The Black Dragon Bulletin

Spring 2022

A Word From Our Commanding Officer

By Captain Paul de Marcellus

Hello Midshipmen, Family, and Friends,

Yesterday was Commissioning. What a fantastic day! I felt so blessed that we were able to have an in-person event, with families present, guest speakers, hugs and high-fives. I cannot imagine the disappointment of having to hold an event like that over Zoom. It was no surprise to me that CAPT Smith and CDR Patrick wanted to come back to Rutgers for the event so that they could enjoy what they could not last year and see the class that they saw walk in the door make it to the finish line. But really, it is the starting line for them and I am supremely confident that they will all be outstanding officers.

I told the Commissioning seniors that I would trade places with them in an instant. Even knowing that it might not work out as well as it did for me the first time, it would be a delight to do it all over again.

I am extremely excited to start up again in the Fall, but it will be hard to top this last semester. What an extraordinary semester! Last issue, I talked about taking the unit from 0 to 60. It feels like the unit just left its foot on the gas with all of the events that we were able to accomplish - Admiral visits, tour of the Pentagon and Sea Air Space Symposium, Mess Night, Field Exercise, the Senior Dinner, Leadership Conferences. All of that on top of the amazing work that you did day in and day out keeping our unit running. Very impressive.

Now you are prepping for your summer, which I hope will include some real time to recover, rest, and reset. For some of you it will be spent in internships, some overseas with Project Global Officer, and most getting a taste of the Fleet at CORTRAMID or with various boats, ships, and squadrons. I just encourage you to really invest in that time and get all that you can out of it.

To our Marine options headed to OCS, do us proud! I am absolutely positive that you will represent the unit well and I cannot wait to hear your stories upon your return. Most of all, please be safe! I will be delighted to have you all return healthy and strong for an even more incredible year next year!

Second Lieutenant Justin McBeth

By Midshipman 4/C Giovanni Iacobucci

Second Lieutenant McBeth joined the Marine Corps after his freshman year of college, and fell in love with the Marines. What the Marine Corps needed and what he was good at and enjoyed meshed well together. McBeth excelled at being able to travel around and inspire those around him everywhere he went. Although originally designated as an Aviation Operations Specialist, he ended up training and coordinating events and tests for those deploying soon. He came to Rutgers/Princeton NROTC in Spring 2018, and has been here at Rutgers pursuing a double major in Political Science and Philosophy, following a deployment to South Korea. McBeth was recently commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Marine Corps, and will be attending The Basic School starting in early June. After this, his goal is to become a Counterintelligence or Ground intelligence officer, and later pursue law. In the last 4 years, Second Lieutenant McBeth has helped midshipmen, who were freshmen when he arrived to this unit, to develop into men and women worthy of being officers in the United States Navy and Marine Corps. Going from enlisted, with a far more hands-on interactive role, to commissioning and trusting the senior midshipman to fulfill this job is what he calls his greatest accomplishment at the Black Dragon Battalion. His presence will be missed at NROTCU Rutgers/Princeton, but he leaves with us the acronym that he has employed through his career, OREO - Opportunity, Responsibility, Efficiency, Ownership. Opportunity - this is a training environment, take advantage of the opportunities and make the best of this training environment. Responsibility - take on as much responsibility as one can. Here is the place to fail, and finding the limits of how much one can take on is a part of this profession, so find that limit here. Efficiency - everyone will be happier and the mission will be better accomplished if one is efficient with their time and efficient with their Marines' time. Finally, Ownership - own everything one does. Superiors don't actually care whose fault it is, if the mission doesn't get accomplished it is never one subordinates' fault, but all should own their part in it. Second Lieutenant McBeth will be missed at the Black Dragon battalion, and his impact will last for years here.

Executive Officer, Commander Charles Eaton

By Midshipman 4/C Giovanni Iacobucci

Commander Charles Eaton commissioned into the United States Navy in 1997 out of the Naval Academy as a Surface Warfare Officer. Commander Eaton wasn't seeking a stereotypical civilian lifestyle - he wanted to see the world and interact with it. However, he missed his home state of New Jersey after seeing so much of the world. From the academy until now, he has served on many different types of warships, from amphibious landing ships in beach groups, to destroyers, cruisers, even prototype warships like the HSV. In addition to serving on these many warships, CDR Eaton also taught at the surface warfare school, and most resently served with Task Force 68 out of Rota, Spain. These previous commands are very different from his new role at NROTC Rutgers/Princeton. The type of work that was required of commander Eaton at his previous commands is very different from the far more administrative work required of him now. However, staff at the unit and from NTSC have all been able to guide Commander Eaton to success at this unit. Teaching at surface warfare school is by far the closest to his current role at The Black Dragon Battalion, but even this has many differences. At surface warfare school, hundreds of new sailors are taught over the course of a few weeks, whereas here at Rutgers/Princeton Commander Eaton will be developing midshipmen for years. This is a very different experience than his previous commands, but Commander Eaton is very excited to see this long term growth. The motivation of Midshipmen at this unit surprised Commander Eaton, but excited him to see more of our unit and experience it for years to come.

