Greetings family and friends of NROTCU RPI.

I hope this Spring 2020 edition of the Hi Line finds you and your loved ones healthy, happy, and emerging from the pandemic. As we reach the conclusion of what is hopefully our last semester of hybrid-style instruction we have a lot to be proud of and a lot to look forward to. The Midshipmen have continued to excel despite the challenges and limitations. These last semesters have been much like time spent in the shipyard. No offense meant to the great folks who do that necessary work but as front-line officers, we prefer to be operating our ships. For the crew, time in the shipyard brings all the drudgery (long hours, tough and dirty work) without any of the exhilaration of the mission. For the Midshipmen, this semester has been much the same. They have put in the long hours studying, early mornings for PT, and the work associated with demanding billets within the ships company but have been unable to experience the great traditions we enjoy such as Dining In, intramural sports, and military excellence competitions. The only consolation is that the perseverance and flexibility needed to succeed over this last academic year will translate to essential skills as Naval Officers. When they face the inevitable challenges in the fleet, our Midshipmen will be ready.

This past semester has had its highlights. The incorporation of virtual instruction has enabled us to expand the scope of our guest lecturers in leadership lab. We have heard from the Navy Research Lab, foreign area officers, aviation engineering duty officers, joint officers from the Air
Force, as well as serving waterfront officers whose recent experiences will directly apply to the lives of our Midshipmen, some sooner than others.

As the semester and the academic year come to a close, we look forward to commissioning. This is, of course, the highlight of our entire year as it represents the culmination of four years of training and education for our commissionees. This year’s ceremony will be held at the local minor league baseball stadium in order to enable us to have (a limited number of) family and friends in attendance. Our (virtual) guest of honor will be CAPT Reid Wiseman, an NROTCU RPI alumnus and Chief of the Astronaut Office at NASA.

Looking a bit further ahead, we are all very excited to get back to Midshipman summer training. After missing last year, we are eager to get the Midshipman out to the fleet for the best part of the NROTC experience. We were fortunate to be able to get all of our cruise eligible Midshipmen vaccinated early this spring which will enable them to have the full spectrum of options for summer cruise. Our incoming fourth-class Midshipmen will also be attending summer training, heading to New Student Indoctrination (NSI) at Great Lakes Naval Station. Our NSI-trained Midshipmen will make an excellent addition to the unit in the fall.

Lastly, I would like to express my thanks and the thanks of the entire unit to all of the families, friends, and alumni who have donated to the Midshipmen fund over this last year. Your support has made a huge impact. Not only did your generous donations enable us to purchase additional PT gear, they also provided the funding for our commissioning ceremony and helped the Midshipmen make
the initial purchase of inventory for our new unit store. Speaking of which, stay tuned for the opportunity to get your NROTCU RPI merchandise.

Looking ahead to the Fall, we anticipate a return to in-person instruction and are hopeful for a return to in-person visits from family, friends, and alumni. Once campus access is restored, we look forward to seeing you all. We will also be maintaining our virtual capabilities. So even if you cannot make it to Troy, you can still drop in. Thanks for your continued support of the unit and most importantly to the Midshipmen. Have a safe and enjoyable summer.

CAPT Jeff Joseph

CAPT Joseph speaking to PT Group Alpha
This semester, COVID-19 is still on the forefront of our minds and influences much of what we do. RPI still has many of the restrictions it had last semester due to the pandemic. Due to an outbreak on campus, the campus saw over 30 positive cases in a rolling two-week period and had to initiate Trigger Level One protocols. This called for the suspension of in-person instruction, pivoting to online instruction, and suspending access to campus facilities. In addition, it called for a quarantine in place for those who live on campus for two weeks. For the Third- and Fourth-Class Midshipmen who reside on campus, this was a big challenge because they had already quarantined for 2 weeks upon their arrival to RPI. But Midshipmen excel in adversity and they proved it yet again during this quarantine.

There is also hope over the horizon: COVID-19 vaccines have been released and promise a return to normalcy. RPI Midshipmen were eager to do their part and get vaccinated once they were eligible under New York State Eligibility Guidelines. This will ensure the safety and security of the Midshipmen against COVID-19, and brings the unit
closer to accomplishing its mission of commissioning Naval officers. Midshipmen are expected to attend summer training this summer after having missed it last year, and these vaccines will ensure Midshipmen will be able to complete it in the safest manner possible. RPI is also planning on conducting the Fall semester completely in person for the first time since March of 2020. They plan to require all students coming on campus to be vaccinated, and Midshipmen will now be one step ahead, and ready to hit the ground running in the Fall.

*MIDN Wynn (left) and MIDN Maher (right) receiving their first COVID-19 vaccine shot*
Each Fall, First Class Midshipmen reach the pinnacle of their time in NROTC with Service Assignment. It is an event that is anxiously awaited. Assignments were released on October 19th, after many delays due to COVID and hurricanes. The First-Class Midshipmen celebrated the long-awaited occasion with a Zoom Call party, marking the beginning of the end of their ROTC journey as a tight-knit class.

