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It’s hard to believe that the Fall semester of the school year has passed so quickly. As I write this letter, the nation is in the grips of dealing with a wave of terrorist attacks domestically as well as internationally. In response, the nation is renewing its commitment to destroy the forces of terror across the world regardless of their manifestation—i.e., ISIS/ISIL, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, etc. There are those who question our nation’s resolve and ability to defeat terrorism, but I am heartened by our incredible American history which is rife with examples of our overcoming immense obstacles domestically as well as abroad. I am also encouraged by the future of our Navy and Marine Corps as reflected in the impeccable quality of our enlisted Recruits and, closer to home, the NROTC Battalion. The 21 new Fourth Class Midshipmen are quickly adapting and adding to the exemplary quality and enthusiasm of the Battalion as they develop into naval officers.

Former NBC news anchor, Tom Brokaw, has eloquently written of the World War II generation as the “Greatest Generation” in American history. I can attest to the fact that NROTC Rochester Battalion, with their answering the call to service and commitment to excellence may give the Greatest Generation a run for their money. Their accomplishments this semester highlight that voluntary commitment. The First Class Midshipmen in the Class of 2016 have earned their career assignments in the Marine Corps and Navy. The Veterans Day Joint Service Run had the largest participation level yet. For the third consecutive year, the Battalion earned first place accolades at the Cornell University Drill and Military Excellence Competition. Although grades are not out yet, I am confident that the Midshipmen’s work ethic and dedication to their intellectual development will be reflected in their grades. In addition to the NROTC alumni leadership panel during Meliora Weekend (MW), the Battalion participated in two unique MW events this semester: the first-ever All Hands Reunion for alumni and the Veteran Grove Rededication.

The keynote speaker for the Veteran Grove rededication was Ambassador George Ward ’65. His wise words proved that NROTC Unit Rochester has produced generations of great leaders in war and peace that are worthy of the label of “greatest generation.” Each of the contributions to the naval service and our nation by the five MW leadership panelists—James Merkle ’62, George Ward ’65, Paul Stryker ’81, Gene Peters ’87, and Brian Chontosh ’00—confirmed this legacy of greatness. This legacy continues to be emulated by the current Battalion. The Midshipmen’s commitment to excellence is forged from their consistent and deliberate focus on mental, moral, and physical development. It is one thing to “want” to have the best grades in challenging classes, to achieve an outstanding/290 on the physical fitness assessment/test, to develop a fine-tuned moral compass, but it is another thing to actually achieve desired objectives. And the Midshipmen achieve their success by setting and prioritizing objectives, persisting through challenges, and overcoming inevitable obstacles. Collectively and individually, they are striving to answer the call to service in the fine tradition of the 70 classes of graduates before them from NROTC Unit Rochester.

Happy New Year!
As I sit at my desk, trying to piece together a story that could possibly sum up our Battalion of Midshipmen in a single page, I find myself asking, why does this unit mean so much to me and those I share it with? Passion is a favorite word of mine to describe our battalion.

Passionate individuals start their days early, always have their desires in mind, are always generous with what they have and excited for what’s in store, are willing to risk the most for what they truly want, devote their lives to their dreams, surround themselves with the best, are eager to share their thoughts, and are always pushing ahead full throttle or enjoying the stillness that gives inspiration.

The passion of every Midshipman and staff officer at NROTCU Rochester is what pushes each of us to make a difference and be better people every day. This culture has allowed Rochester to continually provide the United States Navy and Marine Corps with top quality officers. This Battalion of Midshipmen has enhanced the character, integrity, and lives of each person that has been a part of it.