RADM George Wikoff

By Midshipman 4/C David Farin

Rear Admiral George M. Wikoff, the Vice Director of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, came up from a busy week at the Pentagon to speak to the Black Dragon Battalion at the beginning of the semester. RADM Wikoff started with a list of qualities that make good leaders: being good followers, understanding bias, seeking feedback, being exemplary, empathetic, and public-facing. He emphasized the necessity of humility and quoted General Eisenhower: "Humility must always be the portion of any man who receives acclaim earned in the blood of his followers and the sacrifices of his friends." The Admiral made it clear that officers are in the business of trading lives for mission objectives, and that showing humility is the least that an officer can do in the face of the greatest sacrifices made by his subordinates and peers. He spoke on the importance of owning your own mistakes and invoked Gen. Eisenhower again with a letter he wrote on June 4th, 1944 that would have taken absolute responsibility for failure had D-Day not succeeded. RADM Wikoff also touched on the idea of "leaders eat last" as well as finding ways to relate to your men and women, because in the end their wellbeing, both physically and mentally, is your priority, and ensuring that they are taken care of is critical as a leader. After the presentation to the whole unit, a select few MIDN were pulled aside for a more personal talk about the Admiral's own NROTC experience, and how he had to fight as a college programmer to get his lost scholarship back, making it clear that as long as you relentlessly prepare, anything is possible.

USAFA National Leadership and Character Symposium

By Midshipman 1/C Elisabeth O'Connell

To branch beyond the leadership training in New Brunswick, NJ, I had the pleasure of attending the 29th annual National Leadership and Character Symposium at the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) in Colorado Springs, CO. The experience was beyond incredible because of the first-hand experience of being a USAFA cadet, the wide range of speakers and the discussions. Every visitor is paired with a host who guides your time at the Academy. My host, C1C Shanna Hoven, provided a great example of what her daily schedule is like, including attending one of her classes, participating at her cheer practice, and escorting me to many of the buildings on base.

The two sessions that resonated with me most included the session with the Honorable Dr. Ben Carson and the shared session with Brig Gen Michael Drowley and Simon Sinek. From Dr. Carson's lecture, he emphasized the power of preparation and knowledge, as well as what it means to be an American. From Brig Gen Drowley and Simon Sinek's lecture, the strongest takeaway was that "integrity is the highest form of selflessness." As a soon-to-be officer in the military, the lessons learned from these individuals will mold me into a better officer to better serve those around me.

To conclude the days of lecture, we attended a consortium where visiting students were put at random tables with honored guests for open discussion. The honored guests were varying speakers from the event, as well as USAFA leadership. The time spent sharing ideas with other students was of the most value to me because I could see different points of view and talk about what we learned from the speakers. Additionally, having personal time with the speakers and accomplished leadership was invaluable.

What is unique about the opportunity is having the ability to better understand our sisters and brothers in other branches by connecting with them about leadership, ethics and morality. Our discussions are for the future of all the services, and it excites me to be around other young, like-minded individuals excited to serve. Overall, the event has better prepared me to commission by sharing insight from very successful individuals, challenging my way of thinking, and helping me to network with other students of varying backgrounds and branches.

Judging at Sterling High School's JROTC Drill Meet

By Midshipman 2/C Simon Kowaleski

On 26 FEB 2022, a group of NROTCU Rutgers/Princeton midshipmen went down to Somerdale, NJ to be judges at the Sterling High School NJROTC annual drill meet. Midshipmen Charlotte Basile, Christian Ladzinski, John Dalmass, Mia Freeman, Lila Ginsburg, Sara Coppola, Mina Jones, and Simon Kowalewski presided over events such as color guard, unarmed and armed platoon drill, and personnel inspections over the course of the day. As a graduate of Sterling High School, and former NJROTC cadet, it was a fulfilling experience to come back as a midshipman and provide the expertise and experience needed for an event like this. Not only did midshipmen score events, but they also provided valuable feedback to the JROTC cadet commanders and drill teams to ensure they are able to focus on their strengths and train to fix their weaknesses. Having been on the JROTC cadet side of the coin, I know how important it is to have midshipmen like us come and act as judges, since we often either have been JROTC cadets ourselves or are simply passionate about drill events and have the experience to know how drill should look. Along with us midshipmen, we worked with local National Guardsmen and midshipmen from other universities, some of whom I went to high school with or had met through NROTC training over the course of my midshipman career. These events, besides being fulfilling and worthwhile experiences for midshipmen, help to spread the Black Dragon name and show areas outside of New Brunswick or Princeton the high standards, skill, and expertise that our unit cultivates. Bravo Zulu to all who made this event possible!

