

VUNROTC NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2022 ISSUE

BATTALION COMMANDER REMARKS

MIDN 1/C Sarah Stevens

Spring 2022, what a wild and wonderful semester you have been! We began with a delayed start, online classes, and a mask mandate, both indoors and outside. Our university leadership consulted health experts and spent countless hours in discussion to discern the way forward. Fraught with some disappointment, many hours of work and always the opportunity to learn, the VUNROTC Battalion adapted to accommodate the late winter wave of COVID-19. Though some aspects of a regular semester were momentarily “on pause,” midshipmen and MECEP Marines took ownership of their training and actively pursued mental, moral, and physical development. The OPS team created online modules and the PTI adapted his training plan to allow for the virtual coordination and execution among the Battalion. Once our national and university leadership advised it was safe to do so, the VUNROTC Battalion kicked into gear!

The midshipmen and MECEP Marines have embraced all opportunities for involvement on campus and among the community, full of eagerness and energy, immersing themselves in activities that accompany a typical semester. Despite the challenge of rigorous academics and ROTC obligations, service remained at the forefront of the minds of VUNROTC midshipmen. This semester alone, the team contributed over 300 hours of service to the community—serving meals to those who are housing insecure, sorting items at the local food bank, supporting the fundraising for cancer treatment and research, and facilitating a 5k to honor the memory of fallen service members.

To the VUNROTC Battalion—what a joy and an honor to learn, work, and lead alongside you! May we continue to be people marked by good character, full of integrity; people who are eager to contribute to the community, who are compelled by a strong sense of ownership, duty and purpose. May all the experiences you have faced personally equip you with a mindset of resilience to overcome with grace and wisdom the challenges that lie ahead. Your sweet encouragement and incessant drive is the reason I’m able to say, “It’s a good day to have a good day!”





BN OPERATIONS OFFICER

MIDN 2/C Jack Warner

This past semester VUNROTC transitioned back to a fully functioning Battalion and the Operations Department led the way! We returned to in person PT, Leadership Labs, Community Service events, as well as a multitude of activities and projects to keep our midshipmen busy. Our Leadership Labs were outstanding with representation from every unrestricted line community and a variety of military and civilian guests. Most notable was our Senior Enlisted Panel, where we heard from Sergeant Major Roger Griffith (Raider Regiment), Command Master Chief Patrick Roseland (USS MAHAN, DDG 72), Master Chief Operations Specialist Jamie Roseland (Afloat Training Group Norfolk), and Senior Chief Shawn Simmons (Naval Diving and Salvage Training Center). They shared wisdom, sea stories, and hard-won leadership advice with our midshipmen. Leadership Lab was not the only opportunity to interface with Leadership opportunities, however. Several of our midshipmen also had the opportunity to meet with General Paul Nakasone, Director of the National Security Agency, as well as interfacing with the crew of a P-8 at a Static Display. Although we weren't able to complete some early semester events due to COVID-19 restrictions, by the end of the semester our Battalion was leading the way across campus. Three particular highlights were our strong performance in the ROTC Olympics, where we dominated at track, Community Service, where our midshipmen completed several hundred combined hours, and our first full Change of Command and Commissioning Ceremonies in three years! I cannot express how grateful I am for every member of our Operations Department, as they contributed to what is one of our finest semesters yet. I have full faith and confidence in MIDN Brown as she takes over, and will no doubt excel. Hooyah!



COLOR GUARD

MIDN 2/C Lanham

As Color Guard OIC, I focused on educating midshipmen on the importance of color guard which led to increased participation from the Battalion, and promoted bearing and enthusiasm within the unit. There were two events that our Color Guard teams were offered that especially stood out; the NHL Outdoor Game at Nissan Stadium and the Vanderbilt Basketball NIT game. Seeing the hard work of midshipmen pay off on game day was both exciting and rewarding!



PATCHED UP 2.0

MIDN 1/C Duncan

This year, we sought out new ways to increase pride in Vanderbilt University Naval ROTC. One idea we had to accomplish this goal was to create a unit patch that mimics the way operational units in the fleet inspire esprit de corps with patches. The 1/C MIDN will design a new patch each Fall so that when MIDN leave VUNROTC, they will leave with four patches to commemorate their time here.



