

University of North Carolina Army ROTC

Fall 2019 Newsletter

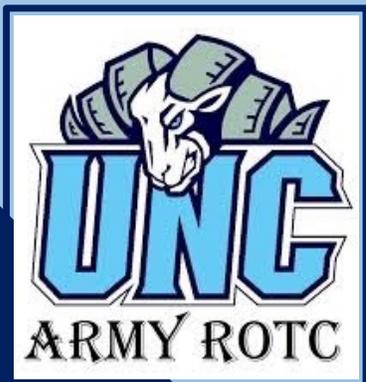


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PMS Greeting



As another term draws to a close, it is inspiring to reflect on everything the Tar Heel Battalion has accomplished. Tar Heel Cadets have inspired and influenced themselves and others to accomplish any assigned mission and consistently improve the organization. Most notably, in recognition of demonstrated excellence, the UNC Army ROTC program achieved a #3 ranking of the 38 programs in the Brigade and was designated a finalist for the MacArthur Award for Excellence!

Cadets continued to display competence and commitment on a daily basis through their ROTC activities, making full use of tremendous opportunities for further professional development. Since the last update, Tar Heel Cadets have developed through experiences such as Airborne, Air Assault, CTLT, CPDT, CULP, ProjectGo, internships, and many others. Cadets distinguished themselves at Advanced Camp, with over half earning “Outstanding” or “Excellent” ratings and over a third of the senior Cadets were recognized by USACC as Distinguished Military Graduates and two were among the top 10% of all Cadets nationally! Once again, the Ranger Challenge team excelled at the Brigade competition by finishing 4th overall (of 44 teams), the third straight year with a Top 5 finish. The Tar Heel color guard continued to reliably and professionally support the university and local communities, participating in over a dozen separate on and off campus events this semester.

Demonstrating character and dedication to Army Values, Tar Heel Cadets continued their selfless service by providing over 800 hours of service to the greater UNC community. Whether hosting a community blood drive, organizing the 9/11 Memorial Run, hosting the Alumni Tailgate, or participating in Military Appreciation sports events, Tar Heel Cadets are projecting a positive image and visibly demonstrating the spirit of the Battalion.

Heels also thrived through four months of tough and realistic training this term. Cadet experiences included long road marches in triple digit heat and Combat Fitness testing with frosty equipment; sunrise runs past the Old Well and muddy patrol bases near Battle Park; dangling from 35 foot obstacles and swimming in full gear in the pool. Throughout it all, Cadets impressively demonstrate resilience and grit as they determinedly enhance their leadership skills.

This Battalion is undoubtedly prospering and succeeding in all areas. I am truly grateful for the opportunity to witness Tar Heel Cadets as they develop into true Army professionals. Hark the Sound, Go Heels!

Advanced Camp

Each summer, Cadets travel from their respective schools to meet at Fort Knox, Kentucky to complete one of their final commissioning requirements: Advanced Camp. This entails 38 intense days of summer, spent completing a wide range of fitness and skill based training events. The first couple weeks of camp are spent in the barracks, completing paperwork, taking classes on skills such as land navigation, call for fire, and range safety. Cadets take day trips to the range to qualify on pop-ups, learn how to safely complete a buddy team live fire rush, and practice weapons cleaning and familiarization exercises. During down time, cadets are typically preparing for the next day or catching up on sleep.

The back half of camp is spent in the field as cadets take turns running through different platoon and squad level leadership positions for various practice tactical missions. Teamwork and leadership skills are put to the test, as everyone must work well together to successfully complete a tactical mission. Cadets sleep in patrol bases most nights, and come back to a bivouac every third or fourth night to shower and swap out old, dirty uniforms. Eventually, everyone returns to the barracks, itching to make it through graduation to be reunited with friends and family.

Typically, I am not the type to have fun running lanes in tactical environments, but I actually had a lot of fun in the field at advanced camp. I was lucky to have a squad of incredibly knowledgeable yet laid back Cadets, which helped make daily monotonous tasks almost fun. I feel that Advanced Camp serves as a crucially important bonding experience between Cadets from all across the states, giving us the opportunity to learn from each other as we prepare to commission into the United States Army as Second Lieutenants.