Upon Commissioning, the First Class will go their separate ways to start their next journey. The Student Naval Aviators and Flight Officers will head to Flight School In Pensacola, FL. The submariners will attend Nuclear Power School in Charleston, SC. And the Surface Warfare Officers will go to their first ships after BDOC, which they selected in late February. Listed Below are the 1/C and their assignments:

SWO: Farr (USS Lassen), McCabe (USS Mahan), Stroka (USS Chosin), Toracinta (USS Tulsa-Blue Crew)
Carbone (USS Daniel Inouye)
SWO(Nuclear): Wagner (USS The Sullivans)
SNA: Beck, Kang, and Zawislak
SNFO: Arntz, Huang, and Melvin
SUBS: Kasun and Laney
SUBS (Engineering Duty Officer Option): Lutz
Back Row: MIDN Carbone, Beck, Zawislak, Melvin, Farr, Toracinta

Front Row: MIDN Kang, Wagner, Kasun, Huang, Arntz, Laney, Lutz, Stroka, McCabe

Congratulations to all and the best of luck in your future careers!
On March 3, 2021, the Midshipmen of NROTCU RPI hosted a Joint Service Drill in which officers from each branch of the United States military talked about joint service experiences from their careers. This drill served as a substituted for Joint Service Ball, a yearly ball in which all ROTC programs at RPI and neighboring school come together to celebrate all that they accomplished during the year. There were two presentation during the Joint Service Drill, first a junior officer panel, followed by a special presentation by a senior officer who had spent most of her career working in a joint environment.

Representing the Army was CAPT Oghere, a prior enlisted combat medic who commissioned as a Logistician. The Air Force representative was Capt. Jack Davis, an Aircraft Maintenance Officer. Representing the Marines was 1st LT Cones, who is a Military Police Officer. Finally, representing the Navy was LT Miller, a Surface Warfare Officer with a specialization as a nuclear operator, and a new member of NROTC RPI Unit Staff. After introductions the Midshipmen were given the opportunity to ask these Junior Officer question about their joint service experiences. LT Cones discussed his experiences leading a team of senior officers from different branches who would assess the vulnerability of different military bases in Syria and Iraq. CAPT Oghere discussed his time as a logistician, supplying units from different branches at the United States Southern Border.
The second presentation was given by Colonel Locke, an active duty Air Force Officer and RPI alumni. Colonel Locke has gained plenty of experience working in joint environments over her twenty-eight-year career. She began her presentation with a discussion on the four relationships junior officers have. They were your relationship with your job, with your chain of command, with your peers, and with yourself. After a discussion on these relationships, the floor was opened for Midshipmen to ask Colonel Locke questions. In the question and answer segment, the Colonel talked about how she managed to raise a family with a military spouse. She also explained how she used to take an hour a day to talk to random people in her office to learn what they do. Colonel Locke explained how this helped in her day to day, as she eventually had to work with these people. She stated that having a face to the name and understanding of that person’s job greatly helped her accomplish her tasks.
Three years ago, the Unit started up the Community Club program. The intent of the program was to educate and build excitement about each commissioning community (Aviation, Submarines, SWO, and as of last year, SPECWAR). Even during the challenges of Covid-19, the clubs continue to grow and flourish, while giving Midshipmen a sense of pride in their desired community.

The Aviation Club, led by MIDN 1/C Beck, has had an active year. The club kicked off the semester with a welcome ASTB prep meeting (the ASTB is the test to gauge potential to succeed in the aviation community). They followed that up with a string of amazing guest speakers, including two jet pilots, a helicopter pilot, and a pipeline briefing. They also put on an online simulation night, where Midshipmen had the opportunity to play aviation themed games online.

MIDN 1/C Carbone led the Submarine Club. The club’s big event for the year was the 2nd Annual Cribbage Tournament. While the tournament had to be completed using a virtual app, the Midshipmen in the club still had a great time interacting with each other and honing their skills. The club also has monthly meetings where submarine history and the training pipeline are discussed.
SPECWAR Club is led by MIDN 2/C Dupuis. The club meets regularly to discuss workout techniques to prepare for the PST (the inventory physical fitness test to determine eligibility), in addition to bringing in guest speakers. This year’s guest speakers included a SEAL Captain, as well as a SEAL Junior Officer, both of whom offered amazing insight on what it takes to make it as a SEAL.

MIDN Toracinta was the Surface Warfare Club Commander. This year, their big event was a zoom call with an RPI NROTC Alumni, who discussed what life as a Division Officer is like. This provided a valuable preview of what life will be like in a few short months for Midshipmen, and helped remind them that their training at RPI is critical to success.
COVID-19 has changed the way we conduct many of our trainings but it will never stop us. As Captain Joseph is fond of saying “the enemy never rests nor should we,” we must always be improving our mission readiness. Part of that improvement comes from regular physical training. Even with the COVID regulations such as mask mandate and social distancing, the Midshipmen at NROTCU RPI are continuing to improve themselves’ physical in two ways, virtual PT and in-person PT.