The passion that we share for knowledge, friendship, excellence, leadership, and service has brought us together and forged a bond that lives deep within. We have faced many challenges this year such as preparing for the Cornell Drill Competition with significantly less time, striving for the highest average GPA in years, enhancing our physical fitness that far exceeds the standards, contributing more to the surrounding community, and being more proficient in the professional knowledge required for the jobs we enter. These obstacles could not be overcome without the joint determination of every member of the team. We have been creating more efficient training so that our Midshipmen can focus on their extracurricular activities including a broad range of different clubs, arts, and sports. When our Midshipmen aren’t preparing for the next assignment or exam, or leading the extra curricular programs they’re involved with, they are collectively logging hundreds of hours in community outreach and volunteering, pushing one another in our increasingly difficult physical training program, mentoring one another through the new professional knowledge curriculum, and engaging with distinguished speakers to improve their leadership. Over the past few semesters we have been cutting back on NROTC events and early mornings, and have seen a consistent increase in the overall GPA, superior physical fitness, and higher morale. I expect we will continue to exceed our goals in the future as we continue to face these challenges head on and promote the excellence of everyone that surrounds us.

The future of this battalion is in great hands with current and future Midshipmen, and I could not have asked for better support and leadership from our current BNXO, OPS, and impressive battalion Staff. I admire the character of every Midshipman that is part of this team. It has been the greatest pleasure of my life to call the members of NROTCU Rochester my friends and colleagues. I look forward to seeing my fellow Midshipmen lead our generation as we take the reins from our elders and continue to make this world a better place and making a difference for good, every where we go.

_in the words of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, “If you want to build a ship, don’t drum up people to collect wood, divide the tasks, and give orders. Rather, teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.”_
The Battalion is always looking for ways to get involved in the community. One of the ways our Midshipmen remain a presence at the University of Rochester and in the community is by being members of the Sea and Anchor Detail Club on campus. This club's goal is to promote military awareness in the community and allows Midshipmen to interact with other clubs through sponsoring events and by using Sea and Anchor Detail as a base which the community can contact if it needs volunteers for upcoming events.

In the Fall Semester, the Battalion participated in multiple Color Guard events, led by University of Rochester NROTC Midshipmen. By presenting the colors at community events, like local high school football games and Rotary meetings, the members of Color Guard have represented the Unit's 'Ever Better' attitude in reaching out to people in the community. We also had Midshipmen, like MIDN Shawler, for example, take the initiative in giving a presentation about his experience with Project GO (a study abroad language opportunity for Midshipmen) to the local Naval Reserve Officer's Mess.

Through Sea and Anchor Detail, the Battalion was able to volunteer for the second year in the Rochester MVP Healthcare Marathon. Midshipmen provided the local running program, Fleet Feet, with road guards for a marathon whose course went through the city. For the third year in a row, the Battalion was also presented the opportunity to work for the school as security for on-campus events. This fall they served as concert security for the UR Concerts Club and worked with Alumni Relations as security for this year's Meliorea Weekend. The Battalion also works with sororities and fraternities in their efforts to support men and women serving in the military by co-sponsoring a yearly gift wrapping done for the Full Circle Home Organization. The Full Circle Home Organization is a group that collects gifts on deployed military personnel's behalf and sends these gifts to families and loved ones so the men and women protecting our nation are better able to protect and take care of their families while they're overseas.

Sea and Anchor Detail has helped the Battalion reach out to our community and gain vital exposure and experience that will be essential when we enter the United States Navy and Marine Corps. It has also given the community, and those who know little about the military, a better understanding of who we are as an NROTC Unit.

Written by MIDN 2/C Baum
NROTC New Student Orientation (NSO) is designed to orient new NROTC students to the college environment and introduce the incoming freshman to military customs, courtesies and expectations, as well as prepare them for the challenges that lie ahead in NROTC. NSO also provides excellent leadership training for upper-class NROTC students who serve as orientation staff.

The upcoming 4/C have a weekend long training schedule filled with physical training, drill, and classes. New student orientation is a time for the upcoming 4/C to be accustomed to some of the military traditions and learn as much as possible in a short time span. Throughout the weekend, the 4/C are mentally and physically exhausted, and understandably so, due to the fast paced and packed weekend. It is just a start to their military and college lives.

The new 4/C kick off their weekend with an introduction by our CO, Captain Nobrega. Here they will take the oath of office for the first time signifying their journey of duty and commitment they are about to embark on. Later that day they meet their Midshipmen orientation leaders and start learning the basic military customs and courtesies. During this time, they are given several classes focusing on our naval uniforms and how to care for them. They are faced with their first challenge of rolling that perfect sleeve that eludes so many. After these classes, they are exposed to basic marching and platoon formations.