CULP

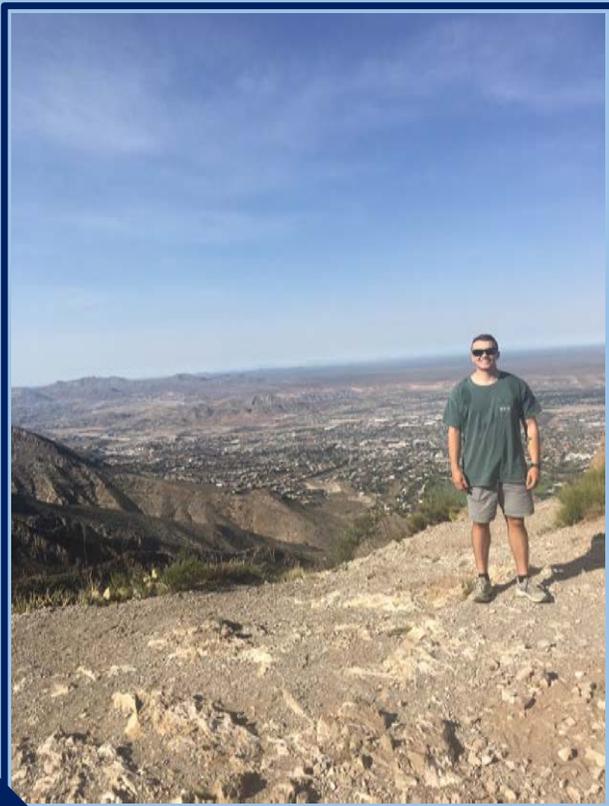


This past summer I was given the opportunity to travel to Guatemala through the Cultural Understanding and Leadership Program. During my month in Guatemala, I was able to work with cadets in the Guatemalan military academy. I communicated with Guatemalan cadets to conduct military training and develop positive and beneficial relationships between cadets. I developed a better understanding of what it takes to work with a foreign military and was able to improve my understanding and use of the Spanish language. When we were not at the Guatemalan military academy we were able to travel to various culturally significant locations in Guatemala. This allowed us to gather knowledge about the history of Guatemala and how the culture has changed and grown into what it is today. This trip was highly beneficial because of the both cultural and military experience that it provided us. During this time I was able to see and experience things that I never thought I would have the opportunity to. Upon returning I feel that I have a greater appreciation for what it takes to lead cadets, understand other cultures, utilize language skills, and adapt to diverse environments.

CTLT



I had the opportunity to do CTLT at Ft. Bliss in El Paso, Texas this summer after completion of Advanced Camp. I was with Headquarters and Headquarters Company (HHC), 47th Brigade Support Battalion (47th BSB), 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team (2ABCT), 1st Armored Division (1AD). I spent 3 weeks with this unit in August of this year and while I was there I shadowed the Executive Officer of the HHC, 47th BSB. During my time at CTLT, I did PT with the unit every morning and then worked in the office and aided the 1st Lieutenant I was assigned to with all of his daily tasks. I was able to attend Battalion level staff meetings, maintenance meetings, as well as listen in to the weekly company training meeting. I also got to do a lot of actual work that an XO does, such as build Troop to Seat rosters for the upcoming rotation for 2/1 AD through the National Training Center (NTC) to prepare them for the deployment to Poland in February of 2020. My Company Commander gave me the opportunity to plan and lead Company PT for HHC in my first week at CTLT. I had to prepare my plan and then create a CONOP (Concept of the Operation) and brief it to my Commander. My favorite part of my CTLT experience was being able to work with Soldiers, both junior enlisted and senior NCOs alike. I learned just as much from the junior enlisted that I did from the NCOs in the 47th BSB. In my off time on weekends, I was able to go out and see El Paso, get some amazing Mexican food, and hike some great trails. Overall, CTLT provided me with an eye opening experience of the life of an XO in an active duty unit, and about life on active duty in general. I highly recommend every cadet compete for a slot for CTLT, because it will teach you things you don't learn anywhere else other than the active duty Army.