Staff Sergeant Severns

By Midshipman 4/C Richard Kwon

Staff Sergeant Severns arrived at the Black Dragon Battalion on March 28th. He is from Scenery Hill, Pennsylvania; has been in the Marine Corps for about nine years now, and is expecting to do about fifteen more. Staff Sergeant Severns actually wanted to pursue a career within the nursing field before even joining the Marine Corps. The reason Staff Sergeant Severns chose the Marine Corps above any other branch of service is because he wanted to be a part of the "few and the proud." Additionally, he wanted to be a part of a brotherhood, and felt that the comradery in the Marine Corps was greater than any other branch. Prior to joining the MECEP program, Staff Sergeant Severns was an F35 Airframe Mechanic and once he graduates and commissions, he hopes to pursue a field within aviation to fly CH53s, Cobras, F35s, and or C130s. He joined the MECEP program because he disliked not being able to have the authority to make a difference; whether it be in troop welfare, management, strategies, or unit morale. He has told of how he has learned more from bad mentors than good, seeing what they did poorly and avoiding that in his own leadership style. But he also spoke of the good figures he has seen, "good mentors who pointed me toward opportunities and gave me a path to those opportunities, I want to be that type of leader". His yearning to become an officer shows in his care for his subordinates and his desire to make their lives better, stating "I care about the individuals and want to look out for the welfare of my people, and I believe I am most proficient in troop welfare." There will definitely be aspects of the enlisted life that Staff Sergeant Severns will miss such as: being able to be more hands on, and having that close relationship with his enlisted peers (being that once you become a 2nd lieutenant it is considered fraternization). Staff Sergeant Severns has now been with the Black Dragon Family for a little less than two months, but he hopes that during his time here he will learn how to lead more by stepping back from the enlisted mindset and transition to the continuously growing officer mentality. He had chosen to join the Black Dragon Battalion because of the location being close to family, and the leadership here is highly rated. He is seeking a degree here at Rutgers studying environmental and biological science, particularly agriculture. His end goal is to eventually become an airline or medevac pilot. In his final words of advice, Staff Sergeant Severns stated, "we're all in this together; I am always looking forward to learning, teaching, and mentoring, and if anyone needs anything please reach out. I am there."

Washington D.C. Trip

By Midshipman 1/C Stephen Sabo

On April 4th and 5th, upperclassmen from the NROTC Rutgers-Princeton Unit traveled down to Washington D.C. to attend the Sea, Air and Space Exposition, along with a tour of the Pentagon. The unit arrived in National Harbor, where the conference was being held at the Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center, and attended the Service Chiefs Leadership Panel. The panel consisted of three service chiefs: Admiral Gilday, Chief of Naval Operations, General David Berger, Commandant of the Marine Corps, and Admiral Karl Schultz, Commandant of the Coast Guard. After the panel, two Midshipmen, MIDN 1/C Gavin Mayes and MIDN 2/C Sebastian Leon were able to converse with Admiral Gilday, with both of the Midshipmen receiving a challenge coin from the Chief of Naval Operations. The rest of the unit explored the exposition, speaking to vendors and other members of the military community.

After the conference, the unit traveled to the Pentagon for a tour, sponsored by Rear Admiral George Wikoff, the Vice Director of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Rear Admiral Wikoff is a native of New Brunswick and has graciously provided guidance to the unit through his previous visit to the university. The tour encompassed only a small portion of the Pentagon but was absolutely packed with sights to see and things to learn. The Pentagon serves as both an administration building and a museum, with the walls being covered in fascinating pieces of military history of all branches, although the focus of the tour was in the Navy and Marine Corps wings. Weapons of all ages adorned the walls, along with paintings of the nation's most significant battles the services have found themselves in. The facility was truly beautiful, fascinating, and was packed with enough memorabilia to distract a Midshipman for days. After the tour inside had concluded, the unit traveled outside to the Pentagon's September 11th Terror Attack Memorial for reflection. The unit stayed the evening at the Air Force Inn on Joint-Base Anacostia-Bolling, and were free to eat dinner on their own.