Once a week the Athletics Division at NROTCU RPI sends Midshipmen two workout plans for Tuesday and Friday PT. Midshipmen then perform these workouts on their own or with roommates if they live with other Midshipmen. The Athletics Division does an excellent job at providing diverse and fun workouts that focus on building strength, speed, and endurance. A new addition to the virtual workout plans is the indoor cardio section. This section helps Midshipmen improve their cardiovascular strength if they are unable to leave their room due to quarantine or weather.

For those Midshipmen that have access to campus, they will also participate in in-person PT. Once a week the Midshipmen have an early wake-up call for in-person at the Armory at RPI. Two groups of approximately seven to eight Midshipmen gather socially distance for a PT session. Midshipmen are spaced eighteen feet apart to allow them to
take their masks off and give that PT session one hundred and ten percent effort. In-person PT consists of a challenging calisthenic workout as there are too many Midshipmen to utilize the track. Though this is not a complete return to normal, completing a challenging workout with other Midshipmen gives Midshipmen the motivation to attack the day’s challenges head-on.

Another change to physical training this year is the return of the PRT. Though the Navy has delayed the PRT to the second half of 2021, the Midshipmen at NROTCU RPI took the initiative and conducted an End of Semester PRT this semester. Starting April 20th, over the course of the week, Midshipmen conducted their PRT safely, to gauge their physical fitness level. This will give the Midshipmen a benchmark fitness level to understand what they need to focus on for their upcoming Summer Cruises.

Midshipmen doing burpees on Harkness field during PT
Though this semester has had its share of hardships, the Midshipmen did receive one pleasant surprise. Thanks to the generous donations to the “Navy Midshipmen Alumni and Friends” Fund, the Unit was able to acquire new PT equipment. The Unit purchased: three 8kg, three 12kg, and three 16kg kettlebells, eight workout sandbags, five foam rollers, twenty jump ropes, and four resistance bands. The sandbags, resistance bands, and kettlebells will allow the Athletics Division to incorporate new workouts that center around functional strength training. Jump ropes can be used as a socially distance form of cardio that improves speed and endurance. In the case of the foam rollers, these will help Midshipmen stretch after PT session and prevent injuries.
The theme for the Ship’s Company during the Spring 2021 semester has been flexibility. In a semester with easing COVID restrictions but increased lockdowns from RPI, the planning for each event this semester had to happen twice. With Freshmen, Sophomores, and some Seniors on campus, we had more midshipmen in person than we did online. This allowed some sense of normalcy to return to our operations. However, with in person drill attendees spread across four rooms, in person PT split across three days, and many of our shipmates still unable to come to campus, calling operations anything close to normal would be a stretch.

Despite having to bake COVID contingencies into everything we did, the Ship’s Company was able to have a productive and successful semester. MIDN 1/C Kang, 2/C Ryan, and several 1/C facilitators ensured that our spread-out drill sessions ran smoothly. MIDN 2/C Fazio and the Athletics Division coordinated six PT groups across three days. MIDN 3/C Terwilliger and the MWR Division held multiple online game nights and tournaments to connect midshipmen when we were unable to meet face-to-face. The Academics Division led by MIDN 3/C Bahethi coordinated midshipman study efforts through an academics discord server, hosting study hours, review sessions, and bringing in outside tutors to help midshipmen excel academically. MIDN 3/C Douglass and the Underclassmen Professional Development Division created opportunities for underclassmen mentor chains to interact and hosted a seminar to prepare our midshipmen to go on cruise for the first time in two years. MIDN 1/C Arntz developed the plan for our yearly
culminating event and was able to transition the training online when COVID concerns cancelled the in-person portion of the event. MIDN 4/C Elligott coordinated the unit’s participation in the virtual Villanova Military Excellence Competition. MIDN 2/C Reddish and the Disbursement Division created a plan to revitalize the unit store and create a permanent place to purchase unit merchandise. Our community clubs, led by MIDN 1/C Beck, 1/C Toracinta, 1/C Carbone, and 2/C Dupuis provided opportunities for midshipmen to engage with their prospective service assignment communities through guest speakers, seminars, and game nights. These are just a few examples of the individual efforts that enable the Ship’s Company to run efficiently and smoothly.

I am very proud about all that we have achieved this semester. These efforts show that when presented with challenging and uncertain conditions, the ship’s company can not only adapt to them, but thrive under them. This sort of flexibility and dedication shows that the midshipmen of the ship’s company are committed to their training here at NROTCURPI and demonstrates their potential as future officers.

As my time as both the Midshipman Commanding Officer and a Midshipman ends, I would like to thank my Midshipman staff and the rest of the Ship’s Company for making this semester a success. I encourage you all to get some well needed rest over the summer and come back ready to work in the fall. To the rest of my commissioning class, congratulations, and thank you for making these past four years great. Enjoy your summer!