begin studies at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in the following semester. I planned to start school in the Spring of 2021, with the goal of starting as a Sophomore, utilizing earned credits at OSUT, however, due to the university's policy on credits earned for military training, this was not feasible. Nevertheless, I was determined to contract with ROTC at the end of the semester, so I signed up for 18 credit hours, as I already had 13 from Advanced Placement credits, I would be able to classify as a Sophomore at the conclusion of the semester, and so far, everything is going to plan.

I arrived at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign on the 23rd day of January, two days prior to the start of the spring semester. Having coordinated with Mrs. Brown and Mr. Ashworth, I knew that the first week at the university would be a very busy one. The Cadet Orientation Program helped me to get acclimated to being a cadet in the Fighting Illini Battalion. I immediately met some individuals who have grown to be my friends, I had the opportunity to see how the battalion operated and understand the perks of being an Army ROTC Cadet. For me, this was especially



Cadet Ladarius Jackson stands for a photo with other cadets interested in the Engineering Brief during 2LT Eddie Thomas' return to campus.

MS-I Class Update

Spring Semester Cadet Orientation Program (continued)

new in that I had just completed OSUT at Fort Leonard Wood, it is a different environment, not entirely, but more so in that you have a greater level of autonomy and independence as you train to become an Army Officer. The cadet leadership is there for you, they are always there to advise or counsel you on matters that you are not 100% on, and I would say that their overall goal is to help you to grow as not only a cadet, but as an individual. Needless to say, the Cadet Orientation Program (COP) provided a very welcoming and warm entrance to newly minted cadets, and particularly on the last day of COP, when we received our grey Army ROTC shirts, we were publicly acknowledged as new members of the Fighting Illini Battalion. It was a great feeling, to know that you are a member of an organization that genuinely has your best interests at heart makes a new member more easily want to further that organization's goals.

With COVID-19, the Cadet Orientation Program was about what I expected. In the Army, you are taught that plans can and will change, and you must be flexible to persevere with the mission, even if it does not go to plan, more commonly referred to as "improvise, adapt, overcome." While an unfortunate fact, we all know and understand that we are limited in our capabilities of in-person activities for health and wellness purposes, however, the notion that, despite COVID-19, there would still be a Cadet Orientation Program speaks volumes to its impact that it has on new cadets. I think that every Army ROTC battalion should have some form of COP, as it sets new cadets up for success in the long run.

For prospective cadets considering the Fighting Illini Battalion, I will leave you with this. Joining Army ROTC will set you apart from your peers, it will provide you with training, knowledge, and opportunities that you quite literally cannot get anywhere else. You will become part of an organization much greater than yourself, not simply in size, but in scope of operations. Above all, you will become a better citizen, a better leader, and you will discover that you set the standard for excellence in everything you do.



Cadet Ladarius Jackson conducts a tactical road march before the sun comes up.

MS-II Class Update

Raid and Attack Super Lab

By Cadet Ryan Kang

On Saturday, February 20th, the MS-III class, along with participation from some MS-I and MS-II cadets, conducted attack and raid lanes at the South Arboretum Woods (SAW). Once we arrived and formed up at the SAW at 0800, we began right away by going into the first lane, which was an attack mission. It was a cold morning with lots of snow on the ground, so we knew we were in for an interesting time.



Cadet Ryan Kang prepares to conduct a grenade assault course.



Cadet Ryan Kang performs in a 6-mile ruck run.

I was the Platoon Leader (PL) for the attack mission, and there was a lot that I learned from this experience. We started the mission by me receiving a Fragmentary Order from higher, which I immediately briefed to all the squad leaders and other leadership in the middle of the Objective Rally Point (ORP). Unfortunately, it took us a while to set up the ASIP radios we were going to use for our mission so it was a time crunch right from the beginning. While the squad members were pulling security, it was our job as leadership to hastily plan the mission. While I was writing the Operations Order (OPORD) and planning actions on, I had Cadet Raven Jo help me make the Terrain Model, Cadet Mary Pelzer plan our route, and Cadet Jacob Jung act as the Radio Telephone Operator and complete radio checks. Once completed, we then went on our leader's recon to find a good release point as well as good locations to place the Surveillance and Observation team, support by fire line, and the assault line.

In order to follow noise discipline and be conscious of the Opposing Forces (OPFOR), we were crawling our way in the snow once at the Rally Point. I personally thought that was fun because we got to make the mission realistic, and I thought it was awesome that the underclassmen cadets were willing to crawl in the snow too without any hesitation.

Still lacking time, we rushed back to the ORP to pick up the whole platoon to move to the Rally Point. Once we got to the Rally Point, we immediately started setting up the support by fire line and the assault line. While I was with the assaulting elements to help them set up, the support by fire line got exposed by the OPFOR and they started trading fire. The assaulting elements had to start moving up a lot earlier than planned, and in the middle of that, our platoon got hit by indirect fire. We were in the middle of running back to the ORP when they ended the lane.

While I would not consider the mission a success, I definitely think the whole experience was a success. I think that the MS-I and MS-II cadets got a good picture of how to set up for an attack mission, and the MS-III cadets got good experience leading squads through the process. As the PL, I learned so much based on my mistakes. I learned that us being low on time can be a common occurrence for real missions, so I learned that being flexible and hasty while still making sure we are setting ourselves up for success is more important than checking off each and every thing on what we're being graded on. Overall, I thought we learned a lot of things from both lanes on Saturday, and it was a valuable learning experience.

MS-II Cadet Update

Virtual Day in the Life of an Army ROTC Cadet

By Cadet Katelyn Boetel

At 1600 on Wednesday, April 21st, the Fighting Illini Battalion conducted its “Day in the Life of an Army ROTC Cadet,” (DILARC) event. DILARC aims to recruit and encourage prospective ROTC cadets by providing a detailed look at the daily lives of our cadets as they fulfill their ROTC, academic, and extracurricular responsibilities.



Cadet Katelyn Boetel at PRT.

Because of COVID-19 restrictions, DILARC was held entirely online over Zoom. In previous years, participants were able to attend a PRT session and follow around a cadet for a day. The challenge of maintaining the quality of our virtual DILARC presentation was met by the OIC, Cadet Feldhaus, Mr. Ashworth, and over 40 other FIB cadets. Cadets were given a variety of different jobs. For example, some cadets were tasked with mentoring interested students by personally reaching out to provide information, while others prepared slides to present, and others answered questions from the audience during the official event. In the weeks leading up to the DILARC Zoom presentation, cadets prepared diligently to make sure no issues arose the day of the event. Multiple rehearsals were performed, and every detail was put under scrutiny.

