

# NROTC RUTGERS/PRINCETON



# NEWSLETTER

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# CO STATEMENT

Black Dragon Battalion, Family, and Friends,

It has been a wonderfully enriching semester, with a wide array of speakers at Naval Science Lab and several professional development trips. I'll highlight two speakers from the semester. The first was Captain Thomas O'Donnell, a former commander of Submarine Squadron TWELVE and presently a Military Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. The second was Command Master Chief Mark Schlosser, the senior enlisted leader for Naval Supply Systems Command who has more than 32 years of service in the Navy. Both speakers provided different perspectives on their long careers and interactions with junior officers. Additionally, we participated in both the Yale and the US Naval Academy Leadership Conferences which provided an opportunity to listen to experienced leaders discussing how we will navigate future strategic challenges. Finally, we took a field trip to United States Coast Guard (USCG) Station Sandy Hook and visited the USCG Cutter Beluga. It was a great opportunity for midshipmen to tour the ship and learn about the crew of a smaller vessel.

This semester also marks the departure of two of our excellent staff members: Commander Charles Eaton retires after 28 years of service in the Navy and Master Sergeant Corey Debord retired after 21 years of service in the Marine Corps. These two veterans have been the backbone of the unit for more than three years, providing expert guidance and invaluable mentorship to the midshipmen, Sailors, and Marines. I am extremely proud to have served with each of them and I wish them both fair winds and following seas. I am also proud to celebrate the commissioning of fifteen of our own into the US Navy and Marine Corps. For four years, they worked hard, overcame setbacks, and ultimately achieved the honor of serving our nation. May they continue to learn and grow as leaders. May they always remember their time as part of the Black Dragon Battalion with fondness.

I wish you all the best over the summer break and look forward to all that you will achieve in the coming years.

-CAPT Jessica Parker



NROTC RUTGERS/PRINCETON



# NALC

20 Jan 2025

This past spring, several Midshipmen from the Rutgers/Princeton unit traveled to Annapolis to participate in the prestigious Naval Academy Leadership Conference. The conference featured a distinguished lineup of speakers, including Navy SEALs, professors, policymakers, astronauts, and adaptive sport athletes—individuals who have overcome significant challenges to compete in sports like hockey and skiing.

Among the speakers, Navy SEAL John Sanchez provided a compelling breakdown of leadership into four essential categories: resilience, evolution, attitude, and legacy. Drawing from his rigorous training in BUD/S and his military service, he shared invaluable insights on perseverance and growth.

Professor of East Asian Studies and White House policy expert Miles Yu emphasized the importance of conviction alongside duty, highlighting the necessity for the United States to maintain its edge in the battle of ideas against China. Meanwhile, Dr. Tabeu, a professor and accomplished mountaineer, joined the conference remotely from Ghana to discuss his dedication to performing cataract surgeries across diverse cultures, religions, and languages.

Adding to the wealth of knowledge, the oldest Naval Academy graduate, Admiral Munch shared wisdom on leadership through the framework of planning, execution, assessment, and feedback. He illustrated these concepts with a memorable story from his time at the Academy, underscoring the timeless principles that guide every generation of service members.

Beyond the keynote speeches, midshipmen engaged in small-group discussions on topics ranging from leadership and decision-making to religion and politics. These conversations fostered meaningful exchanges between midshipmen from institutions such as the U.S. Naval Academy, Norwich University, Harvard, and Ohio State.

The conference also provided ample networking opportunities during lunch and coffee breaks. Attendees shared stories about their experiences, including the distinct traditions of their respective units.

Overall, the Naval Academy Leadership Conference proved to be an enriching and inspiring experience for those who attended from our unit. The exposure to diverse leadership philosophies, interactions with midshipmen from across the globe, and the opportunity to visit historical monuments at the Naval Academy made for an unforgettable journey.

This experience has not only provided invaluable lessons but has also strengthened our motivation to refine our own leadership skills. As we move forward into the semester, the knowledge and inspiration gained from this conference will undoubtedly shape our own leadership journeys.



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# PERSHING RIFLES

20 Jan 2025

The National Society of Pershing Rifles is a military honor society focusing primarily on building brotherhood and discipline through drill. The National Convention brings together ROTC units from all over the nation to compete against each other in the John J Pershing Memorial Drill Competition. This year's competition was held in sunny Wilmington, North Carolina with every school demonstrating precision and excellence through well honed routines. The two main events were squad regulation and squad exhibition. Regulation routines were your standard test of uniformity, bearing and instant obedience to orders. While exhibition routines allowed for more creativity and more liberal use of our Army ROTC's M1903 Springfield rifles.