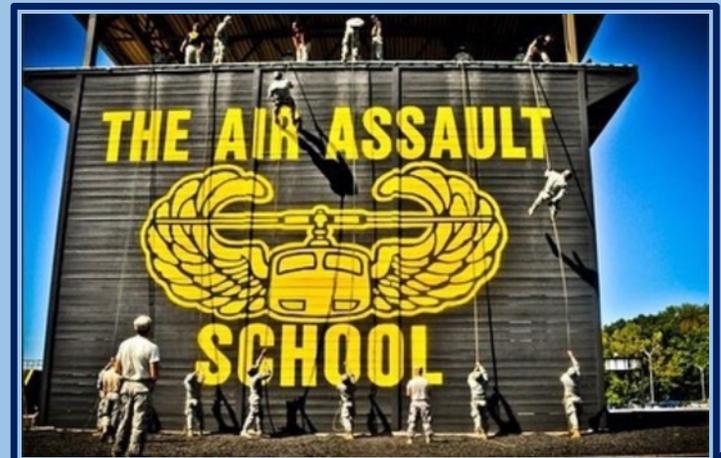
Airborne



This summer I had the wonderful opportunity to earn the coveted silver wings of a U.S. Army Paratrooper. Airborne School was a unique experience for me, as my prior Infantry service had been within a mechanized capacity as a “dirty leg”. Ever since I was sixteen years old, I had wanted the opportunity to go to Airborne School and had tried to attend multiple times while in active duty. I found going to Airborne as a Cadet to be a personal irony, but despite the long wait it was definitely worth it. When I first arrived back to Ft. Benning, I was anxious yet excited to see the 250ft Jump Towers marking the schools training Area of Operations. Ground Week wasn’t quite what I expected it to be. We started off by jumping out of the 30ft towers while incorporating some of the basic fundamentals of the Parachute Landing Fall. Moving into Tower Week, we moved to testing out of PLFs on the Swing lander training and Suspended Harness and by the end of Tower Week, I was felt that I was ready for Jump Week. In my opinion, the best part about Jump Week were the actual jumps themselves. Once the first aircraft arrived, we would be told to stand up and move out by chalk to the plane. I remember being thrilled for my first jump as the reality set in that I was actually about to jump from a perfectly good aircraft. I was fortunate that I was one of the lighter guys and usually ended up loading the aircraft towards the rear. Which meant that I was normally either the number two or three man for most of my jumps. I remember that after we hooked up and got our static lines ready I couldn’t help but look out the door watching the ground anticipating the time to jump. Once the jumpmasters shouted “GREEN LIGHT, GO!”, my training carried me out of the door and the next thing I knew, I was falling towards the earth. The comforting shock of the parachute opening was a great feeling as I drifted towards the ground and prepared to land. The first landing was probably my best as I caught a partial thermal and landed pretty softly compared to some of the other jumpers. After 5 successful jumps, my father pinned on my silver wings, and I became a paratrooper.

Air Assault

This past June I attended the Sabalauski Air Assault School at the 101st Airborne Division of Fort Campbell. The goal of this school is “To train Soldiers in Air Assault operations, sling-load operations, and rappelling... to make maximum use of helicopter assets.” The training consisted of three phases, and each presented its own challenges. The first phase was largely physical, including the obstacle course, 6 mile ruck, and some basic testing. The next phase focused on sling loads and was extremely hands on. Finally, I completed a 12 mile ruck and a series of different rappels. Rappelling from the Blackhawk was by far my favorite, but it lasted only a few seconds. I valued both the training and meeting all the other air assault students during my time. Cadets, officers, and even Naval Academy midshipmen came together to graduate from this Air Assault program.



Project Go

Over the summer I had the amazing opportunity to participate in a Project GO program. Project GO is an initiative created for Cadets and Midshipmen to enhance intercultural fluency, language skills, and regional knowledge for various locations and cultures around the world. I can say from experience that Project GO creates much more well-rounded Cadets who are better equipped and prepared to become successful officers. Examples of locations for Project GO programs include Brazil, East Africa, and Latvia to name a few. I participated in the program to East Africa which included the countries of Tanzania and Kenya. While I was there, I had unforgettable and irreplaceable experiences in cities, national parks, and villages of East Africa while at the same time earning 12 college credits towards my degree and learning Swahili. I was lucky enough to share this experience with another Tar Heel Battalion Cadet, Lauren Shappell. In her words, "Project GO has enriched my life beyond what I thought was possible. I've spent two summers with the East Africa Field School – not sure how I got so lucky – in Tanzania and Kenya. Through this program, I've studied socioeconomic and environmental problems, their interplay with people's daily lives, the different kinship systems between the Maasai, Luo, Luhya, the impacts of colonialism, and how each of us can make a difference in our daily comings and goings through being mindful consumers! The trip broadened my worldview and allowed me the opportunity to see beautiful and interesting places such as the Serengeti, Ngorongoro Crater, Stone Town, and Kibera. I also studied and learned a decent amount of Swahili through the trips, professors, and my daily interactions. I'd love to go back one day soon! I encourage every cadet to take advantage of these Project Go opportunities- just throw an application in the ring! You never know when an opportunity might change your life and worldview!" From CDT Shappell's testament, it is clear to see what an amazing and eye-opening experience this program is. All cadets are encouraged to apply for Project GO and share these same experiences!