This effort paid off, as the event occurred without any deficiencies. Presenting cadets wonderfully communicated the college experience as an Army ROTC cadet, attendees were given a virtual tour and shown videos taken from exciting events this year, such as the Sparta Range day, and the meeting was finished with a question and answer session. The level of engagement between cadets and the audience was tremendous and overwhelmingly positive!

DILARC is incredibly important for the Fighting Illini Battalion. It provides an important boost in recruitment and offers prospective cadets detailed information on our program, that they otherwise would not have known. The firsthand knowledge provided is an invaluable resource, helping sway individuals to explore the career path of Army officers.



Cadets Katelyn Boetel and Annika Chheung during the Squad Tactics Lab.

With COVID-19, the importance of DILARC is intensified, as many incoming freshmen never got the opportunity to tour our campus and speak to our cadre and cadets in person. Our polished transition to online recruiting events is a testament to the excellence of our cadet body and cadre members. This year’s DILARC was a resounding success because of this and is now an excellent example of the Fighting Illini Battalion’s ability to adapt and thrive under pressure.

MS-III Class Update

Northern Warfare Challenge

By Cadet Grant Jobe

A 16-mile ruck march, sub-freezing temperatures, and lots of sweat. In simple terms, this tends to be how I describe the Northern Warfare Challenge when people have asked me what it was like. On February 20th I had the privilege of captaining a team of 5-men where we were tested to our physical and mental limits. During this competition which takes place annually in La Crosse, Wisconsin, 29 teams from schools around the Midwest were tasked with completing a 16-mile ruck march broken up by different challenges including marksmanship, fire starting, tying knots, and evaluating and evacuating a casualty.

Championing itself as the “Toughest competition in ROTC,” this race was one our team made sure not to take lightly. With no one in the battalion having done the competition before there was a lot of uncertainty going into the competition and training leading up to it. However, we made sure to meet every weekday in the month leading up to the competition to practice our ruck marching, overall fitness, and knowledge. With the help of some of our more experienced cadets, we were able as a team to become proficient in tying 5 different knots, starting a fire with just steel wool and batteries as well as learn how to properly evaluate and evacuate a casualty.

When first asked to lead NWC I was excited but hesitant. As a lateral entry cadet coming into the program as an MS-III cadet I was worried I may not be ready to lead MS-IV cadets successfully in such a challenging competition. However, after much careful thought and consideration, I decided to take the opportunity and captain the team. It turned out to be the best decision I’ve made in ROTC. The experience turned out to be invaluable and allowed me to gain a goldmine of knowledge that I never would’ve obtained if I hadn’t decided to step out of my comfort zone and challenge myself. It sharpened my leadership skills and allowed me the opportunity to grow in every dimension as not only a cadet but as a person. And yes, some of this learning came through failing at times but learning from my own mistakes proved to be a great teacher.

I’m extremely grateful to have been able to lead my fellow cadets and be trusted with such a great

responsibility. I would encourage any cadet and especially those new to the program to use ROTC as an opportunity to challenge yourself in ways that you may not be able to in other aspects of your life. ROTC and its clubs provide unique opportunities not found anywhere else on campus to test yourself and grow in ways you may have thought not possible. These are experiences any cadet interested should take advantage of, you won’t regret it.



Cadet Grant Jobe prepares to give an OPORD Brief at Super Lab 2.



Cadets Grant Jobe, Ryan Kim, Tim Easton, Steven Irace, and Wyatt Martens were the first Fighting Illini Battalion Northern Warfare team.

MS-III Class Update

Ambush Super Lab

By Cadet Billy Dremel

On Saturday, March 20th, the MS-III class along with select MS-I/II cadets conducted our fourth Super Lab of the 2020-21 academic year. The Super Lab consisted of three parts: an introductory step drill of tactical movement and linear danger area crossing, and two iterations of a platoon ambush.

The introductory step drill was meant to correct common errors seen during previous Super Labs. It was an excellent way for the MS-I/II cadets, and even the MS-III cadets, to see what “right” looks like when it comes to tactical movements, which is fundamental to the type of tactical training done in ROTC and at Cadet Summer Training.

I served as platoon leader during the first platoon ambush iteration. We were given the location of our ambush objective, as well as the time we could expect the enemy to cross the objective. Since I had thoroughly prepared myself in doctrinal knowledge regarding a platoon ambush, at first I was confident in the success of the mission. However, as the iteration went on, I realized how difficult it can be in the leadership position during an exercise such as this. Time moved quickly, and we were not quite able to get everything done that I wanted to get done to ensure the flawless execution of the platoon ambush. Although we ended up accomplishing the mission, I felt that I had my work cut out for me in terms of better leading platoons during Situational Training Exercise lanes.

The second iteration of the platoon ambush I was a team leader in a squad. This iteration was much simpler for me: there were much less responsibilities and decisions that I had to make. This mission ended up probably being the most successful mission we have ever had at a Super Lab. Since I had just led the platoon on a similar mission that was not nearly as successful, I was able to very well appreciate the skill it took for the leadership to execute how they did during this iteration.



Cadet Billy Dremel as the Platoon Leader for an Ambush Mission.



Cadet Billy Dremel rucks in full tactical gear.

Regardless of the success of the missions during these Super Labs, everyone who attended got great training and experience in platoon level operations that will serve well during future training. For the MS-III cadets like me who will be attending Cadet Summer Training in a few months, we will be much better prepared because of the experience we had at this Super Lab. There is a reason that the University of Illinois produces such successful cadets, and I am sure that the fact that we pull off such successful training is a large part of that.

Ranger Club Spotlight

Task Force Marseilles Ranger Challenge

By Cadet Connor Forrest



Cadets Connor Forrest and Kyle Villamayor both competed on the Ranger Challenge Team.

During the month of March, the University of Illinois Army ROTC program sent two teams to compete amongst various other schools in what is called Ranger Challenge. The two teams (nine-person and five-person) were comprised of a splattering of MS-I to MS-III cadets and had been preparing for this competition since the fall. As a lateral entry cadet, I had never been to any Ranger Challenge and so to compete on a winning team was an honor and a privilege. However, what made this year and our subsequent win so much more incredible was the fact that the entire team including leadership had to be switched around due to a COVID incident.

