Dear Students, Parents, Alums, and Friends of UMN NROTC,

With winter in full gear, today marks the return of the Golden Gopher NROTC Battalion to the University of Minnesota campus after a well-deserved holiday break. The Armory halls, classrooms, and gymnasium are empty and silent without Army, Navy and Air Force ROTC students here to brighten things up. They have been missed!

The fall semester was a productive period of positive leadership development for our 28 upper-class midshipmen and great transition into proactive followership for our 19 freshmen. Between close order drill practice, color guard events, thrice-weekly early morning workouts, and regular drill periods and classes, the Unit made great strides toward achieving our academic year goals. We have also hosted a variety of other Battalion activities such as our annual 5k/10k Eagle and Anchor Run and other fundraising events, numerous community and military service projects, field training exercises, and various special events. In keeping with our mission to “develop midshipmen and officer candidates morally, mentally, and physically,” our students demonstrated impressive performance and achievements!

As an example of these efforts, the midshipman leadership and officer staff worked hard over the summer to establish the Unit as a UMN Campus Life Program so that we could take advantage of additional student benefits. We were also able to establish a fund through the UMN Foundation, allowing us to be classified as a tax-free charitable group. We have already benefited from our newfound Campus Life status by holding the annual Navy-Marine Turkey Bowl under the lights at TCF Bank Stadium. While it was a cold, blustery morning, fun was had by all.

Matching the spirit that persists in the ranks of today’s midshipmen and officers, we have set out to create many new opportunities this school year. We initiated a Leadership Lecture Series to expose our charges to six accomplished individuals outside of the immediate military environment over the course of the school year; we were participants in the UMN Homecoming Parade for the first time; we started squad-level community service projects; and we even tested our artsy side by painting our logo on the Washington Avenue walk bridge. At the core of all of this activity remains the focus of a quality baccalaureate education supported by a rigorous physical fitness and officer development program. To our parents, alums, and friends of UMN NROTC, stop by to see for yourselves! You will be proud.

I will close with a note on our vision to improve the physical condition and infrastructure of the Armory facility. Our focal points include garnering more memorabilia (such as ship or airplane models and wall art), upgrading workout equipment for our new conditioning room, adding training aids to our diverse Naval Science curriculum, as well as updating the furniture and electronics in the midshipmen study and lounge areas. If you think you can help, give me or a staff member a call to find out more. Together the Navy, Army and Air Force programs strive to provide the most positive and inspiring environment in which to train our future leaders in our historic building. Thank you for your continued support and assistance.

With Best Regards,
David Ratte
In the military there is a huge focus on seeking improvement. This year with our annual fundraising race we were able to do that. The staff that put on this year's race was hard at work beginning in May of 2013 to put on the large production on October 5th. There was a large number and a significant amount of strategizing, meetings and discussions about how to grow and expand from the previous year. We were able to add more than one hundred people this year over the previous year and it is all because of the hard work of the staff! The morning of the race was of course hectic, however it all paid off and even the weather held out for us. Next year I have the utmost faith that the race will expand and grow again to reach even greater heights!
Each semester here at the University of Minnesota, our Companies of Navy and Marine Corps Midshipmen go head to head in an all-encompassing Battalion Competition. With Alpha Company made up entirely of Navy Midshipmen and Charlie Company composed of their Marine-Option comrades, each Midshipman carries with them a sense of pride in representing not only their company, but their branch of service as well. Traditionally, the events included in the Battalion Competition are designed to play to the strengths and weaknesses of each company, creating a well-rounded field of play.

This semester the events included discipline points, inspection scores, academic records, volunteering hours, a knowledge exam covering military history and current events, a three-part drill competition (composed of COD, Color Guard, and Exhibition events), as well as athletic events including Ultimate Frisbee and Water Polo. At the end of the semester when the scores were tallied, Charlie Company took the trophy by a landslide. Charlie Company had sweeping wins in every event, with the exception of volunteering hours. This was a well earned return to victory for the Marine-Options after their first ever loss of the Battalion trophy to the Navy company in the spring of 2013. The competition will return in full force in the semester ahead, but as we continue to train together, we are constantly reminded of the greater goal of service to our nation. Even as we compete against one another, every Gopher Midshipman will undoubtedly remain dedicated to the credo, “One team, one fight!”

