



# Gorilla Gazette

Pittsburg State University Army ROTC  
pittstate.edu/mil

2020



**Professor of Military Science**  
LTC Charles Costello

A special welcome to all of you, especially our esteemed Alumni, to this year's edition of our newsletter. Our goal is to keep you all informed about the status of the program, what we have accomplished this past year and, more importantly, what we are wanting to achieve in the coming academic year. As we navigate these troubling times, be comforted in the knowledge that we have the most resilient and well training Cadets and we will persevere! This spring semester is especially difficult as we cannot hold our traditional commissioning ceremony at the Veterans Memorial; instead this is scheduled to be executed virtually. Not at all how I imagined our newest class of Lieutenants to be recognized for their accomplishments. COVID-19 is a terrible situation to cope with but your Cadets and Cadre will come out stronger on the other side of this, that I promise all of you!

This academic year has certainly been exciting. We opened our newest extension unit of the Gorilla Battalion, Wichita State Army ROTC! This program enhances your Battalion with the knowledge that the Gorilla Battalion's tradition of excellence will now be available to more future leaders. This has been my main focus over the last two years and I'm happy to report that with the help of the entire team we have accomplished our goal. In the span of the last 12 months the program has grown by 45% and will continue to do so! This year we welcome another large class of senior Cadets, with 17 scheduled to be commissioning this FY as 2LTs. We expect

our class size to increase even more as we have recruited some of the finest young men and women to share in the Gorilla Battalion experience starting Fall 2020. The outstanding recruiting by one of your own, Mr. Josh Shay Class of 2004, has seen ten scholarship winners for the class of 2024. A superb beginning for your program to continue to grow on! Building tomorrows leaders with world class cadre is what we do and I promise all the Alumni we will continue to do so.

Fall semester 2019 saw a number of great events for the Gorilla Battalion. We continued our support to the Pittsburg State University Football team with our color guard, cannon crew and push up platoon. We supported the PSU baseball and basketball team with team building events promoting teamwork and resiliency. I had the honor of inducting our latest member of the ROTC hall of fame, COL (R) Tim Senecaut and administering the contracting oath to 20 cadets. We competed at the Task Force Ranger Challenge with two teams and the five person team won at the task force competition! We also supported the university's Veterans Day observance and had the honor of speaking at the wreath laying ceremony this December for wreaths across America. We continued our commitment to community service with assisting with Toys for Tots, numerous color guard events across the community, and supporting our local JROTC programs. We conducted our first Alumni Banquet this past Fall and am hopeful that when we host our second Banquet this upcoming Fall 2020 semester we will see a great deal more of our Alumni come out to support the program and celebrate!

This Spring semester has been probably the most challenging for both the cadre and Cadets of the Gorilla Battalion. Due to the COVID-19 situation we had to cancel all of our events which included our Spring FTX, the Gorilla Dash fund raiser, our Dining Out and awards banquet, and most importantly our commissioning ceremony at our beautiful Veterans Memorial. All of these events are so important to the Gorilla Battalion and will cause some setbacks in terms of morale, training, and financial aspects that we depend upon. We as Cadre are continuing to train our Cadets online and are coming up with innovative ways to teach, coach, and mentor our Cadets. Many thanks to the University and the Cadre for all their hard work as we shift to this form of alternative teaching methods. Never a dull moment around here but we are up for the challenge!

Summer 2020 is still unclear as to what our Cadets will face. With COVID-19 uncertainty all summer training is at high risk of being delayed, changed, or canceled. We currently have 22 MS III Cadets scheduled to attend Cadet Summer Training, four Cadets to attend Airborne and Air Assault Schools, three attending Nurse Summer Training Program, and eight to attend CTLT all over the United States. All of which are in jeopardy and hopefully will still be executed in some fashion. Even if the worst case scenario happens, as much as they would be disappointed, we will do all we can to ensure that our Cadets are ready to take the reins as the incoming Senior Class. I have every confidence in all of them!

As the semester draws to an end I would like to extend my thanks to the Cadets, university personnel, and our great alumni for their support. On behalf of the Gorilla Battalion and my family I would like to wish you the very best during this difficult time. Your support to this program in any capacity is now more important than ever! OAGAAG!!