COMMSERV

MIDN 3/C Alexander

Blessed with the opportunity to be back in-person, Vanderbilt midshipmen took on a variety of service opportunities, and establishing relationships with the following community partners: Nashville Rescue Mission, Nashville Wine Auction, and Memories of Honor. Midshipmen took to the city and worked in teams to serve food to the homeless and impoverished at Nashville Rescue Mission, prepare for an event to support fundraising for cancer research, as well as helping to honor the memory of fallen service members at the Tour De Hawkins 5K. With a substantial dedication to the community, Vanderbilt midshipmen accumulated over 300 hours of service this semester.



MORALE, WELLNESS, AND RECREATION

MIDN 3/C Kaszprzak

A crucial component of developing midshipmen is making time for morale, wellness, and recreation. The battalion has been able to grow and strengthen through team building and competitive events. Some events include Mario Kart tournaments and Battalion Paintball; midshipmen were able to work together and work on their communication and leadership skills through these interactive events. After a year with COVID, midshipman came together for simple things like a watch party for the Super Bowl. These informal gatherings allowed the battalion to interact and identify commonalities, forming a stronger group bond.



ALPHA COMPANY

MIDN 2/C Sarah Brown

Spring 2022 was a semester of accomplishment and exceptional servant leadership for Alpha company. Alpha company logged over 69 community service hours at ROTC sponsored events in the community and totaled over 146 community service hours including independent service. The dedication to growth in themselves and in others shined as the midshipmen motivated each other in PT challenges ultimately recording 702 miles ran! The platoon commanders took on new roles with enthusiasm and led each evolution with max participation and success. Being the Alpha Company commander was a true honor. The midshipmen motivated me daily to show up, match their energy, and push our company to excel. After a tight competition, Bravo took the title of Honor Company. However, our team was not disappointed, because they know-as do I- that they pushed full steam ahead this semester. And for that I give them the ultimate Bravo Zulu!

BRAVO COMPANY

MIDN 2/C Shine Peng

Throughout the beginning of the year, we asked our midshipmen to adapt to rapidly changing COVID-19 regulations which they were able to do with grace and enthusiasm. Our leadership team was consistently impressed by the energy Bravo Company displayed in physical training and aptitude shown in leadership lab discussions by embracing mental toughness in a very challenging time. The continued drive of these midshipmen made leading them a straightforward and rewarding job. I found that my platoon commanders that had general autonomy were able to operate well and effectively support the midshipmen in their platoons. It was an absolute pleasure to command the midshipman of Bravo Company during this uncertain semester.

PHYSICAL TRAINING

MIDN 2/C Jackson Harrington

Physical Training (PT) this semester was forced to adapt to the challenges placed by the Coronavirus pandemic. The first half of the semester saw the Battalion participate in a remote PT program. Midshipmen were assigned a set of calisthenic workouts every week that they were required to complete. To track progress, Midshipmen logged their max performances in a spreadsheet on a weekly basis. Further, Midshipmen were required to run at least six miles per week at their own chosen pace; Midshipmen on the Fitness Enhancement Program (FEP) ran ten miles per week. This program operated for four weeks before the inventory PRT/PFT in late February. Following Spring Break, in-person PT and FEP sessions returned to the VUNROTC unit. Medium-distance running was emphasized due to an analysis of PRT results showing that running had been causing poorer results. For example, FEP participants ran several miles per week, while each Battalion PT session involved jogging or sprint intervals. PT culminated in a four-mile Battalion-wide run to Fort Negley, a Civil War-era fort in Nashville. Midshipmen ran in squads of similar running abilities to maximize the session's efficiency. The renewed efforts to improve physical fitness paid off, with 75% of the Battalion receiving an Outstanding/270+ on the PRT/PFT, the highest scoring category of the fitness test. This is the highest percentage of Midshipmen reaching Outstanding in recent recorded history – dating back to 2013! PT finished with the Battalion's participation in the ROTC Olympics, a three-day competition consisting of several different sporting events. While VUNROTC unsurprisingly swept its opponents in track and field, it was defeated in basketball, soccer, and weightlifting; though the competition was fierce. The Battalion heads into summer in excellent physical condition, with goals to continue improving in the following academic school year.