Saturday morning at 0600 you will find the freshmen running their very first physical fitness assessment of their careers. This is a great opportunity for the staff to get a reference of the readiness of the upcoming 4/C and the challenges that lie ahead. They then have a jam-packed day of classes focusing on basic military subjects and new student college briefs. The highlight of their day is the opportunity to show their leadership and ability to work with others. The orientation staff sets up a comprehensive leadership reaction course filled with obstacles and rules. The 4/C are split into groups of 4 to 6 and have to complete the mission they are given for each station in a limited time.

For many of them, this is the first time they have been away from home and placed in a completely different environment. It takes courage, commitment, and internal drive to succeed. On Sunday, the final day, they wake up again before the sun comes up and conduct a station PT session lead by the orientation leaders. Through the morning they will be getting ready for graduation and the Battalion Commander’s inspection. At graduation they are inspected by the Battalion Commander, MIDN 1/C Cooper. After the inspection they graduate from New Student Orientation, meet their chain of command and are welcomed into the family that we call NROTC Rochester.

Written by MIDN 1/C Romesser
In remembrance of the attacks on September 11, our NROTC Unit paid our respects to the victims in a number of ways.

The day of commemoration started with a three-mile run around campus singing cadences and carrying the Navy, Marine Corps and American flags. Later in the day, our Unit held a vigil on the Eastman Quad on the University of Rochester campus.

I was honored to have had the opportunity to participate in this year’s memorial with a number of other Midshipmen. I thought the event struck a nerve with so many of us in the Unit since we all have grown up with the tragedy of that day looming in the backdrop of our transition from childhood to adulthood.

Later in the day, a few Midshipmen from our Unit and Cadets from the Rochester Institute of Technology Air Force and Army Units came together to honor the victims in a joint ceremony at RIT. The vigil on the Eastman Quad and at RIT should have provided everyone with perspective.

We are all busy with our jam-packed schedules between school, NROTC obligations, and extracurricular activities. For this reason, it is easy to lose sight of the fragility of life and how quickly actions by others and ourselves change the course of life from day to day.

September 11th will forever be a day to take a step back and to reflect on what happened to our country and to think about all of the Americans who tragically lost their lives.

The act of recognizing that monumental day in our nation’s history is important to our Battalion because it is another reminder that what we do here at the University of Rochester as an NROTC Unit really matters. It is a way for our Unit to come together and to honor the victims of that terrible day in our history, but it also serves as a reminder that we need to always be vigilant and understand that every day at the University of Rochester better prepares us to be great leaders capable of dealing with adversity. We were also successful in making sure that other students on campus recognize that we should never forget those who lost their lives on that day.

Written by MIDN 3/C Kober
November 11, 2015 marks 97 years since the end of World War I, also known as Armistice Day. Now this day is set aside every year as a day to honor those men and women that have served in our nation’s armed forces. Veterans Day has become a very special event around the NROTC Rochester Unit. Every year, the NROTC Rochester Battalion of Midshipmen along with the Army and Air Force Cadets of the Rochester Institute of Technology and numerous members of the Rochester veteran community complete a cadence run to the Veterans Memorial at Highland Park in Rochester. The mission of the run is simple: joining forces with the Army and Air Force, the run helps to create a strong and positive military presence that honors those that have selflessly served to keep our country safe.

This year we had the great opportunity to speak with a few veterans from the Rochester area and thank them for the service to our nation. We honored those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country, who gave their lives in pursuit of freedom when we made the Memorial’s “Walk of Honor” through a portion of Highland Park. The trail is marked with plaques with the names of fallen Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Coastguardsmen from the Rochester area who have died defending our country during the Vietnam War. It was an honor to be able to walk through the memorial and to take the time to think about all the people, those from Rochester and beyond, who died so honorably. We, as future officers of the Navy and Marine Corps, strive to embody the same honor, courage and commitment as we join the fleet in the short years to come. Thank you to all of the brave men and women who have served our nation in the military.