Both of the teams we sent to the Ranger Challenge competition in Marseilles, Illinois performed admirably but our nine-person team managed to climb to the top. We arrived on a Friday and our captain, Cadet Joseph Lim, was briefed on the entirety of the competition the night before. We then spent the majority of the night planning the next day's competition, taking a written exam and eventually getting some rest. The next day we conducted hygiene, ate some tasty Meals Ready to Eat (MRE) breakfast and prepared ourselves for the day ahead. The competition consisted of seven events: stress shoot/weapon assembly and disassembly, tactical combat casualty care, radio problem solving, Situational Training Exercise (STX) Lane and grenade course, one rope bridge, functional fitness lane and finally an obstacle course. Additionally, we rucked to and conducted land navigation between every single lane. The nine-person team finished the fastest out of any school with the time of 4 hours and 15 minutes. This was in no small part due to the decision making of the team captain and the overall hustle and perseverance of the entire team. The entire team including alternates, Cadets Jacob Jung and Mackenzie Larsen gave it their all physically and mentally.

After finishing all events, we had the awards ceremony where we learned how we fared. While the five-person team did not do as well as they would've liked, our nine-person team finished 1st overall and won our task force. This came as a collective surprise to everyone including cadre and represents a huge achievement for ranger club and the program as a whole. None of this would have been possible without the leadership of captains Donovan Spann and Joseph Lim and the individual team members who gave it their all. While I am new to the program and ranger club as a whole, I am glad to have been a part of this and look forward to coming back next year and seeing the underclassmen build on this.



The Task Force 9-man team: Brandon Carter, Kyle Villamayor, Ben Busby, Mackenzie Larsen, Grace O'Brien, Raven Jo, Jacob Jung, Graham Kessler, Joseph Lim, Connor Forrest, and Skander Boudabbous.

Ranger Club Spotlight

3rd Brigade Marseilles Ranger Challenge

By Cadet Joseph Lim



Cadet Joseph Lim climbs a rope during the competition.

After the incredible victory at Task Force Marseilles Ranger Challenge, I had the honor of leading the nine-person Ranger Challenge Team to the 3rd Brigade Ranger Challenge Competition at Fort Leonard Wood, MO. With approximately two weeks in between the competitions, we had to learn and train for ten additional tasks in preparation for this new competition. This proved to be a very demanding task as cadets on the team had to meet twice a day, seven days a week at 0600 and 1800 in addition to workouts and their normal academic load. The additional training definitely gave the cadets ranging from MS-I through MS-III an opportunity for exposure to tasks such as: Combat Water Survival Training, Hand Grenade Assault Course, Call for Fire, Battle Drill for Entering Buildings/Clearing Rooms, React to IED (Improvised Explosive Device), M4 Qualifications, M9 and M320 operations.

We arrived at Fort Leonard Wood on Thursday evening and immediately began preparing for the competition that began early morning the next day. The first day of the competition consisted of M9, M320, and M4 Operations, Written Exams on Land Navigation, Military Knowledge, and weapons, as well as a team physical fitness test. In between these lanes, we rucked with 55+ lbs in grueling hilly terrain. The second day of the competition, the teams were tasked to land navigate to each lane which consisted of: Tactical Combat Casualty Care, Hand Grenade Assault Course, mystery lane, Call for Fire lane, crossing a river by a one rope bridge, physical endurance course, confidence course, and a final functional fitness lane. For a combination of 18+ miles between the two days, the team was challenged both physically and mentally as we negotiated through each lane. All 11 cadets showed remarkable grit and resilience all the way to the end of the two day competition.

A few hours later, the teams from UIUC, Iowa, Missouri, Marquette, and St. John's universities formed up in front of the Brigade Commander and Command Sergeant Major to receive streamers for the best performance in each lane and award the top three teams. The Illini Nine Person Team ended up with a fourth place finish and a streamer for the Functional Fitness Lane. It was an unbelievable opportunity and honor to lead the amazing cadets on the team as well as make a trip to Brigade for the first time in 16 years. Every year, the Ranger Challenge Club makes improvements from lessons learned, so I look forward to Ranger Challenge next year!



The Brigade 9-man team: Raven Jo, Brendan Carter, Donovan Spann, Lauren Leonard, Grace O'Brien, Skander Boudabbous, Benjamin Busby, Kyle Villamayor, Joseph Lim, Connor Forrest, and Jacob Jung.

Ranger Club Spotlight

Ranger Buddy Competition

By Cadet Annika Koester

This past spring, I was fortunate enough to participate in the Ranger Buddy Competition hosted by the University of Kansas. I was lucky enough to be paired with fellow Cadet Donald Argueta. Throughout the weeks leading up to the competition, people "buddied up" and began reviewing many infantry skills like weapons disassembly and reassembly, range cards, Tactical Combat Casualty, employing, firing, then recovering an M18A1 claymore mine, among other tasks. However, Ranger Buddy is not only a test of knowledge but a great test of endurance. The Ranger Buddy competition begins with a 15k ruck with a 35-pound rucksack and dummy rifle and ends with a 5k run.



One of the coed buddy pairs, Annika Koester and Donald Argueta.

We left for the University of Kansas the morning before the competition. We used the seven-hour drive to prepare for the knowledge lanes, strategize our plan for the ruck, nap, and eat an absurd amount of pringles. I also discovered during the drive that MSG Collier is a proud Taylor Swift fan; I believe we listened to her entire new album twice on the drives there and back. I must admit that I had many of her songs stuck in my head the following morning during the ruck run.

The next day, the coed and female teams had a start time of 0600. All the male teams woke up early to cheer Argueta and me, and Melanie Rodriguez and Kira Seeley on at the start. Once the race began, everyone sprinted out of the gate, leaving Argueta and me towards the back of the pack. However, we kept a steady pace and slowly passed people as the race progressed. Towards the end of the first lap, we had run our way into first place. Over the subsequent two laps, we leap-frogged with the University of Kansas' coed team. My fondest memory of the ruck was when Cadet Argueta randomly yelled out, "Look, Cows!" pointing to a field near the running route. We ended up finishing the ruck second with a time of 1:59.00. After that, we dropped our rucks to be weighed and started the knowledge phase of the competition. Unfortunately, we got disqualified during the Tactical Combat Casualty Care

lane, which was sooner than we anticipated, but we finished feeling proud of what we had accomplished. For the rest of the day, we were able to cheer on our fellow buddy teams. The male race kicked off at 1000, with UIUC fielding three teams, two of which make it to the knowledge tasks. It was such a fantastic experience being able to watch all our teams compete and do so well during Ranger Buddy. It was an honor to learn from and gain inspiration from my fellow cadets during training and competition. Although none of us won, I am proud of what everyone was able to accomplish. I ended the day feeling exhausted but looking forward to next year's Ranger Buddy Competition!