## Senior Military Instructor of Military Science

MSG Timothy Nellessen

This year I have been extremely lucky with the Cadets that I had in the Junior Class. 19 Cadets trained and learned leadership this year as they prepared to go to Fort Knox for Cadet Summer Training. I completely revamped the training glidepath this year and had them start at leading a Squad, then transitioned them slowly to Platoon operations. I saw them grow in their confidence in themselves, and their leadership and decision making ability over the course of this last year. In the spring semester we focused on their mental agility and how they handle decision making when things are changing rapidly on the battlefield. I am extremely proud of all of them and I am anticipating them dominating their peers at Fort Knox this summer.

Sadly this is my last semester at PSU as an instructor. I was selected to attend the Sergeants Major Academy at Fort Bliss Texas starting in August. This has been an extremely rewarding assignment and I am looking forward to seeing Gus on at least a few more vehicles on Army Posts. OAGAAG and RLTW.

# Meet the New Pitt State ROTC Cadre



Staff Sergeant Tramarkis D. Johnson is from Loris, South Carolina and enlisted into the U.S. Army on February 4, 2013. He attended Basic Combat Training and Advanced Individual Training at Fort Jackson, SC where he transitioned into a Soldier and Human Resources Specialist. Upon completion of training he was assigned to 3RD Brigade Combat Team, 10TH Mountain Division at Fort Drum, New York. While there he deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. He then was

assigned to 2-10 Assault Helicopter Battalion, 10TH Combat Aviation Brigade at Fort Drum, New York where he served as the Human Resources NCOIC 2015-2016. In 2016, he was then assigned to the 1ST Squadron, 17TH Cavalry Regiment, 82ND Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. He served in the organization from 2016 – 2020 as the Senior Human Resources NCO. He is married to Jhanai Johnson of Loris, South Carolina and they have a 1 child, Carson Johnson.



Captain Erick León joined the Pitt State ROTC program in July of 2019. Serving as an Assistant Professor of Military Science, he is bringing 17 years of experience spanning deployments to Iraq, Afghanistan, and Jordan. This experience is distributed amongst a varied military career of service as an Infantryman, a combat medic, a military funeral honor guard, a ordnance/logistic officer, and having served the last 6 years as an Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Technician

Officer. He believes in developing future leaders to perform to the best of their abilities, fostering strong character and esprit de corps. He has served with the 25th Infantry Division, 744th Military Police Battalion, 52nd and 71st Explosive Ordnance Disposal Brigades. CPT León is a native of the Bronx, NYC and is married to Yana. They have two children together, Nikolai and Eva.



Mary Jane Emerson joined the Pitt State ROTC program in April of 2019, but didn't have to go far as she is a Sergeant First Class assigned to the 891st Engineers that resides in the same building as ROTC. She has 20 years and 4 months service in the KSARNG. Her military experience has taken her from supply, to plumbing, to construction, to combat engineer tasks and to battalion supply functions. She has conducted two tours at the National Training Center and has been mobilized for state-side and overseas missions multiple times.

Prior to joining the ROTC Program, Mary Jane worked as a full-time law enforcement officer in Kansas for 13 years and is still certified on part-time status. She began her law enforcement career in the Judicial Center as a Corrections Officer while obtaining her associates degree in Multi-Disciplinary Studies. In 2009 she was hired as a police officer and went to KLETC (Kansas Law Enforcement Training Center). She is married to Matthew Emerson and has 4 children, Brandon, Brittan, Jazzmin, and Dylan.



First Lieutenant Taylor Wiebe joined the Pittsburg State ROTC program in February of 2020. He will serve as the Kansas Army National Guard Active Guard/ Reserve Officer and brings 3 years of experience, including a deployment in support of Operation Spartan Shield. He commissioned from Pittsburg State in 2017 as an Infantry officer. He believes in strong character and morals, and is determined to instill those values in every Cadet of the program. He has served in the

2-137th Infantry Regiment Combined Arms Battalion in the Kansas Army National Guard as an Infantry Platoon Leader and Scout Platoon Leader as well as the Operations Officer for the Extension Unit at Wichita State University. 1LT Wiebe is married to Emily, who is a 2018 graduate of the PSU ROTC program and is currently serving in the U.S. Army Reserves as an Intelligence Officer.





**Cadet Battalion Commander**  
Cadet Derrick Sumner

My name is Derrick Sumner and I am a 2020 graduate of the program. I have had the privilege of leading the program as the Cadet Battalion Commander for my final semester at PSU. I attribute much of my success during the four years at Pitt to the support of cadre, professors, and mentors that have been with me every step of my journey. I am excited to take what I have learned over the four years of ROTC and

use it in my career as an Active Duty Officer.

