

Fall I 2025

Message from the PMS

A Season of Momentum and Growth

The fall semester has been a season of momentum and meaningful growth for the Fighting Illini Battalion. Building on the strong foundation of previous years, our cadets have continued to sharpen their tactical skills in weekly leadership labs, execute complex field exercises, and represent the Army and the University of Illinois with professionalism across campus and the community. From the first lab in August to the last formation of the semester, our focus has remained the same: developing confident, competent leaders of character for the United States Army.

Training Excellence:

Our Day to Day Operations Across All MS Levels



Cadet Thomas Beacom grouping and zeroing at Marseilles Training Center

Our fall labs gave cadets repeated opportunities to lead and learn under pressure, with each class progressing through increasingly complex challenges:

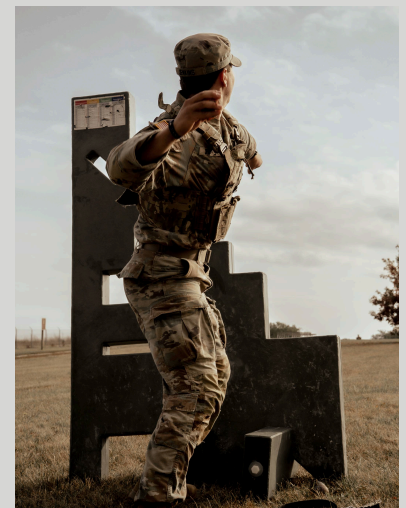
- MS-I Cadets were introduced to the fundamentals: movement techniques, drill and ceremony, and introductory land navigation. They learned how to wear the uniform with pride, find their place in the formation, and build confidence in their new roles as future Army officers.
- MS-II Cadets deepened their understanding of small-unit tactics, radio communication, and troop leading procedures. Many served as team leaders during squad lanes, refining their ability to translate orders into decisive action.
- MS-III Cadets, preparing for Cadet Summer Training, spent the semester planning and executing squad and platoon-level missions: raids, ambushes, and movement to contact, during battle drills and tactics labs that tested their leadership under realistic conditions.
- MS-IV Cadets focused on the planning, resourcing, and supervision of training events, ensuring that underclassmen received realistic, standards-based instruction that will prepare them for success at Advanced Camp and beyond.

Fall FTX:

The Capstone of Our Fall Training

The centerpiece of our training calendar was the Fall Field Training Exercise, where the battalion deployed to the field for an extended training weekend. Cadets executed day and night land navigation, weapons familiarization and qualification, and additional warrior skills that they will face at Advanced Camp.

For many MS-I and MS-II cadets, it was their first true "field" experience: living out of rucksacks, operating in small units, and learning to make sound decisions while tired, cold, and under time constraints. For our MS-III and MS-IV cadets, the FTX served as both a crucible and a validation: a chance to see their planning pay off and to watch their squads and platoons grow into cohesive teams.



Cadet Calvin Jenkins participating in the Hand Grenade Assault Course during Task Force Marseilles Ranger Challenge Competition

Ranger Challenge:

Excellence in Competition

Our Ranger Challenge teams represented the Fighting Illini Battalion with distinction at Task Force Marseilles this fall, earning second place finishes in both the 7-man and 11-man team competitions. Competing against ROTC programs from across the region, our cadets demonstrated the physical toughness, tactical proficiency, and mental resilience that define Ranger Challenge. These results reflect months of early-morning training, team cohesion, and an unwavering commitment to excellence. Congratulations to all team members for their outstanding performance.

Representing the Battalion on Campus

Beyond the Training Area, the Fighting Illini Battalion Remained Highly Visible Throughout the Fall:



Cadets during a morning run with Larry Gies and Athletic Director Josh Whitman before the Military Appreciation Game

Military Appreciation Game – Our cadets supported game-day activities at Memorial Stadium, providing color guard and on-field recognition for service members and veterans while showcasing the Army's presence to thousands of fans.