The Ranger Buddy Competitors: Melanie Rodriguez, Annika Koester, Kira Seeley, Donald Argueta, Lauren Leonard, Ali Burianek, Tim Easton, Neel Khattri, Jay Hatkar, Ryan Kim, Raven Jo, and Steven Irace.

MS-IV Class Update

Combined Field Training Exercise

By Cadet Wyatt Martens

This past semester, our MS-III cadets engaged with other MS-III cadets from Illinois State, Western Illinois, and Eastern Illinois Universities to train together at Fort Knox, Kentucky. Cadets trained in small unit tactics, basic rifle marksmanship (BRM), and land navigation. Being combined with cadets from other universities gave the Fighting Illini Battalion (FIB) MS-III cadets a unique opportunity of working with people that they did not know before.



Cadet Wyatt Martens prepares for STX Lanes.

On Thursday, 15 April, MS-III and MS-IV cadets as well as Cadre formed up at the Armory building to conduct COVID-19 screening, pack up vehicles and depart for Fort Knox. Cadets arrived in the afternoon at Fort Knox and began to meet the members of their platoons and prepare for the Situational Training Exercise (STX) lanes which took place the following day. Weapons and radios were issued to the cadets and they soon became familiar with these items. Cadets rehearsed missions and established Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the following day.

Friday Morning the cadets formed up outside their barracks before 0500 to board busses to the training area. Upon arrival at the training area, cadets were issued blank ammunition and maps and made their first patrol base in the woods. At approximately 0630, they were issued their first Fragmentary Order (FRAGO) for their first of six missions for the day. The cadets conducted quick missions where their leadership and decision-making abilities were challenged in order to complete their missions. FIB MS-IV cadets were used as the Opposing Force (OPFOR) for the lanes. Upon completing of all of the lanes, MS-III cadets expended the rest of their blank ammunition, turned in radios, and prepared to sleep in the woods.



Cadets assault an objective during the Combined Field Training Exercise.

At 0630 on Saturday morning, cadets were bussed to the range to conduct Basic Rifle Marksmanship. The MS-III cadets were allowed an opportunity to first zero their weapons and then move to a pop-up target range to try out the new carbine qualification standards. During and after their time shooting, cadets cleaned their weapons and then turned them in after they were cleaned and inspected. At approximately 1630, cadets were moved back to the land navigation course to conduct an iteration of day into night land navigation. During this time, cadets had to find four out of six land navigation points during the day and limited visibility conditions. Upon completion, cadets turned in their scorecards and made their evening patrol bases to sleep in.

At 0700 on Sunday morning, the MS-III cadets stepped off on another iteration of land navigation. They were given two hours to find two out of three points that they were given. After completion of the final land navigation iteration, cadets filled out peer evaluations of their squad members and loaded up for the journey back to UIUC.

The Combined MS-III Spring Training Exercise was a great training event for the MS-III cadets where they were able to train at the same instillation that they will for Cadet Summer Training (CST). They were also able to work with people they never knew before and train to standard on valuable Army Skills. Although they only trained for a few days, the experiences that they gained were vital in their development as cadets and future Army Officers.

MS-IV Class Update

Congratulations to the Fighting Illini Battalion Army Second Lieutenants!

On 17 May 2021, the following Second Lieutenants commissioned into the Illinois National Guard and Army Education Delay Program from the Fighting Illini Army ROTC Battalion.



2LT Keegan M. O'Donnell

Component: Illinois National Guard

Branch: Engineer

Degree: BFA in Industrial Design



2LT Donald G. Argueta

Component: Illinois National Guard

Branch: Field Artillery

Degree: BS Animal Science



2LT Nathan K. Ruxlow

Component: Illinois National Guard

Branch: Engineer

Degree: BS in Mechanical Engineering



2LT Benjamin P. Kofman

Component: Illinois National Guard

Branch: Cyber

Degree: BS in Systems Engineering



2LT Jacob Q. Beckman

Component: Illinois National Guard

Branch: Engineer

Degree: BS in Political Science



2LT Tucker W. Petersen

Component: Illinois National Guard

Branch: Transportation

Degree: BA in Sociology



2LT Jazmin V. House

Component: Illinois National Guard

Branch: Engineer

Degree: MA in Architecture



2LT Gabriel A. Frausto

Component: Illinois National Guard

Branch: Ordnance

Degree: BS in Psychology



2LT Allison J. Duncan

Component: Education Delay

Branch: Judge Advocate General

Degree: BA in Sociology

Law School: Southern Illinois University Carbondale

MS-IV Class Update

Congratulations to the Fighting Illini Battalion Army Second Lieutenants!

On 17 May 2021, the following Second Lieutenants commissioned onto Active Duty in the U.S. Army from the Fighting Illini Army ROTC Battalion.



