Spring 2020 Hi-Line
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps

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Greetings family and friends of NROTCU RPI.

I hope this edition of the Hi Line finds you and your loved ones safe. As we complete this year of training and commission our group of exceptional new officers, we do so in a way that is quite literally unprecedented. This time of year is one where we typically reflect on those who have gone before us and the challenges they faced; wondering what new challenges this generation of leaders will face. This year, the first challenge is obvious. Our Midshipmen are fighting through the restrictions and limitations of the coronavirus to continue their training and get to the fleet.

Accession of new Sailors and Officers is a critical mission area for the Navy and I am proud to report that the Midshipmen and staff at NROTCU RPI have pivoted seamlessly to our new (and hopefully temporary) virtual environment. We have had a successful year despite the emergence of the virus. Our fourteen (soon-to-be) Ensigns will head off to training and ultimately their ships and squadrons, balancing the restrictions necessary to mitigate the pandemic with the drive to take their place as leaders in the fleet. The Midshipmen of the ship’s company have continued to excel, as you can read about in these pages.

As we look ahead to the fall, the Midshipmen and staff are preparing to receive the class of 2024. Because the coronavirus has increased the complexity of managing Navy boot camp, this incoming class will not be attending New Student Indoctrination (NSI) at Great Lakes Naval Training Station. This places increased emphasis on our local New Student Orientation (NSO) to make sure we effectively transform prospective Freshmen (AKA “civilians”) into Midshipmen. The only wrinkle is the timing. We will have to wait until we all return to campus. Whenever that is, the unit staff and a team of motivated Midshipman volunteers are up to the task. Stay tuned to the Fall Hi-Line for highlights.

The most significant impact to Midshipman training of the coronavirus pandemic is the loss of summer training. As part of the Navy’s mitigation strategy we are not sending Midshipmen out on summer cruise. So, if you have a Midshipman in your family, enjoy the extra time with them. If you are an alumnus or other friend of the unit, I am asking you to consider whether you can help us mitigate this loss of training. Part of our “new normal” coming out of this crisis will be an increased familiarity and comfort with virtual interactions. We can, and should, leverage this new capability to bring RPI alums into drill or other sessions with the MIDN virtually. If you are interested in sharing your fleet perspective or have something else to share, please let us know.
A Message from the Commanding Officer (Cont.)

One final thought from the perspective of a crusty old submariner (yours truly). What have these last couple of months of this unusual Spring 2020 semester looked like for an RPI Midshipman…? Long days isolated from most people, not much to do other than work, and someone from your chain of command sending you periodic tasking. Sounds a lot like deployment! So, maybe there is some enhanced training value here after all. One consequence of deployment is that helps you appreciate the simple pleasures in life that we otherwise take for granted. Hopefully when this strange, reverse deployment (to home) is over we will all have a deeper appreciation of the time we are able to spend together.

Stay safe and thank you for your ongoing support of NROTCU RPI and our Midshipmen.

CAPT Jeff Joseph

Donation Information

Donation Link

Checks can be made out to: “Navy Midshipmen Alumni and Friends”

and sent to:

RPI Naval Service 110 8th Street
AS&RC 201 Troy, NY 12180

Contact information

Phone: (518) 276-8001
Fax: (518) 276-4788

Unit Website

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Late last semester, a group of RPI MIDN and Unit Staff were given the opportunity to visit the Naval Nuclear Laboratory in Niskayuna, New York. They were given a tour of some of the most technologically-advanced systems the Navy has to offer, and brought back to RPI a newfound appreciation for manufacturing in the modern age. The marvels they saw there would plant a seed that soon grew into a desire to have a small piece of that capability right here at RPI—our very own NROTC 3D printer.

While RPI students have access to other 3D printers on campus, the Unit 3D printer gives Midshipmen an edge to pursue their goals faster than ever. Open to school tasks, personal projects, and more, it’s sure to see a lot of use in the upcoming semesters.

You’re probably wondering what it can really do though. Mini or massive, pretty or practical, check out the pictures below for some of the cool projects we’ve already completed this year!

**A Benchmark Boat: First Print**

**A 3D Unit Coin / Guest of Honor Gift**

It’s Almost 6 Inches Across!