Homecoming Week – The battalion helped host the Golden Knights at the stadium, integrating with game-day activities and reinforcing the connection between the university community and the profession of arms.

Army-Navy Game Victory & Tri-Service Competition – Cadets rallied around our football team's victory and the Tri-Service competition win, where Army, Navy, and Air Force ROTC programs came together in healthy rivalry. These events highlighted not only our cadets' physical toughness and competitive spirit, but also the mutual respect and joint mindset that will define their careers in uniform.



The US Army Golden Knights parachute team looking over memorial stadium before the jump at the U of I vs USC Homecoming Game

Branch Night

Our MSIV's Received the Branches in which They'll Serve as Lieutenants

Branch Night marked a powerful turning point for our senior cadets this fall, as they learned the branches in which they will soon serve as second lieutenants. In a room filled with cadre, classmates, family, and friends, each MS-IV stepped forward to see years of academic work, leadership performance, and Cadet Summer Training evaluations culminate in a single moment. This year's results were exceptional: all thirty cadets received a branch within their top three preferences, reflecting both the hard work of the cadets and the careful mentorship they received throughout the accessions process.

The distribution of branches highlights the diverse strengths and interests within this year's commissioning class. Our cadets will be entering some of the Army's most critical career fields: 1 Cyber, 2 Military Police, 10 Logistics, 1 Finance, 1 Chemical, 3 Infantry, 3 Field Artillery, 2 Signal, 1 Military Intelligence, 1 Nurse Corps, and 1 Adjutant General.

Branch Night also marks the beginning of a major life transition: from cadet to lieutenant. For our 12 cadets commissioning into the Active



CDT Shamus Herbert receiving his first branch choice: Active Duty Field Artillery

Component, this means preparing to leave campus life behind for Basic Officer Leader Course (BOLC), followed by their first duty stations at posts around the world.

For the 14 cadets commissioning into the Army National Guard, the transition looks different but no less demanding. They will balance their roles as citizen-soldiers: attending BOLC, drilling with their units, and remaining ready for state and federal missions: while simultaneously building civilian careers, pursuing advanced degrees, or entering the workforce full-time. These new Guard officers will bring the leadership lessons learned at Illinois back to communities across the state and region, embodying the ideal of service both in and out of uniform. Whether Active Duty or Guard, each new lieutenant carries forward the same charge: to lead with competence, character, and commitment, and to honor the trust placed in them by their soldiers, their units, and the Fighting Illini.

Illini Army ROTC Campaign for 2030

The future for the Fighting Illini Battalion:

Looking beyond this semester, the Fighting Illini Battalion has set a clear vision for where we want to be by 2030. Our long-range plan is built around four priorities: caring for cadets, transforming how we teach and train, expanding our impact on campus and in the community, and building a sustainable program that will serve future generations. At the center of that vision is a commitment to developing high-quality scholar-leaders who can pursue ROTC without financial hardship, and who graduate ready to lead with character in the Army or in civilian careers.

To care for our cadets and students, we are working toward an ROTC Scholarship Endowment of \$1 million to help offset out-of-state tuition and room-and-board costs, ensuring that financial barriers do not prevent talented young leaders from commissioning through Illinois. Complementing that goal is a \$50,000 annual Cadet Development Fund that will underwrite leadership travel, professional conferences, and experiential training opportunities that go beyond standard resources. Each year, our cadre conduct more than 300 national high school scholarship interviews and engage with over 6,000 prospective students; this plan will allow us to attract, retain, and develop the very best of them.

Our 2030 goals also focus on delivering transformative learning experiences. We aim to modernize ROTC classrooms and lab spaces to support simulation, wargaming, and adaptive learning: environments where cadets can practice decision-making, ethics, and resilience under realistic conditions. Expanded partnerships with Athletics, Campus Police, and local Fire departments will deepen our leadership and performance training, while new experiential learning models will align Army leadership methodology with Illinois' mission of innovation in teaching. The end state is a graduate who is physically resilient, mentally agile, and tactically proficient: a leader of character ready to serve with excellence.