I joined the program as a freshman with a 3-year federal scholarship. I made myself known for being the kid that could run fast, being at least 30 seconds ahead of the next cadet during the 2-mile in the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT). Even though my fitness was to par, I was showered with a firehose of information about the army during my freshman year. Customs and courtesies, individual movement techniques, chain of command. I was so flustered at the beginning. I didn't know if I was supposed to salute a sergeant let alone know how to take charge.

Like all the cadets, I had many opportunities to develop mental agility and leadership skills. Every year, the battalion has many events that can help cadets move ahead of their peers as well as get individual mentorship from cadre and upperclassman. I took every opportunity to be a part of it all. During my first semester, I participated in Ranger Challenge, A well-known event that encompasses a 25-mile ruck, obstacle course, and many technical activities based on knowledge learned throughout the 4 years in ROTC.

Throughout my time in ROTC, I participated in Ranger challenge for four years, competed for the German Armed Forces Proficiency Badge (GAFPB), Ran and Rucked in the Bataan Memorial Death March three times, and consistently received perfect scores on the APFT. During my summers, I went to Cadet Basic Camp, Airborne School, and completed Advanced camp with the highest score possible. I had many leadership opportunities ranging from being a team leader all the way to Battalion Commander. Even with all of this, I still managed to keep a minimum of a 3.7 every semester.

My goal has always been to leave things better than the way I received them. The senior class and I have made some amazing steps to better the future of the program. But nothing would have been possible without the mentorship and guidance of the cadre. We have so many tasks we juggle throughout our time in school that it seems like we are only taking things a day at a time. But when we step back to see everything, we are leaps and bounds ahead of where we were when we started. I am so proud to say I was a part of the Pitt State ROTC Battalion and I will hold on to the memories I have made here throughout my life.

The PSU Gorilla Battalion is known for being the premier leadership program on campus. Even with the unexpected struggles due to COVID-19, the program was able to act fast and navigate through murky waters. With all the changes that no one could have expected or even planned for, the entire battalion stood strong and focused on what really mattered, the future of the Battalion. Even with most of the year's events cancelled during the spring semester, the cadets have been motivated to come back the following semesters and put in the work to make things even better. The graduating class of 2020 is very thankful for everything the community has done and will continue to do in order to help create more future leaders for this country.

The best part about ROTC is how there is so much going on that you can always push yourself to be better. None of my college peers can say they got as many opportunities as me during their 4-years at Pitt!

## PSU ROTC Would Like to Thank the Following for Their Recent Donations to Military Science:

Mary Cathleen AuBuchon

Carl L. Boswell

Marty C. Brown

John W. Cook

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Jacqueline Ponder

Betty Ann Thorpe

Ronald Watts

Kelly A. Wing

Donald D. Woolfolk



# Upcoming Fall 2020 Schedule

**18-20 SEP** – Survival Lab

**17-19 OCT** – Ranger Challenge

**23-25 OCT** – Fall FTX

**06 NOV** – Alumni Banquet  
(invitations for Alumni attendance forthcoming)

**11 DEC** – Fall Commissioning



*Senior Cadet Autumn Crist attended Cadet Troop Leader Training in Hawaii as a part of her professional development.*

Please let us know if you'd like to make any of the events. The Cadets and Cadre would like to see Gorilla Battalion Alumni at the banquet. Mark your calendars and look for invites on social media.

## Contact us!

We love to see your photos! Send your CONUS and OCONUS pictures to [jshay@pittstate.edu](mailto:jshay@pittstate.edu).

## Gorilla Hall of Fame

There is a link on the Pittsburg State University ROTC Website. It currently contains a general outline for Hall of Fame nominations, as well as the form needed to make a nomination. Please take the opportunity to review the link and learn about current Hall of Fame members at [pittstate.edu/mil](http://pittstate.edu/mil).



*Junior Cadet Brock Budke graduated from Air Assault school at Fort Campbell over Christmas break.*

**WHY CHOOSE TO GIVE TO THE ROTC GENERAL FUND?** Unrestricted gifts allow the Professor of Military Science to support the training and cadet leader development opportunities that he or she feels will have the greatest positive impact on the program. These funds are used to fund events such as: ammunition for weapons qualification, Field Leadership Reaction Course time at Greenbush, staff rides, Bataan, Ranger Challenge much more. We appreciate everyone who chooses to support the future leaders of our Army!

**Yes! I want to support Pittsburg State University ROTC**

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**Thank You!**  
ROTC2020



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