Week of Welcome

Week of Welcome began August 12 and officially kicked off UNC Army ROTC's 2019-2020 school year. Over a dozen new cadets gathered first time to meet each other, current ROTC cadets, and the Cadre. The week was a blur of power points, learning new names, and seeing new faces. While it seemed hectic at first, the new cadets soon became indoctrinated into the program. First cadets met Lt. Colonel Snow as he briefed the parents and new cadets about the UNC ROTC program. Cadets learned about what to expect as they began the journey that is Reserve Officer Training Corps.

Throughout the week, Cadets learned the basics of ROTC life. We were assigned ACU's and PT uniforms. Standard customs and courtesies, such as when to salute and how to stand at attention were also learned. While at first it seemed like a lot information was thrown their way, the new cadets quickly adapted with the help from older, more experienced ROTC cadets.

Perhaps the highlight of Week of Welcome was the Carolina Adventures Ropes Course. It was the last event of welcome week, and the Cadets were required to go through a ropes course that helped build trust in each other. In the middle of the course, disaster struck as a thunderstorm appeared, temporarily hindering activity outside. When the storm faded, the ropes course continued. It consisted of a high ropes obstacle course, a 'flying squirrel lift,' and a high swing. Each event relied on the trust of each other to be successful. To quote CDT Isaiah Jackson, "The ropes course helped people who barely knew each other build trust." Overall, Week of Welcome was a great way for new cadets to meet each other, and was a success.



9/11 Memorial Run

A cool, crisp Wednesday morning at Kenan Memorial Stadium, to some it was just another Wednesday. However, to the American people that cool, crisp morning was the 18th anniversary of 9/11. 18 years ago to the day everything changed. That day would change not only the United States, but the world forever. Army ROTC remembers that day, always. That is why the 9/11 Memorial Run we conduct annually means so much to us. While running up and down each and every step at Kenan Memorial Stadium might seem like a daunting task, with the nationalism inspired by commemorating 9/11, each step left us feeling stronger than the last. The morning only got brighter with the presence of multiple UNC sports teams attending, including Men's Lacrosse and the Swimming and Diving Team. Also in attendance were UNC's Air Force and Navy ROTC, Duke's and NC Central's AROTC, a number of veterans, as well as fully fitted firefighters. So, as the air horn sounded and multitudes of people began to run, we were all brought together by one idea; a country united in remembrance of what we have lost. After the stairs had been finished, and goodbyes had been said, all participants parted ways, but we all left feeling proud of our nation and full of love for those we had lost. The Memorial Run exemplifies how UNC honors those who died and those who tirelessly worked to save the affected people. As firefighters climbed the stairs, followed by future military Officers, and sports teams, and civilians, a scene was set to remember the loss of life and the reemergence of a strong, united American people. The UNC AROTC puts on this event annually to remember those we lost and the tragic events of the past. It shows that no matter what obstacles this country faces, we will overcome it together and become one country



Fall FTX



Early in the afternoon on Friday, September 27th, Cadets loaded onto a bus to Camp Butner for the weekend-long Fall FTX. Most of Friday afternoon was spent in classroom settings, teaching new cadets basic field skills and preparing them for the more physically demanding events to come. The majority of new Cadets experienced their first patrol base Friday night, prior to a 02:45 wake-up Saturday morning. Upon the early wakeup, Cadets set out on their first ruck march of the weekend, covering roughly six miles. After breakfast, Cadets took part in several stations that gave them more hands-on training. The stations included an EST range, grenade familiarity, and high and low crawl practice. Following a two mile ruck march and chow, Cadets pushed themselves and each other on the obstacle course at Camp Butner. After enjoying the obstacle course, Cadets prepared for their iteration of day land navigation. The results for day land navigation were a positive sign for both the MS3s preparing for camp next summer and for the younger cadets, who gained important experience. After dinner Saturday night, Cadets were challenged with a shortened iteration of night land navigation. While this may have been the most difficult event of the weekend, it required Cadets to trust in their abilities and have confidence in themselves. At the end of a very long and demanding Saturday, everyone was rewarded with a full night of sleep to refuel for the last stretch of FTX. At 05:30 Sunday morning, Cadets woke up and began the final round robin stations. The MS4s led stations that simulated several of the events that take place at Advanced Camp. These included a Grenade Course rehearsal, Call for Fire familiarity, and Tactical Combat Casualty Care practice. The Fall FTX accomplished everything that the Cadre and Cadet Staff had intended it to. Cadets learned vital field skills, gained experience and confidence, and challenged themselves at every opportunity.