2LT Ryan T. Kim

Component: Active Duty Army

Branch: Engineer

Degree: BS in Chemistry

Duty Station: TBD



2LT Timothy P. Wallace

Component: Active Duty Army

Branch: Aviation

Degree: BS in Nuclear Engineering

Duty Station: TBD



2LT Steven K. Irace

Component: Active Duty Army

Branch: Infantry

Degree: BA in History

Duty Station: TBD



2LT Baylie E. Mabbett

Component: Active Duty Army

Branch: Field Artillery

Degree: BS in Political Science

Duty Station: Fort Stewart, GA



2LT Thomas M. Easton

Component: Active Duty Army

Branch: Infantry

Degree: BA in Global Studies

Duty Station: TBD



2LT David P. Pabianczyk

Component: Active Duty Army

Branch: Field Artillery

Degree: BS in Political Science

Duty Station: Fort Bliss, TX



2LT Wyatt A. Martens

Component: Active Duty Army

Branch: Infantry

Degree: BS in Agriculture and Consumer Economics

Duty Station: TBD



2LT Timothy D. Song

Component: Active Duty Army

Branch: Transportation

Degree: BS in Chemistry

Duty Station: Fort Lewis, WA

Cadet Training Events

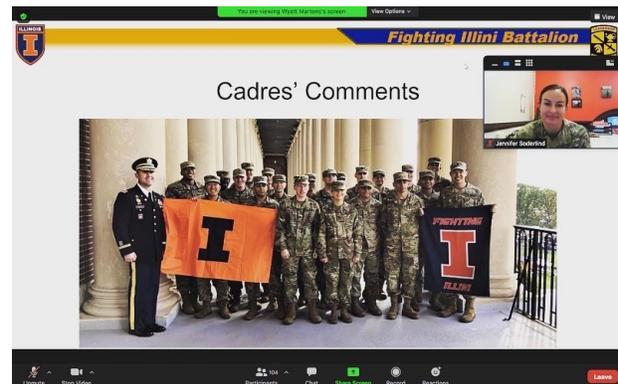
Spring Semester Town Hall

28 January 2021

The Fighting Illini Battalion conducted a town hall for their first lab to introduce the staff, set expectations, and advertise clubs for new and continuing cadets. Due to COVID restrictions the university had in place, the entire battalion tuned in via Zoom and met the leadership within the cadet battalion and the captains of each Army ROTC club. The incoming cadets were excited for what the semester had in store.



Cadets await the start of the virtual town hall meeting.



MAJ Soderlind gives remarks at the end of the lab.

Platoon Operations

4 February 2021

The Fighting Illini Battalion conducted a platoon operations lab, where all cadets learned some of the basics of the platoon level infantry tasks. Four classes were conducted covering different aspects of platoon operations including infantry squad and platoon elements, platoon formations and movement techniques, types of combat patrols, and types of reconnaissance patrols. This instruction is key for the Super Labs later in the semester.



Cadet Skander Boudabbous watches the class diligently.



Cadet Brian Ziech poses a question during their lesson.

Cadet Training Events

Team Building

11 February 2021

The Fighting Illini Battalion MS-I/II cadets learned some of the basics in leadership by participating in a Leaders Reaction Course (LRC). This exercise places cadets in a dilemma where a cadet must execute a series of tasks under a set time limit. This a team building lab that gives the underclassmen an opportunity to practice their leadership abilities through several different scenarios.



Cadet Estefanie Rendon and Michael Frank cross the river.



Cadets Aditya Maddalurri and Jiwoo Kim carry a litter.

Patrol Base Operations

11 February 2021

To expand their skills on occupying a patrol base, the Fighting Illini Battalion MS-III cadets conducted a patrol base operations lab to prepare for Advanced Camp. The cadets learned the fundamentals of setting up a patrol base, establishing priorities of work within the patrol base and conducting reconnaissance patrols. This lab consisted of two phases, classroom instruction, and a walkthrough practical exercise.



Cadets Joseph Lim and Raven Jo compare notes on Patrol Base Ops.



Cadet Ryan Kim explains the nuances of a patrol base to the MS-III cadets.

Cadet Training Events

Squad Tactics

18 February 2021

The Fighting Illini Battalion MS-I/II cadets participated in a Squad Tactics Lab. Cadets learned basic battle drills such as how to react to contact, how to communicate tactically and then the MS-III cadets were given opportunities to lead their squads through these drills. MS-IV cadets used their experience from Advance Camp to walk the younger cadets through of how these operations should be executed. Each squad then practiced what was taught to prepare for a future Super Lab.



Cadet Darren Novak gives instruction to cadets.



Cadets Katelyn Boetel and Annika Chheung lay in the prone.

Attack and Raid

18 February 2021

Fighting Illini Battalion MS-III cadets learned about Attack and Raid. Both of these missions are critical skills needed for the summer's Advanced Camp. Cadets learned the basics through a classroom portion, and then were able to demonstrate what they learned by briefing their plans from their terrain models. The next step for these cadets will be to take what was learned in this lab, and apply it in an upcoming Super Lab. Due to COVID restrictions and colder weather, this approach to training best utilized the few labs available during the spring months.



MS-III cadets use a terrain model to visualize attack and raid missions.



Cadet Raven Jo adjust his terrain model.

Cadet Training Events

Attack and Raid Super Lab

20 February 2021

The Fighting Illini Battalion conducted a four-hour Super Lab on a Saturday at the South Arboretum Woods. The focus of the training was two missions that were conducted, an attack and a raid. Cadets Ryan Kang and Chris Flores led the first mission, and Cadets Raven Jo and Billy Dremel led the second. The MS-III cadets executed this additional iteration to gain more confidence in tactical missions.



Cadet Raven Jo gives his OPORD Brief.



Cadet Ali Burianek pulls security from the patrol base.

Drill and Ceremony

25 February 2021

The Fighting Illini Battalion conducted a Drill and Ceremony Lab at Campus Recreation Center East (CRCE). Cadets were able to receive more practice on formation and marching movements with their platoons. MS-III cadets were given the opportunity to practice leading their platoons, and were evaluated on their ability to call and execute commands effectively. Up to this point in the semester, Drill and Ceremony focused at the squad level.



Cadet Julio Zacarias marches his platoon.



Cadets from 2nd Platoon of Bravo Company stand in formation.

Cadet Training Events

Call for Fire

4 March 2021

The Fighting Illini Battalion MS-I/II cadets participated in a Call for Fire Lab in which cadets received instruction, followed by time to practice three methods of marking location; Grid Mission, Polar Mission, and Shift from Known Point. Cadets were divided into four groups to allow everyone to put into practice what they were just taught. This is a testable skill during Advanced Camp.



Cadet Ryan Kim uses a terrain model to visualize Call for Fire.



A photo of a Call for Fire Terrain model.

Combat Water Survival Test

12 March 2021

The Fighting Illini Battalion advanced course cadets conducted the Army Combat Water Survival Test in the pool at the university's Activities and Recreation Center. This test required all cadets execute a series of tasks. These tasks included wearing the Army Combat Uniform and conducting a 15-meter swim with rifle, Equipment Ditch with rifle and field load carrier (FLC), and 3-meter blindfolded drop with rifle. This is a commissioning requirement, and all cadets performed well.



Cadets Ezequiel Barraza, Benjamin Kofman, and Eric Lee stand prepared for CWST



Cadets Allison Duncan, Darren Novak, and Ezequiel Barraza serve as safeties.

Cadet Training Events

Tactical Competition

18 March 2021

The Fighting Illini Battalion MS-I/II cadets participated in a tactical competition between platoons. Events included: a hand grenade throw, Individual Movement Technique (IMT) lane, all Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT) events, litter carry, and swinging through a series of monkey bars. It was an incredibly fierce competition with all platoons putting in work, but ultimately, 2nd Platoon of Bravo Company, reigned supreme.