Making a visible impact on society is another cornerstone of this initiative. By 2030, we plan to strengthen our connection with more than 2,000 Army ROTC alumni across all 11 colleges through a dedicated Advancement Representative, reinforcing Illinois' national footprint in service and leadership. We will also grow partnerships with JROTC programs and community organizations to expand awareness of military service, outreach, and civic engagement. High-impact public events: such as the Military Appreciation Game, community ceremonies, and campus showcases: will continue to highlight ROTC as an indispensable pillar of Illinois' land-grant mission: educating leaders who serve both nation and community.



CDT Janessa Mosqueda rappelling down memorial stadium for the 2025 Military Appreciation game

Finally, our vision calls for stewarding and growing the resources that sustain the Fighting Illini Battalion. Key objectives include acquiring a dedicated training facility or BeaverFit Beyond Trailer to expand our collective physical training capacity, upgrading the Cadet Lounge and Computer Lab into a collaborative, technology-enabled learning hub, and refreshing our ROTC offices and welcome area to reflect the professionalism and excellence of our program. Together, these efforts will create a modern, sustainable ROTC program that optimizes shared resources and secures the support needed to sustain excellence well into 2030 and beyond.

Physical Training

The Glue That Holds The Battalion Together

Physical training (PT) is where every day in the Fighting Illini Battalion begins-and where much of our leadership development truly happens. Long before most of campus is awake, cadets are on the field, in the weight room, or on the road, building the fitness, discipline, and teamwork they will need as future Army officers. PT is not just about passing a test; it is about preparing to win on tomorrow's battlefields and building leaders who can be trusted with America's sons and daughters.

First and foremost, PT prepares cadets for combat by making them strong, fast, and durable enough to outlast any adversary. The demands of modern warfare require officers who can carry heavy loads, move quickly over difficult terrain, and keep going when they are cold, tired, and under stress. Through structured workouts, AFT-focused training, and endurance events, our cadets learn to push their physical limits in a controlled environment now...so they can be unbeatable when it matters later.

PT is also a daily test of leadership and consistency. Cadet leaders plan, brief, and execute every session, ensuring that workouts are safe, effective, and aligned with Army standards. When Soldiers see that their leaders can be counted on to be prepared at 0600, to enforce standards fairly, and to hold themselves accountable, they begin to trust those same leaders with more complex responsibilities. In this way, PT becomes a proving ground for the planning, communication, and follow-through that define effective lieutenants.

Just as important, PT strengthens cohesion by bringing the unit together in shared effort. This is where cadets really get to know one another: who is quiet but reliable, who needs extra encouragement, and who may be struggling. In the small conversations before formation and the shared grind of a hard workout, cadets learn to read each other, support each other, and hold each other accountable. That connection translates directly to tighter squads and platoons in the classroom, in the lab, and in the field.

Finally, PT is where cadets don't just build resilience-they push past it. Well-designed sessions demand mental toughness, discipline, and the willingness to do one more rep, run one more lap, or help one more teammate finish. Over time, cadets see themselves change. They become stronger, more confident, and more aware of what they can endure and overcome. Those lessons carry into academics, leadership roles, and eventually into their first units as officers.

Every morning at PT, we are shaping the character, toughness, and leadership of the officers who will lead America's formations. To fully support that mission, we are working toward a modern ROTC gym that matches the caliber of our cadets and the standards of today's Army. A dedicated, updated facility would allow us to run safer, more effective, and more varied training- especially in harsh weather and during high-demand periods. This gym is not simply an investment in equipment; it is an investment in people. By helping us build a training space worthy of our cadets' effort, discipline, and service, you directly contribute to the development of the next generation of Army leaders.