The next day, the unit traveled to National Harbor again for further attendance at the Sea, Air and Space Exposition. The unit was free to attend whichever panel they would like, although most attended a panel on Marine Corps Force Design, moderated by General Eric Smith, Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, or the Women's Leadership by SSLA Panel, moderated by Captain Emily Bassett, U.S. Navy. After the panels had concluded, several Midshipmen were able to speak with Sgt. Maj. Troy Black, 19th Sergeant Major of the U.S. Marine Corps for a short period of time. The unit was fortunate enough to meet with a plethora of servicemembers, all of whom were extraordinarily friendly and insightful. Several Midshipmen in the unit stayed at the Exposition, while others traveled to the National Mall or Arlington National Cemetery to explore.

The Midshipmen who remained at the Exposition were fortunate enough to meet The Honorable Carlos Del Toro, Secretary of the Navy, whom they had a short conversation with. They further attended other panels, having a great time.

The Midshipmen who traveled to the National Mall departed Washington, D.C., stopping in Annapolis, Maryland on their way home for lunch and good times to be had by all.

The trip was a rare opportunity, and a great one at that. The unit was able to share experiences together in a fascinating new place, making memories that shall last a lifetime. In total, sixteen Midshipmen attended the trip, being accompanied by Gunnery Sergeant Debord and Captain de Marcellus.

By Midshipman 2/C Sebastian Leon

On 4 April and 5 April, the MIDN of NROTC Rutgers/Princeton were given a once in a lifetime opportunity. 17 MIDN, consisting of 2/C and 1/C, took a trip down to our nation's capital along with GySgt Debord and CAPT de Marcellus. On the morning of 4 April, we attended the annual Sea Air power symposium. This was a mix of conferences and speeches from a wide range of high ranking leaders within the Navy and Marine Corps. We had the great opportunity of hearing from the Chief of Naval Operations, ADM Michael Gilday, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. Berger, and the Commandant of the Coast Guard, ADM Schultz. MIDN Mayes was able to flag down ADM Gilday as I trailed close behind. We were able to exchange words for a few minutes and before he went about his business, he left us with two challenge coins. The exchange was certainly one of my high points in my time here with the Battalion. In the afternoon, after some chow we had another great opportunity of being given an extraordinary tour of the Pentagon by RADM Wikoff and an excellent Joint Chiefs of Staff historian. It was one of the best opportunities that the MIDN of this Battalion have been presented with. We took every advantage of asking questions and soaking in all the lessons and conversions on leadership. As the day ended, we headed into the capital for dinner and liberty. The next day we were back at the symposium where we sat in on another panel where the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. Smith and other generals spoke about the new Marine Corps Force Redesign 2030. The group split in two, as some MIDN stayed at the Symposium and the rest headed into the Capital once again to take in sights, such as the Lincoln Memorial, the Vietnam War Memorial, the Korean War Memorial before getting lunch in Annapolis. Overall, the two day trip was one of the best experiences for anyone to be a part of. My only wish is that we could be afforded the opportunity to go down again next year. It was almost surreal being around so many high ranking officers and hearing them speak. Very thankful and grateful to be a part of such a great experience.

Grand Arctic Strategy

By Midshipman 4/C Omar Aguero

Opportunity. A word that never ceases to surprise. When MIDN Hilton's email landed in my inbox titled "Opportunity to Participate in Princeton Grand Strategy Simulation," I knew I couldn't pass it up. The event was set up for a Saturday morning with a promise of free breakfast and lunch. There was no way to resist.

After I walked into the Julis Romo Rabinowitz Building, I went to the registration table and received the country I would be representing: Denmark. From reading the background information about my country, it was clear that Denmark had many strengths and weaknesses. I then enjoyed my breakfast with my fellow MIDN, an assortment of fruits and bagels. For some odd reason, no napkins were provided.

We were called into the 'control room' and briefed by LCDR Norton about what the event would entail, and then sent off into our respective groups to begin negotiations with other countries. For the first round, Denmark decided to focus on internal objectives that didn't rely on other countries' consensus. It was much easier than trying to make deals with other countries that could very easily go back on their word and waste time, which is what happened as representatives from different countries scrambled in the final minutes of negotiations. We were called back into the control room and briefed about each countries' decisions during the round through slides and complimented by memes. You had to be there.

We were sent back out and more negotiations started. We realized better results could be achieved through key deals made with other countries. Despite the challenges, we attempted to jump into the mix and made what we thought to be solid deals. When it came time to go back into the control room, we learned some countries did not go through with our deal (we did similar to other countries), but the deals that did go through had a large impact on our standards. Denmark was also given the news that Greenland gained independence, so more challenges in the upcoming rounds. But first, we broke for a much needed lunch break.