Written by MIDN 3/C Ebersole
On the morning of September 26, 2015, Midshipmen and Cadets from the Army, Air Force, and Naval ROTC Battalions gathered for the Annual Joint ROTC Warrior Day Competition.

The competition was held at the Rochester Institute of Technology on Grace Watson Field. The Battalions competed in a series of events in hope of beating out the competition to take home the Warrior Day trophy. The events that the battalions competed in included: sack races, football, soccer, tug of war, kickball, and Jell-O eating. All of the Midshipmen and Cadets competed fiercely on behalf of their Battalions and demonstrated how hard each Unit works to develop physical fitness, teamwork, and leadership. The event was also a great way for these future members of the different branches to come together and learn from one another.

In football, soccer, and kickball, Army beat out the competition taking first for these three events. In tug of war, the Air Force Battalion out pulled everyone else to win this event. Navy won in the Jell-O eating contest and the sack races. In between these events the future warriors of the military enjoyed burgers and hotdogs prepared by the officers.

After all the competitions were completed, the points were tallied and a victor was declared. The RIT Army Tiger Battalion was victorious in beating the other battalions in points, and took the trophy home. Although Army won this year, the Navy Battalion is prepared to beat them and take back the Warrior Day trophy at the 2016 Warrior Day Competition.

Written by MIDN 2/C Lloyd
Being a student at the University of Rochester and an active member of NROTC has many perks. One of the many benefits is the opportunity to connect with the alumni and veterans that have made their way through the NROTC program here at the University of Rochester. Every year the university hosts an alumni weekend called Meliora Weekend. It is on this weekend, alumni from past years can relive their glory days at the University.

This year, our NROTC Unit had the privilege to host a number of veterans on a panel open to both Midshipmen and alumni alike. During this panel, attendees were able to learn about each speaker’s individual experiences in the Navy and Marine Corps. Having the ability to listen to past graduates is an excellent opportunity for Midshipmen to learn from both their mistakes and their successes. This year we had panelists who graduated from as far back as 1962 to as recent as 2000. The wide array of age groups represented provided a number of different perspectives on what the Navy and Marine Corps used to be like and how it has changed over time. Not many people have such an incredible opportunity to interact with so many knowledgeable veterans. Meliora Weekend is something we as Midshipmen look forward to every year, as it provides us with an excellent opportunity to learn and expand our understanding on what the Navy and Marine Corps has to offer.

During Meliora Weekend, NROTC Rochester also rededicated the Veteran Grove on the River Campus. We were able to honor those that have come before us and those that gave their lives in defense of this country. We were honored to have a number of veterans at the rededication, including Ambassador George Ward ’65. Ambassador Ward spoke briefly on his own experiences in the Marine Corps and the positive impact it had on his life. This ceremony was greatly appreciated by all who attended and served as an excellent reminder that while our future service to the United States will require great sacrifice, it will also mold us into better, more capable leaders.

Written by MIDN 3/C Rutledge
On November 14, 2015, the Cornell University Naval ROTC Unit hosted the annual Cornell University Invitational Drill Competition (CUIDC). It consists of two competitions, drill and athletics or MEC (Military Excellence Competition). The bar is set very high as competitive schools like Villanova University, University of Michigan, The United States Naval Academy, and The United States Military Academy all field teams. The first event was Platoon Basic Drill. Because our Unit fields an all-freshman team, it is up to the new Fourth Class Midshipmen to set the standard for NROTC Rochester. Marine Drill Instructors grade each team to the tee. At CUIDC, a team is only as strong as its weakest link. For example, an entire platoon can be spot on, but if one person messes up, the whole team loses points. There are no individual events in the drill competition as each team must be in sync with their movements. While the Drill Competition is conducted, the MEC events take place in the pool and other outside locations around campus. Various swimming, running, and overall fitness competitions are either individual or team oriented. Either way, the rest of the team is always there. Sometimes the entire Rochester Battalion is cheering on one competitor, which is highly motivating. Eventually you realize there is a higher purpose to all of this. All of the hours in the morning spent drilling pay off, but not for the trophy. NROTC Rochester won CUIDC overall, but the greatest thing taken away is not the trophy, it’s the teamwork and bonds we build throughout the preparation and competition. For the individual events, the rest of the team is there to cheer you on. At the end of the day, everyone competes not to win their event, but the entire competition for their respective schools. The most rewarding part of winning CUIDC is realizing how important a role teamwork plays in the competition. Winning made all the hours of drill worth it.