**For the Future:**

It’s Not Really Complete Until Someone Prints a Submarine.
This semester RPI Midshipmen had the unique opportunity to collaborate with Sodexo and Rensselaer Dining Services in honoring Maj. Bill White, a 104 year old Marine WWII veteran. Maj. White fought on Iwo Jima and was awarded the Purple Heart for injuries he sustained. This Valentine’s Day, he asked for people to send him cards at his assisted living facility in Stockton, California. The public outreach division at NROTCU RPI helped organize the signing of a banner provided by Rensselaer Dining Services that was then sent to Maj. White, who ended up receiving over 300,000 cards. As we continue our training as Midshipmen it is important that we learn from and honor the sacrifices of those who have gone before us.
The 69th annual Joint Service Ball was celebrated on the 14th of February. The Army, Navy, and Air Force all gathered at the Hilton in Troy for an evening of camaraderie and unity. This annual celebration is a reminder that despite the friendly rivalries between the ROTC units, the end goal of all cadets and midshipmen is the same: to commission as officers in the United States military.

The event began with arrival and cocktail hour. MIDN 4/C Anderson served as the usher, welcoming attendees as they entered. The cocktail hour provided time for the members of the different units to get to know each other better. MIDN 2/C Beck delivered a prayer of invocation after the cocktail hour. The POW/MIA table was brought to everyone’s attention. This table is always set at a military ball in remembrance of those who are not able to be with us because of their service to the country. Cadet Sweeney of the Air Force Detachment led the joint service color guard, which included two Navy MIDN. MIDN 2/C Stroka led the joint service vocalists in singing the National Anthem. The tradition of toasting each of the branches was conducted.
The guest of honor was Matt Patricia, the head coach of the Detroit Lions. A graduate of RPI Class of 1996, Matt Patricia spoke about his life and the value of hard work, determination, and the belief that you will succeed. He also spoke of his time at RPI, and how it helped him succeed in life. The motto for this year was “United We Stand, Divided We Fall”, which helped to shape the event as a union of the family that is the RPI ROTC units.

MIDN 1/C Isaac Fultz was the coordinator for this Joint Service ball, and his effort and careful planning ensured the smooth operation of the event.
All 4/C MIDN have a drill requirement that is fulfilled either by group armed drill or color guard. The MIDN were given a choice between the two and trained every Sunday to perfect the skills and movements of their chosen drill to compete in a Military Excellence Competition (MEC). This obligation established discipline, work ethic, and camaraderie within the 4/C. “I feel that the drill requirement helped me not only with coordination and weapon safety, but it provided me with an opportunity to be a leader and lead my peers which is invaluable to me as a Marine option,” said MIDN 4/C Bahethi, who was one of the armed drill squad leaders.

The group armed drill team was led by the Drill Commander, MIDN 3/C Morford. The MIDN used demilitarized M-16 Rifles to learn about weapon safety and how to conduct armed drill. The team started out with basic facing movements and the command ‘Inspection Arms’. Within a matter of weeks, MIDN 3/C Morford was able to lead the MIDN that didn’t know their right from their left to successfully complete drill movements as a team.

MIDN 2/C Kang and MIDN 3/C Whitlock were the color guard commanders for the Fall and Spring semesters, respectively. The color guard presents the national ensign and service flags for competitions and ceremonies. For competitions the color guard team practices the same movements, cadence, pauses, and timing until they can’t get them wrong. Ceremonies, unlike competitions, require flexibility to your surroundings. The team had to learn basic movements that can be combined in different orders to suit each situation. MIDN 3/C Whitlock’s goal was to build muscle memory in the 4/C for each individual movement, in both competition and ceremony, so that he could rely on them being in a certain order to execute correctly.

Though the teams never got to compete in a MEC due to the coronavirus outbreak, they did have a demonstration at the family weekend event.
Each semester the unit’s infamous and widely revered IM sports teams, battling under the name “SKELETON KRU,” competes against other teams across the school to bring home victories for our unit. This year proved to be no different.