CDT Shamus Herbert deadlifting during the annual tri-service competition



The Fighting Illini Battalion and the Illinois Swim and Dive team after completing the 9/11 Memorial Ruck

University of Illinois Is Being Out-Invested in ROTC by Every Neighboring State

Purdue University

- National Guard cadets receive immediate in-state tuition
- Contracted cadets pending approval for full in-state
- All ROTC branches placed within Purdue Polytechnic Institute
- 20-credit Advanced Course earns a Military Science minor

Indiana University

- University provides \$400K/year to offset out-of-state tuition for ROTC
- Moving toward full in-state tuition for ROTC cadets
- ROTC reports directly to the Provost
- Military Science minor approved (2025)

University of Minnesota

- All ROTC scholarship cadets receive in-state tuition
- 20-credit Advanced Course earns a Military Science

University of Iowa

- Strong ROTC visibility and institutional support
- Competitive scholarships and reduced financial barriers for ROTC

University of Missouri

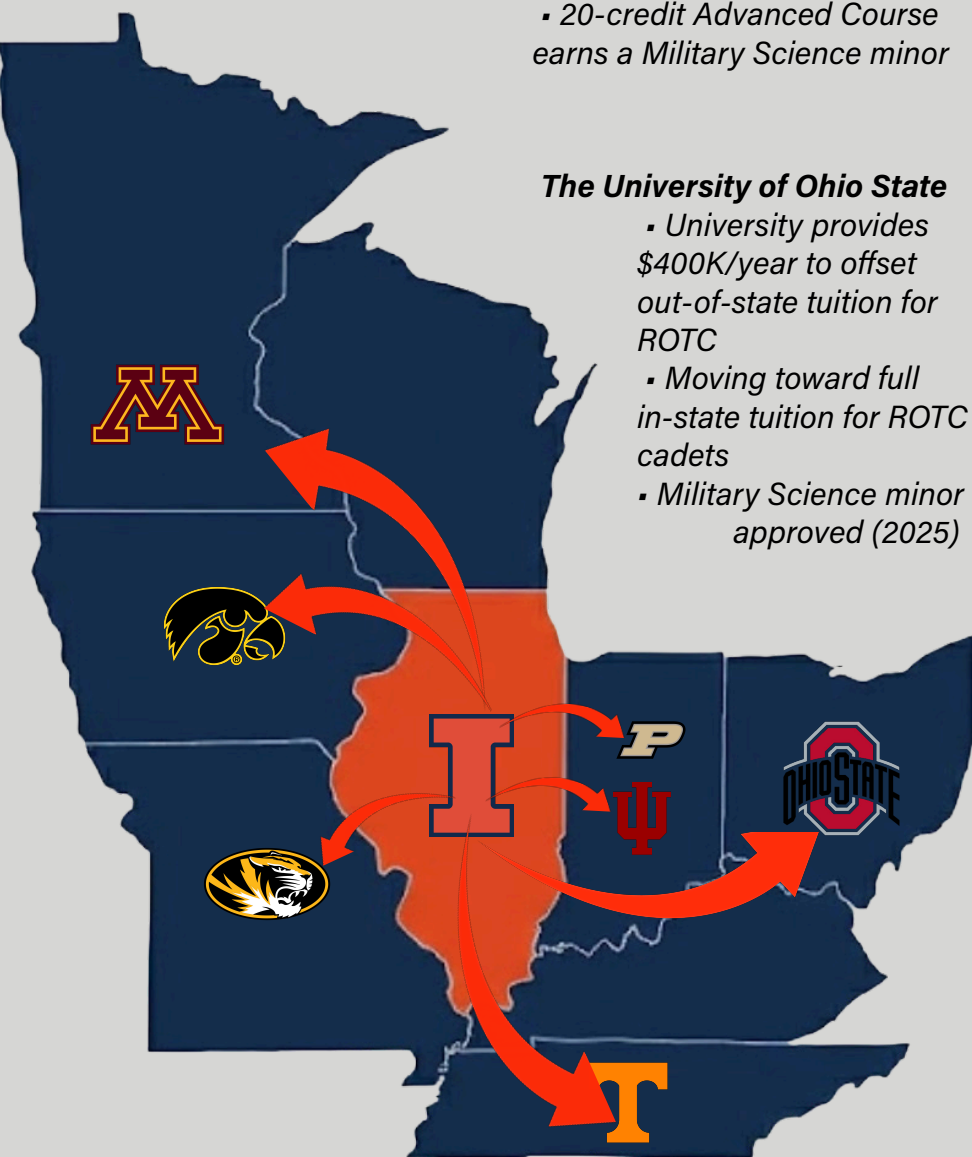
- In-state tuition for all contracted cadets
- National Guard receives immediate eligibility
- Army & Air Force housed in College of Arts & Science