Written by MIDN 3/C Doherty
The hardest part of Cornell Military Excellence Competition (MEC) for me was having to coordinate both the swim team and our squad basic team. Swimming held the challenge of finding a fourth person for each relay given that we only had three consistent swimmers this semester. MIDN Pausley seemed to come out of nowhere with great freestyle form making him the obvious choice for our fourth in the 4x100 freestyle. The individual medley (IM) relay was another kind of challenge. Being competitive in one stroke is difficult enough, but being competitive in all four is a challenge which normally requires years of practice. Given this fact, I was almost positive we would be unable to complete the IM relay at the competition, until a week before Cornell, when MIDN Mahaney decided to step up. Mahaney had no swim experience since he was in middle school, but without question, put his name forward when he heard we were in need. It was thanks to this contribution that MIDN Clark, Delgado, Mahaney, and I were able to not only compete, but take second in the IM relay, ultimately leading to our placing overall in the swim events.

At the same time I was trying to deal with our swim team issues, I was learning how to call cadence, use a sword, and be in command of a squad. MIDN Jackman had, earlier in the semester, asked who wanted to lead the squad drill competition team and my name was not the only one considered. MIDN Romesser expressed interest in leading the squad, and we also considered asking MIDN Cooper given his extensive experience in drill. Both MIDN Romesser and Cooper were clearly more qualified than me, and yet both decided they would rather give me the opportunity to gain more experience as a younger Midshipman. It was a little intimidating at first to be leading a group consisting of all upperclassmen, but when our practices began I received nothing but support from them. Both MIDN Romesser and Cooper were incredible teachers and got me up to speed within our first few practices so we could focus on fine tuning our drill card. In the end we took fourth (behind three teams with perfect scores), but given that we were competing against 18 other teams and still won Cornell overall, it was difficult to be disappointed.

I would be lying if I said I was not a little upset at our results in the drill portion of Cornell. It was hard to see so much hard work go unrewarded when none of our teams even placed, but at the same time I was proud of the way we competed. I had the pleasure of seeing all of our drill teams compete, and between MIDN Doherty staying calm, cool, and collected with a broken flag and still looking sharp; squad having our best run-through to date; and trick looking awesome and crazy complicated as always, I am proud to be able to say I am from NROTCU Rochester.
MIDN 3/C Bova

Before arriving at college, I was quite ambitious. I decided to join the NROTC program and lacrosse program all while being a full time student. At the time, I did not understand the challenge that was ahead of me. NROTC events take place five days a week, sometimes more. Lacrosse practice and lifts happen four to five days a week during the fall and six times a week during the season. I quickly realized how crucial time management was in order to be successful. It is extremely helpful to make lists and fill in a calendar so I don't forget the day assignments are due, the days I have tests, or when I have to be at an NROTC event or lacrosse. Even when I plan it all out, I still have to miss a lacrosse practice for NROTC and an occasional leadership lab for a lacrosse game. Being a part of the team is important to me, so when I miss lacrosse practices or can't be at NROTC, I feel guilty. The guilt stems from my desire to be a part of a team and be able to actively participate. I just have to keep reminding myself that I am doing the best I can to balance everything and be fair to each program. Having a good relationship with my company officer, Captain Quezada, and my lacrosse coach, Coach McGuigan, helps as well. They both understand the amount of stress I can be under and the pressure to make being a part of both programs work. When they understand their program is not the only one I am a part of, it makes dealing with the stresses and schedule issues easier to deal with. Balancing my schedule is not the only thing that is important to manage; taking care of my body is also vital and difficult to do. I have to make sure I get all of the nutrients I need, an adequate amount of sleep and rest, and make sure I stretch enough. Being a part of NROTC and lacrosse does not make taking care of myself easy since I am left with no extra time. There have been many nights where I have gotten little to no sleep, and long days where I may have forgotten a meal. I can help prevent injuries and keep myself from getting sick if I take care of my body to the best of my ability. I love being a part of RIT's lacrosse program and the NROTC program at Rochester. I have met many genuine people. They have taught me significant lessons and have inspired me in multiple ways. The experiences and rewards I obtain make every obstacle worth it.