One of the most standout Midshipman this semester, was Midshipman 2/C Zawislak, who captained the basketball team, while also playing floor hockey. He thoroughly enjoyed working alongside MIDN 4/C Quereshy, who MIDN 2/C Zawislak personally named rookie of the year and an “unstoppable goalie” in floor hockey, attributing the title due to his dedication to never let the opponents score. When asked about what inspired MIDN 2/C Zawislak on the court, he said “I want to thank the seniors and the Air Force Cadets who joined our basketball team, they put in the real work, especially MIDN Dromgoole. In floor hockey, seniors MIDN Clark and Papio were my idols, they gave everything they had 24/7 and we will miss their motivational speeches.”

Looking back on the season, Zawislak will fondly remember the “most exciting moment... when MIDN Kern made his much anticipated debut 4 years in the making. The fans went berserk when he scored his first (and only) basket in that debut... watching it, I knew I was becoming a part of history.” While the season was cut short, both the basketball and floor hockey teams look forward to continuing their ferocious run next semester.

Two other teams, the IM indoor soccer and Frisbee teams, experienced tough challenges this semester, but are also looking to improve for next year. The Frisbee team, which was to be led by captain MIDN 2/C Arntz, looked forward to starting the season and crushing the competition after coming back from spring break, but never got the opportunity to showcase their skill. IM soccer, led by MIDN 2/C Beck faced a rough 2-5 record before spring break. While they hoped to improve on their record when they got back from break, the team looks forward to regrouping next year to continue their dominance.
Rensselaer and NROTCU RPI have been quick in adapting to new operational restrictions due to the national impact of COVID-19. All classes, laboratory periods, and NROTC courses have continued through an online format. Following Spring Break, RPI called for an additional one-week recess as instructors reworked course schedules and syllabi to account for long-distance learning. As RPI announced the closure of on-campus housing, many Midshipmen returned home, while some living off-campus remained in Troy.

NROTC operations and academic courses have continued via teleconferencing platforms such as Zoom and WebEx. Midshipmen are able to interact face to face with professors and Unit Staff, ask questions, and participate in group discussions. The weekly NROTC drill session continues on Wednesdays with all hands. During disengaged operations, these meetings become even more important to keep Midshipmen engaged and mission focused. Each session is an opportunity for Midshipmen to ask questions and is accompanied by a written assignment. Academic courses are conducted through either live lectures or prerecorded videos. Professors and Teaching Assistants hold virtual office hours and maintain excellent communication.

The mission of Naval Service Training Command is to develop Midshipmen morally, mentally, and physically, to become officers in the Navy and Marine Corps. Despite COVID-19, the NROTC program will continue to deliver Ensigns and second Lieutenants to the fleet. Rensselaer and the Naval ROTC Unit on campus remain committed to this objective and plan on commissioning fourteen Ensigns this May via an online format.
It is in times of uncertainty and ambiguity where we must fall back on our everyday routine to keep us functioning at a high level. With our everyday lives being affected so intensely by COVID-19, it is imperative for our mental health and well-being to retain, and even improve, our level of fitness. As a Unit, we have discussed all semester that PT is a necessity within our own personal lives that can be a catalyst for optimal performance. Since we cannot conduct “all hands” PT sessions at RPI, we as Midshipmen are working up a sweat within our own homes. We follow PT plans designed by our fellow shipmates that are designed to push us to our individual limits and continue the progression of our overall fitness levels.

These PT routines mainly consist of bodyweight exercises that require no equipment. However, do not let the simplicity of these workouts fool you. The bodyweight calisthenics routines are organized with high repetitions for each set of every movement, which challenges individual muscle groups and forces us to work out of our comfort zone in a healthy way. Included within our bodyweight exercises are stationary cardio routines that can be performed inside, and are structured in such a way that will spike one’s heart rate in both a fun and challenging manner. The optional running routines included within the PT program each week are also incredibly stimulating, and are to be performed outside while maintaining safe social distancing. Between distance running at a comfortable pace and mixing it up with maximum effort conditioning runs and sprints, these workouts are certainly a treat for the cardiovascular system.