There was also enough time before our dining out the next day to sneak a few quick hours at the beach in North Carolina's 80 degree weather, which was a pleasant surprise for early march. Spending quality time with the men and women I'd been training with for the past year was an incredibly rewarding experience.

Anyone interested in joining for next falls intake process (and for the next NATCON in Myrtle Beach South Carolina) can email Cadet Thomas Frank at [Tjf143@scarletmail.Rutgers.edu](mailto:Tjf143@scarletmail.Rutgers.edu)





# LAND NAV

20 Jan 2025

As a group of four midshipmen going into submarines or ships, land navigation is not a skill we need to be well versed in. Despite this, walking through the woods eating my cheezits and twizzlers we got all of our points, and had a blast doing it. Midshipmen Aguero, McOgon, Bryan and I enjoyed this event greatly and got all of our points. All of us are seniors who will likely never have to do this sort of training again, so we did our best to enjoy ourselves. None of us have had official training in land navigation, but we had instruction on how to plot our points. So we utilized the method of plotting our points, and then taking the trails as close as we could get and then wandering in the general direction of our point in order to find it. We found this method to be very successful, getting nearly all of our points the first time and all the second time. After finding out the last point we were heading back to the origin point for muster to head out, when I was consulting the map trying to assess where we were when I slipped and fell down a hill, rolling multiple times and dislocating my left shoulder. Roughly 6 hours later I was finally discharged from the hospital and able to go home, but vastly changed the course of this day.



# YALE CONFERENCE

## 20 Jan 2025

The 2025 Yale NROTC Leadership Conference marked my first exposure to a ROTC activity that didn't include PT, lab, or Naval Science class, and it was an eye-opening experience. A handful of our unit and midshipmen from across the country gathered to hear from distinguished military leaders, national security experts, Navy SEALs, and enlisted personnel who offered insight into leadership, foreign relationships, U.S. Navy shipbuilding, and their experiences in the Navy. General David H. Berger's panel had the greatest impact on me. His stories about leadership and the early challenges of becoming an officer offered valuable insight for future officers. He spoke about how new officers are constantly tested by those they lead, sharing a story about a seasoned, intimidating Gunnery Sergeant who dismissed his order. Initially walking away, Berger quickly realized his authority was being undermined and returned to firmly reissue the order—this time, the Sergeant complied without resistance. Berger noted that while the GySgt was wrong, he still respected his experience but acknowledged that allowing his authority to slip had been a mistake. General Berger also spoke briefly about foreign relations and how they are maintained. His comparison to foreign relations being like his relationship with his wife gave a humorous but solid perspective on the topic, how there are always ups and downs, but if you stick through the entire way, the relationship will be stronger than a group of allies that don't have the trust and bond you gained over time. Rear Admiral Craig T. Mattingly also spoke of being tested by your sailors and how they learn from the actions and decisions you make. He recounted a near-miss helicopter crash, and he had two choices: remain silent and avoid scrutiny from his command or report the event and hold himself accountable. He chose to be honest and show integrity, and he believes that those he oversaw learned from him. Had he made a different choice, those in his command would have thought that being unethical when it's their turn to be accountable would be okay. These stories left a lasting impression on me and clarified the kind of leader midshipmen should aspire to become – someone who earns trust and respect not by words alone but through their actions.





# FEX

20 Jan 2025

On 05APR25, our Marine Option Midshipmen participated in the annual Spring FEX. At 0600, the Marine Options stepped off for a 9-mile hike to the Ecological Preserve at a rigorous pace set by Sgt Carp. Upon arrival, MIDN were issued MREs as they listened to instructions and safety briefs before beginning the rest of the day's activities.

MIDN started with some rounds of tan belt MCMAP lessons led by Sgt Carp before beginning Land Navigation.

SSgt Lam gave a safety brief before tasking MIDN with finding 7 out of 10 points located across the Eco Preserve. It was muddy from ongoing rainfall, and as full of thorn bushes, fallen trees, and streams ripe to fall into as ever, but the Marine Options pushed through even on sore feet and in damp uniforms.

MIDN then moved on to Small Unit Leadership Evaluations (SULEs), which are graded evolutions at OCS. MIDN Wang, Morros, and Welch each led at least one SULE, tasked with destroying an OPFOR element made up of some motivated Navy Option MIDN. After a few hours of SULEs, Sgt Carp led MIDN through some advanced training, where they practiced organizing into formations based on hand and arm signals and firing upon an enemy after taking contact. MIDN practiced the concept of "Return Fire, Take Cover, Return Accurate Fire" (RTR), conducting Australian Peels to retreat while still suppressing an enemy, and preparing for a near or far ambush, before wrapping up the day.