MIDN 4/C Jordan

What are you planning to do in college? A question most high school seniors have had to answer a countless number of times. Whenever I gave my answer, that I wanted to major in mechanical engineering, play club sports, and do NROTC, I always got a response of skepticism. People did not think I would have time to do all of those things. Over halfway through my first semester in college, however, I am happy to report that it can be done, and it can be done while still living a happy college life with family and friends. Each program I am a part of is extremely understanding of my other commitments. A great example is that this semester I had a conflict with mechanical engineering workshop and naval science lab. The university took a video recording of the workshop which enabled me to go to naval science lab and get all the info I needed by watching the recording later. This kind of consideration gave me a sense that the university is really looking out for the welfare of their students. Also, my hockey coach understands the commitment necessary for NROTC and has never given me negative feedback when I have to miss a game for an NROTC event. As for NROTC, the officers constantly emphasize that our job as Midshipmen is to be good students. A high level of commitment is expected from Midshipmen, but the Unit recognizes that academics are first and foremost. At the beginning of each semester, Midshipmen compile their syllabi to find when exams conflict with NROTC events. Whenever an exam overlaps with an NROTC event, Midshipmen submit a chit form in order to be excused from the NROTC event that day. This way, when the exam does come along, the Unit already knows about it and it doesn’t pose a problem. Overall, I have been very happy with how I have been able to have both a high level of military training, and a civilian college experience. I plan to continue to stay involved and play club baseball in the spring semester.
MIDN 3/C Kober

I was told going into college that you can be successful at two out of three things; academics, having a social life and managing to get sleep. Adding NROTC into the mix is an extra caveat. One major sacrifice I make with my time is my social life. Playing soccer naturally becomes my social life because most of my best friends are on the team. Sometimes it gets difficult being on the team but we all get through it with each other’s support. Getting a big win over a ranked opponent or a cross-town rival makes it all worth it in the end. I would never be willing to give up being on the team because soccer has been such a huge part of my life for as long as I can remember. It is something that bonds me to my parents who have sacrificed so much for me to be able to play; it bonds me to my teammates and other athletes here at the University of Rochester; and it also bonds me to players all over the country who I have played with and against. Soccer is a community to me just as being in the Navy is a community that I am being integrated into.

Moreover, the work I put into NROTC is not as much of a time crunch as one would think considering most of what we do is done in the morning before I would normally wake up. For this reason, the second major sacrifice I have to make is the amount of sleep I get. In season especially, I stay extremely focused on my schoolwork because I know that every moment that I get off topic in the library or spend on Facebook doubles as less time I get to sleep. At the same time, it is apparent that (with little sleep) my ability to perform in the classroom, on the soccer field and in NROTC-based events declines severely. Overall, I know where my priorities lie and what is important. I know that I will never be a professional soccer player but that my efforts in NROTC will dictate the rest of my life in my career. If soccer ever came in the way of my success in this program then I would consider choosing to leave my team. For now, I am enjoying the experience I am gaining being able to balance everything while doing what I love on both teams that I am a part of. In a year, I have noticed a huge difference in my ability to manage my time effectively, how to prioritize and how to make beneficial decisions. I am confident that these skills, in addition to my maintenance of fitness, will assist me in my career as a naval officer.