University of Tennessee

- Statewide in-state tuition for ALL ROTC cadets
- VOLSTARTER provides \$40-50K/year in scholarships for ROTC
- Military Science minor established in 2023

The University of Ohio State

- University provides \$400K/year to offset out-of-state tuition for ROTC
- Moving toward full in-state tuition for ROTC cadets
- Military Science minor approved (2025)



If we want to build officers for America in Illinois, we have to compete for them. Right now, the states around us are competing harder — and winning!

Investing in the Battalion's Future

Game days provided another avenue for our cadets to give back to the program. Through football tailgates and support to concessions operations, cadets invested long hours before, during, and after home games to raise funds that directly enhance the cadet experience—supporting additional training opportunities, equipment improvements, and recognition events that would not be possible through standard resources alone. These weekends demanded teamwork, resilience, and professionalism under pressure, and provided opportunities for cadets from every MS level to work side-by-side in service of the battalion.



A Call to Our Alumni, Families, and Friends

As we reflect on this fall's accomplishments, we recognize that none of this would be possible without the steadfast support of our alumni, families, and friends. We respectfully ask you to consider partnering with us in a formal way to sustain and expand these opportunities for our cadets.

As we look ahead to the coming year, we recognize that our ability to provide high-quality training and developmental opportunities for our cadets depends heavily on the generosity of our supporters. Standard resources alone cannot fully cover the costs of additional field training exercises, specialized leadership labs, professional development events, and recognition for our top-performing cadets.

We respectfully ask you to consider supporting the Fighting Illini Battalion through a financial contribution at whatever level is appropriate for you. Your investment directly enhances the cadet experience: allowing us to purchase needed equipment, offset transportation and training expenses, and expand opportunities that prepare our future officers to lead Soldiers with competence and character.

On behalf of the cadre and cadets, thank you for your continued support and for helping us develop the next generation of Army leaders.


Looking Ahead

As we close out the fall semester and look toward spring training, we carry forward the lessons learned, the bonds forged, and the standard of excellence that defines the Fighting Illini Battalion. Thank you for being part of our team.

- LTC Zachary Miller

I-L-L!

Donations



[Sign in or create donor account](#)

Army ROTC: Give Now!

If you have any questions, please email the [Cash Desk](#) or call 217.244.2706.

One-Time
Recurring

\$50

\$100

\$250

\$500

\$1,000

Amount *

Select from above or enter your custom amount here

Minimum of \$5

Support Army ROTC Year-Round with a Recurring Gift!

Gift Designation *

Make your selection(s):

Select or Search for your designation

Army ROTC Alumni Fund	+
Army ROTC Cadet Endowment Fund	+
Army ROTC Scholarship Fund	+
Other (Type here where to direct your gift)	+

Can't find what you are looking for? Select "Write-In Designation" from the drop

Donation · University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign - Fighting Illini Battalion

1. Acquire a dedicated training facility or upgrade current facility (\$125K - \$250K) to expand collective PT capability
2. Establish an ROTC Scholarship Endowment of \$1Million to offset out-of-state tuition and room-and-board costs for cadets.
3. Establish a \$50K annual Cadet Development Fund to support leadership travel, professional conferences, and experiential training.
4. Modernize ROTC classroom and lab spaces (\$30K) to support simulation, wargaming, and adaptive learning environments
5. Upgrade the Cadet Lounge (\$10K) and Computer Lab (\$15K) to create a collaborative, technology-enabled learning space that supports student success and leadership development.

Invest in the Future Officers of this great Nation!!