BULLDOG

MIDN 1/C Matthew McConnell

MIDN Kim, Free, and I wanted to focus on academics for Fall 2021 and physical fitness during Spring 2022. Our academic instruction consisted of operations order classes and weekly exercises, and land navigation practice, and concluded with a graded course at Percy Warner Park constructed by MIDN Free. The physical fitness program was a blend of conditioning hikes (3mi, 4mi, 6mi, 9mi), hill sprints (on the Hank Ingram 18th Ave. hill), trail runs (at Percy Warner Park), and O-Course prep. The 2/C MIDN were consistently drilled on the things they can control like giving counts, gear prep, physical fitness, and OCS knowledge; they were given their own leadership responsibilities (equivalent to a candidate platoon sergeant or candidate squad leader) to foster growth. Finally, our MECEPs (SSgt Russell and SSgt Bradshaw) rounded everything out by providing a great deal of knowledge, perspective, and motivation to the training environment.



CHANGE OF COMMAND

On the 21st of April 2022, VUNROTC held its annual Change of Command Ceremony along with a Pass and Review and Award Ceremony. Due to COVID-19 the past two years VUNROTC has not been able to host this event. However, due to the outstanding combined efforts of MIDN 4/C Crocker as Drill OIC alongside active-duty staff and other MIDN involved VUNROTC was proudly able to host a traditional Change of Command with the passing of command from MIDN 1/C Stevens to MIDN 1/C Warner. With new leadership in charge we are excited and ready for the upcoming fall semester!

Battalion Commander: MIDN 1/C Warner

Battalion Executive Officer: MIDN 1/C Christiansen

Battalion Master Chief Petty Officer: MIDN 1/C Harrington

Battalion Operations Officer: MIDN 1/C Brown

Battalion Adjutant: MIDN 2/C Brady

Battalion Supply Officer: MIDN 2/C Kalb

Alpha Company Commander: MIDN 2/C Critchley

Alpha Gunnery Sergeant: MIDN 2/C Murray

Bravo Company Commander: MIDN 2/C Lanham

Bravo Company Gunnery Sergeant: MIDN 2/C Couchenour



AWARDS CEREMONY

Following the Change of Command ceremony, midshipmen were honored with awards from organizations including the Marine Corps League, American Legion, and National Naval Officers Association. These awards were well-deserved by their recipients who showed perseverance, commitment, integrity, and leadership throughout the year. Congratulations to all recipients!



COMMISSIONING

On 13 May 2022, 13 Ensigns and 3 Second Lieutenants commissioned from VUNROTC, the largest class in over half a decade! Due to their efforts, future graduating classes have been giving an excellent foundation to build on in the years to come. We thank the Class of 2022 and cannot wait to see what they accomplish in their lives and careers! Information on this year's class can be found below:



VUNROTC CLASS OF 2022

USMC

2nd Lt Jakob Free, Chapin, SC - USMC Ground
2nd Lt Immanuel Kim, Frisco, TX - USMC Ground
2nd Lt Conner McConnell, Dallas, TX - USMC Ground

USN

ENS DeAsia Baker, Baltimore, MD - Surface Warfare
ENS Evan Bouck, Tallahassee, FL - Aviation
ENS Benjamin Bryce, Lancaster, PA - Surface Warfare
ENS Cole Diamond, Murfreesboro, TN - Aviation
ENS Brian Duncan, Nolensville, TN - Surface Warfare
ENS Delaney Hinkley, Virginia Beach, VA - Nursing
ENS Matthew Lafond-Favieres, Gray Court, SC - Aviation

ENS Jack Pantlin, Peachtree Corners, GA - Submarine Warfare
ENS Sarah Stevens, Mechanicsburg, PA - Nursing
ENS Tristen Medley, Gallatin, TN - Surface Warfare
ENS Alexandra Stuart, Menlo Park, CA - Submarine Warfare
ENS Abigail Williams, Berea, KY - Surface Warfare
ENS Clayton Wright, Carmel, IN - Aviation