Cadet Jacob Fuss conducts the Sprint Drag Carry in full tactical gear.



Cadet Michael Nelson accepts the golden canteen on behalf of his platoon.

Sprint Lanes

18 March 2021

The Fighting Illini Battalion MS-III cadets participated in an Operations Order (sprint lane) lab. This lab required cadets to work together to prepare a terrain model and Operations Order brief within a limited amount of time. Roles including platoon leader, platoon sergeant, squad leader, terrain model builder, route planner, and radio telephone operator were all given. Cadets had to manage delegating tasks as well.



Cadet David Seo adjusts his terrain model.



MS-III cadets work together on an Operations Order (OPORD) Brief.

Cadet Training Events

Ambush Super Lab

20 March 2021

The Fighting Illini Battalion conducted a six hour Super Lab on a Saturday at the South Arboretum Woods. This lab included a brief rehearsal, then reacted to two ambush missions. Cadets Billy Dremel and Connor Forrest led the first mission, and Cadets Grant Jobe and Kyle Villamayor led the second. The MS-III cadets are one step closer to Cadet Summer Training. These tasks are evaluated at Advanced Camp.



Cadets Christopher Flores and Brendon Carter cross a linear danger area.



Cadet Grant Jobe stops to speak with his platoon leadership.

Weapons Lab

25 March 2021

The Fighting Illini Battalion MS-III and Ranger Club Cadets went to the Champaign Armory to get familiarized with the Crew Served Weapons. These weapons were the M240B machine gun and M249 Squad Automatic Weapon (SAW). MS-III Cadets were able to use this time to prepare for Advanced Camp by learning effective ranges and maintenances. The Ranger Club cadets were also included in this lab to prepare them for their upcoming competitions.



Cadets Kira Seeley and Melanie Rodriguez clear an M249 SAW.



Cadets Grace O'Brien and Neel Khattri work on the M240 weapon system.

Cadet Training Events

Army Combat Fitness Test Lab

25 March 2021

The Fighting Illini Battalion MS-I/II cadets participated in a lab where they learned some tips and techniques for doing well on the new Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT). This lab also covered exercises to use to train for the events. This lab included the new changes with the ACFT and the new optional plank standard was discussed. This lab ended with a platoon competition, where 2nd Platoon of Bravo Company won.



Cadet Ethan Jones performs the hex bar deadlift event.



Cadet Brian Ziech throws a 10lb medicine ball over his head.

Operation Agile Leader II

1 April 2021

The Fighting Illini Battalion MS-III/IV cadets participated in Operation Agile Leader (OAL) II. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, Advanced Camp was altered in the summer of 2020 to eliminate the need for all ROTC cadets to travel to Fort Knox, Kentucky. The new event, known as OAL was a shortened version at Camp Atterbury. The OAL II event covered some of the commissioning requirements that were not covered last summer during OAL. The events included a grenade assault course and identification, and a battle buddy Individual Movement Technique lane.



Cadet Billy Dremel throws a grenade.



Cadet Kyle Villamayor performs a 3 second rush between covered positions.

Cadet Training Events

Defense Lab

8 April 2021

The Fighting Illini Battalion MS-III cadets participated in a defense lab at the South Arboretum Woods. This lab introduced cadets to the defense of a patrol base, and allowed them to get in a few repetitions before going to their semester Field Training Exercise. It allowed the cadets to learn how to navigate terrain tactically, utilize and differentiate between cover and concealment, and prepare a defensive position in a Patrol Base.



Cadet David Seo takes cover behind a downed tree.



Cadet Donovan Spann pulls security from the patrol base.

Field Craft

8 April 2021

The Fighting Illini Battalion MS-I/II cadets participated to prepare them for a Field Training Exercise or Cadet Summer Training. These stations covered face paint and camouflage, setting up a sleep system, how to set up a Field Load Carrier (FLC) and ruck, hazards in the field, and how to avoid or treat dangers in a field environment.



Cadet Harold Lucas applied face paint to himself.



Cadet Cole Thompson has face paint applied by Cadet Baylie Mabbett.

Cadet Training Events

Combined Field Training Exercise Day 1

15 April 2021

Fighting Illini Battalion cadets traveled to Fort Knox, Kentucky, to participate in a Combined Field Training Exercise. Upon arrival, cadets had practice with weapons and had time to rehearse their Standard Operating Procedures with their new platoons. Each platoon had a mix of the cadets from Western Illinois, Eastern Illinois, and Illinois State Universities. The platoons were designed to be similar to what cadets would experience at Advanced Camp.



Cadets Joseph Lim and Julio Zacarias arrive at Fort Knox for FTX.



Cadet Heidi Kirchen carries the M240B for rehearsals.

Combined Field Training Exercise Day 2

16 April 2021

Fighting Illini Battalion MS-III cadets conducted Situational Training Exercises for the second day. 2nd Platoon, conducted platoon operations and allowed Cadets to cycle through leadership rotations. Cadets conducted Recon, Attack, Ambush, Movement to Contact, and Raid missions. MS-IV cadets were the Opposing Forces to the cadets, giving them the most accurate sense of training possible for them to prepare for Summer Training where they will face similar conditions.



Cadets Christopher Flores and Kyle Villamayor communicate after clearing an objective.



Cadet David Seo assaults through the objective during an ambush mission.

Cadet Training Events

Combined Field Training Exercise Day 3

17 April 2021

Fighting Illini Battalion cadets continued their CFTX with M4 weapons zeroing, qualifying, and a lot of weapons cleaning. Each cadet was given adequate time to zero their weapon (adjust their sighting), tighten their shot group, and clean and return their weapons in pristine condition. Cadets then moved on to the land navigation course. Cadets were given six hours to find six points in the late afternoon and the evening.



Cadet Kyle Villamayor starts on his land navigation points.



Cadets Wyatt Martens and Eric Lee await the MS-III cadets at the land navigation start point.

Combined Field Training Exercise Day 4

18 April 2021

Cadets completed their Spring 2021 CFTX with a final iteration of land navigation in the morning, and final peer reviews and clearing Fort Knox. Cadets from every university present returned notes of improvement for their comrades to better prepare them for Cadet Advanced Camp in the Summer. The final day of the CFTX also allowed time for recuperation from the harsh conditions endured in the days prior.



Fighting Illini Battalion MS-III cadets.