On the logistical side, we have had to adjust how our Midshipmen chain of command takes accountability of our shipmates upon completion of each PT session. After a few weeks of virtual innovation, we came up with a winning solution that requires Midshipmen to take a photo of themselves upon completion of the PT routine of the week, and submit it to our google drive. This has become a fun way to keep ourselves accountable, as well as an efficient way for Midshipmen staff members to report accountability up the chain of command.

As we press forward into the remainder of our term, we as a Unit will continue to maintain our level of fitness. PT is one variable in our everyday lives that we can control, which is ever so valuable in these trying times.
“The massive political tumult and antiwar fervor was driving ROTC programs off campus at many universities, including Union College in Schenectady. Members of our own RPI NROT Unit had declared or would soon declare themselves conscientious objectors and be released from their military obligations, albeit without objection, even after their tuitions had been fully paid.

At Rensselaer, student dissatisfaction with the incursion into Cambodia was so strong, that they left classes, with the resulting disruption motivating the administration in empathy, to offer students the option of finishing classes without grades on a Pass/Fail P/F basis.”
“Did you know that the RPI NROTC Unit CO and XO were invited to appear before the Rensselaer Staff Faculty Council in the spring of 1970 to defend whether or not ROTC programs should remain on campus? (I apologize that the XO’s name escapes me, but he too was a Polaris boat skipper, and a brilliant man.) I was invited to present remarks at this meeting, as the MIDN battalion CO, and had the rare opportunity to hear the then popular objections to and political support of ROTC on campus expressed by several speakers. But then the Skipper, XO and Chemistry Professor Dr. Clark give brilliant, and impressively persuasive rebuttal, that not only turned the tide, but greatly strengthened the foundation logic for Army, and Air Force ROTC and NROTC at RPI. Later that year, NROTC scholarship numbers were raised from 18 to 40. Of all of the points Captain Gallemore raised that afternoon, the scholarship of the battalion, and the unparalleled preparation of a combined NROTC Program syllabus and Rensselaer education for leadership in service as second to none in academia, that the Staff Faculty Council voted to keep and actually strengthen the programs.”

“At the time NROTC midshipmen were the only Rensselaer engineer undergraduate students to take courses in (naval) history, modern management, criminal law (UCMJ), celestial navigation, leadership and team athletics all four years for eight semesters. In addition, the excellent NROTC summer training programs were cited in detail, when at that time, summer career internships were rare or unheard of for most engineering students. “
1. You can do more than most any of your contemporaries in a variety of disciplines, if you've managed to survive undergraduate studies and graduate from Rensselaer. The same goes for military adversaries. Use this strength as you compete for promotions, assignments and other goals in the Navy and Marine Corp. You know how to put together a detailed report, the important elements, how to be brief. USE YOUR MATH AND GRAPH skills to express complex ideas. When opposing military adversaries, let loose your full math and engineering skills to find and define your organization's strengths. I can assure you, as a Rensselaer graduate, you are prepared in this area.

2. Write, write, write. But always be sure to whom your correspondence is addressed and tailor your remarks appropriately. Make sure that you know from whom your correspondence came, so that you address all questions and issues raised in the correspondence correctly. Be very careful on your use of adjectives and adverbs, as your seniors do not like to be criticized. If you have an argument to make, make it dispassionately, supported by facts and examples, math and graphs, a picture or two, testimony of witnesses if called for. NEVER SEND ANY CORRESPONDENCE UNLESS YOU HAVE YOUR ISIC PROOF READ IT FIRST. REPEAT AFTER ME, Never....

3. Publish: You will have ample opportunity to publish technical papers, new and improved Standard Operating Procedures recommendations, "There I Was" stories of your unique operational experiences, as well as innovative, relevant and credible papers and presentations. It will help the Navy and Marine Corp to become better organizations and will help your skipper to break you out in FITREPS

4. Stay in shape: Run, run, run. Keep your uniform perfect and your appearance as best you are able. Remember that you will continue to mature as a human being. Watch your weight. Protect your hearing, your eyes and your fingers and toes.

5. LISTEN: Your boss (ISIC) will give you the goals that he/she desires for you to achieve. LISTEN to that. Converse and communicate with your boss often to make sure that what you are doing is what the boss desires. You will be a happy camper at FITREP time.