The next rounds held the same. A lot of negotiations, going behind other countries' back, getting double crossed, and having to remake negotiations. For the final brief in the control room, the top 3 countries were revealed, with Denmark being one of them. But ultimately, the communist PRC came out on top as the country that best achieved their long term goals and learned how to work with other countries. Bravo Zulu to MIDN Imperial and MIDN Sisbarro on their excellent performance!

Mess Night

By Midshipman 2/C Abigail McRea

Mess Night is a beloved tradition honored for many years by Marines around the world. This spring, for the first time for most of the Midshipmen present, our NROTC unit got to get a glimpse of this tradition for ourselves, and made a lot of memories doing so.

From the very beginning, this event was shrouded in mystery and excitement. 1/C Midshipmen and active duty staff members would talk to us about "fines", and about hilarious feats they had seen done by Marines, Sailors, and Midshipmen in the past as a result. The unit prepared for this event by dedicating portions of lab to reviewing the script and order of events, allowing Midshipmen to know what to expect and to get the most out of the night.

As one of the two dress dinners of the academic year, the event itself was already destined to be filled with excitement and camaraderie. It began with a time of socialization and comparison of warrior mugs. Once the guests were called into dinner, it turned into a night of further laughter and fines ranging from running laps around the room to drinking from the grog out of a Midshipman's shoe.

The guest of honor was Army Colonel Jack Jacobs, Ret., a Medal of Honor recipient. During the social hour before dinner, he spent time discussing military and life values with students and staff, and humbly expanded upon his views on life and the modern American military in his speech toward the event's conclusion, tying the night's festivities to our greater mission as future officers.

As we finish out a difficult school year and head into the summer where many of us will be experiencing a taste of the fleet on summer cruise, mess night was a gateway between these two points in our college careers. It was an opportunity to celebrate this year's hard-fought achievements as a unit and to wish graduating seniors all the best as they enter the fleet for the first time.

Commissioning

By Midshipman 3/C Nicodemus Leaver

This May, NROTCU Rutgers/Princeton commissioned the class of 2022. The ceremony took place on the 16th of May and was the battalion's first in-person commissioning ceremony since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. This year, the battalion was honored to have the Chief of Navy Reserve, Vice Admiral Mustin, be a guest speaker at the ceremony. After remarks given by the commanding officer of Rutgers/Princeton NROTCU Captain De Marcellus, Vice Provost Carolyn Moehling, and Vice Admiral Mustin, the commissioning class received their oath of office delivered by Vice Admiral Mustin, officially becoming officers in the United States Navy and Marine Corps. Once the now newly commissioned officers received their oaths of office, their new shoulder boards and pins would be attached to their uniforms by their families. At long last, after four years of training, the United States Navy and Marine Corps has just received a fresh batch of Ensigns and Second Lieutenants that will challenge their Sailors and Marines to be the effective fighting force there is. Bravo Zulu Class of 2022!

Remarks from Midshipman BCO

By Midshipman 1/C Gavin Mayes

As we near the end of the semester, the inescapable glance to the past ensues. For myself and the seniors, we are at the end of our four year journey with the Black Dragon Battalion. Much has changed since we arrived in 2018. While the size of the unit has waxed and waned, the quality has only increased.

We came into this unit on the heels of a first place MEC win at Villanova, only to follow with a repeat of success at Cornell. Four years later, with a week of practice and a fraction of the unit, we beat West Point in squad drill to take home first in that event and third overall.

Returning after a Covid hiatus, we held our first military ball in over two years and welcomed Vice Admiral Mustin in person as a guest speaker. While virtual for the first few weeks of the spring semester, we compensated by embarking on the first ever overnight trip for professional development, traversing down to the Pentagon for a tour and then to the Sea Air Space Symposium to hear from our military leaders.

With greater freedom on the horizon comes a hope for more opportunity. I am confident that the battalion will be in good hands with the Class of 2023, and am excited to see what they have to offer in continuing the traditions of our Black Dragon Battalion!

Closing Remarks

Midshipman 4/C Giovanni Iacobucci

Thank you to everyone who wrote articles, helped me edit these articles, edit the format, and brain storm how it should all come together, I could not have done this all alone, and I am ever grateful for everyones' help. Thank you to staff for everything you all have done to help me in this process. This was my freshmen year in this unit, and I have loved it, the people in this unit have made this an excellent experience, I am very excited for the next 3 years in this unit to see how we all will grow. As much as I will miss those going off to bigger and better things, I am sure all of you will make us proud, Bravo Zulu to all of you!

NROTC Unit Rutgers University
12 Lafayette Street
New Brunswick, NJ 08901
(848) 932-8484