MIDN 4/C Phinney

This past fall season I had the privilege of being on the varsity cross country team while also being a part of NROTC. I have enjoyed competitive running for a very long time and hoped to continue in college. My desire to run in college is partially what brought me to the University of Rochester. This season, I was able to run for my team and achieve some of my own personal running goals, while still meeting my NROTC obligations. The combination of NROTC and a varsity sport is certainly challenging, and it’s difficult to watch my friends who have a little more freedom with their schedule. Even though it is not easy, I could not imagine college without either of these activities, both of which I really enjoy. I find that being on the team and being in NROTC actually complement each other very well. Cross country gives me a chance to decompress from the stresses that come with NROTC. Running also meshes very nicely with NROTC because of the flexible practice times and the fact that my sport prepares me to do well when we run the Navy physical readiness test. I have grown to really enjoy spending time with my NROTC and cross-country teammates, and college without them would not be nearly as enjoyable. I have multiple personal goals I hope to achieve in both NROTC and cross-country. For example, I’d like to run below 26:00 minutes in the 8k and below 9:40 in the steeplechase runs. As long as I work hard to balance these obligations, I can continue to strive to accomplish these goals.
This past summer, I had the unique opportunity of studying abroad for nine weeks through an organization called Project Global Officer (GO). Project GO is a DoD initiative meant to send Cadets and Midshipmen abroad to acquire a foreign language proficiency. The program is unique in that there are no requirements for prior experience with a language - even beginners can apply and receive scholarships abroad. After my summer cruise training aboard the USS HIGGINS, I went directly to Beijing, China.

While in China, I attended class five days a week, four hours every day. One of those hours was with a personal tutor. However, the program offered so much more than school. I lived with host family; I attended several lectures at the very prestigious Beijing University on things like Chinese history, economics, and environmental issues; I explored the city on my own time; and on weekends, the program sponsored trips to famous cultural sites around Beijing. One weekend we even took a train to Xi’an, the ancient capital of China, to see the Terracotta Warriors and Mt. Hua, one of the five Mystic Mountains.

To sum up, my Project GO trip gave me invaluable perspective from another culture, increased my language proficiency, and introduced me to friends in China and our nation’s military that I will keep for the rest of my life. If you are considering applying for the program, I highly recommend it.

Written by MIDN 2/C Shawler

Over the summer I spent a total of ten weeks in East Africa, Tanzania studying Swahili, sustainable engineering, and anthropology. It was initially nerve-wracking and exciting traveling for more than 24 hours and arriving in a foreign country with people I recently met on the airplane.

The biggest part of the trip was the homestay with the Maasai. The Maasai are pastoralists that live in huts constructed out of cow manure, mud and sticks. They make their income by herding ten hours a day in a savanna, with no water, and maybe masala chai for breakfast. My friend and I were there only for a few days, but it was an experience I will never forget. I had an opportunity to herd with them for the day, and the ‘no water’ got to me after six hours. I underestimated how powerful the equatorial sun was, and how they have learned to adapt to the constant heat. The nights were equally enduring, my homestead had a bedbug infestation and we were bitten hundreds of times. The experience overall was grounding, but if I had the opportunity to visit my homestay mom again, I would.

I was challenged academically and morally while in Tanzania. I saw the political arena of Zanzibar and mainland Tanzania and we were exposed to a lot of concepts that were taboo for many of us. We debated capitalism, socialism, polygamy, religion, their education system, population growth and so forth, but what made it stick was that we physically experienced these problems. We lived with polygamous families, we interacted with their education system and we saw the humanitarian dilemmas posed by population growth. We had to reflect on each topic and learn to face the challenge of Tanzania as a developing country. The biggest takeaway from the entire trip was that they endure adversity every day, but they also have extremely strong ties with their community and remain optimistic.

Written by MIDN 1/C Stalzer
Different Perspectives

MIDN 1/C Clark

Looking back on my experience in the Battalion as a Fourth Class Midshipman, there are a few differences in the overall atmosphere compared to what it is like from a first class perspective. As a fourth class, I did not see the ‘behind the scenes’ work that went into running the Battalion. The current upper-class Midshipmen have fostered qualities such as communication, camaraderie, and coordination to help facilitate the inner workings of the Battalion.

The Battalion seems to be more of a team than it had been in the past. I believe the team environment is more cohesive because the communication is better. Communication is imperative to facilitate the working order of a common multifaceted goal. As upperclassmen, we have more transparent communication with one another than we had when we were Fourth Class Midshipmen. This improves camaraderie significantly. The staff now suggests ideas on how to make a certain aspect of the Battalion better even if it does not necessarily involve that individual staff member’s billet. This may not have been well received with the staff four years ago. There is more coordination with the individual parts of the Battalion working more efficiently together. Rather than one leadership billet taking full responsibility for a task, the staff billets incorporate input from each other.