Inter-Service Meet



On Wednesday, October 23, 2019 the four branches of UNC's ROTC program met on Hooker Fields to compete against one another in several friendly competitions. This is an annual event to help build moral amongst the individual service branches, as well as the Tarheel Battalion as a whole. Points were awarded to the winning service branch of each event, in order to award an overall winner at the end of the meet.

Each event consisted of one team from each branch of service. The Inter-Service meet started off inside with the fireteam push-up and sit-up event, followed by the max pull-up event. The competition was then taken outside onto Hooker Fields where the team relay race occurred. Following the relay race, Cadets began the Flag football and Ultimate frisbee tournament. UNC's Army Battalion walked away with the overall victory at the end of the Inter-Service meet. Many Cadets felt that this was a meaningful experience: "I really liked how we were able to come out here and cheer on each other, all the while getting to meet Cadets from the other branches. It felt like we were a team."

- CDT Brad Barlow

Overall, the Inter-Service meet was a great opportunity for the UNC ROTC program to come together as a whole in friendly competition. Win or lose, the Inter-Service meet is a good time to build comradery amongst the different service branches, and even within the branches themselves. It is an event that is looked forward to by all Cadets every year.

Army Ten Miler

The Army Ten Miler is an annual 10 mile race held in Washington D.C. For many years the cadets of the Tar Heel Battalion have constructed a team to compete in the race. The cadets train hard to improve their fitness and run times leading up to the race. This year the team consisted of Cadets Karimi, Di Ruzza, Lewis, Collins, Sorensen, Christensen, Reinisch, and Burns. The race not only served as an opportunity for cadets to push their physical limits and challenge themselves, but also as an opportunity for bonding between cadets. The cadets look forward to this trip yearly for the memories and relationships that they form with their close friends in the battalion. Furthermore, the event is inspiring to cadets as its participants come from all over the nation to compete. This is truly a testament to community environment that the United States Army creates, and excites cadets to involve themselves in this community in their upcoming careers upon graduation. In the end cadets performed exceptionally well at the race and use this exceptional opportunity as inspiration and as a standard for future physical challenges.



Ranger Challenge

From October 18th-20th, the UNC Ranger Challenge team competed against the 48 other teams from 4th Brigade in Fort Pickett, Virginia. The team trained extremely hard in the upcoming months, with many early morning rucks, runs, and skill circuits. Through all this training, they created a very strong team dynamic. The strong bond the team displayed help keep moral high throughout the competition. The competition consisted of 14 events, a 3-mile run and a total of 15 miles of rucking. These events included an obstacle course, functions check on an M4, tactical combat casualty care (TCCC), and map reading. The team represented the battalion exceptionally well, finishing with 4th place and earning two streamers for having the fastest times in applying a tourniquet and calling up a 9-Line MEDEVAC. They also received a 100% on the written test! We are very proud of our team, and look forward to next year's competition.



Color Guard

The Tar Heel Battalion Color Guard team serves as one of the most important public representations in the battalion. Our Color Guard members are held to a high standard as they are trusted with the responsibility of carrying our nation's colors proudly and professionally at events including ceremonies, sports games, and UNC commencement. All who volunteer must train for at least a month before they are selected to participate in events. Our dedicated Cadets are also required meet every week to practice and refine their skills so they are always prepared and ready to perform. Our Color Guard team is commanded by CDT. Colleen Burns. She organizes events, and oversees the training of new members which is led by her captain, CDT. Zachary Hatch, and assistant captain, CDT. Sydney Downes. This year, Color Guard has already been invited to participate in fifteen events with more to come in the following semester. CDT. Hatch, MSII, reflected on his experience, "Color Guard is an excellent way to build relationships between the Battalion and the University and community."



Military Appreciation Game



On November 2, 2019, the North Carolina Tar Heels took on the Virginia Cavaliers at Kenan Stadium for the annual Military appreciation football game. To celebrate this, the UNC Tar Heel Battalion organized a tailgate at the campus ROTC Armory, and then attended the game as a Battalion.

Cadets, Cadre, and many family and friends of the program attended the tailgate in the several hours preceding the game, and it was a great success. The fresh-grilled hamburgers and hotdogs left none unsatisfied, and everyone enjoyed the conversation and camaraderie of the others attending. Before the Battalion left for the stadium, LTC Snow gave a speech about all the impressive advances the Tar Heel Battalion had made in the past year. The Battalion ranked very highly in the Brigade overall, and did similarly well nationally amongst programs from other schools of comparable size. This success owes itself to the ideas and leadership of the Cadre, the dedication and resilience of Cadets in the program, and the support of their friends and families.

