



# Vanderbilt University Naval ROTC

## Commodore Cable – Spring 2022



Friends, family, and Naval ROTC alumni, I hope this “Commodore Cable” finds all of you thriving during these interesting times. Here in Nashville, we just concluded our spring semester with a crescendo, commissioning 16 new ensigns and second lieutenants and fulfilling our mission to *“Deliver trained warfighters to the Fleet.”* Rear Admiral Stephen Barnett, a Tennessee State University (TSU) alum, delivered the keynote address and oath of office to one of the largest commissioning classes in over a decade. This year’s amazing group included three Marine options and thirteen Navy options with a great mix of warfare designators, including two headed to Nuclear Power School/Submarine Community, four are off to flight school in Pensacola (three as student Naval Aviators and one student Naval Flight Officer), five reporting as Surface Warfare Officers in Newport, and two Nurse Corps Officers (San Diego and Jacksonville). The three Marines will receive their Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) at The Basic School (TBS) in Quantico. Without question, this was a special group of First-Class Midshipmen that led the battalion with resolve, resiliency, and determination. They will be missed, but without question they are ready to hit the Fleet and LEAD!



Looking back at this academic year, it unfortunately continued to be a year marked by the ups and downs of COVID and the challenges associated with overcoming those obstacles, balancing midshipmen development and staff/student safety. That statement taken out of context might sound tired or defeated, but I’m proud to report that from my perspective the year was a smashing success. Like previous years, the midshipmen battalion delivered impressive leadership and brought a “can-do” attitude to every evolution. We returned to many traditional NROTC events once again hosting the Navy/Marine Corps Birthday Ball in the fall and the Spring Pass in Review. We even started a few new traditions, hosting a series of three NROTC tailgates, including an event held during Parents Weekend. The tailgate provided many parents of third-class and fourth-class midshipmen their first opportunity to meet in-person at Vanderbilt and see their midshipmen in action, meet their peers, and an introduction to the active-duty staff. The tailgate was a well-received event I intend to continue in the Fall 2022 semester. Academically across the entire year, every Naval Science class was held in-person supporting core academic requirements. The weekly Leadership Lab focused on in-person events, but also continued to harness the power of virtual events, capturing remote speakers to supplement the in-person instruction.

Aligned with the Navy's drive to recruit and retain a more diverse officer corps, one of my objectives this year was to bring focused energy to build the Naval ROTC brand at Tennessee State University by creating connections, building community, and developing an inclusive culture with our cross-town partner. With the goal to build awareness of the NROTC program available to TSU students, we kicked off the fall semester welcoming back TSU Alum, Rear Admiral Stephen Barnett for a leadership address on the TSU campus. RDML Barnett was also honored at a TSU football game at Nissan stadium, conducting the pre-game coin toss, ahead of an F/A-18 Super Hornet flyby. The engagement plan at TSU will continue to be an area of focus as we drive to attract and retain a more diverse officer corps that is *more representative of the Sailors we lead, and the Nation we serve.*

Looking ahead to the next semester, I am excited to announce that former Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral John Richardson has agreed to be the National Security Symposium keynote speaker during Vanderbilt's Reunion Weekend on Friday, October 7<sup>th</sup>. Across the first two years of Chancellor Diermeier's leadership at Vanderbilt, he has made support of the ROTC units and our veteran community a strong priority. This year we invited the Chancellor to attend the NSS and we are hopeful his busy schedule will support his participation. Additionally, we invited the Ole Miss NROTC battalion to attend the NSS event and stay for the football game. Go 'Dores!

On the recruiting front, this spring saw another strong recruiting and admissions year with over twenty students admitted to Vanderbilt, TSU, and Belmont universities. The strength of battalion continues to grow with a projected battalion end strength of over 75 midshipmen for the fall semester. Another positive trend, all incoming freshmen will attend New Student Indoctrination at Great Lakes, Naval Station prior reporting to Vanderbilt.

As I close, I want to express my sincere appreciation for the VUNROTC Alumni Association. Your continued generosity enables an enriched NROTC experience for the midshipmen and contributes immeasurably to the development of our future Navy and Marine Corps officers. Unequivocally, your support sets the conditions for the Battalion's success and our commitment to developing leaders for the Navy and the Nation. To all of our friends, family, and alumni, if your travel plans bring you to Nashville, please reach out and make plans to stop by the NROTC building. Also, please check out the accompanying VUNROTC Battalion Newsletter with photos and articles produced by the midshipmen and posted at: <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/nrotc/>

Very respectfully,



Brian "Rookie" Erickson  
Captain, US Navy



**Anchor Down and LEAD**

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