Cadet David Seo drinks from an canteen after completing land navigation.

Cadet Training Events

Day In the Life of an Army ROTC Cadet

21 April 2021

The Fighting Illini Battalion hosted a virtual “Day in the Life of an Army ROTC Cadet” (DILARC) event where current cadets were given the opportunity to speak with prospective cadets and high schoolers about what Army ROTC is like. Items discussed included things like time commitments, benefits from trying out ROTC, how to manage life in the university along with other responsibilities, and the opportunities provided both financially and socially by being a member of the Cadet Battalion.



Cadet Sebastian De La Cruz kneels during a Super Lab.



Cadet Melanie Rodriguez lays in the prone during a lab.

Visit to the WWI Museum

22-23 April 2021

Fighting Illini Battalion MS-IV cadets conducted a museum visit the WWI museum in Kansas City. Cadets were also able to visit Fort Leavenworth in Kansas and were given a tour from the base by LTC Johnson. At the WWI museum, cadets were able to observe extremely well preserved equipment, documents, and other interesting remnants from that war.



Fighting Illini Battalion MS-IV cadets at Fort Leavenworth.



Cadets David Pabianczyk and Gabriel Frausto examine a map at the WWI museum.

Cadet Training Events

Bataan Memorial Death March

24 May 2021

The Fighting Illini Battalion gave cadets the opportunity to participate in a remote version of the honorary Bataan Memorial Death March where cadets completed a ruck with 35lbs in order to honor those who had lost their lives in the Philippines in WWII. Cadets were given a preset route that covered the required 14 miles. The Bataan event is normally held at White Sands Missile Range, NM. The UIUC event began and finished in front of the Armory and all cadets gained a greater perspective of the sacrifice those soldiers endured.



Cadets Maddy Szamocki, Grace O'Brien, Benjamin Busby, and Brendon Carter complete the ruck.



Cadets begin the ruck march.

End of Semester Awards Ceremony

29 May 2021

For the final lab of the academic school year, the Fighting Illini Battalion had an awards ceremony where cadets were recognized for their achievements throughout the year. The awards included everything ranging from exceptional grade point averages to displaying exemplary leadership. A change of command ceremony was conducted where the guide-on was transferred from the outgoing command team to the new one. Ms. Brown was also recognized for her service as she prepares to retire from the program.



Cadet Jacob Jung, Steven Irace, and Donovan Spann at the change of command ceremony.



Mrs. Emily Brown receives a gift from the Fighting Illini Battalion.

Keeping in Touch with the Fighting Illini Alumni

Year Group 1989 Updates

After commissioning, classmates from the Illini Battalion generally keep in touch throughout the years. However, fellow 1989 classmates Maynard Favila and Mark Kaeser have taken this to a new level. These two and several other classmates have remained in contact throughout the years. Whether participating as each other's groomsmen; having drinks in Chicago, hiking Hong Kong's ridgelines; whitewater rafting in the Gauley River or having a surprisingly tasty lunch at JUSMAG-Thailand, they have remained close. Their discussions took a unique direction when Mark retired to Bangkok in early 2018. His positive experience and insight were factors leading to the Favila Family retiring to Chiang Mai in December 2019. Now residing in Thailand, Mark and Maynard frequently catch up over phenomenal international cuisines; discussing world events, investment opportunities, through travel, and of course their U of I connection. This year they also solicited updates from those classmates that they remained in contact with (see below). These seven officers have also volunteered to serve their country again as mentors to some MS-III/IV cadets. They would like to challenge fellow Illini Army Officers, whether serving or retired, to mentor a current cadet. Opportunities are available and your efforts are paying it forward to the future military leadership of our country. If you are interested in mentoring, please contact Mr. Ashworth at eashwort@illinois.edu.



April 1989. MSIV cadets during the Spring FTX.



April 2021. Maynard Favila & Family and Mark Kaeser after a recent Yemenese lunch in Bangkok.

Henry Dixon. BG, IN. Brigadier General (BG) Dixon, promoted in April 2019, is currently the Director of Operations, G3, US Army Central Command. Prior billets include Deputy Director of Operations, J3D, US Northern Command; Brigade Commander, 33rd Brigade Combat Team (BCT); and Battalion Commander, 2/130 Infantry (INF). BG Dixon has deployed in support of Operation IRAQI and ENDURING FREEDOM and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Multinational Division Northeast in Elbag, Poland. Prior to returning to active duty in 2018, BG Dixon worked for the U.S. Department of Labor in Chicago after graduating from The John Marshall Law School. BG Dixon currently resides in South Carolina with his wife Mary Pat.



April 2019. MaryPat Dixon of Chicago, attaches new rank insignia on her husband, BG Henry S. Dixon, during his promotion ceremony at the Pritzker Military Museum and Library in Chicago.

Keeping in Touch with the Fighting Illini Alumni

Year Group 1989 Updates (continued)



1996. COL(R) Pat Grady in Bosnia.

Patrick Grady. COL(R), MS. Colonel (COL) Grady is currently the Veterans Affairs (VA) Director responsible for VA/DoD (Department of Defense) medical sharing. Prior to his current role, he was involved with the DoD's electronic healthcare record roll-out and then served with TRICARE as Chief. Prior to retiring from the Medical Service Corps in 2016, COL Grady was posted in various staff and command positions throughout Germany, Washington DC, Fort Hood, TX, and Fort Ord, CA. COL Grady was also an Army Fellow with the RAND Corporation and received his MBA from UIUC. COL Grady currently resides in Virginia.

Ted Martens. LTC(R), FA/MI. Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Martens is currently the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Intelligence Center at Ft Huachuca, AZ. Prior assignments include DCO - 111th MI BDE; OIF IV and OIF VI with III Corps, 1st Cavalry Division; SOC-KOR; CO, 704th MI Bde, Ft Meade, MD; DIVARTY and 1/320th FA, 101st Airborne Division (AASLT), FT Campbell, KY; and DESERT SHIELD/STORM with 3rd Brigade, 3rd Armored Division, Friedberg, Germany. LTC Martens retired after 23 years of active service. He currently resides in Arizona.