Above: MECEPS, Navy, and Marine Option Midshipmen lined up for the Close Order Drill Competition.

Right: Charlie Company Commander Ewald and 1st Sgt Ritter pose with the Battalion Competition Trophy.
The Navy/Marine Corps team tied for second this year at the 2013 Joint Military Athletic Competition. Held at Bierman Track on the brisk morning of November 2nd, the NROTC duked it out against the Air Force and the Army ROTC units in five different sports; Flag Football, Ultimate Frisbee, Volleyball, Basketball, and a 4x400m relay. After dominating the competition last year, the NROTC’s spirits were high; taking the trophy back from the Air Force after breaking the 30 year streak the Navy had going felt great. However, the games played this year were all on one day, meaning the Navy had to split up their numbers, whereas the Army and Air Force were able to confine their skilled players to sports they excelled at.

Two points were given to winners of each game, with one point given for each tie. Coming in first place with 13 points was the Air Force, followed by the Army and Navy both with 7 points. Great effort, NROTC! No doubt next year will fare even better!

Being my first year in NROTC, I didn’t know what to expect when 10 November rolled around. I was expecting some mention of the significance of the date, but surely not a cake-cutting ceremony put on by our unit and a celebration at Treasure Island.

Around the week of the birthday of the Marine Corps, we started getting ready in our unit for the cake-cutting ceremony, where a piece of cake to commemorate the birthday of the Marine Corps is cut. During this ceremony, the oldest and youngest Marines present take the first two bites of the cake, and a message from the 13th Commandant, General John Lejeune, is read. Likewise, six of the Marine Options from the unit reenacted the flag raising on Iwo Jima. The ceremony was brief but meaningful, and reminded me what exactly I was aspiring to be a part of.

This ceremony was repeated at the Marine Corps Birthday Ball, which was hosted by MWSS 471. Along with the cake-cutting and reenactment of the flag raising, there was also a dance, which quickly evolved into a dance-off with some of the Midshipmen and Marines. A memorable moment was when Staff Sergeant Carroll, out of nowhere, pushes MIDN Bell into the center of the dance floor and starts dancing wildly around, receiving cheers from everyone on the dance floor.
My first Marine Corps Birthday ceremony is something I will always remember as I progress through my life. From the words of the Birthday message read to us: “The inspiring message of our 13th Commandant has left its mark in the hearts and minds of all Marines.”

Celebrating the Navy Ball
By Midshipman 4/C Sean Branick

On October 12, Navy Option members of the University of Minnesota Navy ROTC battalion attended the Navy Ball, located at the Kahler Grand Hotel in Rochester, Minnesota, celebrating the Navy Birthday, which is officially October 13, 1775. The Navy League and the USS Minnesota provided the USO troupe, featuring lots of singing, and treated the Navy Options to many delicious courses. At every table, there was a glass imprinted with the symbol of the USS Minnesota, which was given to everyone present. After the meals, the oldest and the youngest that had served or is currently serving in the Navy were charged with cutting the cake and having the first piece. Midshipman Yang was the youngest, and Midshipman Van Horn’s grandfather was the oldest present. After the cake was cut and eaten, the USO troupe performed many patriotic songs, and then the dance floor was opened to everyone. Midshipman Knott showed a certain skill that hadn’t come to light before this occasion. He showed his love of dancing to everyone. He began dancing, and many of the midshipmen began to cheer him on, and soon the entire room was watching him and laughing along. After he was done, he bowed and received the applause of everyone present. Then the younger crowd took over the dance floor, with some of the more senior present joining them in a night of dancing. It wrapped up around 11pm, after a great experience.
Field Training Exercise (FTX) is a hands-on application of leadership and land navigational skills used to prepare the Midshipmen for Officer Candidate School (OCS). On Saturday October 19, 2013 the Marine Option (MO) Midshipmen from the Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps University of Minnesota participated in their FTX at Arden Hills Army Training Station. The all-day event focused on small unit leadership during squad movements while under strenuous conditions along with land navigation application. The MOs loaded up in the utility van early that morning and set out for Arden Hills.