There were some orders or tasks that seemed redundant or irrelevant, but as a first class I now see that these tasks are all part of the training. As commissioning approaches, I am grateful for the training opportunities and experiences with which I have been blessed through this Battalion.

MIDN 4/C Phinney

Upon entering the Battalion, I was extremely excited, but at the same time I had never been more scared. In my first few hours of NSO, I kept hearing over and over again just how hard college is and that definitely contributed to my fear of whether I could handle all of the expectations. After being here for a few months, I have realized that NROTC is not easy, but with enough motivation anything can be accomplished.

Even though NROTC seems to be giving me more challenges than I have ever been faced with, it also gives me just as much motivation to overcome these challenges. As Midshipmen, we have a number of reasons to do our best to overcome these challenges. For example, seeing our upperclassmen hold billets and leadership positions is motivating because it gives us very real goals to strive for. I am motivated to do my best so eventually I may hold a desirable leadership position or billet. Recently we found out which service assignments the 1/C earned and that was an extremely motivating moment because we got to see how NROTC accomplishments translate into real rewards and our futures in the fleet.

I must say I am really looking forward to these next four years. Going on cruises and having a more active role in the Battalion is certainly something for which I am very excited. Although the simplicity of being a 4/C does have its perks, I’m motivated to take on a bigger role in the Battalion. I also look forward to the challenge of academics, running track and cross country for Rochester, and making lifelong friends. I know it’s a long and challenging road ahead of me, but I’m definitely proud to say I am a Midshipman at NROTC Rochester.
Lieutenant Commander Joshua Thompson, USN has been serving in the US Navy for over 12 years. After attending the University of Notre Dame, he was designated a Naval Aviator in Kingsville, Texas in March of 2006. LCDR Thompson served as a pilot on deployments aboard the USS Kitty Hawk (CV-63) and USS George Washington (CVN-73) with the DAMBUSTERS of VFA-195 where he flew F/A-18C HORNETS. He continued his service with the No. 617 DAMBUSTERS at RAF Lossiemouth, Scotland where he flew GR4 Tornado aircraft as part of an officer exchange program between the Royal Air Force and the United States. LCDR Thompson’s personal awards include the Navy Commendation Medal, Air Medal (x2), Navy and Marine Corps Achievement medal (x2) and various service ribbons. In the Fall of 2009, LCDR Thompson was nominated for the Wesley McDonald Junior Officer of the Year Award for leadership and excellence in the US Navy’s Strike/Fighter Community.

Lieutenant Commander Thompson has been serving as the Aviation Officer and Delta Company Officer at the University of Rochester NROTC Unit for almost three years. LCDR Thompson is an Assistant Professor of Naval Science for the Introduction to Naval Science and Weapon Systems courses at the University of Rochester. He is well known for his unparalleled dedication to the Midshipmen and his love for sharing aviation videos. LCDR Thompson plans to continue his service after leaving NROTC Rochester in the Washington, DC area serving as Deputy Mission Commander of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA), Open Skies Division. LCDR Thompson, we are so grateful for your devotion to this Unit and to all of the Midshipmen of the Battalion. We wish you the best of luck in your future commands and can’t wait to join you in the fleet!

Written by MIDN 3/C Ebersole
COMMO’s Favorite Moments
In December, the University of Rochester NROTC Program came to the end of another incredible semester. From excellence in the classroom, to stellar performance on the PT field, and taking the gold at the Cornell Drill competition, there has been a huge amount of success to reflect on. I hope that everyone has enjoyed this fall semester's edition of the Ironclad. Please feel free to contact the Unit with any questions you have! Thank you all for the continued support you provide our Battalion; we wouldn’t be able to do it without you!

-MIDN 3/C Emily Ebersole, USNR
Communications Officer CPO, Naval ROTC Unit Rochester

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