2005. LTC(R) Martens, then a Major, in Camp Liberty, Baghdad, Iraq.



2010. LTC(R) Hugo Silva in Mahmudiyah, assessing a construction project allocated for the Iraqi Army.

Hugo Silva. LTC(R), IN/FA/MI. Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Silva is currently VP-Business Process Management at JPMChase's Quality CoE. He retired from military service in 2017 after 31 years of service in the Illinois and Ohio National Guard. LTC Silva branch qualified as an Infantry, Field Artillery and Military Intelligence Officer. His last billet was G2/J2 for the State of Ohio. LTC Silva has two tours in Iraq and was awarded the Bronze Star for his meritorious service. LTC Silva currently resides in Ohio.

Keeping in Touch with the Fighting Illini Alumni

Year Group 1989 Updates (continued)

Bill Williams. MAJ(R), OD/LG. Major (MAJ) Williams is currently an Analyst/Logistician with the US Customs & Border Protection (Department of Homeland Security). He served in several leadership and staff roles throughout his 22 years of service. His last billet being Support Operations Officer of the 38th Sustainment Brigade, from which he retired in 2009. During his service, MAJ Williams deployed to Iraq in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. Additionally, he has deployed twice in support of humanitarian assistance missions. MAJ Williams currently resides in Indiana.



November 2015. MAJ(R) Bill Williams at his daughter's school Veteran's Day event.



April 2003. MAJ(R) Favila (Left) in Najaf during the initial stage of OIF I.

Maynard Favila. MAJ(R), IN. Major (MAJ) Favila is a retired Banking Executive and Infantry Officer. He posted to 2/502 INF, 101st Airborne Division (AASLT) for his initial leadership assignments. Upon completion of Active Duty, MAJ Favila joined the Army Reserves while pursuing his MBA and working as a Management Consultant. He deployed to Iraq for OIF I; ultimately serving as the Coalition Provisional Authority North's (CPA-N's) Head of Projects & Finance. Upon redeployment, MAJ Favila was recruited by a Financial MNC and posted throughout Europe, Asia and the United States. He and his family currently reside in Thailand.

Mark Kaeser. CPT(R), MI. Captain (CPT) Kaeser was a Military Intelligence officer with both the 2nd and 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiments (ACR)s for two years each. This included his deployment with the 2nd ACR during the Persian Gulf War. Afterwards, CPT Kaeser left the Army to pursue a civilian career. Over the next 20 years, he resided in both Chicago and Houston specializing in the energy industry; with inherent knowledge of logistics management and trading. In 2018, CPT Kaeser chased another dream and decided to travel the world and work for himself. He ultimately settled in Bangkok, Thailand...for the time being.



CPT Kaeser chilling with Phang Nga Bay, Thailand serving as a stunning backdrop.

What's New in the Armory

The Hall of Fame Wall is Becoming High-Tech!

By Mr. Eric Ashworth, Alumni Coordinator



The Fighting Illini Cadet Battalion (FIB) always likes to brag about the support they receive from our alumni. Having a program with a history of over 150 years doesn't hurt as we have a lot of alumni to support us, but in general, we have been fortunate to have the financial support to continue to train and operate outside of what is budgeted to us from the U.S. Army. Those extra funds come from our alumni and the cadets are aware that many of the training opportunities they receive are gifts from our alumni. So thank you!

Many ROTC programs across the country have Halls of Fame to recognize alumni that contributed to and served the greater good of society after their commissioning. UIUC is one of those programs and we proudly display our Hall of Fame members on a wall in the southeast entrance of the Armory Building. Last summer I wrote about how our wall was "full" and we needed funding to purchase and program a touch-screen monitor to provide summaries of our Hall of Fame members. This would ensure that visitors would always have access to the accomplishments of our Hall of Famers and ensure we never needed more wall space. Well we are happy to inform you that funding was raised and this summer the screen is being installed. Our next ceremony is scheduled for 3 December 2021 and will feature our new touch-screen monitor. We look forward to this new technology and are so appreciative to those alumni that helped us with the purchase. For those who were unaware of that this induction ceremony was occurring this fall, there is still time to nominate other worthy Illini that earned a commission from UIUC. If you wish to nominate someone, the application can be found on page 35.

There are other endowments that support the Army ROTC cadets. All of this tax-deductible support goes through the University of Illinois Foundation. Last year the Class of 1970 created an Army ROTC Scholarship. It is listed on the Foundation's website as the **Army ROTC Scholarship Fund** (11776233). There are two endowments, the **Army ROTC Cadet Endowment Fund** (11774561) which provides funding each year to supplements annual cadet training and the **Army ROTC Alumni Fund** (11330418) that supports specific requests by our cadets throughout the year. All of these funds directly help cadets and we wish to thank all of you that have donated to any of these funds in the past.

I'll leave you with a couple new items in the FIB. After many years our transition program that welcomes new members into the Cadet Battalion being called the Cadet Orientation Program, it is now been changed to the **Incoming Cadet Welcome Week** or ICW2. Also, the recruiting effort didn't suffer this past year even though campus visits reduced to a trickle. The **Day in the Life of an Army ROTC Cadet** (DILARC) used the technology of Zoom online sessions to introduce our current cadets to high school students considering Army ROTC. The majority of students reached have decided to attend UIUC which ensures that the FIB ranks remains full!

Hall of Fame: The Cadet Battalion is developing the plans for the next Hall of Fame induction ceremony during the Fall of 2021. The induction ceremony will be December 3, 2021. We currently have no new nominations and two for reconsideration but time is still available to submit any additional nominations. We will establish the nomination review board in late October to ensure inductees selected will be notified by the beginning of November. If you are interested in submitting a nomination, we must have your application by 15 September 2021. Listed below is the application form.

Fighting Illini Battalion Army ROTC Hall of Fame

Nomination Form

1. Your Name: _____

2. Your Email: _____

3. Your Phone Number: _____ Best time to call: _____

NOMINEE INFORMATION:

Name: _____

Date Graduated UIUC (if alumnus): _____

Degree(s) Achieved at UIUC (or other University): _____

Will this award be Posthumously? _____ Yes _____ No

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

If yes, do you have contact info for Nominee’s Family: _____ Yes _____ No

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

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

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

Return this form with a nomination biography to arotc@illinois.edu by 15 September for consideration for this year’s Induction Ceremony.





Staying in Touch with The Fighting Illini Battalion

University of Illinois
Foundation
Recruiting, Donations
Visits, Expertise

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

- Guest Speaker for the Incoming Cadet Welcome Week (ICW2). During the week of 16-21 August 2021, we will welcome the newest members in the Fighting Illini Battalion as new cadets attend the ICW2. 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: CPT Jessica Carr

(217) 333-0247

Email: jlmcarr@illinois.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 !!!!