As each semester draws to a close, the FEX is always something for the Marine Options to look forward to in order to put the lessons and skills they learned throughout the semester to use. Although each FEX is physically demanding, the Marine Options always rise to the challenge. They are an essential part of training to prepare each MIDN for the challenges that they will face at OCS and are key to building a strong sense of camaraderie.



# VILLANOVA

20 Jan 2025

This year's MEC was held at Villanova, bringing together Navy ROTC units from Rutgers/Princeton, Cornell, and several other schools for a full day of physical and drill competitions. Events took place across Villanova's course and drill platform, with midshipmen showcasing everything from athleticism to precision in an intense but fun setting. The day featured a wide range of events, including squad drill, the color guard competition, a 10K race, lifting, and the fan-favorite chocolate milk mile. Representing Rutgers/Princeton, MIDN Ryan came in a close second in the milk mile, an impressive effort. MIDN Coppola, however, had a slightly different experience, ending the race with more chocolate milk coming out than going in. Safe to say, she walked away with a different kind of memory, and probably some regrets. The 4x400 relay was another highlight, with Rutgers/Princeton securing 3rd place. Despite tough competition, our team stayed locked in, finishing strong and earning well-deserved respect on the course. Whether sprinting or squatting, everyone gave it their best. Unlike past events, there was no national anthem this time, just a brief speech to kick things off, but the lack of music didn't stop the motivation. Throughout the day, midshipmen balanced intense competition with support for each other, creating a high-energy, positive atmosphere. At the end of the day, all units gathered for a trophy ceremony to recognize the top-performing battalions. Rutgers/Princeton proudly took 3rd place overall, an achievement that reflects both effort and teamwork across every event. From relays to the 10K, and chocolate milk miles to color guard drills, MEC gave every participant a chance to test themselves, support their battalion, and enjoy the camaraderie that makes events like this more than just a competition. Here's to more PRs, fewer pukes, and showing up even stronger next time.





# MESS NIGHT

20 Jan 2025

On May 2, 2025, the Black Dragon Battalion gathered to hold our annual dining-in event, Mess Night. This night was held to foster camaraderie and unit spirit, as well as to close out the successful year of the Black Dragon Battalion. To start the event, the chief steward presented the beef slab, also known as “parading the beef”. After presenting the beef to the president, he confirms that the food is good and fit for consumption, which starts the night of celebration. The midshipmen, staff, and the guest of honor are served food to eat during the night, then the mess floor is open for fining- a tradition to call out and fine midshipmen and staff about harmless incidents that occurred during the year, all getting approved or denied by the president of the mess. The fines could range from not following the rules of the mess to being late to events throughout the year. We then welcomed and honored Commander Pat Cohen as our guest of honor. After the toasts, Commander Cohen delivered a speech about grit and gave words of perseverance. Overall, it was a great night to celebrate memorable moments of the year, reliving the camaraderie, and looking forward to what the future holds.



# COMMISSIONING

20 Jan 2025

On 20 May, four 2nd LTs and seven ENS were commissioned from NROTC Rutgers/Princeton aboard the historic USS New Jersey (BB-62). The Guest of Honor for the Ceremony was RDML Weeks, Program Executive Officer for Strategic Submarines. After he delivered remarks and the oath of office to the class of 2025, the new officers had the opportunity to have their new ranks pinned on by their loved ones. Similarly, on 27 May Princeton University held their joint commissioning ceremony for all three ROTC units on campus. Four additional officers were commissioned out of NROTC Rutgers/Princeton at the ceremony, three into the Navy and one more into the Marine Corps. General Cavoli, the current EUCOM commander and Princeton alumni was the guest of honor and delivered words of guidance to the new officers. Similar to their Rutgers counterparts, the newly commissioned officers were able to have their new ranks pinned on their families.

While commissioning was the culmination of four years of grit and determination for the class of 2025, it also marked an end to their time here at NROTC Rutgers/Princeton. However, it more importantly opened the pages on their careers as Naval and Marine Corps officers. The lessons learned and leadership crafted throughout their time here will no doubt allow them to excel in the fleet. Those of us who have had the privilege to grow and develop under their tutelage are most certainly grateful. As we bid fair winds and following seas to our friends and mentors, we know that they will continue to make our beloved Navy and Marine Corps better everyday, just as they have done here at NROTC Rutgers/ Princeton.