6. Visit your Navy or Marine Corp detailer in Washington often, as if he/she was your favorite cousin. Call when you can't visit. Regularly talk with your Skipper and XO about keeping your Navy career on path. Let them work for you with the placement officers for the jobs that you desire next.
7. ALWAYS BE STUDYING. Enroll in further formal post grad education at every duty station and at every chance available to you. Consider diversity in your educational pursuits. Look to an MBA, to literature and history studies, counseling, languages and fine arts.

8. Keep your own notebook of clean jokes, good stories and games of entertainment. You will spend a lot of time at sea, at remote duty stations and at social gatherings with peers and superiors. Be prepared to keep life lively. You are a better team member when you can both be serious and laugh at the appropriate times.

9. Keep a diary of your daily activities, operations and writings. At FITREP time, you will have a ready list of achievements, accomplishments and completed tasks to give to your XO and skipper by which to evaluate you. In the Navy and Marine Corps, you will regularly be called upon to do collateral duties, maybe 5, 6 or 7 duties in addition to your assigned billet. Ops Officer, Division Officer, Legal Officer, Admin Officer, Maintenance Officer, Training Officer, Navy Relief Coordinator, Damage Control, Voting Officer, Change of Command Coordinator, Command Duty Officer, Senior Watch Officer, Foreign Officer Liaison Officer, Operational Readiness Inspection Coordinator, Conning Officer Alongside, Athletic Fitness Test Coordinator, Unit Annual Picnic Officer, Dependents Day/Tiger Cruise Coordinator, Boat Officer, Shore Patrol Officer, Beach Guard Officer, Beach Det Officer in Charge, Combined Federal Campaign and Savings Bond Officer, Advanced Party Coordinator, Barracks Inspector, Promotion Board, Officer Selection Board, Award Board, Audit Board, Administrative Investigation Officer, Legal JAG Investigation Officer, Holiday Newsletter Editor, Officer Mess, Enlisted Mess and Tours Officer.

10. BE YOURSELF, repeat, BE YOURSELF and you will always be self-confident, original, strong in your own way and pleased with your performance at the end of the day. Set your own goals for training and education, athletics, career path, financial success, growth, personal life and travel. Maintain your own identity even as you contribute your all to your team. Be careful out there, look after your own safety and plan, plan, plan for what is next.
The Spring 2020 semester has been unprecedented for NROTCU RPI. At the beginning of the semester, I shared my goals with the theme being to prepare for the summer and ultimately the fleet. Little did we know that it would be almost impossible to prepare for the events that have transformed our second semester into one of unparalleled adaptations. Events such as the Culminating Event, Military Excellence Competitions, Dining In, and Commissioning have had to be canceled or dramatically altered. Every Midshipman has had to adapt to new forms of learning, and much of the structure that characterizes the RPI experience has dissolved. This does not mean that Midshipmen are struggling, and I would even say that this Pandemic has proven to be one of the best teachers of life’s lessons. Learning to adapt to an ever-changing environment is essential to Sailors and Marines. The Ship’s Company has become resourceful in their personal development through virtual active learning and creative physical fitness routines. The mission for every Midshipman, earn a commission and serve our country, has remained the same; this semester was by no means a failure as the life lessons provided by these crazy times will prove invaluable as we join the fleet.

It has been an honor being able to serve as the Midshipman Commanding Officer, but it is the dedication and perseverance of my staff that has truly made this semester successful. While many of the plans we set out to accomplish this semester have to be postponed, the foundation for active and successful following semesters has been built. I learned a lot from every Midshipman on my staff, and I thank you all for being so flexible during this tumultuous semester.

To all of the Midshipmen in the unit, I implore you to take a period of introspection to determine what you miss most from RPI. Eventually, you will return to campus and continue in-person operations, but make sure you give extra emphasis to that which you miss most. Academics are the reason we are at RPI and you should definitely focus on maintaining your academic standing, but I doubt you will remember the calculus test over your memories with friends. Your time at RPI is short, and there is a real possibility of it ending unexpectedly. NROTC does a great job of teaching moral character and establishing the pillars of leadership, but your personal experiences ensure these things become part of you. Enjoy your time in college, and be excited about your future.