The first event of the day was designed to give hands on leadership experience to the MOs when they were given control of a squad and tasked with an order. The Midshipmen were broken up into three squads. Each squad leader was graded in their small unit leadership skills when receiving and delivering their orders to their squads, and also while moving upon and seizing the objective. The squad leader had to successfully navigate the squad through the terrain to get to the objective and then, using formations taught to the MOs during lab, to attack and seize the objective. The squad leader had to manage difficulties such as dense terrain, hand signal communication, and formational movements all while maintaining squad cohesiveness. The evaluators found areas that needed improvement but positive areas as well.

After a hearty meal of MREs, the next area of focus was land navigation which gave the MOs a chance to hone in their map plotting skills. The Midshipmen were given sets of points which they needed to plot correctly on the map using grid lines. Once the Midshipmen correctly plotted their waypoints, they then needed to find the correct markers located at each point throughout the area. Freshmen MOs were paired with sophomores while the junior MOs were on their own. After getting a pace count, the Midshipmen marched into the brush in search of their waypoints. A steady rainfall created a new challenge in mapping for the MOs but everyone managed to find their waypoints correctly.

The Leadership Reaction Run was the final event of the day where the MOs were divided into squads of 3-4 and were tasked with using critical thinking to solve a series of problems set up by the instructors. Tasks ranged from situations such as getting ammunition across a gulley without anything touching the ground or getting the wounded across a river using only the obstacles at hand. Each of the four scenarios required the person in charge of each squad to quickly develop a plan of action and to complete the task in the time allotted. Each task had its own challenges but they all incorporated the focus on small unit leadership skills.

Overall the day proved to be a success in the further positive development of leadership skills of the Midshipmen as well as the application of practical land navigational skills in unfamiliar and sometimes difficult terrain. A cold rain...
Midshipman 1/C Sebastian Ewald, one of the evaluators of the day, gave positive feedback on what he thought was a successful day: “FTX provides a unique window into the professional development of Marine Option Midshipmen. This year’s FTX was an excellent gauge of the knowledge that the underclassmen had picked up during Professional Military Education classes during the fall semester. The Marine Options displayed proficiency and skills to build upon in the spring.”

This fall semester Alpha Company, our company made up entirely of Navy Options, initiated something we have never tried before. Each squad leader was tasked to organize various service projects for the squads to complete before the end of the semester. We had a few main reasons for doing this, mainly to show the importance of service members caring about their community and to instill a sense of responsibility and kindliness in our future Naval Officers. The other main reason we implemented this was to show the community that the University of Minnesota’s NROTC unit cares and wants to make a difference. Some of the service projects were as simple as spending a few hours packing food at Feed My Starving Children and volunteering in the child care center at a nearby homeless shelter, but some were more complicated and took more planning, for instance, a day-long event for Boy Scouts or spending a day teaching the Sea Cadets the different aspects of being a leader. Every service project left an impact on the midshipmen who participated and furthered the camaraderie of the unit, and hopefully these service projects will affect their future leadership in positive ways. We are definitely planning on continuing these service projects as a new tradition of helping our community.
Family Night
Midshipman 3/C Daniel Van Horn

Every year, the University of Minnesota NROTC puts on a family night for the families of both the senior (1/C) and freshmen (4/C) Midshipmen. The purpose of the event is to act as a welcoming night and introduction to the battalion for the freshmen, as well as a formal conclusion for the seniors in the year before they commission as officers in either the U.S. Navy or the U.S. Marine Corps.

This year’s event, held on 4 OCT 2013, was a great success. Over 80 family members and Midshipmen gathered for a social hour, dinner, and speeches from the Battalion Commanding Officer MIDN Sarah Bauer and Unit Commanding Officer CAPT David Ratte. Also included in the ceremony was a presentation from both the Exhibition and Color Guard Drill Teams; these teams were composed of all 4/Cs, who at the time had less than a month of formal drill practice. Finally, a video of this year’s New Student Orientation (NSO) was shown to expose parents and family members to the initial training 4/Cs go through to prepare for ROTC life and the expectations of Midshipmen within the battalion.