After the tailgate, the Battalion moved to the stadium and settled into its assigned seats right next to the home end zone. Certain Cadets were afforded the opportunity to go onto the field and watch the game from there, performing push-ups every time UNC scored to equal the amount of cumulative points they had scored. Being on the field and watching the game up close was an incredible experience, but the most inspiring part of the game occurred when a retired Special Forces Soldier who had lost a leg in combat was brought out to be recognized for his selfless service and personal courage. His story of bravery and sacrifice elicited an enormous round of applause from the crowd, and gave Cadets a stellar model for shaping their own values and mentality for military careers in the near future. According to Cadet Mitch Sorensen, “the appearance of the wounded Special Forces Veteran moved the whole stadium and brought light to the reality of the sacrifices our Military makes for our country.” At the end of the day, the Battalion had a great day tailgating and watching the game, and learned a sobering lesson on sacrifice and gratitude.

Leadership Lab



Each Wednesday, Cadets of the Tarheel Training Company participated in Leadership lab to develop their tactical and leadership skills in preparation for Advanced Camp. Cadets began the semester developing their individual soldier skills and practicing individual movement techniques such as the high crawl and buddy rush. In the classroom, MSIII's taught the Tarheel Company basic tactics, tactical combat casualty care, and radio communications. Cadets also enhanced their map reading skills, learned how to read a compass, and created land navigation route plans. Later in the semester, cadets were able to apply the skills they learned by conducting missions at Battle Park. MSIII Cadets learn to develop plans and think critically as they led the MSI's and II's through rehearsals and executions of ambushes, attacks, and reconnaissance. CDT Parker, MSIII, commented on his favorite part of lab, "During this week's lab, rehearsals helped our squad better understand and prepare for the Movement to Contact lane." Ultimately, Leadership Lab has developed cadets' confidence and ability to work as a team.



SMP



I started Army ROTC at UNC way behind the curve. I began coming to PT, class, and lab without a scholarship or the prospect of one, because I had not paid close enough attention to the application deadline during my senior year of high school. I assumed I would have to compete for a two or three-year scholarship instead of getting all four years paid for, as I'd hoped I would as an out-of-state student.

Luckily for me, the National Guard recruiter talked to me about the Simultaneous Membership Program (SMP) and I was immediately hooked. I was told I had the opportunity to attend Basic Combat Training (BCT) and join a National Guard Unit, gaining valuable experience and incurring time in service benefits while enrolled in ROTC. In addition, I qualified for in-state tuition benefits, bringing my costs down significantly. On top of that, I would receive monthly drill pay, active duty pay for BCT, and tuition assistance that completely covered the rest of the tuition costs I had.

My experience with SMP began with my enlistment soon after the start of freshman year. Soon enough, after months of drilling, summer had come, and with it my 10 weeks at BCT. I dreaded attending BCT because of all the horror stories I had heard about the gas chamber or Drill Sergeants, but ended up making some really close friends and enjoying much of the training I received. BCT was the single most important factor in my development as a Soldier and a leader, and I would encourage anyone who has a chance to go to do so. When I returned, I felt much more confident and competent in ROTC, and took a much more active role in the program. My initial recruiter had left by the time I returned, and the new National Guard liaison NCO was Staff Sergeant Kordab. I began drilling every month with him until moving into my new unit this September. SSG Kordab was an indispensable resource for me as a liaison, offering guidance and a quick fix for any issue I had. SSG Kordab quickly became my first resource for any questions about anything to do with ROTC or my status in the National Guard.

Aside from being extremely competent and helpful professionally, SSG Kordab is just a cool guy in general, and I know many Cadets who go by his office often to stop by and say hello. He can relate to and joke around with Cadets, and has also mentored them on important decisions concerning what component and branch of the Army to choose. His experience and expertise have led him to pursue becoming an Officer, and as he completed Officer Candidate School several months ago, UNC ROTC will soon be losing him. SSG Kordab has been an integral and fun person in many Cadets' experience with ROTC and he will be missed when he moves on to bigger and better things.

To any new Cadets considering SMP, go for it. You meet some great people in the Guard and the financial and experiential benefits you receive are incredible. Looking back, I'm actually glad I didn't get a scholarship and went the SMP route: it could not have worked out better.

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