USMC Toys For Tots
By Midshipman 4/C Mitchell Watkins

Being new to the NROTC program, I was also new to the Toys for Tots program. Before I volunteered to help bag and box toys in Golden Valley I didn’t have much insight on what the program actually did and how much it accomplished. In fact I did not even know the program is run by the United States Marine Corps.

Upon arriving to the Golden Valley toy collection site at the news center I quickly learned just what the program was about. I saw many little children along with their families very happy to be dropping off toys and sharing the holiday spirit. It surprised me that children so young could be happy giving away a car load of toys that surely they would have enjoyed themselves. It is a fact that within the first two hours of my shift that day we had collected enough toys to fill half of a full length semi-trailer. What topped the day off was seeing children having the chance to be on live television. This was made possible by KARE 11, because they would film people who dropped off toys and gave everyone the opportunity to get their five seconds of fame which the smaller children especially enjoyed. This program showed me that people are truly willing to give and that giving does bring people happiness.
It was bitterly cold and windy the morning of November 26th, 2013, perfect football weather. The NROTC unit held its annual Turkey Bowl where the Navy Options and Marine Options compete in flag football for bragging rights. For the first time in Turkey Bowl history, the teams were able to compete at TCF Bank Stadium thanks to the hard work of MIDN Blomgren and MIDN Van Horn.

Historically, the Turkey Bowl has been ruled by the Marine options as the Navy Options have never won. Former Tommie and newly commissioned ENS May was part of the losing streak and wanted one more chance to win and bring pride back to the Navy side of the house. Both teams were ecstatic to hit the field as Navy kicked off. SSgt Carrol and Sgt Caploe split time at quarterback for the Marines and soon realized the wind was going to be a major factor. The Marine’s first drive was halted with a turnover on downs putting the ball in MIDN Coffel’s hands. The Navy went three and out and was forced to punt. Thankfully the Navy had the cannon leg of MIDN Johnson to pin the Marines on their own 15. On the first play of the drive, SSgt Carrol was pressured and forced an errant pass that was intercepted by MIDN Moore. This would be the beginning of a long day for the quarterback position of the Marines who would be picked off five times. Inside the Marine red zone, the Navy had a 3rd and goal from the 4 yard line when MIDN Coffel rushed in for the first score of the game putting Navy up 7-0. The rest of the half was filled with constant pressure by both defensive lines and many interceptions. The first half ended with Navy leading 7-0.

Beginning the 2nd half, the Navy defensive line stepped up their game even more, led by MIDN Braegelmann, Johnson, and Branick. Their pressure forced SSgt Carrol to throw quickly, forcing interceptions by ENS May, MIDN Sherman, and MIDN Coffel. MIDN Coffel would rush for another short touchdown putting the Navy up 14-0, a drive set up by another interception and spectacular catches by MIDN Farris and ENS May. The Marines would attempt to respond by some big plays made by MIDN Herwig and Nayes, but it would not be enough as the Navy defense would hold strong and win their first ever Turkey Bowl with score of 14-0. HOOTAH NAVY!
For the Midshipmen, Sailors and Marines of the NROTC Unit, University of Minnesota, training continues to develop these future military leaders through a broad range of valuable experiences, such as Drill Competitions, Leadership Conferences, and field training exercises. Unfortunately, Navy funds cannot be spent in the execution of such events. If you are interested in helping our students attend these excellent developmental opportunities, please consider providing a monetary donation (University of Minnesota Foundation # 20093 UMN NROTC). Your donation will directly support the students’ attendance at these events and enable the further development of future generations of leaders.

REMINDER: Your financial contributions allow the NROTC Foundation to make students stronger in all areas. Your donations to the NROTC through the UMN Alumni Association are always welcomed and tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Thank you for your generous support!

**Donation Information**

*Donations can be made online at [www.giving.umn.edu/nrotc](http://www.giving.umn.edu/nrotc)*

*Checks made payable to: University of Minnesota Foundation #20093 Naval ROTC*

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